

How Emotions Influence Performance in Competitive Sports

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In this article, I have attempted to apply my cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion, on which I have been working for over 50 years, to an understanding of performance in competitive sports. I begin with four metatheoretical and theoretical positions: (a) stress and emotion should be considered as a single topic; (b) discrete emotion categories offer the richest and most useful information; (c) appraisal, coping, and relational meaning are essential theoretical constructs for stress and emotion; and (d) although process and structure are both essential to understanding, when it comes to stress and the emotions, we cannot afford to under-emphasize process. These positions and elaborations of them lead to my examination of how a number of discrete emotions might influence performance in competitive sports.

One of the major concerns of sport psychology has been the deleterious effect high stakes competition can have on performance. Competition can, of course, facilitate performance too, and the important question then becomes the conditions under which it does one or the other. For this problem, the relatively new field of sport psychology (see Hanin, 2000, especially chapters 3 and 7, for a comprehensive treatment of the subject) turned its attention to a field that has burgeoned since the 1970s—namely, the psychology of stress and coping. Stress is thought to be a major factor in the failure of athletes to fully and effectively utilize their skills in diverse types of performance.

Although my work on stress, coping, and the emotions is well known to many researchers in sport psychology, I could be considered an interloper because I have not until recently (Lazarus, 2000) published in its books and journals. I believe the analysis I intend to present here could have utility despite the selective nature of my knowledge of this field's published research and theory. A key premise of the present analysis is that as a result of evolution, emotions serve adaptational struggles to survive and flourish, but they can also be counterproductive in such struggles. My purpose is to apply my ideas to performance in competitive sports.

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Selye (1974), who was a major figure in the physiology of stress, suggested that there are two types of stress, each of which has different consequences for adaptive functioning, health, and well-being. Eustress, illustrated by socially constructive striving, was said to have positive effects, whereas distress, illustrated by destructive anger and aggression, has negative effects. These ideas have not yet led to useful research generalizations or practical social or clinical solutions.

Parallel to but very different from Selye's proposal, Lazarus and Folkman (1984; see also Lazarus and Launier, 1978) contrasted two different types of psychological stress, threat and challenge, threat being associated with performance impairment and challenge with facilitation. Although a considerable amount of research in psychology yielded findings consistent with this idea (see Lazarus, 1999a, pp. 79-80 for a partial list), this kind of conclusion is undoubtedly incomplete and research on this topic has not to my knowledge dealt extensively with competitive sports.

There are plenty of exceptions, but in the main, stress has remained largely a unidimensional concept—that is, one that specifies degrees of external pressure or disturbed reaction as in the psychophysiological concept of arousal or activation. In the 1980s, however, theoretical attention began to expand beyond stress to a broader, more complex, and richer rubric—namely, emotion (Lazarus, 1993). In this article, my emphasis is on the emotions rather than stress, which is an important aspect of the broader topic of emotion.

What is an emotion? My *definition* of emotion as a phenomenon is that it is an organized psychophysiological reaction to ongoing relationships with the environment, most often, but not always, interpersonal or social. This reaction consists of responses from three levels of analysis—namely, introspective reports of subjective experience (often referred to as an affect), overt actions or impulses to act, and physiological changes that make the emotions organismic.

Thus far, this definition is traditional because it remains at the descriptive level and stops short of a conceptualization of the process. However, I consider this limited definition inadequate. Rather, I take the probably controversial position that a full definition should include the causal cognitive, motivational, and relational variables and processes involved in arousing and sustaining an emotion because they are part of the phenomenon itself and help us understand it. In other words, without the continuation of these causal thoughts about the ongoing relationship and the fate of a goal, the emotion either disappears or changes (see Lazarus, 1991). So I would add to what I have said above descriptively that what mediates emotions psychologically is an evaluation, referred to as an appraisal, of the personal significance for well-being that a person attributes to this relationship (I refer to this as relational meaning), and the process.

A cognitive-motivational-relational outlook once dominated Western philosophical and psychological thought until the ascendance of a brief period of radical behaviorism and logical positivism, which lasted for approximately half to three quarters of the Twentieth Century. The recent movement away from radical behaviorism has been referred to as the cognitive revolution, though it was hardly a revolution because it mainly returned psychology to a rationalistic outlook, the origins of which can be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle over two thousand years ago in Ancient Greece (McKeon, 1941).

I begin my exploration of emotions and competitive performance with four basic metatheoretical and theoretical issues, which set the stage for my later

discussion of emotions in competitive sports. They are (a) the relationship between stress and emotion; (b) emotions as discrete categories and dimensions; (c) the role of appraisal, coping, and relational meaning; and (d) process and structure.

The Relationship Between Stress and Emotion

I have been arguing for some time that the phenomena of stress and emotion should be examined as a single complex topic (Lazarus, 1993). In the past, two almost separate research literatures have grown up, one centered on stress and coping, the other on emotion. Many scholars who tend the garden of stress seem blissfully unaware of the research and thought of those who work in the emotion garden, and vice-versa. This is illogical and counterproductive. Stress is important in its own right, but emotion encompasses all of the important phenomena of stress. I believe the emotions provide a far richer understanding of the adaptational struggles of human and infrahuman animals.

The assumption is commonly made that stress refers only to the negatively toned emotions, which should be contrasted with positively toned emotions as polar opposites. This assumption is unwise, because it is evident that stress often occurs in connection with positively toned emotions such as happiness, pride, love, gratitude, and compassion. Conversely, positively toned emotional reactions often accompany stress. Stress also comprises the psychological base condition from which certain emotions, such as relief and hope, arise (Lazarus, 1999a).

Therefore, the contrast between negative and positive is overdrawn and misleading, especially if we make too much of it. The distinction also depends on whether we define emotional valence in terms of its subjective feel, its social consequences, or the antecedent conditions arousing the emotion (see also Lazarus, 1991, 1999a), but the basis for this decision is seldom specified.

The affective valence or tone of each emotion is often uncertain across encounters and diverse individuals, which makes it difficult to say whether any given emotion is positive or negative, especially in the absence of careful measurement of the emotional state. Sometimes more than one emotion occurs together, an example being the case of hope, which is normally paired with anxiety because the outcome of hoping is always in doubt.

Emotions as Discrete Categories and Dimensions

It is difficult to imagine an emotion without an intensity dimension. It is also difficult to imagine an emotion without a distinctive content or quality. Nevertheless, this issue is far more complex than has generally been assumed. Thus, Hanin (2000, chapters 3 and 7) has proposed five basic dimensions: form, content, intensity, time, and context.

Since Wundt (1905), an exclusively dimensional approach has long been dominant in psychology. It is centered on an effort to identify the minimum number of factor-analytic-derived basic dimensions of emotion—for example, pleasantness-unpleasantness, tension-relaxation, and quiescence-activation—that could account statistically for the greatest amount of emotion variance in reaction (see also Schlosberg, 1941; Russell, 1980). This approach began to lose favor

with psychology's return to a doctrine of cognitive-motivational-relational mediation.

The approach that has recently attained ascendance is centered on discrete categories of emotion based on their qualitative content. The intensity dimension is retained in the discrete approach but is drawn upon only within each emotion category—as in the intensity of a given display or experience of anger, anxiety, and so forth. In effect, in the discrete emotions approach, intensity is subordinated to the emotion's qualitative content, whereas in the dimensional approach, this content is subordinated to intensity, and the differential content carries little or no theoretical interest.

In this article, my main concern is with qualitative content as a defining attribute, which is often referred to as affect. This is the way appraisal theorists treat discrete emotions (Scherer, Schorr, and Johnstone, in press). I also presume that content is highly relevant to performance in sports competition, and this relevance is a central issue of this article.

The discrete emotions approach, which tends to center on the concept of appraisal, has been gaining ground in recent years and could ultimately have profound consequences for how research on competitive performance is conducted. Each discrete emotion is said to tell a different story about a person's adaptational struggle (Lazarus, 1999a; Scherer, Schorr, and Johnstone, in press).

Although any list of discrete emotions is arguable, it should include so-called "negatively toned emotions," such as anger, anxiety, fright, sadness, guilt, shame, envy, jealousy, and disgust and so-called "positively toned emotions," such as relief, hope, happiness/joy, pride, love, gratitude, and compassion. Emotion theorists differ about how many emotions there are and which ones are most worthy of programmatic study. Regardless of the exact list, a primary empirical and theoretical concern is to identify the most important emotions, their distinctive characteristics, antecedent causal variables and consequences, and how they might influence competitive performance in sports.

Several emotions may also occur within the same adaptational encounter, probably because most such encounters contain diverse goals and outcomes. In the sport performance field, there is a further issue—namely, which emotions are most relevant for any given individual in specific competitive contexts. To determine the most important emotions in any sports competition requires that we describe with care the emotions experienced by an athlete in training and under different competitive conditions and relate them to successful and unsuccessful performance.

In much research, it is common to group negatively toned emotions together and to regard this group as the polar opposite of positively toned emotions (e.g., Bolger, 1990), a strategy that is closer to the dimensional way of thinking than the discrete approach. To emphasize these two groupings is, I believe, a strategic mistake because it overlooks the extent to which each individual emotion is distinctive with respect to its antecedents, subjective experience, and outcome. The differences among emotions may be more important (or at least as important) than the similarities within each dichotomous grouping and the differences between groupings. As you will see later, these differences create a rich and useful analytic tool for characterizing, understanding, and influencing most of life's adaptational struggles, a tool that is undermined by emphasizing broad dichotomies instead of discrete categories.

The Role of Appraisal, Coping, and Relational Meaning

Three interdependent sub-principles are at the heart of my approach:

- There are ubiquitous inter-individual and intra-individual differences in the way we react emotionally to similar situations. Although emotional encounters are never identical, even in the same person, they often share a common relational meaning, such as a particular harm, threat, challenge, or benefit, and what might be done to cope. We could think of these meanings as gains and losses. Thus, harm is a loss that has already occurred; challenge is a difficult-to-attain, yet anticipated gain; threat is the potential of a loss; and benefit is a gain that has already occurred (see Hobfoll, 1998). Table 1 presents a four-fold schematization of a two-factor categorization of the relational meanings of loss and gain and the time-line of anticipation and actual occurrence.¹

- The emotions we experience in an adaptational encounter depend on an appraisal of the significance of what is happening for a person's well-being. They also depend on the coping process, which I take up later. Appraising is the verb form of the noun appraisal. Its premise is that every event in our lives is constantly being evaluated with respect to its significance for our well-being. The function of emotion is to facilitate adaptation, but if the appraisal is unrealistic, it can do the opposite. An appraisal provides the cognitive-motivational-relational key to our emotions and shapes the way we cope with them and the conditions of life that bring them about. In effect, the process of appraising contains motivational as well as cognitive contents, including a person's goals, goal hierarchy (the relative importance of each goal), beliefs about self and world, and personal resources, as well as environmental factors.

- Relational meaning is constructed by means of the process of appraising about the personal significance of adaptational encounters with other persons and the physical environment. This meaning is distinctive for each emotion. No two discrete emotions are the same with respect to their relational meaning, which is at the heart of the process that arouses an emotion. Appraisals and the meanings generated from them are always relational because they must simultaneously take into account personal factors and environmental demands, constraints, and opportunities.

I use the term core relational theme, which is a terse, composite summary for each emotion of a set of six separate appraisal judgments (see Lazarus, 1991, 1999a), which are combined into a single complex meaning. The separate judgments include goal relevance, goal congruence, type of ego-involvement, options

Table 1 A Two-factor Schematization of Relational Meaning and Time

Outcomes	Anticipated	Occurred
Gain Loss	Challenge Threat	Benefit Harm

Table 2 The Core Relational Theme for Each Emotion

Emotion	Theme
Anger	A demeaning offense against me and mine.
Anxiety	Facing uncertain, existential threat.
Fright	An immediate, concrete, and overwhelming physical danger.
Guilt	Having transgressed a moral imperative.
Shame	Failing to live up to an ego-ideal.
Sadness	Having experienced an irrevocable loss.
Envy	Wanting what someone else has and feeling deprived of it but justified in having it.
Jealousy	Resenting a third party for loss or threat to another's affection or favor.
Happiness	Making reasonable progress toward the realization of a goal.
Pride	Enhancement of one's ego-identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either one's own or that of someone or group with whom one identifies.
Relief	A distressing goal-incongruent condition that has changed for the better or gone away.
Hope	Fearing the worst but yearning for better, and believing the improvement is possible.
Love	Desiring or participating in affection, usually but not necessarily reciprocated.
Gratitude	Appreciation for an altruistic gift that provides personal benefit.
Compassion	Moved by another's suffering and wanting to help.

Note. From *Emotion and Adaptation* by Richard S. Lazarus, 1991 (modified). New York: Oxford University Press.

for coping, coping potential, and future expectations. The core relational theme for each emotion, in which the six separate appraisal judgments are brought together as one, is presented in Table 2.

If we think of the similarities and differences among emotional encounters as being based on relational meaning, as I do, it is easy to understand why two individuals can experience essentially the same emotional reaction when the encounters vary yet experience different reactions when the encounters are the same. The concept of relational meaning helps us understand individual differences—that is, both between and within persons—in the emotional life.

In accord with this stance, my approach posits that emotions are aroused and transformed into other emotions on the basis of the changing relational meaning a person constructs from the person-environment relationship. Change the meaning

and the emotion changes. For example, shame may be managed by rejecting blame for a social failure and externalizing it. Blame is one of the separate appraisal variables. This should result in anger instead of shame, the anger being directed at another person, object, or institution deemed responsible for the debacle.

In effect, although changes in the environment can result in a change in the appraised relational meaning, appraisal changes are often self-generated—that is, they may represent a *defensive* response centered on, say, who should be blamed, oneself or another person. Treating the discrete emotions as if their psychosocial dynamics were unrelated would lead us to miss the interdependence of the emotions and the ease with which the process of appraising can transform one emotion into another.

Although on its face this theoretical outlook is substantially subjective, it is not traditional phenomenology in that the person who is making the appraisal is said to negotiate between two perspectives, a realistic one and a wishful one, which are defined more precisely as follows:

- In keeping with our evolutionary endowment and the struggle to survive and flourish, we try (and mostly succeed) to grasp the objective realities being faced in order to cope with them effectively.
- We also try to put the most favorable spin possible on what is happening so as not to lose our sanguinity or hope, although some people might prefer a negative spin in accordance with a consistently dour appraisal style.

Permit me now to address the coping process. Coping is second in importance only to appraisal. It has to do with how we manage or regulate our emotions, for example, by suppressing their expression, addressing and changing the environmental or personality conditions that provoked it, or reappraising the personal significance of what has happened or is happening without changing the actual person-environment relationship.

Emotion theorists have a tendency to understate or even overlook the role of coping in emotion. It is commonly treated as a separate process belonging mainly to stress theory rather than the emotions. However, it is a mistake to treat coping in this way, that is as a separate process that comes into play only after the relational meaning has been established and the emotion aroused.

Coping and the appraisals that underlie it influence which emotion will occur and how emotions change, and this influence begins at the outset of the process whereby the emotion is aroused. For example, if we fear it might lead to retaliation from a powerful other, we are less likely to express the anger or we may reappraise the conditions for it, which changes the relational meaning that led to the anger. If the relational meaning is changed, the anger may soften, become moot, or change to an altogether different emotion such as anxiety, guilt, or even affection.

The above analysis implies that coping “mediates” the reaction to the emotion-provoking relationship and the subsequent emotion (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988a, 1988b). In other words, what we think and do to cope influences the emotions that emerge from the emotion-provoking encounter. Because coping comes into play at the initial arousal stage of an emotion and operates throughout an emotional encounter, it must be regarded as an integral feature of the emotion process. I don’t believe anyone would really argue against the thesis that coping plays a role in the emotions. This role, however, is an essential feature of the emotion

process itself regardless of the primary valence of the emotion. In other words, it can be important even in the so-called positive emotions—in effect, in all emotions.

I say this because, as I indicated earlier, stress is often involved in so-called positively toned emotions such as happiness and pride, and positive feelings can accompany stress. For example, superstitious people may believe that the “evil eye” will get them if their enterprises are going very well. In effect, others may take offense at their good fortune and try to undermine it. People who think this way will often underplay or disguise their happiness or pride by refusing to acknowledge how good things really are. Doing this is a coping effort to avoid potential envy and resentment by others in what is perceived to be a hostile world (see Lazarus, 1999a).

Process and Structure

The focus of much of psychology, as evidenced by traditional psychometrics, has been centered more on what is stable over time—that is, psychological structure—than on process, which has to do with flux or change. This is unfortunate because we are usually motivated to alter any source of distress and dysfunction. The social and physical circumstances of our lives are also constantly changing, as in the processes of psychological development and aging. All this suggests that when we are considering stress, emotion, and coping, we should focus on process as much or more than structure.

Structure and process are, of course, two sides of the same coin. The more one side applies, the less does the other. Emotions can be treated as relatively stable traits and environmental conditions, as when we speak of angry or anxious persons and environments that are characterized by certain values such as achievement. Emotions can also be treated as changeable processes, as when we observe emotional flux in the same persons over time or across environmental conditions. So when we speak of the arousal and regulation of our emotions we must take into account both process and structure in the effort to understand what has been going wrong or right in a person’s adaptational struggles (Lazarus, 1998a, 1998b).

Process analysis calls for a very different philosophy of psychological, social, and physiological measurement than existed when many of us began advanced study. We must seek alternatives to the traditional psychometric reliance on temporal or situational stability or consistency, while at the same time making an effort to identify stable environmental conditions and personality traits. To assess appraisal and coping, which are usually responsive to changes in the person-environment relationship, repeated measurements or longitudinal research designs are required so that potentially changing as well as stable variables can be identified. In the next two subsections, I relate process and structure to performance in competitive sports.

The Process Aspect of Performance

No one knows exactly what accounts for most variations in performance. Why does our timing seem just right on some days when we appear to be playing over our heads but on other days we are awkward and off balance? It is a wonderful experience when everything we do seems to be right. Many of us who engage in competitive sports, even those of us who are mediocre, wonder what accounts for these performance variations.

Some of the within-person variations in sports competition, particularly when the stakes are high, undoubtedly arise from the emotions experienced when we have attained exceptional skill in a sport but things go badly. These variations are what we want to understand. I believe some of the answers lie in the cognitive and motivational processes arousing emotions—namely, they hinge on an appraisal, which includes a person's goals in an adaptational encounter, and on the coping process. Appraisal, coping, and the emotions they result in are influenced by continual feedback from our performance, represented below by what we say to ourselves, so to speak, about what is happening and its personal implications.

Here, for example, are some negative self-statements that might occur during competitive sports: "I'm getting too old; this is the beginning of the end of my career." "My opponent is too strong for me today; I just can't get it together; I'm going to lose." "I'm down too far and too tired to come back." "The spectators don't like me." "The referees are biased against me." "The referees are incompetent." "As a top player, I'm embarrassed or ashamed about how I am doing." "My stomach hurts; I regret having eaten that lunch." "I must have a fever, and shouldn't be playing." "I'm afraid my shoulder is acting up again." "I don't see anything I can do to turn things around in this match." And so forth.

These negative self-statements can be potentially destructive. Different emotions, which reflect particular person-environment relations, result from different evaluative self-statements. How this might work is a question central to research from the point of view of this essay. It is also an empirical question whether negative self-statements can ever have positive value in performance. I think the answer is yes under certain conditions, for example, when the negative judgment motivates an athlete to seek a more constructive pattern of attention and concentration or to abandon a losing strategy for one that works.

Here are some positive self-statements that might occur during competitive sports: "Today (or these days) I am playing at the top of my game." "Even if I lose a point, I'm way ahead and can easily come back on subsequent points." "Everything I do today seems to go right." "At the moment I'm losing but I'm confident I will come back; I just need to restore my attention to what my opponent is doing and concentrate more fully on my play. I know I can do this." And so forth. Even positive judgments can, under certain conditions, have negative consequences for performance. For example, athletes may feel self-congratulatory about how they are doing in a match and let down, but they don't see the danger until it is too late. The lesson is that we have to be careful not to presume that negative thinking is always damaging and that positive thinking always facilitates performance. Simplistic thinking like this is not what we need.

With respect to coping, I watched a 1999 French tournament on television where André Agassi lost the first two sets in a three-set match and then rallied to win the match by taking the next three sets, a remarkable feat. It is difficult to know what really happened psychologically, but it may well have depended on what Agassi told himself (and believed) at the nadir of his failure and its effect on his level of effort and strategy. In general, the right kind of coping in an important competition could lead athletes to become re-motivated and, thereby, capable of attending and concentrating effectively to display their typically high standard of excellence. The problem for research on this kind of speculation is that what happened might have been based on what was going on psychologically in Agassi's opponent's mind rather than or in addition to Agassi's. In this particular case, we probably will never know.

The Structural Aspect of Performance

To make the decision to compete at the highest level possible, an athlete must want very strongly to achieve excellence in order to put up with the time, pain, and fatigue that constant practice involves and to resist burnout, which is a devastating loss of this commitment. Top performance in any field of endeavor calls for a very strong and steady commitment, which illustrates the stable or structural side of our efforts to explain recurrent or consistently outstanding performance. A large portion of the athlete's life must be given over to conditioning the body and practicing skills. This commitment must consistently fuel the energy and persistence needed for the harsh regimen of training and the competitive match itself with its ebb and flow of success and failure. The commitment must survive off days, a series of playing mistakes, and bad luck.

Madden, Kirkby, and McDonald (1989) have used Folkman and Lazarus's (1988c) process measure of coping (see also Folkman and Lazarus, 1988a for the theoretical rationale) in a study of how middle distance runners manage being in a slump. I cite these researchers, however, for the structural aspects of their work and thought. They suggest, rightly I'm sure, that elite athletes share a motivational characteristic in common, that is, "a remorseless, unshakeable determination to beat the rest of the world in their chosen event," a resolve that "leaves no room for mediocrity or excuses" (p. 291). Athletes are driven to very demanding regimens that most of us would shun.

All outstanding athletes achieve excellence by over-learning performance skills, in effect, by automatizing their actions. In tennis, table tennis, and golf, sports with which I have much direct experience, the idea is to groove strokes to hit the ball in just the right way regardless of the conditions being faced. The same over-learning applies to the golf swing. It is essential to keep the head down, both in fairway strokes and putting, which, presumably, fixes the gaze on the ball and keeps the body in a constant alignment during the swing. Something like this probably applies in all sports, including football, baseball, basketball, hockey, and soccer, which are team sports, as well as in figure skating, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, and golf, which are individual sports.

Comparison of Yuri Hanin's and My Theoretical Approaches

I consider Hanin's (2000) work on competitive sports of great importance because of the ambitiousness and comprehensiveness with which he has addressed the problem of emotions and performance. He draws on extensive research and a model that he refers to as the Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF). I also applaud it because he is one of a very modest number of scholars who emphasize the emotions. A brief comparison of aspects of our respective ways of thinking could have value in pointing to major issues that future research might address in order to understand the role of emotions in sports competition. Any disagreement between us seems to be more a matter of emphasis than one of basic substance. He also provides significant ideological support for the metatheoretical and theoretical principles about stress, coping, and the emotions I have enunciated here and elsewhere. These days, when two competing scholars agree publicly, it is worth celebrating.

Our two most important differences in emphasis have to do with the concept of relational meaning (along with the self-statements they generate) and the coping process. Nevertheless, in much of what he writes, the importance of something like my concept of relational meaning is acknowledged, implicitly, even if not emphasized. For example, he distinguishes between self-defeating and self-empowering self-statements, which might be helpful or harmful for performance and which suggests more overlap in our perspectives than disagreement. With respect to the coping process, while not emphasizing it as a central process (few writers do) he nevertheless implies the role of emotion regulation in his writing by referring to awareness, acceptance, and action under competitive conditions, again suggesting more overlap than disagreement.

What I had at first thought was a third discrepancy between us has to do with the important and difficult question of a suitable list of the emotions. Based on our recent correspondence, however, this turns out not to be a real disagreement. Because the question of how to define emotion is so central to our concern with the effects of emotions on competitive performance, it is worth examining in more detail.

Hanin (2000, in chapters 3 & 7) drew on a conceptually faulty list of emotions compiled from the 10 global affect scales described in Watson and Tellegen (1985). As he now acknowledges in our correspondence, most of these reactions would not be considered emotions by appraisal-centered theorists (see Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, in press), though they often contain emotional-related features depending on the level of analysis one is considering, namely, subjective, behavioral, or physiological. The issue is not merely a matter of semantics but has to do with substantive definition as well as theory.

To see this clearly, one needs only to look at these so-called emotions in Hanin's chapters and in Watson and Tellegen's paper in the context of the definition of emotion I offered early on in this article. To cite some examples, eager, slack, lazy, and complacent are sometimes said to be emotions, but these terms should be thought of as having largely motivational and attitudinal implications. Though motives and attitudes are involved in emotions, they are not emotions.

Calm, nice, content, and pleasant seem to refer to pleasant moods suggesting a low degree of arousal or motivation. Moods are emotional but do not constitute emotions. Eager refers to a stronger goal state and brings to mind Schachtel's (1959, p. 24) use of the term "eager concentration" to contrast the organized, but hardly calm, goal state involved in the sucking behavior of nursing infants who, nevertheless, do not seem emotionally distressed during feeding. Determined suggests the attitude of a willful struggle, perhaps against the odds. Unwilling has the attitudinal connotation of opposition, which may or may not involve much arousal. Tense refers to a psychophysiological state in which there is some kind of threat; the actual threat and emotion remain unspecified but the latter could be anxiety, guilt, shame, or even anger.

Being tired is certainly not an emotion but a psychophysiological state of fatigue. To my knowledge, no one has been able to find a simple physiological measure of energy or fatigue. Often a tired runner appears to mobilize against severe fatigue when the finish line is close. This has been referred to as an "end spurt." So there must be both cognitive and motivational factors in energy and fatigue as well as physiological ones, which is why I used the word "psychophysiological" for being tired.

Furious is the only term on the above list to be considered an emotion by most appraisal theorists. It connotes intense anger. The essential lesson is that we need to be more thoughtful and precise when speaking of emotions and to get our terminology straight from the standpoint of theory and the way emotions are usually defined. In several recent books (e.g., Lazarus, 1991, 1999a), I have closely examined fifteen discrete emotions. This is probably not a complete list but it covers considerable ground and offers what I think is a substantial start, and my list is considerably longer than most. Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) grouped these emotions into five categories. They include (a) the nasty emotions, namely anger, envy, jealousy; (b) the existential emotions, for example, anxiety-fright, guilt, and shame; (c) emotions provoked by unfavorable life conditions, such as relief, hope, sadness, and depression; (d) emotions provoked by favorable life conditions, which include happiness and love; and (e) the empathic emotions, such as gratitude and compassion.

Any classification scheme generates many problems, and I am not satisfied with the one mentioned above, but it is probably as good or bad as any other. Remember that because each discrete emotion involves a different adaptational story, summarized tersely in the core relational themes for the fifteen emotions listed in Table 2, the conditions that bring an emotional state about and how it must be coped with will differ for each emotion.

Psychological Functions Influencing Performance

Now to the issue of the most important psychological functions that influence competitive performance and could be affected by the emotions. There appear to be three: (a) motivation, manifested by the commitment of energy and persistence in both practice and sports competition; (b) close attention to what is happening in a competition; and (c) concentration on the task, that is, on the actions and competitive strategies needed to defeat an opponent.

In order to respond suitably, an athlete must anticipate and perceive an opponent's actions during interactive play so can he know instinctively, as it were, where and with what speed and spin the ball or other type of sports object will go. This anticipation and perception is endangered in competitive situations where there is interference with (or distraction from) these perceptual and cognitive tasks. I have never engaged in a sport where motivation, attention, and concentration weren't of the utmost importance, and often the damaging effects of loss of goal commitment and cognitive interference are so subtle and unattended to that the athlete may be unaware of them until the damage has been done.

The basic principle here is that when our goals and thoughts, perhaps manifested as ruminations (e.g., Nolan-Hoeksema, 1991; Nolan-Hoeksema, Parker, and Larson, 1994), are irrelevant to the task, they will interfere with cognitive and motor activities that are essential for top performance. If, for example, competitors are thinking about the personal implications of what is wrong when they should be concentrating on what they are perceiving and doing, these thoughts are likely to impair performance.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the most prominent explanation of negative stress effects on performance was anxiety-related interference of this sort. This process has been studied extensively in the past in non-sports contexts. See, for example, Easterbrook (1959) who mainly emphasized attention to the performance task. It has also been studied in competitive sports with the main focus being anxiety.

Emotion also interrupts whatever personal goals are ongoing with another agenda that seems to be more important, adaptationally speaking (cf. Mandler, 1984). In sports competition, the intrusion brings a new set of goals that are irrelevant to the ongoing athletic performance. Therefore, any emotion, except one that arouses additional motivation to attend and concentrate, could be counterproductive because it turns the mind toward a different goal commitment and away from the competitive task at hand. We are then pushed to look more closely at the details of motivation and the process of task interference, which have to do with the particular evaluative thoughts that have been getting in the way of a top performance.

There is another version of this motivational explanation not considered by Easterbrook but is more in keeping with current appraisal-centered emotion theory. It states that the new motivational agenda weakens the motivation to sustain the effort needed for outstanding performance. We may reach a point in the match when we believe it is impossible to get back into contention and then give up or let down significantly and, in consequence, add to the risk of losing. It is not clear which of these mechanisms, interference or weakened motivation, plays the more important role. Perhaps both apply in different individuals and circumstances.

I believe we must move beyond these earlier analyses toward a consideration of diverse relational meanings and the coping skills needed to overcome destructive self-statements. The most important question then becomes how to reinstate the necessary effort before the match is lost. Putting destructive ruminations out of mind so that they no longer undermine performance is, of course, easier said than done. What happens in a strong emotion, such as anger, is that the emotion inspired motivation to retaliate for the offense and restore an injured self-esteem seems to be, at least temporarily, equal to or stronger than the desire to win. So the natural response often appears to be short sighted with respect to the practical competitive issue that is being addressed.

The competitor must learn how to cope with strong and counterproductive action tendencies that are part of any emotion. Coping is a crucial component of the solution. In many respects, what I am implying here is relevant to theoretical and procedural models used by cognitive therapists, which should also be appropriate for dealing with psychological problems arising in competitive sports. See, for example, Meichenbaum's (1977, 1985) concepts and methods of "stress inoculation."

If I am right about the way emotion and coping influence performance in competitive sports, it would help if athletes understood which emotions are aroused in competition, their individual vulnerability to them, and how best to cope. This understanding would provide the rationale for coping and add potency to personal coping efforts. It is essential that self-statements, which are part of the training, not merely be a vacuous litany that lacks relevant meaning and commitment for the person using them. I suspect that Hanin would not quarrel with most of what I have been saying in this section.

Specific Emotions in Competitive Performance

At this point, I am ready to discuss some of the emotions that are likely to be important in competitive sports, which is the final goal to which all that has preceded this point in my essay has been directed. Each emotion requires a mini-theory, so

to speak, which must be consistent with the metatheoretical and theoretical principles employed for emotion in general. The emotions I consider below are anger, anxiety, shame, guilt, hope, relief, happiness, and pride. My intention is to illustrate rather than to be exhaustive.

Assuming that the core relational themes, which define the cognitive-motivational-relational essence of each emotion, are sound, it should help us predict the emotion to be experienced on the basis of the relational meaning a person has constructed from the adaptational encounter. Conversely, it should also help us predict the relational meaning if we know that a person is experiencing and displaying a given emotion. This analytic symmetry should give a researcher, sports practitioner, competitor, or coach a practical guide about alternative ways of coping.

An important caveat is that the particular form of an emotion could make a considerable difference in the way the emotion affects performance. There are, in effect, diverse kinds of anxiety and anger, as well as other emotions, and these must be delineated and measured to evaluate their role in performance. For example, although anxiety and fright overlap considerably, they are different in many important respects, such as what brings them about, their subjective feel, and what they promote in the way of behavior or physiological change. Moreover, pouting is one form of anger; it represents a wary, tentative complaint by a needy person that more attention need be paid and is designed to avoid retaliation. Pouting involves very different psychic and social antecedents, however, from gloating, which is the open expression of satisfaction about another person's comeuppance by someone who does not fear retaliation. These forms of anxiety and anger must be taken into account as we consider the recursive two-way links between their relational meanings, aroused emotions, and their physiological and behavioral consequences, including skilled performance.

Another caveat is that some emotions, which intrude on competitive performance, are generated outside of the sporting world, say, in family life, whereas others are a direct reaction to what is happening in a sports competition. Stresses that take place in the family can spill over to work and vice-versa (see, for example, Eckenrode and Gore, 1990; and Gottlieb, 1997). Sports should be thought of as an athlete's work. Therefore, in discussing each emotion below I first speak about that emotion in general—that is, under the ordinary conditions of living—and then address it in the context of sports competition.

Anger

Speaking first of this emotion under the conditions of ordinary life, its core relational theme is a demeaning offense against me and mine. If we treat frustration as the provocation to anger, as psychology has in the past (see Berkowitz, 1989), the analysis will not be adequate because all so-called negatively toned emotions involve frustration (Lazarus, 1991). The differential question that still must be answered is why the emotion that is aroused is anger and not, say, anxiety, guilt, shame, envy, or jealousy, and so on.

If the reader harbors doubts about the proposition that being demeaned or slighted is the key to adult anger, consider how often in international politics, leaders as well as the populace as a whole act as if their country (and, therefore, its individual citizens) have been slighted or insulted. Nationalistic ire follows this collective appraisal (Smelser, 1963) and provokes nations and tribal groups to mount destructive wars that no one can truly win in the long run. Given the damaging

social and personal consequences of aggression, if a person or society wants to control aggression and violence, its cognitive and motivational underpinnings must first be understood. (See Toch, 1969, 1983, for an account of the writings of Seneca, the Roman philosopher and politician whose interests centered on the social control of aggression.) The same applies to the emotions of competitive sports.

Each emotion also entails a biologically derived action tendency or impulse that may be so strong that it is difficult to inhibit. In anger, there is a powerful impulse to counterattack in order to gain revenge for an affront or repair a wounded self-esteem. This is what makes anger such a dangerous emotion. Only pride and shame involve similar underlying goals.

With respect to anger in competitive sports, actions by an opponent, oneself, referee, ball handler, the spectators, coach, wife, or lover with whom an angry verbal interchange the night before may have deprived the athlete of needed relaxation and sleep, can readily get the athlete's goat. The object of one's anger is the person whom one blames for an offense and toward whom one wants to exact revenge in order to repair a wounded self-esteem.

A distinction needs to be made between anger that is centered on another person (it could also be an institution or event) to whom the blame is attributed for an offense or, alternatively, on oneself because the blame is accepted as one's own. Both are capable of impairing performance effectiveness. It is possible, however, that self-blame is the more insidious process of the two because it could well be both a source of interference and a loss of motivation (discouragement or hopelessness), especially when the athlete has a shaky self-esteem. Because we don't know the answer to this possibility, it would be interesting to test the contrast between self-blame and other blame in research.

I watched the great German tennis player, Boris Becker, berate himself on television during an important and difficult match for recurrent mistakes of play. During the play he constantly muttered out loud about a series of missed points for upwards of an hour, his score steadily going downhill and his state of mind seeming to be that of angry dejection. Although it is difficult to say what is cause and what is effect here, I thought that Becker's self-directed anger undermined his ability to come back after a period of poor play.

There could also be instances in which the mobilized energy behind anger results in better rather than worse performance. I am thinking of a competitor who makes the compensatory self-statement "I'll show that [expletive] referee [or coach, or whomever]," and then tries all the harder to attend to what his opponent is doing and concentrate on his actions in the match. I have no idea how often this sort of "constructive anger" occurs in sports competition. Still, children who are deeply resentful of their parents' tendency to denigrate them as inadequate have often drawn on the energy from this anger to work hard at a career just to prove that the parents were wrong and that they did, indeed, amount to something.

Anxiety

This emotion stands in marked contrast to anger and is also one of the most important emotions in human life. Under ordinary life circumstances, the core relational theme of anxiety is facing an uncertain threat (Lazarus & Averill, 1972). Although its existential aspects have to do with who we are in the world and life and death issues, most recognizable sources of anxiety are concrete and immediate in that they reflect limited goals and beliefs at stake in our daily lives. Anxiety is aroused

when important values and goals are threatened under conditions of ambiguity about what will happen and when we have only limited personal resources to pit against the threat, which increases our sense of vulnerability.

The existential implications that underlie anxiety go well beyond the concrete and immediate and serve as symbols of our potential inability to control the circumstances of our life and to survive and flourish. Even when we are not fully aware of what is happening, the threats involved in anxiety seem central to our well-being. This idea of the centrality of anxiety led psychologists, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, to regard this emotion as *the* negative emotion in our lives and to propose that both positive adaptation and psychopathology are consequences of it.

A ubiquitous example of an environmental source of anxiety is being evaluated, which poses the threat of a negative judgment that could have destructive social and personal implications. This threat can be provoked by tests in school, having to perform in front of an audience, living up to others' expectations in a competitive or love relationship (see Zeidner, 1998, on test anxiety, which is also referred to as performance anxiety).

The contrast between anger and anxiety points up clearly why the dynamics of discrete emotions are so distinctive. This is well illustrated in the research of Laux and Weber (1991; see also Weber and Laux, 1993) who showed that coping differs greatly when the emotion is anger compared with anxiety. These researchers studied married couples who imagined angry or anxious marital encounters or actually experienced such transactions. When couples were having an argument, which involved an assault on one or both partners' ego identity, anger was usually expressed openly. It would escalate with each partner attacking the other in an effort to repair their wounded self-esteem. Angry confrontations were characterized by Laux and Weber as "openly expressive and marked by defiance, that is, by fighting against inflicted harm and by correcting injustice" (p. 251).

Anxious encounters, however, typically took place when there was a shared threat to a couple's well-being—for example, a job was in danger or a child who was seriously ill. Efforts to cope with these encounters were usually designed to bolster the relationship and to search for cooperative ways of dealing with the threat. In the authors' words, the marital partners dealt with each other "by not expressing feelings, by re-appraising the situation and by rational action aimed at the assumptions of avoiding or escaping danger that are formulated for coping with anxiety" (p. 251). The coping intentions of the married couple were distinctly different and flowed sensibly from the threats being faced, a pattern that seems eminently adaptive.

A major source of anxiety in competitive sports is that public competition reveals to everyone who knows about it, including the athlete, their comparative competence in the sport. In any contest, top competitors may be at their momentary best or worst, so what is being faced in the competition always contains considerable ambiguity, which is a hallmark of anxiety. How well athletes realistically expect to do depends on their performance history, reflected in how they are ranked in the field, and this ranking can change on the basis of a series of competitive outcomes. Their career is, in effect, recurrently at stake, along with the idea of who they are, the economics of their life situation, and when they will be forced to retire. These are important concrete and existential issues for athletes. Each match contributes to the overall sense of their future.

Anxiety, like anger, can escalate during a match. For example, one can become uneasy after a series of failed efforts against an opponent, and this uneasiness may be compounded with each additional failure. Ultimately, this could turn a limited, specific source of situational anxiety into an increasingly broad existential crisis, proceeding inevitably from the potential loss of a match to one's overall standing or entire sports career. This appraisal must be resisted lest a growing vicious circle of failure set in. Unlike the casual sports enthusiast, elite competitors who have made a career out of their sport cannot readily convince themselves that this is just a game and pass off a major failure as something to accept casually. So it is important to learn how to cope with failures.

Can anxiety, like anger, ever facilitate performance? The answer is a resounding yes. The assumption that anxiety is always, or even usually, destructive is an exaggeration. Too little anxiety can, in effect, be counterproductive. To turn in a top performance requires the mobilization of sustained effort rather than relaxation and continuing attention to and concentration on one's performance task. This applies both in preparation for and during an actual contest. Hanin (1978, 1986) cites data that a significant number of athletes consider high levels of anxiety to be optimal for performance, and the work of Jones (1995) and Hardy (1997) provides even stronger evidence of the positive value of anxiety. There are also substantial individual differences in respect to how anxiety affects performance and probably many contextual effects that have barely been explored.

Guilt and Shame

From the standpoint of their role in ordinary life, these emotions have to do with the need to live up to moral social standards and ego-ideals, which are usually inculcated during a person's early development (see Lewis & Haviland, 1993; Mascolo & Fischer, 1995). The core relational theme for guilt is having transgressed a moral imperative; for shame, it is having failed to live up to an ego-ideal that may have no connection with moral values. In other words, one can be ashamed of being an inadequate thief or con man, in which case one fails to live up to an amoral or antisocial, probably family-inspired, ego-ideal.

Guilt and shame are, in the main, distinguished by the nature of the personal failure on the input side, the subjective state of mind that results, and the behavioral manifestations on the response side. The societal values on which guilt and shame are based must have been internalized by the individual in contrast with mere compliance in which conforming behavior provides only lip service (Kelman, 1961). The person who feels guilty believes in the societal moral values and seeks to expiate or atone for the moral failure by making restitution.

Shame is one of the most miserable emotional reactions people can experience because it implies a character defect and, therefore, is particularly difficult to cope with. How much emotional distress will be experienced depends on whether the guilt or shame is tied subjectively to a specific action or is regarded as a major character flaw.

With respect to coping with shame, we can try to convince ourselves that we are not worthy of feelings of shame, drawing on a mental reconstruction of what has happened. We can also try to regard the shame-provoking event as unimportant in the larger scheme of things. These possibilities are, of course, easier said than done. Alternatively, the shamed person can try to hide the character flaw or try to shift the blame to someone else. The latter is very common and sometimes

dangerous, as anyone who has caught another person in a shameful act knows after pointing it out to that person. The intensity of the vitriol that often follows such a confrontation tells us how urgent and intense is the effort to deny blame and project it onto the person who has caught us in the shameful act. Hamlet's statement to his mother "Methinks the lady doth protest too much" expresses this theme. The excessive protest reveals the shame and the need to defend herself against it.

Concerning guilt in competitive sports, some athletes are more vulnerable to this state of mind than others, and we might speak of them as prone to guilt or guilt-ridden. The guilt may stem from secret hostile or illegal actions against an opponent, which are regarded as immoral or socially unacceptable if revealed. Some people, which would include athletes, are so guilt prone that even engaging in vigorous competition provokes this emotion. It is questionable for such a person to decide to be an elite athlete, given the inevitability of such competition. They must learn to control the guilt feelings if they are to be consistently successful.

Certain competitive situations are especially conducive to feelings of guilt. For example, if an athlete wins against an aging or otherwise sympathetic opponent whose career is in trouble, guilt-prone athletes might have difficulty suppressing their empathic concern with the plight of their opponent. In addition to counterproductive rumination, an athlete may let up in competition and possibly lose the match if this trend is allowed to go too far and the opponent rallies. There is little room for guilt in elite competition; to win consistently, no quarter can be given to any significant competitor.

Shame too can play a role in competitive sports. When shame-prone athletes fail in competition, they may think that this failure reveals a serious character flaw to the world. The athletes have let others as well as themselves down and want to hide from everyone, a psychosocial withdrawal that is hardly conducive to high levels of performance.

Wanting to hide shame may lead to a refusal to examine what has happened, which delays or thwarts the self-diagnosis on which effective coping is likely to depend. As I noted earlier, shame may also lead athletes to externalize the blame defensively, which further confuses the issue. Then the emotion will probably be anger at another person who is blamed instead of them, who may deserve the blame. For the process of defense to work it must be unconscious, so it is difficult to gain insight into what is really going on psychologically. This makes it more difficult to cope with the problem successfully, undermining the power to regulate the emotion and to give full attention and concentration to the competitive task at hand.

Because of its highly subjective nature as a construct, psychologists have shied away from the study of hope, which is an emotion of significance in any type of difficult adaptational struggle, including those that take place in competitive sports. Its role in the maintenance of morale and well-being, even under adverse circumstances, is being increasingly recognized.

Speaking about hope in ordinary life, the emotional reactions of hope and despair are polar opposites. The ability to hope is a vital coping resource against despair (Lazarus, 1999b). Its core relational theme is fearing the worst but yearning for better and believing this is possible, either through individual efforts or external factors that can't be controlled, such as luck, fate, God, or a skillful and caring person. People differ greatly in their ability to mobilize and sustain hope under unfavorable circumstances. This ability is a powerful personal resource that has not always been fully appreciated.

Depression is one of the emotional consequences of despair or lack of hope. It can be a serious form of psychopathology that is characterized by mild or severe distress and dysfunction. This complex emotional state should not be referred to as a single discrete emotion. Rather, it is a combination of a number of emotions such as anger, anxiety, guilt, and shame, and perhaps some sadness. In time, the sadness becomes wistful as the depression lifts after successful grieving over the loss, and the person accepts or is reconciled to what has been lost.

Hope may enter the arena of competitive sports, both in training and in an athletic match. We need to hope in order to avoid feeling hopeless, despairing, or suffering a breakdown of competitive commitment when things are going badly. If one can preserve hope, even following discouraging performances, there is more likelihood that the full utilization of resources can be restored. An enemy of excellence is despair, depression, and giving up. This applies not only to a particular match, but to an entire career and life.

Relief

This is the simplest of all the emotions. It occurs in ordinary life after a period of threat and anxiety that gives way to evidence that what we were threatened by—say, an incurable disease or the failure of a career—will not materialize, and we suddenly experience relief.

In competitive sports, relief could have a desirable effect on performance because an overdrawn state of tension and worry is no longer warranted, and we are free to reinstate normal attention to and concentration on the competitive task. Before relief we were anxious and tense, perhaps well over the limit of activation for maximally effective functioning. After relief we are relaxed and can allow ourselves to experience the flow of secure and comfortable play. (See Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, for a more detailed account of “flow.”)

Despite the usual advice to competitors to relax, there is a potential danger in becoming too relaxed. I made the same point earlier about the role of anxiety in performance. Not surprisingly, athletes may let down when they are far ahead of an opponent and seem to be securely in command of a match. They may let down so much that they lose their edge and, perhaps, the match. I assume coaches warn their proteges against this common problem.

Happiness

Happiness is more than just the cessation of danger, pain, or suffering, which is what relief is all about. From the perspective of ordinary life, happiness has two meanings. The first meaning is a relatively detached calculation of overall well-being, which might better be treated as a mild, somewhat intellectualized satisfaction or dissatisfaction about how things are going in life. It might be better to refer to this state of mind as the feeling of well-being rather than to call it happiness, or to regard it as a sentiment or disposition rather than an acute emotion.

The second meaning treats happiness as a positive but evanescent emotional reaction, which is my focus here. It might better be called happiness/joy, which expresses more intensity and verve than the ambiguous and probably more detached term well-being. One can see this in the thrill and joy often manifest after the triumph of an athlete who has been victorious in a tough and important match. The tremendous excitement seems palpable to the observers in a post-match interview.

There is very little agreement about what results in either the feeling of well-being or the acute emotion of happiness/joy. Aristotle defined it very broadly as the sense that we are using our physical and mental resources effectively (McKeon, 1941). I define it as an extended process of making progress toward a goal or goals toward which we are striving. I do so because, very commonly, getting what we think we want is apt to produce only short-lived happiness/joy. It can even lead to disappointment because it is so easy to overvalue what we think we want.

Thus, obtaining an advanced degree sets a person up for the next practical step in life, say, landing a suitable job. Marriage too does not mean living happily ever after, as our culture's simple-minded aphorism has it, but rather that the couple now has new positive and demanding (even negative) hassles and opportunities such as living together, raising children, and establishing themselves economically. In effect, happiness/joy, and even the feeling of well-being, must be leavened by the realities of living.

Happiness/joy and well-being are considerably more complicated than they seem at first glance. They may be byproducts of a continuing process of striving and doing even more than an outcome of this striving, which could mean that there is no sensible way to seek such a state as a life goal. This seems to be a difficult lesson to learn because our culture's way of thinking about either version of happiness lacks the necessary wisdom and depth. What I have been saying can also help us understand why, ironically, there is so little correspondence between our feeling of well-being and the realities of our lives (Diener, 1984).

With respect to happiness/joy in competitive sports, some of the most important concrete psychological issues at stake are just the satisfaction of winning, attaining sports honors and wealth, controlling fate, and the wonderful feeling of fully using mental and physical resources. The triumph of a great win—especially when major obstacles, such as serious illness or other handicaps, have been overcome—can produce intense joy, which is a highly excited state but which seldom lasts very long. Most of us need an encore. Small steps toward fulfillment of goals are more likely to generate more stable, if milder, happiness/joy or just a feeling of well-being than a sudden major success in which we gain what we think we want only to discover that by itself, it is not enough.

Therefore, happiness/joy and well-being in sports competition may have less to do with the ebb and flow of competition and more to do with overall morale and the ability to sustain a stable high level of motivation. In effect, it is career related. In this connection, there are interesting stories of famous athletes who look back nostalgically on the harsh and painful experiences of training and competing with a sense of longing for the return of this life. They may wonder what they can do now and in the future.

Because aging makes it impossible to be an elite young athlete throughout life, athletes may need to consider that the time will come when they must give up the original goal of being a top performer. Their coping alternatives are either to compete at a lesser level of performance excellence within a similar age range or to find something else that makes them happy.

Pride

From the perspective of ordinary life, this emotion differs from happiness in that it stems from a favorable event or state of affairs that enhances one's social and

self-esteem. Its core relational theme includes taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either one's own or that of another person or group with whom one identifies. Pride and happiness are, therefore, often conjoined, though different in their particular causes. Pride is also an emotional opposite of shame and anger, which has to do with the failure to live up to an ego ideal or to sustain one's self esteem against being demeaned; pride opposes the implicit or explicit putdown involved in shame and anger.

These general considerations about pride also apply to competitive sports. Status can be regarded as the social psychological counterpart of dominance hierarchies in infra human life. Pride and what brings it about is clearly a motivating factor in all forms of status striving, including sports. Although our successes fuel the feeling of pride (or shame when we fail), a downside of pride is that we may need to be concerned about how its display might affect social relationships negatively. Our society has always been ambivalent about pride, which is also treated biblically as one of the seven deadly sins.

Other persons, for example, may appraise manifest pride as a putdown of themselves. Still others may envy and even resent our success, especially if we boast about it too much or display an arrogance of self-confidence or power. Such resentment can be a danger in sport competition in helping to make the winner a pariah as well as a hero. This could undermine overall morale and well-being or lead to a weakening of competitive efforts.

Summary and Conclusion

I have argued in this article that there is much to be gained in sports psychology by turning our attention from stress as activation to the discrete emotions, which probably have major consequences for performance whether they occur in a match or spill over from life outside the sport. One main mechanism whereby performance is affected negatively is the self-statements and ruminations produced by emotional struggles that interfere with attention and concentration, without which a top performance is not possible. A second such mechanism is a lowering of motivation so that competitors all but gives up when they have been doing badly. These evaluations differ greatly from one emotion to another in accord with their core relational themes.

Yet I think more is involved here than has usually been identified, which implicates both relational meaning and coping processes. It might be fruitful to look closely at whether and how relational meanings and coping processes operate in sports competition. I think we have only scratched the surface of these powerful emotion-related reactions and processes.

What athletes must do, if they can, is to clear their minds of destructive forms of thought and substitute more constructive ones that could end the vicious circle of downhill performance and restore weakened or lost motivation, attention, and concentration. We can refer to this regulative-preventive-therapeutic process as coping. Because of the nature of many of the emotions, particularly the almost peremptory action impulses that arise from them, this is easier said than done.

I believe that knowledge on the part of athletes and their coaches of the psychosocial dynamics of each emotion may be necessary to accomplish this end. At the very least, this knowledge is likely to facilitate coping with damaging

emotional activity. Therapeutic and preventive training programs are already in place that could be helpful in preparing elite athletes for emotional problems that could intrude on, facilitate competitive performance, prevent them, or correct them when they occur.

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Note

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