Sports psychology exam essay examples

1. Describe the three phases of motor learning and include a discussion of how you as the coach would approach teaching an athlete in each respective phase.

There are three phases of motor learning that a coach can use to teach athletes. These are the cognitive phase, the associative phase, and the autonomous phase. The cognitive phase is the stage where the learner is first introduced to the sports. This is the beginning phase of skill learning. At this stage, me, as the coach should focus on trying to make the learner understand everything about the sports. If I am the coach, I would give the learner an overview of the sports such as the rules, techniques, and scoring. I would also show the learners how the sports is done. I will let them observe learned players since through observing, they will be able to learn the techniques of the sports. After that I will let them practice certain each technique repetitively so that they will get used to it.

The associative phase is the intermediate level of acquiring skill in sports. This phase focuses on the mastery of the sports. While the learner focuses more on physical execution in the cognitive phase, in the associative phase, the learner will focus more on the strategies of playing the game. If I were the coach, I would teach the athlete in the associative phase through improving his senses and making him master different moves such as dribbling the ball without looking at it. I will also let him observe an " imperfect game" and then participating in the game so that he will know what to do in unexpected situations.

The third stage is the autonomous phase or the advanced phase. In this phase, the learner goes nearer in perfecting the game. He will have an

obvious mastery of the game including physical execution and strategies. This phase is a never-ending phase. As one goes on in learning the game, one will find more things to learn and one will become more skillful. As a coach, I will teach an athlete in the autonomous phase through letting him play with more advanced players so that he can learn both their strategies and how to deal with each player's skill. As the athlete gains more experience in playing with the " greats", he will also acquire their level of skill.

2. Compare and contrast the teaching of skills in the following teaching approaches:

a. Blocked practice vs. random practice

b. (practicing a specific technique until you get it right)

i. Blocked Practice Schedule - repetition of one skill is practiced until a prescribed level of mastery is achieved before moving to another skill.

ii. e. g. swimmer - one stroke; gymnast - one element; golfer - one shot; tennis - one shot.

iii. Used when teaching several different tasks.

iv. Appropriate in the early stages of learning.

v. Cognitive and early Associative phases.

c. Random Practice Schedule - practicing a variety of skills within a defined practice period.

d. May be useful when needing to learn several types of tasks necessary for the execution of an activity.

e. Seems to provide better long-term retention than blocked practice.

f. Transfer - the application of a practiced skill to a new situation. E. g. Live Pass-Set-Hit; Game-like shooting drills; Setting research.

g. Constant practice vs. variable practice approach

Focus is on teaching a single skill typically performed within a dynamic environment.-

e. g. shooting a basketball, kicking a field goal.

Constant Conditions - creating the same environmental conditions for each repetition. (ground balls - same speed, bounce, direction, distance from first base.)

Variable Conditions - varying the environmental conditions for the same skill for each repetition. (ground balls - different speed, bounce, direction, distance from first base.)

Variable Conditions re, contextual interference results in better retention and learning.

h. Whole vs. part methods. Include progressive part method

Whole Method - the athlete learns the entire skill as a single unit.

Part Method - the athlete learns the skill as several components/parts.

- skill, when learned in separate units can initially be disjointed.

- more valuable when learning a complex skill.

Whole-Part-Whole - preferred method combining strengths of both methods. Learner sees entire skill, then practices each component, then combines elements to perform entire skill.

3. Describe and discuss the notion of feedback and its functions and use in skill learning and performance.

Feedback is very powerful and influential in skill learning and performance. A positive feedback can urge the performer to do better while a negative feedback can remove ones enthusiasm. There are different feedbacks applicable to sports.

1. Intrinsic Feedback – This is sometimes called inherent feedback which is a self generated as a response to what one feels after a performance of a skill. It is like a self-evaluation using the kinesthetic sense. This is almost a natural response by a performer after making a performance. This is usually done by all athletes to make a self-assessment and help him improve the performance next time.

2. Extrinsic Feedback – This also called the augmented feedback which is the response of an outsider like coaches, spectators or teammates. This may be given before during or after the performance of a skill. This type of feedback is very influential in giving motivation to the performer or it may remove the enthusiasm depending on the type of feedback given.

4. Describe and discuss gender differences and similarities within the environment of competitive sport. Include a discussion of the gender differences relative the effective coaching and motivation.

Competitive sport poses a lot of gender differences. With regards to praises,

women usually want to receive praises that are sincere and specifically directed to them while men prefer to be praised publicly. While men don't look forward to having a specific kind of relationship with their coaches, women usually look forward to having one with their coaches. This makes them feel important and recognized by their coaches. Generally, female athletes are more sensitive compared to their male counterparts. Females tend to be attention seekers, especially from their coaches and must feel the respect from them to have better communication. Sometimes, the existing relations with either the teammates or the coaches contributes to their overall performance and loves to be corrected personally when the committed errors

Male, on the other hand, tend to rely on challenges directed to them before they can play 100%. Men usually do not bring existing relations with him during the actual performance and does not seek a particular relation with coaches. In terms of correction acceptance, they need to actually see their errors first before they admit of having committed such errors.

In terms of effective coaching and motivation, females tend to be motivated by the degree of relationship they have with their coaches and their personal assessment of the motives of a coach plays a big part. The emotions of coaches while motivating them usually affects the amount of motivation the athlete received. Men on the other hand, need to be challenged to be motivated.

With regards to coaching, female coaches tend to include emotional ties when coaching, more sympathetic to their athletes and more critical when judging an athletes performance. On the other hand, male coaches are

assertive, authoritative and usually do not know how to handle female athlete having mood swings.

5. Discuss the positive and negative elements and affects of reinforcement in the enhancement of athletic performance. Include a discussion of punishment in terms of it's effect on behavior.

Using reinforcers to enhance athletic performances could have both positive and negative effects to the athlete. Positive effects of using reinforcers could be having the athlete more encouraged and motivated to practice and perform well. On the negative side, using reinforcers especially negative reinforcement could discourage an athlete. For example, a video analysis and comparison of one's performance could give encouragement to one person but could cause one to to be discourage knowing that everyone has viewed his flaws. Negative criticism too can be a detrimental motivator, while giving rewards can be a motivator.

Punishment as a reinforcer is usually used by coaches to elicit the action they want from their athletes. However, using this can have detrimental effects on the motivational levels of the athlete and would later on instill fear in the athlete which will cause him to find the sport unenjoyable. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee could eventually be affected if this is constantly used.

6. Discuss leadership as a psychological contract, as well as provide a complete overview of the approaches to leadership theories as discussed and presented in class.

Leadership is a kind of " Psychological Contract" because the common notion that a leaders' follower will receive some benefits in following. These benefits can either be tangible or intangible benefits. Usually, a follower is attracted to follow the leader based on what he had done in the past and its effect on that person. Usually, this is influenced by the follower's previous experiences with other authority.

Leaders do not need to be formally chosen. There are natural leaders which automatically arise in a group. However, there are some theories that are used in assessing a leader. The first approach is the trait approach which tries define leaders by looking at the common characteristics and behaviors of leaders. On the other hand the Behavioral Appraoch tries It tries to the concept that there are no naturally born leaders, but leaders become leaders because of exposure and experiences.

7. Discuss the notion of developing leadership and morale within the team. Include a discussion related to issues of ethical leadership in athletics.

The leadership within a team can be developed. One team member may not possess the characteristics of a good leader from the start but as one gains experience and knows his team members he may emerge to be a good leader because he eventuality masters the traits needed to become one. Developing morale of a team requires a lot of motivation from coaches, leaders, spectators.

8. Discuss decision styles in terms of coaching and the selection of the most effective styles. Include a discussion of the antecedents of leadership (conditions that affect leader behavior).

There are several ways to makes decisions when coaching. A coach can either choose to solve a specific problem by himself, consults concern or significant players before making the decision, consult all of the players individually before making the decision where the decision arrived at may or may not reflect what the players' input, consults the players as a group before making the decision himself or present the problem to the group and let them decide. When choosing the most appropriate style of making decisions, several factors must be considered by the coach. The coach must consider the complexity of the problem, the capability of the players to make good decisions, his power over his players, the quality requirement and how cohesive his team is. Mostly, older athletes and male athletes tend to make the decisions on their own while females prefer to be included when making decisions. The type of sport and nationality of athletes also has something to do with choosing the applicable decision making style one has to apply.

9. Discuss the elements of effective communication in sport as described by David Yukelson in the " Ch. 10", A-R #4 reading.
The elements of effective communication in sport described by David Yukelson include having the coach be sensitive to the feeling of his athletes. The athletes need to know that they are feelings are being taken into consideration and not want pity. Try to place yourself on the shoes of your athletes before deciding what to say or how to say something to them. The reasons for every action must be properly explained and make the athletes understand them. Use a communication style that you are at home with and be consistent with the style. Changing your communication style could result

to misunderstandings. There must be consistency in making disciplinary actions and it is important to acknowledge the greetings of others.

10. Define and discuss group, team, cohesion, and group cohesion.

A group is a cluster of individuals who shares a common fate, has a source of mutual benefit and has a social structure which exhibits a variety group processes wherein members are engaged in self-categorization. A team differs in a group in such a way that a team is collection of two or more individuals who has a common identity, goals and objectives and shares a common fate. A team also exhibits structured patterns of interaction and modes of communication but are personally and instrumentally interdependent and considers themselves as a group.

Cohesion is the " something" or " factors" that bonds group members together while group cohesion is observable fact which determines how well a group holds together. It can be strong which makes the group strong and stable or weal which may lead to falling apart of the group.

11. Discuss how a group becomes a team.

A group becomes a team when each member have a sense of ownership and commitment towards a set goals and they take the responsibility to achieve their goals. An understanding between the members that they could only achieve their personal and team goals by supporting each other and having a participative decision making rather than making one team member responsible for giving the decisions which will possible arouse misunderstanding when other group members do not conform to the

decision. A team sees conflict as a way to think of new ideas and a chance to improve relations and performance rather than a way of pointing on others.

12. Discuss " social loafing" including a definition, types, causes, and ways to avoid or address " social loafing".

Social loafing is the tendency of one member of a group to rely on the other group members rather than performing better. The types of social loafing can be:

1. Sucker Effect – the cause of this type of social loafing is when an athlete chooses to put less effort because he doesn't want to become a sucker, due to the belief that some teammates are less motivated than him.

2. Minimizing Strategy – the cause of this type of social loafing is when one athlete get the feeling of losing in the crowd and was not able to see the positive result of all the hard work he has done.

3. Allocation Strategy – the cause of this type of social loafing is when one athlete relies on his teammates. It is the mental notion of having teammates which can do the things you ought to do.

4. Free Rider – the cause of this type of social loafing is when one athlete believes that even if he does not perform well, he will not be noticed because there are so many of them.

13. Describe the conceptual model of cohesion as presented in class. Include a discussion in terms of guidelines for building team cohesion."

The conceptual model of cohesion is a model that proposes that individuals are attracted to a group by four factors: environmental factors, personal factors, leadership factors, and team factors. The environmental factor that

attracts one person to stay in a group includes having contracts to fulfill or family and peer expectations. Personal factors are almost constant and more varied and dynamic compared to the environmental factors which usually include personal motivation. Leadership factors on the other hand play a big role in keeping a team intact. It is important that the leader is able to communicate with each team member and must have compatibility with the group. Team factor includes the experience the team has had together. This tends to unify the team further because they have a common ground to talk about as a starting point.