

DECISIONS.....DECISIONS.....DECISIONS



Decision-making is a process we go through every day of our lives. It involves deliberately opting for one choice from two or more options. The aim is to optimise a situation or outcome rather than simply allow it to happen. The key is that it is a proactive process not a passive one.

The challenge of integrating sport with the other aspects of their lives forces athletes to make decisions – many of which are extremely difficult e.g. to forgo aspects of their social/family life in order to train or rest, to slow track or extend academic progress in order to accelerate development in their sport, to change coach or training venue in order to facilitate progress. In general hard decisions means a mix of different issues, greater consequences and high levels of commitment - often in terms of time. So how should we approach the challenge of decision-making?

“A consistent approach is best” says Peter McCabe (Coordinator – Performance Lifestyle Programme)



Step 1

What has led to the situation that demands a decision?
What is my objective in making it?

Step2

Understand the uniqueness of the context. Analysis of the situation is critical. Who are the major players? Who will be impacted by the decision and how should they be involved?
What are the major factors and the impact of each?

Step3

Identify the options.

“Generating sufficient options can often be tricky in complex situations” says Peter “This is when there is value in consulting someone outside of the issue. Their knowledge and application of creative problem solving techniques can often generate options that the individual did not see at first appraisal. I often find myself cast in this role with athletes facing dilemmas”.

Step4

Evaluating Consequences

It really comes down to which option has the most acceptable set of consequences given consideration of the context and the individuals key objectives. “There are frameworks to help with this” says Peter “But a critical factor is the concept of regret. The key question is often - what will be my level of regret if I do this versus what will it be if I don’t?”

Step 5

Prioritising options then follows analysis of options and consequences. “Once again there are techniques to use to facilitate this process” says Peter, “Ideally you want to have reached a point where you can frame a decisive argument for your chosen option and feel that you can live with the consequences and regret associated with following it”.

Step 6

Take action. “Telling stakeholders is an important action. It should precede implementation in most cases. Unfortunately if this does not happen it can lead to conflict” says Peter.

Conflict management - now there’s another skill that would benefit elite athletes. “No doubt” says Peter “but that’s for another time..”

“For this time, recognise that a consistent, sequential approach to decision making can enhance the possibility of taking the right one!”