

How Lifestyle impacts on Performance



Middlesbrough Football Club assistant manager Bill Beswick emphasized the importance of assessing athlete lifestyle in a presentation to coaches assembled at the recent World Class Coaching Conference. Beswick, who is a qualified and applied Sports Psychologist, explained that while handling athletes is individual and contextual, there are a number of operating principles that work consistently. He explained how he and the staff at Middlesbrough meet weekly to consider each squad player from three perspectives – physical, mental and lifestyle. Under lifestyle he stressed the importance of gaining an understanding of the network that the player functions within. In addition it was key to be able to recognize instances when individuals need support in order to maintain balance in their lives.

“ Bill spoke about understanding the players and their motivations. He recognizes that physical, mental and lifestyle issues can all impact on the energy that the player is able to give to performance,” said SINI ACE Coordinator Peter McCabe. “Developing adult to adult relationships with the players and their immediate networks helps player maintenance and builds their sense of belonging”. “I was interested in Bill’s comments that coaches also need balance in terms of their personal lifestyle management. Modern sport has the potential to become all-consuming and this can lead to problems. Ability to identify periods when it is appropriate to “switch off” and indeed strategies to facilitate “switch off” can be crucial in terms of stress management”.

Another comment that struck a chord with McCabe was Beswick’s description of the use of ‘transition zones’ to help athletes “switch on” and “switch off” before and after performance. As part of SINI’s facility planning it is hoped to create a small athlete lounge to serve such a function. “Hopefully we will be able to incorporate this concept into our new facility” said McCabe, “I am already well aware of how such an area is used creatively in the US Olympic training centres and believe that in time it will be a useful addition to our environment”.

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