

**Category: Coaching research abstract**

**1- High performance coaching or 9 - Bridging the gap between sport science/technology and coaching practice**

**Title:** Back on podium after medal drought of three decades: Perceived benefits and challenges of integrating psychological skills and reflective practice in elite basketball

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**Abstract**

The positive impact of psychological skills training (PST) in competition and reflective practice on athletes' performance has been documented in Western world. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on precompetitive PST, as well as on the perceptions of both elite coaches and athletes on the integration and implementation of reflective practice with the help of a sport psychology consultant facilitating their learning. The purpose of the present study was to document the experiences of an elite basketball team players and their 46-year-old head coach in a season-long process where a sport psychology consultant acted as a learning facilitator helped the team integrate psychological skills (goal-setting, positive self-talk and visualization) and reflective practice using reflection-cards in the practices and competitions. The main elements of the intervention were two workshops, observations during practices/games and provided feedback to the head coach and players. Findings based on inductive thematic analysis from the interview transcripts showed that the participants experienced both benefits and challenges during the process. The perceived benefits included: 1) enhanced performance, 2) improved self-awareness, 3) facilitated personal development, and 4) enhanced personal satisfaction. The perceived challenges were related to: 1) time consuming, 2) willingness to learn, and 3) dependence on the learning facilitator. Findings are discussed with reference to high performance sport development and suggestions are offered to professionals working with high performance sport coaches.

**Key words:** goal-setting; self-awareness, positive self-talk; visualization; reflection; learning, coaching

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Dr. Koh is currently the head of Physical Education and Sports Science (PESS) Academic Group, and Programme Director for Sport Science & Management at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. His research areas are in coach education and sport pedagogy. He also holds key appointments at the international and local levels, namely: Executive Board Member (Asia Representative), World Association for Basketball Coaches; Treasurer, ASEAN Council for PE and Sport; Executive Board Member, Asia Association of Coaching Science; President, Singapore Physical Education Association, and Chairman, Coaching and Development Committee, Basketball Association of Singapore.