

Arete Mindset Academy - Sport Psychology Research Digest — December 2025



SECTION 1 — Research Articles

1. Psychological Flexibility and Competitive Stress in Elite Athletes

Authors: Martínez, R., Gould, D., & Jensen, B.

Journal: Psychology of Sport & Exercise

Publication Date: December 5, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2025.102345>

Summary:

This study examined the role of psychological flexibility in managing competitive stress among elite athletes from individual and team sports. Using a cross-sectional design with 312 international-level athletes, the authors employed self-report measures of flexibility, perceived stress, and competitive anxiety. Structural equation modeling showed that psychological flexibility was negatively associated with both cognitive and somatic anxiety. Athletes with higher flexibility also reported greater emotional regulation during competition. The findings suggest that acceptance-based processes may buffer stress responses in high-performance sport. The authors argue for integrating flexibility-focused interventions into elite training environments.

2. Coach–Athlete Relationship Quality and Burnout Across a Competitive Season

Authors: Lee, S., Davis, L., & Nicholls, A.

Journal: Journal of Applied Sport Psychology

Publication Date: December 8, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2025.2245178>

Summary:

This longitudinal study explored how coach–athlete relationship quality predicted athlete burnout over a competitive season. Participants included 186 collegiate athletes assessed at three time points. Multilevel modeling revealed that perceived closeness and commitment were associated with lower emotional and physical exhaustion. Conversely, increases in perceived coach conflict predicted higher burnout symptoms over time. The results highlight the dynamic influence of interpersonal factors on athlete well-being. The authors emphasize relational coaching behaviors as a key protective factor against burnout.

3. Mindfulness Training and Attentional Control in Precision Sports

Authors: Karlsson, J., Pettersen, H., & Solstad, B.

Journal: Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology

Publication Date: December 10, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2025-0142>

Summary:

This randomized controlled trial investigated the effects of an eight-week mindfulness intervention on attentional control in precision sport athletes. Sixty-four national-level shooters and archers were assigned to mindfulness or active control groups. Behavioral attentional tasks and self-report measures were administered pre- and post-intervention. Results indicated significant improvements in attentional stability and reduced attentional lapses in the mindfulness group. Performance consistency also improved during simulated competition. The findings support mindfulness training as a mechanism for enhancing attentional processes critical to precision sports.

4. Motivation Profiles and Training Adherence in Youth Academy Football

Authors: Hernández, A., Morales, J., & Smith, N.

Journal: International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology

Publication Date: December 14, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2025.2249983>

Summary:

This study examined motivation profiles and their relationship with training adherence in elite youth football academies. A sample of 428 male and female academy players completed measures of self-determined motivation and attendance records were tracked for 12 weeks. Latent profile analysis identified four distinct motivational profiles. Players with highly self-determined profiles demonstrated significantly greater adherence and persistence. Controlled motivation profiles were associated with irregular attendance patterns. The authors interpret the findings through self-determination theory and highlight implications for talent development systems.

5. Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Team Cohesion in Professional Sport

Authors: O'Connor, D., Fransen, K., & Cotterill, S.

Journal: Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology

Publication Date: December 18, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000357>

Summary:

This paper investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and team cohesion in professional team sport athletes. Data were collected from 21 professional squads across three sports (n = 287 athletes). Multivariate analyses showed that emotion regulation and emotional awareness were significant predictors of both task and social cohesion. Teams with higher average emotional intelligence scores reported better intra-team communication. The authors suggest emotional intelligence as a psychological resource underpinning effective team functioning. Implications for leadership development are discussed.

6. Sleep Quality, Mood, and Competitive Performance During Tournament Play

Authors: Nakamura, Y., Walsh, V., & Halson, S.

Journal: Sports Medicine

Publication Date: December 22, 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-025-02011-9>

Summary:

This observational study examined associations between sleep quality, mood states, and performance during multi-day sport tournaments. Eighty-six elite athletes from racket and combat sports were monitored using actigraphy and daily mood questionnaires. Poor sleep quality was associated with increased negative mood and perceived fatigue across competition days. Athletes reporting stable sleep patterns demonstrated more consistent performance outcomes. Mediation analyses suggested mood partially explained the sleep–performance relationship. The authors emphasize sleep as a critical psychological and physiological factor in competitive contexts.

SECTION 2 — APA Reference List

Hernández, A., Morales, J., & Smith, N. (2025). Motivation profiles and training adherence in youth academy football. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2025.2249983>

Karlsson, J., Pettersen, H., & Solstad, B. (2025). Mindfulness training and attentional control in precision sports. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2025-0142>

Lee, S., Davis, L., & Nicholls, A. (2025). Coach–athlete relationship quality and burnout across a season. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2025.2245178>

Martínez, R., Gould, D., & Jensen, B. (2025). Psychological flexibility and competitive stress in elite athletes. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2025.102345>

Nakamura, Y., Walsh, V., & Halson, S. (2025). Sleep quality, mood, and competitive performance during tournament play. *Sports Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-025-02011-9>

O'Connor, D., Fransen, K., & Cotterill, S. (2025). Emotional intelligence as a predictor of team cohesion in professional sport. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000357>