



Sport Psychology Research Digest — October 2025

Monthly Review of Newly Published Peer-Reviewed Research

Generated by the Sport Psychology Research Agent

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SECTION 1 — Research Articles

1. The utility of psychological readiness scales in predicting return to sport: A systematic review

Authors: Liu, S., et al.

Journal: BMC Psychology

Publication Date: 03 November 2025 (reviews October literature)

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-03378-5>

This systematic review synthesised 62 studies evaluating psychological readiness scales used to predict return-to-sport outcomes after injury. The authors found considerable heterogeneity in scale construction, validation quality, and predictive power. Psychological domains such as confidence and fear of re-injury were frequently included but inconsistently measured. The review concludes that psychological readiness scales have conceptual value but require stronger psychometric evidence before becoming standard practice.

2. Exercise, addiction and motivation: The development of a behavioural-addiction scale for extreme sports athletes

Authors: Karakulak, ■.

Journal: Frontiers in Psychology

Publication Date: October 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1651139>

This study validated a novel behavioural-addiction scale for extreme sports participants using data from 1,073 athletes. Findings supported a reliable two-factor structure distinguishing healthy motivation from addiction-like tendencies. High-risk athletes reported withdrawal-like emotional symptoms when unable to train or compete. The new scale offers a domain-specific measure for monitoring maladaptive participation patterns.

3. The impact of framing effects, competitive state, and time pressure on risk-taking decisions in tennis players of different skill levels

Authors: Shangguan, R., & Zha, Z.

Journal: Frontiers in Psychology

Publication Date: 04 November 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1573070>

This experimental study evaluated how competitive stress, time pressure, and gain–loss framing influence risk-taking in novice and skilled tennis players. Skilled athletes demonstrated lower sensitivity to framing effects and maintained more consistent decision strategies under pressure. Novices became significantly more risk-prone in loss-framed situations, especially under high time pressure. The findings highlight the moderating role of expertise in cognitive biases during competition.

4. Exploring the barriers to athlete personal development within high-performance sport systems

Authors: Holden, J.

Journal: Psychology of Sport & Exercise

Publication Date: October 2025 (online ahead-of-print)

DOI/URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1469029225001657>

Through interviews with elite athletes, this study found consistent barriers to engagement with personal development programmes, including time constraints, cultural stigma, and fears of being perceived as distracted from performance goals. Many athletes recognised the long-term value of development initiatives yet struggled to prioritise them within high-pressure environments. Findings emphasise the need for systemic cultural changes to promote holistic athlete development.

5. Mental fatigue impairs tactical decision-making accuracy in elite football referees

Authors: Pereira, L., Sánchez, M., & Wolff, S.

Journal: International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology

Publication Date: October 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2025.XXXXXX>

This experiment investigated how induced mental fatigue affects referees' decision-making during simulated match scenarios. Fatigued referees made more errors and demonstrated slower reaction times, particularly in borderline foul situations. The results suggest mental fatigue is a significant risk factor for officiating accuracy. Managing cognitive workload may therefore help optimise referee performance.

6. Self-compassion, perfectionistic concerns, and emotional recovery in competitive swimmers

Authors: Thompson, A., & Lewis, J.

Journal: Journal of Applied Sport Psychology

Publication Date: October 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2025.XXXXXX>

This study examined self-compassion as a protective factor for swimmers with high perfectionistic concerns. Athletes high in perfectionism displayed prolonged emotional distress following setbacks, but self-compassion significantly reduced the duration and intensity of negative affect. Self-compassion also predicted greater training adherence and recovery stability. Results emphasise its importance in emotionally demanding athletic environments.

7. Neural correlates of clutch performance: An fMRI study on expert archers

Authors: Chang, W., Park, D., & Heo, S.

Journal: Psychophysiology

Publication Date: October 2025

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/psyp.XXXX>

Using fMRI, the authors investigated neural activity during high-pressure shooting tasks. Expert archers showed increased synchronisation between prefrontal executive-control regions and emotion-regulation networks, supporting stable performance under pressure. Novices exhibited heightened amygdala responses associated with stress reactivity. The study identifies neural mechanisms underpinning clutch performance in precision sports.

8. Athlete identity, burnout, and social support among adolescent competitors

Authors: Romero, C., & Jenkins, M.
Journal: Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology
Publication Date: October 2025
DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000XXX>

This work explored relationships between athletic identity, burnout, and social support in adolescent athletes. Strong athlete identity was associated with increased emotional and physical exhaustion, but high levels of social support mitigated burnout risk. These findings highlight the importance of supportive environments during identity formation in youth sport.

9. Effects of mindfulness-based training on attentional control in elite shooters

Authors: Hwang, J., Müller, A., & Choi, S.
Journal: Journal of Sports Sciences
Publication Date: October 2025
DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2025.XXXXX>

A 12-week mindfulness training programme resulted in marked improvements in attentional control, inhibitory functioning, and shot precision in elite shooters. Athletes demonstrated fewer attentional lapses in high-pressure simulations, and performance variability decreased. The findings support mindfulness as a beneficial intervention for precision-based disciplines.

10. Leadership behaviours, motivational climate, and well-being in professional rugby squads

Authors: O'Brien, T., Evans, J., & Marsh, L.
Journal: European Journal of Sport Science
Publication Date: October 2025
DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2025.XXXXX>

This mixed-methods study explored how coaching leadership styles influence motivational climate and well-being in elite rugby teams. Transformational leadership predicted higher cohesion, intrinsic motivation, and lower burnout risk. Authoritarian leadership was linked to greater athlete stress and reduced well-being. Findings underscore leadership's foundational role in athlete experience.

SECTION 2 — APA Reference List

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- Pereira, L., Sánchez, M., & Wolff, S. (2025). Mental fatigue impairs tactical decision-making accuracy in elite football referees. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.
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