

Burnout and Overtraining in athletes

PSS Expert Workshop on Physical Integrity

”Pro Safe Sport for Young Athletes”

May 5th-7th Budapest

Henrik Gustafsson, PhD.

henrik.gustafsson@kau.se

Karlstad University, Sweden



Linus Thörnblad

Length: 180 cm.

Weight: 76 kg.

Club: Malmö AI.

Personal records: O

(2006), indoors 2,38

World champion U23

Indoor WC in Moscow

Indoor-EC in Birmingham

in EC 2006 and 2010,

2009.

Thörnblads karriär över

"Jag är fortfarande känslig för stress och press"



BEING BURNED OUT

Trapped?

Caught in a trap

Voluntarily trapped

Trapped by my own demands

Demands of my own free will

No possibility to turn back, to chose a different path

The decision is tempting, but at the same time it's not

I don't want to do this anymore – I can't take this anymore

Help me find an answer!

(19 year old female elite endurance athlete)

BURNOUT: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL SYNDROME



Defintion:

- ***Exhaustion*** is the central symptom of burnout, and is related to stress associated with intense training and competitive demands
- ***Reduced sense of athletic accomplishment*** is manifested in a perception of low ability with regard to performance and sport skill level
- Finally, ***sport devaluation*** manifests itself in a loss of motivation, with the athlete ceasing to care about his or her previously beloved sport

(Gustafsson, Kenttä, & Hassmén, 2011; Raedeke, 1997).

BURNOUT AND OVERTRAINING SAME THING, DIFFERENT LABEL?

- Burnout is studied by psychologists and overtraining syndrome by physiologists... (Gustafsson et al., 2011)
- Overtrained athlete can be highly motivated while a core component of burnout is loss of motivation and devaluation of their formerly beloved sport (Radeke, 1997; Raglin, 1993)
- Overtraining can lead to burnout (Gustafsson et al., 2007)
- *A coach (and an athlete) does not care of the definitions...*





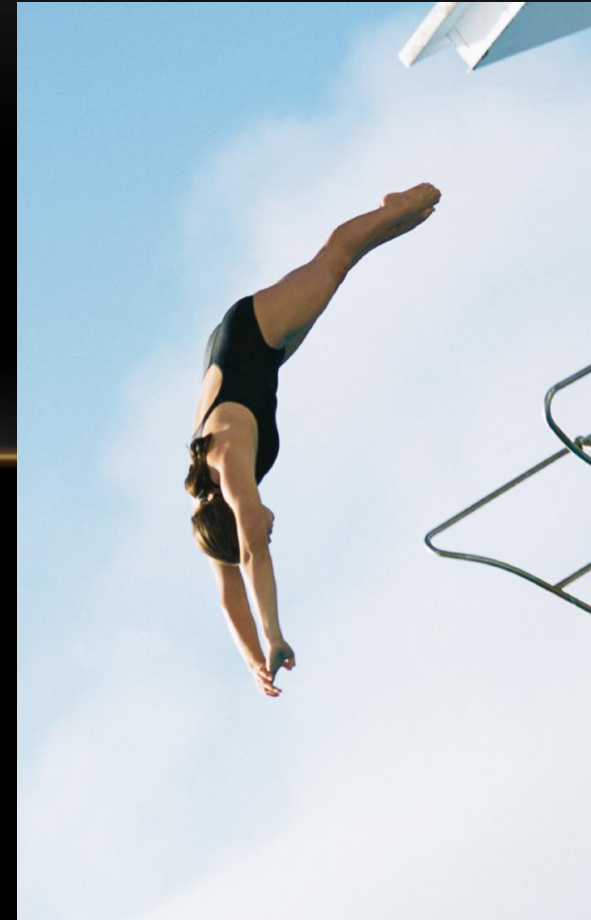
BURNOUT IN ATHLETES

- Recognized as a serious problem with an estimated prevalence of 1-9% and severe burnout symptoms around 1-2% (Eklund & Cresswell, 2007; Gustafsson, Kenttä, Hassmén, & Lundqvist, 2007)
- Suggested to be on the rise due to increasing competitive pressure and training loads (Gould & Dieffenbach, 2002)

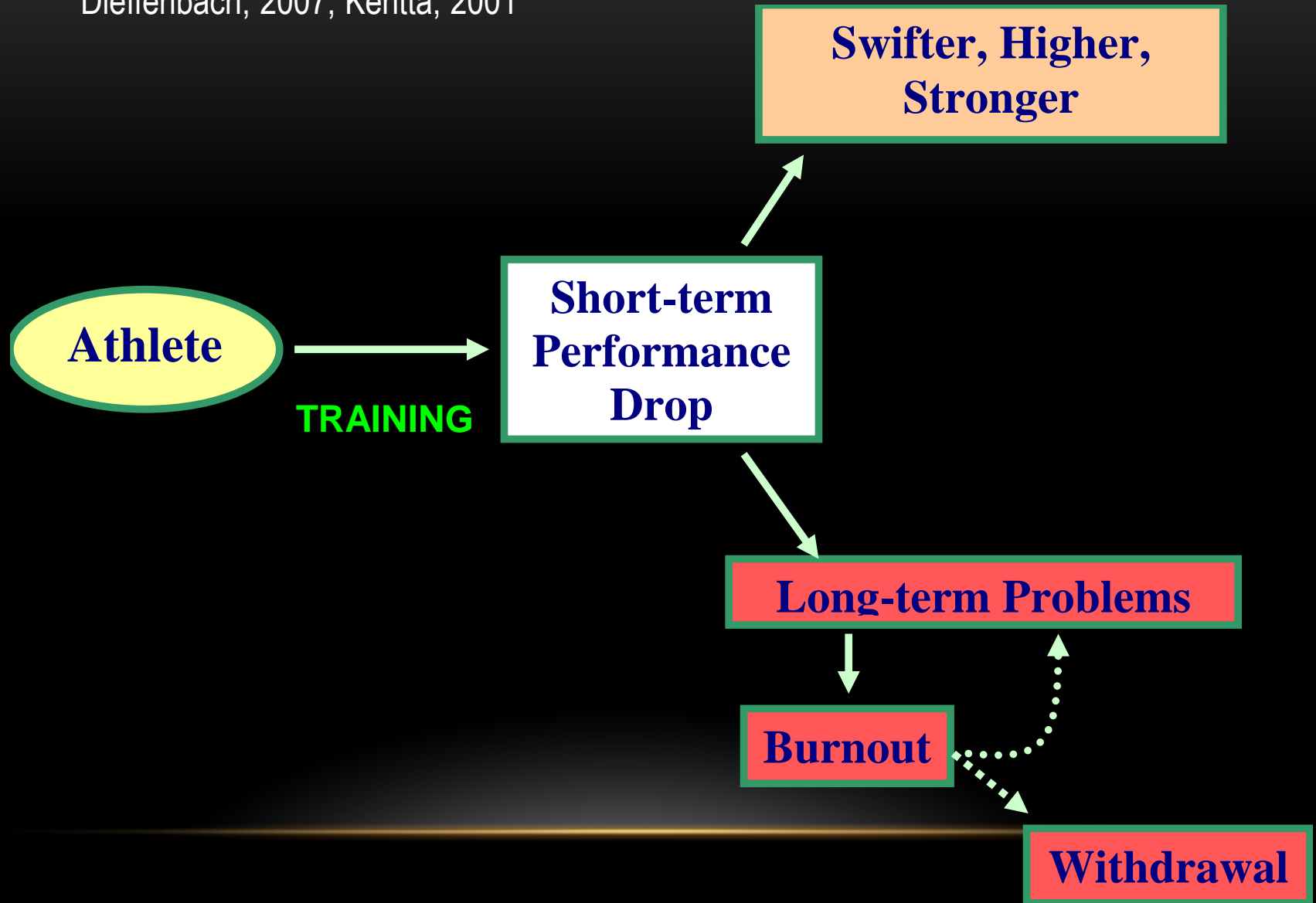


HIGH MOTIVATION – A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD?

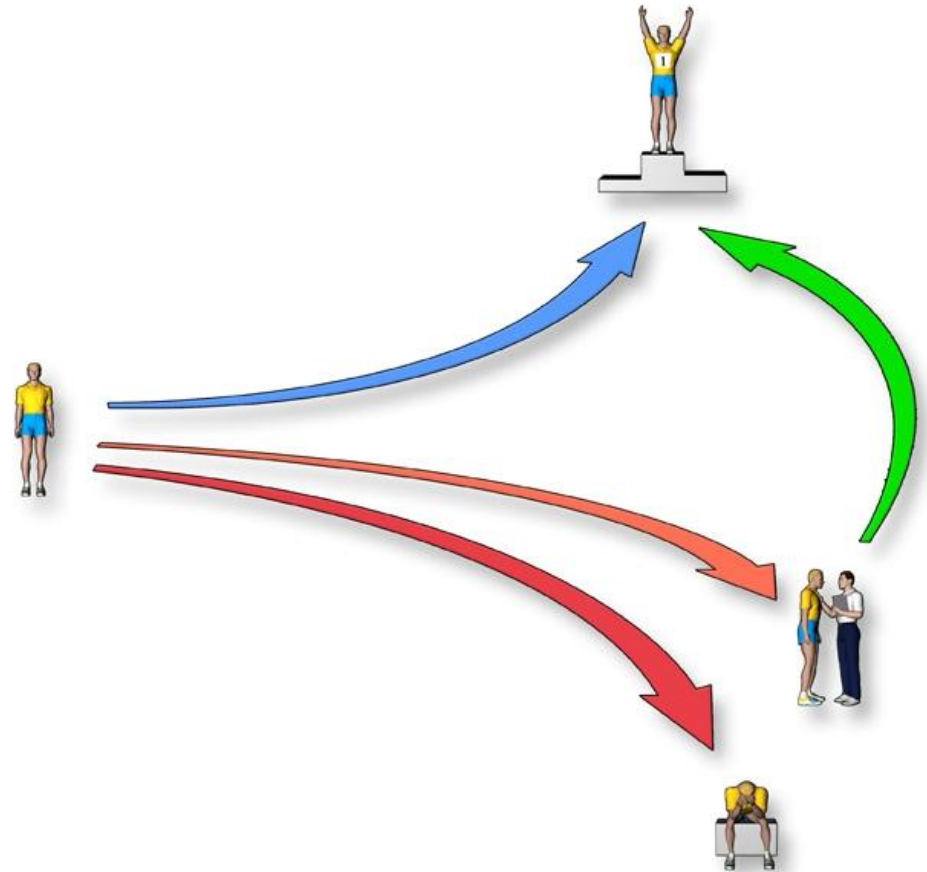
- Many athletes at the elite level have been described as having a “fire burning” for their sport (Mallet & Hanrahan, 2003).
- Probably a necessity to be able to tolerate the required high levels of training for a number of years, (Gustafsson, Kenttä, & Hassmén, 2011).
- Passion a possible risk of burnout? (Curran, Appleton, Hill, & Hall, 2011; Gustafsson, Hassmén, Hassmén, 2011)
- Perfectionism an example of a maladaptive striving (Gould, Udry, Tuffey; & Loehr, 1996; Hill, Hall, Appleton, & Kozub, 2008).
- Performance based self-esteem? (Gustafsson, Hassmén, Kenttä, & Johansson, 2008)



Dieffenbach, 2007; Kenttä, 2001



HOW TO HANDLE AND PREVENT?



MONITORING OF TRAINING STATUS

- Performance markers (Meeusen et al., 2013)
- Mood (e.g., POMS; Morgan et al., 1987)
- RPE (Borg, 1998)
- "The Form-scale" (Gustafsson, Holmberg, & Hassmén, 2008)



RECOVERY, A KEY COMPONENT FOR ATHLETES?

- Ignoring early signs of training maladaptation and a chronic lack of recovery was important contributors to burnout.

“I didn’t train more; I simply didn’t allow myself to rest.”

(Gustafsson, Kenttä, Hassmén, Lundqvist, & Durand-Bush, 2007)

- Perfectionism and performance based self-esteem contributing factors (Hall, Hill, & Appleton, 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2008)

PREVENTION?

Borrow ideas from Positive Psychology? (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000):

- Hope (Snyder et al., 1991)
- Optimism (Carver & Scheier, 1987)
- Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003)
- Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

HOPE, OPTIMISM AND BURNOUT

- Optimism is negatively related to burnout, mediated by stress (Gustafsson & Skoog, 2012)
- High trait hope is associated with low levels of burnout (Gustafsson, Hassmén & Podlog, 2010).
- The relationship between hope and burnout is mediated by stress and positive affect (not negative affect) (Gustafsson, Skoog, Lundqvist, & Wagnsson, 2013).



PREVENTION?

- Task involving motivational climate (Ames, 1992) might be an important prevention strategy.
- An ego involving motivational climate induced by coaches (Lemyre, Hall, & Roberts, 2008), **peers** (Smith, Gustafsson, Hassmén, 2010) and parents (Gustafsson, Hall, Stenling, Wagnsson & Söderberg, in review) is likely to affect burnout symptoms.



PREVENTION?

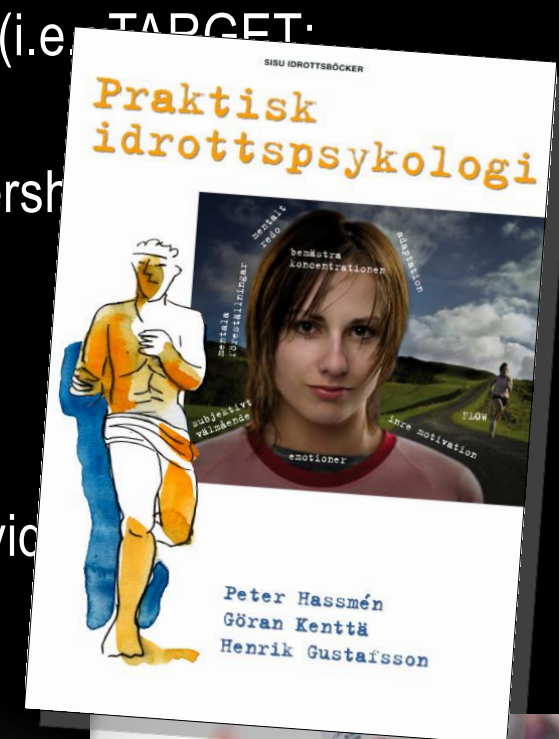
Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT; Hoffman et al., 2013) intervention for stress reduction:

- Mindfulness is negatively related to stress and burnout (Gustafsson, Davis, Skoog, Kenttä, & Harberl, in review; Jouper & Gustafsson, 2013)
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)
- Perfectionism (e.g., Shafran, Egan & Wade, 2010)



TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

- Monitoring of training status is crucial
- Establish "healthy" social environments for athletes (i.e. Epstein, 1992).
- A way to do so is using coach education (e.g., leadership and motivational climate; SISU).
- Athlete education (e.g., recovery, injury prevention)
- Parent education?
- Use stress reducing interventions based on CBT (evidence; Ivarsson, Johnson, Lindwall, Gustafsson, & Altemyr, 2013)
- ***Develop "Best practice guidelines"***



THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION...

