

## ATTENTION AND IMAGERY IN SPORT

### Isaac (1991) Mental Practice. Does it work in the field? The Sports Psychologist Vol 6

**Aim:** To examine the effectiveness of visual mental practice on the learning of a complex physical skill in a sports setting. The influence of imagery ability was also examined.

**Method:** Field Experiment

**Participants:** 78 Physical Education students, half experienced trampolinists, half novice trampolinists.

All were tested for imagery ability using imagery questionnaires and were classified as either high or low imagers.

The sample was divided into a control group (n=39) and an experimental group (n=39) Each group included both experienced and novice trampolinists and both high and low imagers.

**Procedure:** Both groups attempted to learn or improve 3 trampolining skills over each of three 6-week training periods. The experimental and control groups were treated identically during training, except for the mental task during the 5-minute break that occurred in each session.

At each session each group physically practiced the skill for 2 ½ minutes followed by a 5 minute break during which the experimental group mentally practiced the skill whilst the control group practiced an abstract mental task e.g. mental arithmetic. Both groups then completed a further 2 ½ minute physical practice.

Participants were video taped performing the first and final attempt at each skill which was then independently marked by qualified judges.

#### **Results:**

- Analysis of results showed that the experimental group showed significantly more improvement than the control group.
- High imagers showed significantly more improvement than low imagers.