

Investigation into Choking and the Yips in Snooker

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Plan of Action

My background.

Background to my study.

What I did in my study.

The results of my study.

How can the results help snooker coaches?

Questions and Answers

My Background

Snooker

- WPBSA Coach since 2007.
- Further qualifications such as EASB.
- Coach trainer for CBSA in 2014/2015.
- Level 2 Coach 2019.

Other

- MSc Psychology.
- Experience in mental health.
- MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology.
- Qualified table tennis coach.

Background Research

Choking

- Lots of research.
- Significant drop in performance.
- Athlete/player enters a threat state.
- Threatened state leads to poor fine motor skills.

Yips

- Less research. Mostly golf.
- Known by other names such as 'dartitis'.
- Occurs when attempting a specific skill such as throwing, bowling, serving and putting.

My study

- Final part of my MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology.
- Choking is more likely in individual sports when fine motor skills are used.
- Yips research is concentrated in golf.
- Yips and choking seem to have common elements.
- Very little sports psychology research in snooker.
- SNOOKER SEEMED OBVIOUS CHOICE!

What I did...

I wanted players perceptions of choking and the yips.

Interviewed 4 professional snooker players with experience of one or both.

Experienced players – 15 years minimum on the tour.

Explored choking and the yips.

Results of the Study

I found 4 main themes

- Choking and the yips are seen as different.
- Choking and the yips do have common elements.
- Player lack psychological knowledge and understanding.
- Players use a variety of methods to boost performance.

1. Choking and the yips are different

Choking

- Not the same as the yips.
- Affects decision making.
- Can miss any shot.
- Only occurs under pressure.

The Yips

- Not the same as choking.
- Sometimes affects shot choice.
- Occurs on specific shots.
- Occurs with or without pressure.

2. Choking and the yips have common elements.

- Choking and the yips both affect cueing.
- Choking and the yips both affect shot choice.
- Anxiety is common in both.
- Choking and the yips affect self-belief and confidence.

3. Players lack vital psychological knowledge

- Players don't talk about choking and the yips.
- Yips is often traumatic and embarrassing for sufferers.
- Players are reluctant to work on the 'mental side'.
- Lack of trust in sports psychologists or coaches who have not got "been there and done it".
- **RESULT:** Players don't realise how mindset affects their cueing so many players will visit the same coaches/former players and work on technique.

4. Players use a variety of methods to improve performance.

- Confidence and self-belief are seen as the difference between the top players and the rest.
- Players try to boost these in different ways.
- Belief that you have a good technique helps confidence.
- Matchplay practice and harder routines help confidence.
- Some players are using sports psychologists to good effect.

Summary of the results

Summary

- Descriptions of choking and the yips fits in with previous research.
- Choking caused by changes in attention brought on by stress.
- Yips can develop on one shot and then develop into others causing problems with positional play.

Limitations

- Only 4 players were interviewed.
- Based on memories of choking and yips incidents – not always reliable.
- My own experiences will have subconsciously shaped results.

Tips for snooker coaches

- Choking occurs when there is self doubt and a lack of confidence.
- Players can be taught to stay calm and relaxed.
- Quality practice can help build confidence and prepare players for pressure situations.
- Be wary of making changes to a player's technique.
- The yips is psychological.
- Players suffering from the yips can be passed onto a qualified psychologist.

Thank you for listening! Any questions?

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