

## Invisible Wounds: The Cumulative Impact of Mental Injury and Positive Punishment in Junior Racket Sports - A Critical Analysis\*

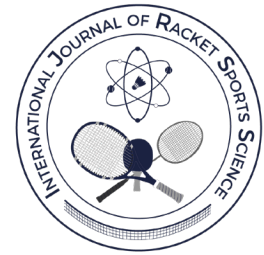
### Heridas invisibles: el impacto acumulativo de las lesiones mentales y los castigos positivos en los deportes de raqueta juveniles – Un análisis crítico

Yun-Dih Chia-Smith<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Loyola University Maryland, United States.

**Received: 20-08-2024**

**Accepted: 29-10-2024**



#### Abstract

This article investigates the combined impact of stress and the use of discipline in youth racket sports like badminton, tennis, squash and table tennis. It sheds light on how pressures, often underestimated or misjudged, can build up over time, significantly impacting an athlete's performance and overall well-being. The article identifies the progression from stress to mental health issues that can leave lasting psychological scars. Furthermore, it touches upon how criticism from coaches or parents can worsen these issues potentially leading to feelings of anxiety, burnout or depression. The article stresses the significance of detection, communication and bringing awareness proactive support for mental health to prevent lasting harm and promote healthier growth, in athletes.

**Keywords:** *mental injury, mental health, junior athlete, coaching style.*

#### Resumen

Este artículo investiga el impacto combinado del estrés y el uso de la disciplina en deportes de raqueta juveniles como el bádminton, el tenis, el *squash* y el tenis de mesa. Los resultados clarifican cómo las presiones, a menudo subestimadas o juzgadas erróneamente, pueden acumularse con el tiempo y afectar significativamente el rendimiento y el bienestar general del deportista. Este artículo identifica la progresión del estrés a problemas de salud mental que pueden dejar cicatrices psicológicas duraderas. Además, se aborda el modo en que las críticas de entrenadores o padres pueden agravar estos problemas y provocar sentimientos de ansiedad, *burnout* o depresión. El artículo subraya la importancia de la detección, la comunicación y la concienciación del apoyo proactivo a la salud mental para prevenir daños duraderos y promover un crecimiento más saludable en los deportistas.

**Palabras clave:** *lesión mental, salud mental, atleta joven, estilo de entrenamiento.*

\* Short communication.

**Corresponding author:** Yun-Dih Chia-Smith, [yhiasmith@loyola.edu](mailto:yhiasmith@loyola.edu)

Cite this article as:

Chia-Smith, Y-D. (2024). Invisible Wounds: The Cumulative Impact of Mental Injury and Positive Punishment in Junior Racket Sports - A Critical Analysis. *International Journal of Racket Sports Science*, 5(2), 21-23.

This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

In sports, such as badminton, tennis, squash and table tennis, the welfare of athletes holds significance to their physical well-being. Mental strains in these sports can exert impacts on athletes to physical ailments. While physical injuries are typically identified and addressed promptly mental strains often evade detection or misinterpretation. These strains tend to manifest over time due to issues that accumulate. Detecting strains poses a challenge owing to their nature and can significantly affect an athlete's performance and overall wellness in the long term.

Mental injuries in sports typically result from a buildup of stressors and emotional strains than a single traumatic event for junior players. The pressure to excel meets expectations. Handling criticism can become overwhelming for young athletes over time. This accumulation of stressors can lead to stress, anxiety, depression and other psychological difficulties (Tutte-Vallarino et al., 2022).

The danger with injuries lies in their tendency to be overlooked and untreated. Because emotional disturbances do not show signs, like injuries they are frequently overlooked or brushed off as minor concerns. Consequently, these psychological issues continue to accumulate, worsening the damage and increasing complexity. It is crucial to acknowledge the impact of factors on sports injuries underscoring how mental injuries are often disregarded due to their lack of symptoms. This oversight can lead to issues over time potentially resulting in severe psychological repercussions if left unattended (Hammond et al., 2013; Ogundele, 2018; Wiese-Bjornstal, 2010).

When these mental issues begin to show up they are often already deeply rooted in the athlete's mind, which can make them hard to recognize and deal with. If untreated stress escalates into health issues it can lead to lasting emotional scars that are tough to overcome (Gustafsson et al. 2011; Rice et al., 2016). The lack of symptoms in these conditions may result in them being underreported. Not receiving adequate treatment potentially causes a progression towards more severe mental health issues, among athletes (Oforeh et al., 2023; Raglin, 2001).

## THE IMPACT OF POSITIVE PUNISHMENT ON AGGRAVATING MENTAL INJURIES

Coaches and parents sometimes resort to using feedback like criticism or constant nagging following a player's performance, which can have effects on the mental resilience, focus and confidence of athletes. Continuously criticizing athletes after games or victories can lead to psychological harm. Consistent negative feedback may create a mindset where success becomes associated with negativity leading to conflict and stress. This pattern could potentially result in "learned helplessness", where players believe that no matter how well they perform they will always receive criticism.

This kind of reinforcement can exacerbate existing strain. Contribute to intricate psychological complexities. Apart from affecting their performance in competitions athletes might struggle with reduced concentration levels, lower motivation or exhibit signs of anxiety, burnout and possibly depression. Sadly, these symptoms are often mistaken for issues, than being acknowledged as signals of an underlying mental challenge (Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2024)

A real-life example from the world of tennis highlights the consequences of coaching practices. Andre Agassi, a tennis player, faced critical coaching from his father Mike Agassi throughout his career. Despite Andre's accomplishments, which include winning eight Grand Slam titles, he faced pressure and criticism that ultimately caused him to harbor deep resentment towards tennis. This led to periods of rebellion, burnout and a waning passion for the sport. This scenario reflects the struggles experienced by players in racket sports who despite their victories or strong performances are constantly scrutinized for their errors. Such continuous criticism can result in feelings of inadequacy and frustration to what Andre went through. If left unattended these emotions can snowball into challenges that affect long term performance.

To prevent strain and reduce the impact of positive punishment on young athletes it is essential to take proactive measures. The first crucial step is acknowledging injuries as serious issues that demand attention just like physical injuries do. Coaches, parents and sports organizations need to be attuned to the signs of stress and act preemptively to address them. Establishing a nurturing environment is vital in averting injuries from accumulating. Coaches should aim for a balance between offering feedback and providing reinforcement while focusing on an athletes' strengths rather than solely pointing out their mistakes. This approach does not boost a players' self-assurance. Also cultivates a healthier bond with sport.

Encouraging and recognizing accomplishments along with offering guidance play a role in promoting mental well-being and athletic success over the long term (Purcell et al., 2022; Vella et al., 2011). It is important for coaches and mentors to focus on developing their communication skills to deliver feedback in a manner. Giving feedback laden with negativity or emotional intensity adopting an understanding approach is key. Positive communication nurtures bonds between coaches and athletes boosts motivation levels and leads to performance results (Smith et al., 2007; Vella et al., 2011). Conversely feedback delivered with emotions can trigger heightened anxiety levels, self-esteem levels and impede an athletes' progress (Gould et al., 2002). Consistently using language or negative attitudes in communication can form a negative pattern that persists over time. This recurring use of communication does not become ingrained as a habitual behavior but also contributes to the buildup

of mental strain in athletes (Gustafsson et al. 2011; Hammond et al., 2013).

Furthermore, offering health assistance for athletes is crucial. This involves providing access to sports psychologists training in skills and fostering an atmosphere where athletes feel at ease discussing their mental health struggles. Taking care of issues on and offering continuous assistance can help prevent these issues from becoming deeply ingrained making it easier to address and manage them (Weiß et al., 2024; Wiese-Bjornstal, 2010).

## IN SUMMARY

Mental challenges in sports that are compounded by the repercussions of punishment present a significant but often underestimated problem with lasting effects on athletes. These challenges develop gradually over time due to turmoil often slipping under the radar and being disregarded. As they build up, they become more intricate and harder to pinpoint, ultimately affecting the athletes' performance and overall well-being. Preventing hurdles and lessening the impact of punishment demands a joint effort, from coaches, parents and sports institutions to establish a nurturing and harmonious setting that values the mental and emotional well-being of young athletes. By doing we can assist racquet sports players in enjoying their sport, boosting their self-assurance and reaching their full potential.

## REFERENCES

- Gould, D., Dieffenbach, K., & Moffett, A. (2002). Psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14(3), 172-204.
- Gustafsson, H., Hassmén, P., Kenttä, G., & Johansson, M. (2011). A qualitative analysis of burnout in elite Swedish athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9(6), 800-816.
- Hammond, T., Gialloreti, C. P., Kubas, H., & Davis, H. H. (2013). The prevalence of failure-based depression among elite athletes. *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine*, 23(4), 273-279.
- Hill, A. P., Mallinson-Howard, S. H., & Jowett, G. E. (2023). Perfectionism and athlete burnout: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 41(3), 286-305.
- Horn, T. S. (2017). *Advances in Sport and Exercise Psychology* (4th ed.). Human Kinetics.
- Jowett, S., & Cockerill, I. M. (2003). Olympic medalists' perspective of the athlete-coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4(4), 313-331.
- Martín-Rodríguez, A., Gostian-Ropotin, L. A., Beltrán-Velasco, A. I., Belando-Pedreño, N., Simón, J. A., López-Mora, C., Navarro-Jiménez, E., Tornero-Aguilera, J. F., & Clemente-Suárez, V. J. (2024). Sporting mind: The interplay of physical activity and psychological health. *Sports*, 12(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.3390/sports12010037>
- Ofoh, K., Tumenta, T., Qureshi, D., Saeed, H., & Nkemjika, S. (2023). Poorly managed stressors contributing to an affective disorder in a high-performance athlete: A case report. *Cureus*, 15(1), e33507. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.33507>
- Ogundele, M. O. (2018). Behavioural and emotional disorders in childhood: A brief overview for paediatricians. *World Journal of Clinical Pediatrics*, 7(1), 9-26. <https://doi.org/10.5409/wjcp.v7.i1.9>
- Purcell, R., Pilkington, V., Carberry, S., Reid, D., Gwyther, K., Hall, K., Deacon, A., Manon, R., Walton, C. C., & Rice, S. (2022). An evidence-informed framework to promote mental wellbeing in elite sport. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 780359. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.780359>
- Raglin, J. S. (2001). Psychological factors in sport performance: The mental health model revisited. *Sports Medicine*, 31(12), 875-890.
- Rice, S. M., Purcell, R., De Silva, S., Mawren, D., McGorry, P. D., & Parker, A. G. (2016). The mental health of elite athletes: A narrative systematic review. *Sports Medicine*, 46(9), 1333-1353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-016-0492-2>
- Smith, R. E., Smoll, F. L., & Cumming, S. P. (2007). Effects of a motivational climate intervention for coaches on young athletes' sport performance anxiety. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 29(1), 39-59.
- Tutte-Vallarino, V., Malán-Ernst, E., Reyes-Bossio, M., Peinado-Portero, A., de Álvaro, J. I., Ortín Montero, F. J., & Garcés de Los Fayos Ruiz, E. J. (2022). Relationship between resilience, optimism, and burnout in Pan-American athletes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.780359>
- Vella, S. A., Oades, L. G., & Crowe, T. P. (2011). The role of the coach in facilitating positive youth development: Moving from theory to practice. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23(1), 33-48.
- Weinberg, R. S., & Gould, D. (2018). *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (7th ed.). Human Kinetics.
- Weiß, M., Büttner, M., & Richlan, F. (2024). The role of sport psychology in injury prevention and rehabilitation in junior athletes. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(3), 254. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14030254>
- Wiese-Bjornstal, D. M. (2010). Psychology and socioculture affect injury risk, response, and recovery in high-intensity athletes: A consensus statement. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 20(S2), 103-111.