

# International Symposium on *Sport for all!*



## MOTIVATION FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

*Creating a desire to become physically active*

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### INTRODUCTION

« SPORTS FOR ALL » is a popular vision for any organisation which is interested in the physical and psychological well-being of its members. It is unnecessary to debate the role of sport and physical activity in the advancement of human potential, productivity and overall happiness. This has been established numerous times.

The actualisation of this vision would appear to be very difficult, administrators and organisers usually experience the frustration of Sisyphus who struggled endlessly with no positive end result.

In the military this question is even more pertinent than in other non-military organisations. Geoffrey Best, in the Collin Dictionary of Military Quotations, states the following: « Sport concerns the military in two ways; firstly, as the straight road to physical health and strength, indispensable to the good soldier; secondly, because of the special value attributed to team games in training the essential qualities of the officer. »

### SCOPE

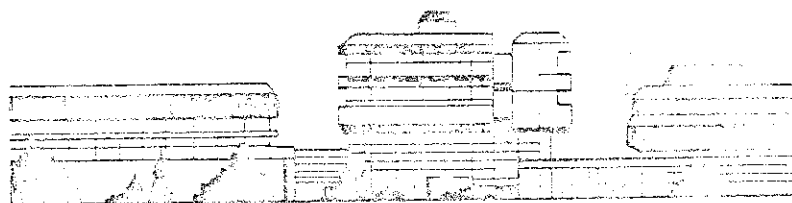
#### CURRENT SITUATION

Six issues are addressed in this paper. These issues emphasise the necessity of motivating people towards higher levels of physical activity.

#### Obesity

In a study which was done during the first six months of 1996 in the South African Defence Force (SANDF), a test sample of 7.102 permanent force members were evaluated. Of the study group 30% were over their desired weight according to age, height and body type. This means that approximately 1 out of every three military personnel is obese! 47,2% of all the candidates recorded high cholesterol counts.

#### Fitness levels



**Warendorf - Germany  
22 - 28 September 1996**

In the SANDF fitness and fitness training are decentralised to each Arms of the Service. These being the Army, Air Force, Navy and Medical Services. Each Arm is responsible for its own policy regarding fitness. The levels of fitness are different for the various sub-organisations. The greatest differences are found between training units and Hqs. The major problem is in the Hqs where the fitness levels as low as 42% are registered.

In the SANDF 23% of all the personnel participate in active sport. This percentage can be misleading because some members participate in sport outside the Military milieu.

#### Stress related conditions

A sharp increase in stress related illnesses were reported by military psychologists, social workers and doctors in 1995 and 1996. During a sample study of 100 stress related cases, only six indicated that they participate in some physical activity or sport.

#### Cultural diversity

The South African Defence Force consist of a wide variety of cultural groups, of which 15 main groups can be identified. These cultural groups show different attitudes towards physical activity and sport. This requires a knowledge and sensitivity towards the needs and ways of expression of each group. Traditional dance forms an important part of some groups' physical activity, while activities such as stick fighting are very popular under the Nguni groups.

In South Africa this situation offers tremendous opportunities for creativeness.

#### Gender issues

The concept « **SPORT FOR ALL** » in a military environment immediately raises the gender question. In this regard it is important to accommodate the following; firstly sports which are more accommodating of a specific sex, secondly those sports which can be enjoyed together and thirdly sports where differentiation is necessary. In the SANDF there is no specific trend regarding the previous categories.

In the following section on theory no differences will be made between the motivation of male and female participants.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The main body of the current paper will propose a plan for the motivation of people to involve themselves in physical activity and sport. This plan is based on the theoretical work done by researchers such as McAuley (1995); Meyers (1996); Jones (1995); Rotter (1975) and Gericke (1991).

The theory on motivation examines the underlying motives as to why people behave in a specific way. In the question of why people participate in sport the following motives may play a role:

- a. Deep seated personality drive.
- b. Fulfilment of a need for achievement.
- c. Some compensation.
- d. External pressure.
- e. Pleasure.
- f. Responsibility towards healthy lifestyle.
- g. Interest.
- h. Challenge.

The implication is that different motives motivate different people at different times. This is one of the reasons why so many programmes have failed in the past. They relied on one or two underlying motives too much. The challenge for any programme is that it should be compounded in such a way as to underwrite a broad spectrum of possible motives.

One of the theories on motivation, viz Rotter (1975) provides a framework to understand sport motivation and gives practical guidelines as to how a programme should be constructed.

Rotter has described the person who typically has a strong belief that rewards are contingent on his or her own behaviours (internal locus of control) and the persons who tend to believe that rewards are largely the result of chance, the acts of others or outside forces (external locus of control). The athlete who wins a 100 meter race, with an internal locus of control, will ascribe his success to his winning capabilities and skill, while athlete with an external locus of control will ascribe his success to the weather, his coach or his new pair of running shoes. In a negative situation this locus of control is even more significant. The athlete with an internal locus of control losing a race, will look for the reasons in himself, while the athlete with an external locus of control will tend to blame it on an external reason like a busy work programme, incorrect diet or the referee.

In an analysis of locus of control Gericke (1991) reasons that internal locus of control is more desirable during sport participation than external locus of control. The sporting person with an internal locus of control shows higher levels of acceptance of responsibility for own actions. During motivation it is therefore important to cultivate an internal locus of control.

With the concept « Sport for all » it should, however, be recognised that there will be representatives of the whole spectrum and that a flexible approach must therefore be followed to accommodate these attitudes. The two concepts should not be seen as « good or bad » but more in terms of desirability.

#### **A BASIC PLAN TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN A DESIRE FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The plan is based on four pillars:

**Stimulate the will to participate**

**Provide opportunity/facilities**

**Offer reward/reinforcement**

**Stimulate tenacity**

### **STIMULATE THE WILL TO PARTICIPATE**

The crux of motivating people involved with physical activity is the **WILL** to do it. The most desirable situation is, that this will is based on an internal locus of control. The participant must develop the will from sound motives, for example to lose weight or to enhance quality of life. This will is questionable if it is based on an external locus of control for example where the athlete does it for his parents or for money. Although the last example is not desirable it can still motivate a person to become physically active. In these circumstances it is recommended that the coach stimulates internal motivations.

The following examples can be utilised to stimulate the will to participate, with internal locus of control motives.

**Healthy body**

**To feel physically well**

**Prevent diseases**

**Acquire new skills**

**Be able to absorb stress**

**Compete with oneself**

**To achieve personal goals.**

This first pillar of motivation must provide the energy necessary not only to start, but also to follow through with a long-term commitment. This first pillar can also be seen as thawing of the target group.

To stimulate this will towards physical activity communication is of the utmost importance. Information on a healthy life style must reach the target group in a friendly but clear manner. Areas which could be covered are:

**Weight control**

**Healthy air**

**Healthy diet**

### Positive self image

This communication must follow the principles of effective advertising.

A message which must be communicated very sensitively is the responsibility which every person has, to look after his own body, with special reference to physical activity.

The will to become involved in physical activity can be stimulated by using a role model. A role model can actively stimulate the will to participate, not only in physical activity but specifically in sport. Using a role model is very important when young people are involved but can be just as powerful in later stages of life. In this sense an excellent example is a marathon runner, Ronnie Hayward of South Africa. His achievements motivated hundreds of elderly people in old age homes to start walking projects.

In the military environment pressure is usually utilised. On the short-term it will have an effect but in the long term this strategy can be very counter-productive. Pressure should not be however totally ruled out. There are examples where initial pressure has helped people to realise that they could achieve something. In these circumstances pressure was only the activator, after that other motives took over.

The first pillar is the will to get involved, is a prerequisite for the rest of the plan. If this first aspect fails, the chances of success are minimal.

### PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES/FACILITIES

The second pillar addresses the enabling factors of opportunity and facilities, which are very close related.

The practicality of opportunity and access to the necessary facilities will create the open gate which people need to enter into physical activity.

In this regard time plays an important role and will play an even stronger role in the future. Time should be addressed from two viewpoints viz the responsibility of the organisation and the commitment of the member.

Facilities must always attract the interest of people. Dirty unfriendly facilities will quickly discourage people. Facilities should always project an image of homeliness.

To accommodate the variety of personal needs diversity must be built into the activities. With the universal swing towards individual needs and decision making, it is necessary to provide this diversity. The diversity should be based on a needs analysis.

Part of the creation of opportunity should be upward mobility for those individuals who set their goals higher, and who have the potential to compete on those levels.

The creation of opportunity is not a once off activity, but must constantly be revitalised in order to acquire sustainability.

### OFFER REWARD/REINFORCEMENT

Offering reward is seen in a broad context. It includes feedback visibility of improvement and upward mobility , as well as emotional and material recognition.

Positive reward supports the participant through frustration, despair and times of low morale.

### STIMULATE TENACITY

Sustained participation needs tenacity. This aspect is closely related to reward and reinforcement but differs in the sense that tenacity is a state of mind. Any participant in physical activity must have the capability to endure and not to give up when going gets tough. This attitude can be stimulated by the instructor, coach and other participants. In the SANDF the « Buddy » method is used to develop tenacity. The encouragement of a friend or instructor stimulates a participant to try harder or to keep up.

It is important to notice that whenever a personal goal is set it must be attainable. If a person forms the perception that a goal is not attainable, he or she will lose interest and the tenacity will drop.

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