



Wietske Idema and Marjolein Torenbeek are among the front-runners of translating the topic of 'self-regulation' into sports practice. They wrote the sports coaching book 'Zelfregulatie in de Sportpraktijk' about self-regulation in sports. More information about self-regulation and/or Weitske and Marjolein can be found at www.zipcoach.nl or www.twitter.com/zipcoach_NL.

What are self-regulating skills and why are they important within sport?

Making use of self-regulation skills helps athletes to challenge themselves in setting and achieving goals, what contributes to a successful route in their development. Recent research shows that well-developed self-regulatory skills can improve performances and intrinsic motivation in sports. Self-regulation also increases the chances of elite youth athletes to make a successful transfer to the senior level. The clue is: use of self-regulation skills leads to certain performance enhancing training behaviors, which ensure efficient use of (training) time.

Self-regulation is distinguished by the following metacognitive components: reflection, goal setting, planning, monitoring and evaluation. **Reflection** concerns two things: first you have to understand what happened in a situation and why this happened. Secondly, reflection is about thinking about future actions: how can you use past experiences to perform better next time? **Goal setting** is about improving your performances on a short or long term. A useful goal (which focuses on a performance or process, is measurable, concrete and challenging) helps you to focus on the things you need to do. The more specific, the clearer it is what you need to work on. **Planning** is making an action plan: what do you have to do to reach your goal, what is the correct order to work in and also, what has priority and what does not? **Monitoring** is tracking the progress you make regarding your goal and changing your action plan when needed, based on reflection. **Evaluation** is determining whether you have or have not reached your goal. Reflecting on why the goal was, or wasn't reached, forms the starting point for a new cycle of self-regulation.

Can you give an example of a self-regulating skill that provides athletes with a greater opportunity to be successful and explain how that skill contributes to achieving success?

Each self-regulatory skill can help you to be more successful. For example: monitoring is a skill that can contribute easily to your own success: it helps you to decide if you are on track, looking at your goal. When you master this skills well, you are capable to switch or change your action plan, because you are aware of the working (or not working) mechanisms behind your actions. You can easily learn your athlete to start with monitoring: counting aloud, write up ratings on a whiteboard, and so on. Of course, for good monitoring it is important that the athlete works on concrete, clear goals.



What role does the coach play in developing self-regulating skills in players?

Not every player knows 'how to self-regulate' and not every athlete will use self-regulation skills automatically. That is why the coach plays a crucial role in developing these skills. He or she has to create a 'self-regulation climate' in which the player can develop the skills. This coach can create such a climate when he or she uses the didactical method ZIPcoach® during training. ZIPcoach® is a new, innovative, evidence-based method which helps coaches to ask the right questions. These questions contribute to the development of the meta cognitive skills reflection, goal setting, planning, monitoring and evaluation in a structured way.

How frequently should self-regulating skills be incorporated into a training session or activity?

We found that if you use ZIPcoach® in one exercise (for example a twenty minute passing exercise) during one training per week, you can already develop self-regulatory skills of your players in five weeks. When you work with your team on self-regulation during the entire season, multiple times per week, you have plenty of opportunities to train the self-regulation skills of your players. As a result, using these skills becomes an automatism for the players, resulting in greater development of soccer-specific skills.

Are self-regulating skills only necessary for players? In what ways would self-regulating skills benefit coaches?

We always use to say, 'teach what you preach'. That means that it is important that coaches who want to create a 'self-regulation climate' during their training, know how to self-regulate their own learning. For example: if you want to coach your player in setting a useful goal, it is important that you also know how to reflect and use that information to set the goal. That's one of the reasons we not only train players to use self-regulation, but also train coaches to develop these skills. Therefore, ZIPcoach® acts on multiple levels.

Specifically in relation to soccer (football), what area do you see self regulation coming into usefulness?

As we described before, self-regulation is useful when you want to make progression in personal goals with individual players. Further, it is useful to work on team goals. For example, you first formulate a team goal and after that you can use ZIPcoach® to make players responsible for their development or performance within this team goal.



Do you think it would be possible to self-regulate concerning the taking of penalty kicks in soccer? In a wider perspective the taking of any free kick in soccer?

Of course this is possible. You can use ZIPcoach® to reach any goal, because it is a didactical method. So, when you want a player to enhance his performances in taking penalty kicks, free kicks or any other technical or tactical skill, he first has to reflect, than set a goal, make an action plan, monitor during training and finally evaluate if he reached his goal. An additional advantage is that the player focuses on his of her task, not on the outcome ('I need to score', 'what if...').

Do you want to learn more about ZIPcoach®? Please contact us!

Wietske Idema (1984, the Netherlands) studied Sociology at the Utrecht University and (Science) Journalism at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht. After her study, she expanded her knowledge by doing extensive research in the field of education, youth, sports and talent. Currently, Wietske is lecturer, trainer and researcher at the HAN University of Applied Sciences and works on projects focusing on the role coaches play in process of talent development and performance in sports and education. She helps coaches in (elite) sports and physical education developing their didactics skills to create a 'self regulatory climate' during training or video analysis. At the moment, Wietske works with trainers of the PSV Eindhoven Youth Academy and the national selection of Dutch Youth Volleyball.

Marjolein Torenbeek (1980, the Netherlands) studied Psychology at the University of Groningen and Sport Psychology at the University of Amsterdam. After graduation, she first worked as a researcher at the University of Valencia (Spain) on a project focusing on stress and performance and then obtained her PhD in educational sciences at the University of Groningen. She currently works as a lecturer, researcher and trainer at the HAN University of Applied Sciences. Her expertise is providing mental training and coaching of elite athletes and sports teams, sports trainers and coaches, specifically in the field of self-regulation, motivation, self-confidence and concentration.