




## The Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP)

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### ABSTRACT

The Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP) is a comprehensive, evidence-informed framework integrating mental performance competencies underpinning the athletic performances of Canadian athletes capable of stepping onto the Para/Olympic Podium. The GMP-SP was established to guide Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) and National Sport Organizations (NSOs) in their design, delivery, tracking, and evaluation of mental skills programs in the Canadian high performance sport system. A Participatory Action Research approach involving a 2-year cyclical process of planning, action, reflection, and evaluation informed the collaborative work of six experienced Canadian MPCs (four men, two women). The group, whose lived experience was integral to the relevance and impact of the inquiry collectively had over 125 years of experience conducting research and consulting in high performance sport. A review of the scientific literature combined with the experts' professional practice led to the creation of the GMP-SP, which includes 11 mental performance competencies grouped under three broad categories: (a) fundamental competencies (motivation, confidence, resilience), (b) self-regulation competencies (self-awareness, stress management, emotion, and arousal regulation, attentional control), and (c) interpersonal competencies (athlete-coach relationship, leadership, teamwork, communication). Mental health was also included as an overarching construct influencing the achievement of mental and athletic performance. The GMP-SP fulfills an important gap given the current lack of models, methods, and tools to guide the operationalization of mental performance systems in high performance sport that include both intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies.

*Lay summary:* The Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP) is a framework integrating 11 mental performance competencies underpinning podium success in Canadian high performance sport, with attention to mental health. The GMP-SP is intended to guide practitioners and sport leaders in their sport psychology programming and resource allocation to support athletes in their quest for excellence.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) can use the Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP) for the assessment,


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periodization, and implementation of mental skills training programs in high performance sport.

- The GMP-SP can be used to educate athletes, coaches, and staff about the importance of mental performance skills to achieve success in high performance sport. The GMP-SP uniquely highlights intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies and the interplay between mental performance and mental health.
- The analogy of gold, silver, and bronze in the GMP-SP can help practitioners, scholars, and sport leaders to plan, test, and allocate adequate resources and funding for the development of mental competencies.

Many international scholars have delivered scientific articles and reports on mental performance competencies (e.g., characteristics, states, skills) associated with peak, expert, or Olympic/Paralympic performance (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014; Banack et al., 2011; Durand-Bush et al., 2001; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Gardner & Moore, 2007; Gould et al., 2002; Gould & Maynard, 2009; Jones, 2002; Jordet, 2015; Krane & Williams, 2015; MacNamara et al., 2010; Mitić et al., 2021; Orlick & Partington, 1988; Swann et al., 2017). The aforementioned contributions contain valuable information that can be used to tailor the development and maintenance of athletes' mental performance for podium success. Competencies reported in these articles include self-confidence, motivation, commitment, attention regulation, arousal regulation, planning, evaluation, emotion regulation, stress management, resilience, mental toughness, coping, goal-setting, imagery, and self-talk. Overall, the literature demonstrates that athletes require "a highly developed ability to identify and then self-regulate a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors relevant to the individual athlete and the requirements of the competition environment" (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 331). This suggests psychological skills and self-regulation processes are necessary to successfully perform and adapt to sport environments and should be integrated into mental performance models.

Although there are commonalities in the findings from previous works (e.g., confidence and commitment are consistently identified as fundamental competencies; Durand-Bush et al., 2001; Gould et al., 2002; Mitić et al., 2021; Orlick & Partington, 1988), there are also diverse results that must be considered (e.g., stages of expertise development, training/competitive environment; able-bodied/parasport; Banack et al., 2011; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gardner & Moore, 2007; MacNamara et al., 2010). Interestingly, although several studies have investigated the psychological characteristics, states, and skills of elite athletes, very few published conceptual models or frameworks that comprehensively integrate the most relevant skills to guide practice. Notwithstanding this observation, some models are available and we have chosen to briefly summarize two of them: the Wheel of Excellence (Orlick, 1996, 2016) and the Ottawa Mental Skills Assessment Tool (OMSAT-3\*; Durand-Bush et al., 2001). These models were particularly relevant for the current project because they were developed within the Canadian context based on research conducted with high performance (HP) Canadian athletes. They have also been used by Canadian Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) to guide mental performance work in the HP sport context.