

Confidence—The Key to Psychological Winning Factors in Table Tennis

Fan Xueyan

Krirk University, Bangkok, 10220, Thailand

Abstract: *Table tennis is a sport that needs high concentration and skills, and psychological factors are very important for athletes' performance. Among them, self-confidence is one of the key factors for psychological success in table tennis. This paper aims to explore the role of self-confidence in table tennis competition and how to cultivate and improve athletes' self-confidence.*

Keywords: *table tennis; Self confidence; psychology*

1. Introduction

Table tennis, as a skill event with high precision and skill, may have slight fluctuations in psychological state during competition, which may have an impact on athletes' technical performance and game results^[1]. Psychological factors are particularly important in high-level table tennis competitions. For example, in the men's table tennis team final of the 2016 Rio Olympics, Chinese team's Malone demonstrated excellent confidence in the match against German team's Mayer. In the competition, Malone faced strong opponents, but he maintained a calm and confident attitude, demonstrating his technical strength with confidence.

Confidence is one of the most important factors in the psychological characteristics of athletes. It has a profound impact on athletes' behavioral choices, persistence in facing difficulties, task preparation and effort level, as well as their thinking and emotional reactions when dealing with problems. Confidence is a psychological quality shared by every successful person, a psychological "momentum", an important psychological factor for unleashing sports potential, and a catalyst for the entire competition.^[2]

Therefore, self-confidence plays an important role in table tennis competitions. A confident athlete can better face challenges and pressure, maintain a positive attitude in times of difficulty, and perform at the best level. They believe that they have the necessary skills and abilities to achieve good results at critical moments. This positive self-confidence can enhance athlete performance, enhance focus, and combat negative emotions and stress.

2. The Relationship between Confidence and Table Tennis Performance

2.1 Technical Execution

In table tennis competitions, self-confidence plays an important role in technical execution. Confident athletes face technical movements in the game with a positive attitude, and have more confidence in accurately executing various technical movements at critical moments, including serving, receiving, attacking, and defending.

Firstly, confident athletes are confident in their technical abilities. They have undergone sufficient training and refinement, and have a clear understanding and confident evaluation of their technical level.^[3] This confidence makes them more relaxed in the competition, enabling them to focus and apply their skills more fluently when performing technical actions, without worrying about making mistakes or failing.

Secondly, confident athletes have more courage to try new tactics and techniques. They believe in their ability to adapt and master new technologies, so they are more willing to try new tactics and techniques in competitions to seek breakthroughs and create advantages. This adventurous spirit enables them to create more opportunities in competitions and confuse opponents through the diversity

of skills.

In addition, confident athletes demonstrate stronger determination and perseverance in the process of technical execution. They firmly believe that they can overcome difficulties and challenges, whether in the face of strong opponents counterattacks or in technical competitions at critical moments. This determination and perseverance enable them to maintain good technical execution under pressure, not give up easily, and strive for success.

The technical execution of athletes not only depends on their technical content, but also their psychological state plays a crucial role. Confident athletes are more stable and free in the process of technical execution, fully demonstrating their technical strength. Therefore, cultivating and improving athletes' confidence is an important aspect of improving table tennis technical execution ability, which can be achieved through systematic technical training, psychological training, and a positive team environment. This will create better competition performance for athletes and improve their chances of winning in the competition.

2.2 Decision making ability

Decision making ability has a significant impact on the level of self-confidence in table tennis matches. Athletes with high self-confidence are more likely to make wise decisions and tactical choices in competitions, in order to effectively respond to changes in opponents and competition situations^[4].

Firstly, confident athletes can quickly and accurately judge the competition situation. They are highly sensitive to various details and changes during the competition process and possess strong observational abilities. By carefully observing the competition environment and opponents' movements, they can quickly understand their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the trends and possible changes in the competition.

Secondly, confident athletes can flexibly adjust their tactics. They have the ability to make independent decisions and are not bound by fixed tactical plans. In the game, they can quickly change their tactics based on the changes of their opponents and their own state of adjustment to adapt to the continuous changes in the game.

In addition, confident athletes are more decisive and confident in the decision-making process. They believe that their decisions are correct and will take decisive action. This decisiveness and confidence enable them to better implement tactics, seize opportunities, and control the pace of the game.

The decision-making ability of athletes is influenced by various factors, including technical ability, tactical understanding, and psychological quality. The improvement of self-confidence can significantly enhance the decision-making ability of athletes. Confident athletes have more courage to try new tactics and techniques, and have more determination and perseverance to meet the challenges in the competition. This positive and decisive mindset helps athletes make wise decisions.

2.3 Dealing with setbacks

In table tennis competitions, athletes often face various setbacks and difficulties, including strong counterattacks from competitors, their own mistakes, and unexpected situations. Confident athletes have better psychological adjustment abilities, can quickly recover from setbacks, and maintain a good competitive state.

Firstly, confident athletes can better cope with strong counterattacks from competitors. When an opponent begins to gain an advantage or score continuously, confident athletes will not lose confidence and motivation as a result, but will remain calm and quickly adjust their tactics and strategies. They believe in their ability to counterattack and constantly seek opportunities to turn the situation around. The support of self-confidence enables them to maintain a positive and enterprising attitude and respond to the challenges of their opponents.

Secondly, confident athletes can actively respond to their own mistakes. In competitions, athletes often make mistakes, which may affect their psychological state and self-confidence. However, confident athletes will not be troubled by past mistakes, but will quickly recover from them and focus on the next crucial ball. They believe that they have the right skills and abilities, and through positive self dialogue and positive self suggestion, they rebuild confidence and self-confidence to better cope with the challenges that come along.

In addition, confident athletes are able to cope with unexpected situations. During the competition, unexpected situations may occur, such as equipment issues, incorrect judgments, etc. Confident athletes will not be swayed by these distractions, but will remain calm and focused, quickly adapt and adjust their plans and strategies. They believe they can handle any unexpected situation and turn it into an opportunity to showcase their strength.

Therefore, confident athletes can better cope with setbacks and difficulties, quickly recover from them, and maintain a good competitive state. This confidence is cultivated through a comprehensive improvement of technical training, tactical understanding, and psychological training. Confident athletes possess strong willpower and a positive mindset, which can persist and seek breakthroughs in the face of setbacks, thus achieving better competition results.

3. How to cultivate and improve athletes' confidence

3.1 Technical training

Through systematic technical training, athletes can improve their technical level and enhance their confidence in the competition. Through continuous practice and technical improvement, athletes can cultivate stable and confident technical performance.

Basic skill training: Establishing solid basic skills is crucial for improving technical proficiency. Athletes should pay attention to the basic elements of hitting techniques, such as hitting posture, grip movements, and foot movements. By repeatedly practicing and strengthening these basic techniques, athletes can establish a stable and accurate technical foundation and enhance their confidence.

Reaction speed training: The importance of reaction speed in table tennis matches is self-evident. Through training to improve reaction speed, athletes can react and respond to opponents' balls faster, and return with accurate techniques. This type of training helps to enhance athletes' confidence and make them believe that they can quickly cope with various situations during the competition.

Accuracy training: In table tennis matches, the accuracy of hitting the ball directly affects the outcome of the game. By conducting precision training, athletes can improve their technical accuracy, making their shots more accurate and refined. Accurate technical performance can enhance athletes' confidence in the game, making them believe that they can hit the ball accurately at critical moments.

Movement fluency training: Fluent technical movements can increase athletes' confidence. By conducting movement fluency training, athletes can improve their technical coherence and fluency, making their hitting movements more natural and smooth. This type of training helps to enhance athletes' confidence and make them believe that their skills can perform steadily in the competition.

By adhering to and valuing technical training, athletes can continuously improve their technical level and gradually cultivate stable and confident technical performance. The improvement of technology and self-confidence are complementary, and technological progress will bring about an increase in confidence, which in turn will further promote the improvement of technology. This virtuous cycle enables athletes to actively and confidently perform at their best level in the competition.

3.2 Psychological training

Psychological training is one of the important means to improve self-confidence. Psychological training plays a crucial role in improving athletes' confidence. Athletes can adjust their psychological state and improve their confidence through self suggestion, positive self dialogue, and relaxation training^[5]. In addition, athletes can also learn psychological skills such as focus control, emotional management, and good competition preparation to enhance their confidence and ability to cope with stress.

Self suggestion: By providing positive suggestions and persuasion to oneself, athletes can shape their positive and confident image and attitude. Athletes can say some positive slogans or motto to themselves and repeatedly repeat them during the competition to enhance their confidence.

Positive Self Dialogue: Athletes can engage in positive conversations with themselves, encouraging themselves and affirming their strength and abilities. This positive dialogue can be implemented in training and competitions, helping athletes build confidence, overcome self doubt and negative thinking.

Relaxation training: Relaxation training can help athletes reduce tension and anxiety, and maintain a calm and composed attitude. Through techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation, athletes can relax their body and mind, making themselves more calm and focused, and enhancing self-confidence.

Concentration control: Concentration is an important component of self-confidence. Athletes can improve their concentration level through training, including the ability to observe correct and precise goals, avoid distractions and distractions, and maintain focus during competitions. By improving focus, athletes can better control their thinking and behavior, and enhance their confidence.

Emotional Management: Athletes should learn to manage their emotions and maintain a calm and positive emotional state during the competition. Athletes can control and adjust their emotions through techniques such as emotional release, emotional regulation, and positive emotional guidance. This helps athletes better handle stress and difficulties, and maintain confidence.

Good competition preparation: Adequate competition preparation can enhance athletes' confidence. This includes setting clear goals and plans, studying opponents, analyzing the competition environment, and so on. Adequate preparation can increase athletes' confidence in their abilities and level of preparation, making them more confident and confident in the competition.

Through these psychological training methods, athletes can actively adjust their psychological state, improve self-confidence, and perform better in table tennis matches. Athletes need to constantly practice and apply these skills, gradually cultivating a stable and positive confidence mindset to cope with various challenges and pressures in the competition.

3.3 Accumulation of Successful Experience

Give athletes the opportunity to accumulate successful experiences, whether in training or competition. Successful experience can increase athletes' confidence and give them more confidence and courage in facing new challenges.

3.3.1 Success in Training

Training is a key link in improving skills and abilities. When athletes achieve success in training, such as improving their technical movements and hitting accuracy, they will feel the affirmation of their self-worth and a sense of achievement. This successful experience can positively affect their self-confidence, enabling them to have higher awareness and confidence in their abilities and potential.

3.3.2 Success in the competition

Competitive competitions are a stage for athletes to showcase their strength and achievements. When athletes win, play exciting rounds, or defeat strong opponents in a competition, they will receive positive feedback and recognition. This successful experience enhances their self-confidence, making them believe in their ability to perform well at critical moments and overcome difficulties.

3.3.3 Challenge self limiting

The accumulation of successful experience enables athletes to break through their own limitations. When they have achieved multiple successes and accumulated confidence, they will be more willing to accept greater challenges and pursue higher goals^[6]. They believe in their ability to overcome difficulties and achieve success, and have the courage to challenge themselves, pursuing higher honors and achievements.

3.4 Team Support:

Establish a positive and supportive team environment, including good cooperation and support with coaches and teammates. Encouragement and support from the team can help athletes build confidence and feel supported and safe in the competition.

3.4.1 Good cooperation and communication

Good cooperation and communication among team members are the foundation for establishing a supportive team environment. Team members should respect, understand, and respect each other, establishing mutual trust and friendly relationships. In this positive atmosphere, athletes can feel accepted and supported, thereby enhancing their confidence.

3.4.2 Encouragement and Appreciation

Team members should give encouragement and appreciation to athletes for their efforts and dedication. This positive feedback can enhance athletes' confidence and self-esteem, making them feel recognized and valued for their efforts and contributions.

3.4.3 Provide assistance and support

Team members should provide assistance and support to each other, especially in difficult and challenging situations^[7]. Mutual support and assistance can make athletes feel secure and supportive within the team, knowing that someone will support them when they need it.

3.4.4 Common goals and significance

The team should have clear common goals and meanings, and athletes should feel that they are an indispensable part of the team. When athletes realize that their work is crucial to the success of their team, they feel confident and motivated to work hard for the team's success.

Coaches play a crucial role in establishing a positive team environment. They should guide cooperation and communication among team members, promote support and encouragement within and outside the team, and help athletes recognize their importance and value. A supportive team environment can provide athletes with emotional support and a sense of security, making them feel supported and encouraged during the competition. This support and recognition helps to enhance athletes' confidence and motivation, enabling them to better handle challenges and pressure, and to perform at their best level. Team support is not only beneficial for individual development and performance, but also has a positive impact on the cohesion and performance of the entire team.

4. Conclusion

Confidence is one of the key psychological factors for table tennis players to perform at their best level in a competition. Through technical training, psychological training, successful experience accumulation, and team support, athletes can improve their self-confidence, better cope with the challenges and pressures of competition, and perform at their best level. Further research and practice will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of confidence in table tennis matches, providing more effective guidance and support for athletes' psychological training.

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