

# Combined precompetitive mental conditioning model customized for pandemic-related limitations

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PhD **A.A. Banayan**<sup>1</sup>

**A.K. Lashkul**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>St. Petersburg Research Institute of Physical Culture, St. Petersburg

Corresponding author: abanayan@spbniifk.ru

## Abstract

**Objective of the study** was to develop a new combined precompetitive psychological training model customizable for the pandemic-related limitations.

**Methods and structure of the study.** In addition to the traditional live/ offline test equipment, the combined precompetitive mental conditioning model included an access to psychological information. At the end individual precompetitive mental conditioning plan was developed for a specific sports event.

The popular social network VKontakte was used for the athletes from all over Russia who received an access to the precompetitive-mental-conditioning-related information and individualized precompetitive mental conditioning service to facilitate their trainings for specific events.

**Results and conclusion.** Distance/ online precompetitive mental conditioning service formats have their benefits in at least the following domains: practical knowledge and guidance is accessible from any point of the globe; and the service is rather flexible and customizable for the individual training and competitive needs and goals. Such a service may be particularly efficient when combined with a reasonable direct/ live communication a sports psychologist with athlete at key points to facilitate competitive progress.

**Keywords:** *sports psychology, distance survey, social networks, precompetitive training, autogenic training.*

**Background.** Lately the global sports communities have demonstrated a growing need for psychological support service as verified by the practical national and foreign studies and new mental conditioning models during the pandemic [3, 13, 14]. The growing demand for the mental conditioning service from the professional sports elite is due to the pandemic-related limitations and the associating burnouts and disappointments with lapses in the competitive progress agendas and uncertainties in the further sports careers [2, 3]. The studies for the period of COVID-19 pandemic have found a correlation between visioning of specific clear progress goals and success motivations – that are important for the individual ‘immune resource’ with its coping strategies [4]. These considerations urged us to develop and pilot a distance component complementary to the standard precompetitive mental conditioning service to respond the pandemic-related crisis in sports [7].

**Objective of the study** was to develop a new combined precompetitive psychological training model customizable for the pandemic-related limitations.

**Methods and structure of the study.** The combined precompetitive mental conditioning model offers, in addition to the traditional live/ offline test equipment, an access to critical psychological information and guidance online, to develop and manage individual precompetitive mental conditioning systems for specific sports events. The online test toolkit includes the following elements:

- Mental self-control tests using Verim ProNet skin-galvanic response test system with a Mind-Reflection adapter [8];

- Gas-discharge visualizing (GDV) non-invasive fast test to rate the current psycho-physiological health, adaptability and rehabilitation in training process [9]; and

- Tests of the individual innate conditions with the nervous system functionality typing, using Prognosis test system based on the E.P. Ilyin (1972) motor re-



sponse test system [9]. The distance precompetitive mental conditioning service format was piloted in the popular social network VKontakte (VK) within a closed group of athletes from all over Russia who received an access to the precompetitive-mental-conditioning-related information (with audio and video contents) and individualized precompetitive mental conditioning service to facilitate their trainings for specific events.

**Results and discussion.** As of November 07, 2021, the VK group was joined by 86 athletes from sailing, ice hockey, figure skating, blind table tennis, Nordic skiing; and adaptive/ Paralympic athletics, powerlifting, sledge hockey and other disciplines. For seven months of the group activity, the content was claimed more than 1100 times. The group attendance statistics show dominance (62.7%) of the 21-30-year-olds in the 18+ years old pool from more than 10 cities in Russia and even Japan – that is indicative of the growing popularity of the precompetitive mental conditioning content, particularly prior to and during the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo. The content was accessed mostly by cell phones (67.68%) and computers (32.32%) as it is offered in a user-friendly format.

The distance precompetitive mental conditioning content included video briefs and precompetitive mental conditioning sessions adapted to specific Olympic and Paralympic disciplines, with a special priority to the intuitively understandable graphics. The precompetitive mental conditioning content offered to the VK group includes, among other things:

1) Precompetitive mental conditioning basics and 'what it is needed for' (521 views), with a list of most common sports-related negative emotions and conditions, coping strategies, self-control and precompetitive mental conditioning toolkits;

2) "Precompetitive mental conditioning in sports, Part 2: Ideomotor training" video (312 views) that explains basics of modern ideomotor training, how it is designed and managed, and its benefits for the individual training and competitive agendas;

3) 12 self-training sessions to facilitate the post-stress rehabilitation (140 to 160 views); and

4) References to the relevant questionnaire surveys designed by St. Petersburg Research Institute of Physical Culture and accessible online at the Lime Survey platform, with the Competitive Consistency Self-Rating Survey (n=300) and individual recommendations for the precompetitive mental conditioning service for every subscriber.

**Conclusion.** Distance/ online precompetitive mental conditioning service formats have their benefits in at least the following domains: practical knowledge and

guidance is accessible from any point of the globe; and the service is rather flexible and customizable for the individual training and competitive needs and goals. Such service may be particularly efficient when combined with a reasonable direct/ live communication a sports psychologist with athlete at key points to facilitate competitive progress.

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