The practice session
Creating a motivational climate

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The motivational climate created by coaches has a significant influence on participants' motivation, the quality of their involvement, their emotional responses and the likelihood of continued participation or 'drop out' from sport (Duda and Balaguer 2007). In short, what really matter in the world of sport and they can make all the difference to the long term motivation and long term investment of athletes. The aim of this chapter is to provide coaches on how to foster a positive motivational climate in their practice sessions to maximise the effort, persistence and learning of their athletes.

Motivational climate is a term that originated from achievement goal theory (Nicholls 1989). As an introduction, a brief explanation of AGT theory is provided together with how it links to individual differences in athletes' perceptions of the motivational climate. Three types of motivational climate will then be considered, along with the coaching behaviour that is likely to foster these climates and the associated motivational responses of the athletes. Finally, the importance of significant others, such as parents and peers, and how they and other factors influence perceptions of the motivational climate will be covered. Throughout the chapter, the theoretical background and research evidence will be presented to justify and explain the practical implications coaches in designing their coaching sessions.

TYPES OF MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE

Before identifying and explaining the different types of motivational climate in sport, it is important to understand the theoretical background of AGT (Nicholls 1989). According to Nicholls, in achievement situations such as sport, where the aim is to demonstrate ability, different concepts of ability prevail – a 'task involved' concept where the aim is to achieve mastery, improve against previous performances or perfect a skill; or an 'ego involved' concept where the individual judges his/her ability relative to others. If an athlete is ego involved with the primary goal in that situation is to outperform others and to be the best. For example, a field hockey player who is ego involved in a team training session would be aiming to demonstrate superior ability to other teammates by exerting the minimum effort required. On the other hand, a task involved athlete is focused on self-referenced goals and the aim is to learn and improve on previous best performances. In this instance, the same hockey player would be primarily focused on improving his or her own level of performance, regardless of the performance of other teammates. According to Nicholls (1989), these two states of