Coping with success and failure
– A qualitative study on athletes and coaches in track and field.

Högskolan i Halmstad
School of social and behavioural science.
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Supervisors: Prof Natalia Stambulova
Fil Dr Urban Johnson

Author: Daniel Haglind

**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate how athletes and coaches perceive and experience success and failure. Objectives of the study consist of examining how athletes and coaches define, react and cope with success and failure, how they perceive consequences and how coaches help athletes to cope with success and failure. Ten (n=10) individual semi structured interviews was carried out with seven (n=7) elite athletes and three (n=3) coaches in track and field. An interview guide based on the objectives of the study was developed. 385 raw data units were identified. These were categorised according to the objectives. The analysis showed that athletes and coaches defined success as achieving goals and a typical reaction to success was to feel happy. A typical consequence that follows success was increased self confidence and athletes cope with this by setting new goals. The analysis of coaches showed that coaches create an understanding for the athletes, what they want and what they need. Failure was most frequently defined as injury. The most common reaction to failure was increased negative thinking and athletes coped with that by “clenching the fist”. Coaches help athletes to cope with failure by adapting the training. Development was considered to be a significant consequence of failure.

Keywords: Coach support, consequences, coping, failure, perceptions, reactions, success.
Sammanfattning

Målet med studien var att undersöka hur aktiva och tränare uppfattar och upplever framgångar och motgångar. Syftet var att undersöka hur aktiva och tränare definierar, reagerar och copar med framgångar och motgångar, samt hur dom uppfattar dess konsekvenser och slutligen hur tränare hjälper de aktiva att hantera framgångar och motgångar. Tio (n=10) individuella semistrukturerade intervjuer genomfördes med sju (n=7) elitidrottare och tre (n=3) tränare inom friidrott. En intervjuguide baserad på studiens syfte utvecklades. 385 rådataenheter identifierades. Dessa kategoriserades enligt undersökningens syfte. Analysen visade att aktiva och tränare definierade framgång som att uppnå mål och en typisk reaktion på framgång var att känna sig glad. En typisk konsekvens som följde framgång var ett ökat självförtroende och aktiva hanterade med detta genom att sätta nya mål. Vidare visade analysen av tränare att tränare hjälpte de aktiva att hantera framgångar genom att skapa en förståelse för de aktiva, vad de behövde och vad de krävde. Den mest frekventa definitionen av motgång var skada. Den vanligaste reaktionen till motgång var ett ökat negativt tänkande, detta hanterade aktiva genom att ”knyta näven”. Tränare hjälpte aktiva att hantera motgångar genom att anpassa träningen. Utveckling ansågs vara en signifikant konsekvens på motgångar.

Nyckelord: Coping, framgångar, konsekvenser, motgångar, reaktioner, tränar support, uppfattningar.
Introduction

Coping and stress are strongly linked and according to Smith (1993, p.169) the human being faces stress throughout different stages of the life span. In a sports career, as over a life span, athletes face different kinds of stress. Two kinds of stress can be success and failure. Each and every time an athlete faces success or failure the athlete needs to adapt to, or cope with the situation. The athlete’s ability to change his or her thinking and behaviour can be an important factor for the outcome in a single competition or for a whole season. Based on this it could be interesting to study the phenomenon coping with success and failure, how athletes and coaches cope with success and failure, how athletes and coaches define success and failure, what perceived consequences there are for success and failure, how coaches help their athletes to cope with success and failure, and last how athletes react upon a success and a failure.

Coping with success and failure is one research area that has not received enough attention from the science community. Coping in general has received quite a lot of attention but the area of success and failure has been more or less neglected. To cope with a situation means that a person changes his or her behaviour and/or cognitions to better manage a situation. The most frequently used definition of coping in sport and exercise is formed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They state that coping is "a process of constantly changing cognitive and behavioural effort to manage specific external and/or internal demands or conflicts appraised as taxing or exceeding one’s resources" (p.141).

Coping is a response to perceptions of threats that arise in athletes’ surroundings. Feelings of threats can develop from different kinds of emotions and most frequently from stress. Stress is also an individual perception that can vary from time to time and situation to situation. Stress is a topic that is discussed and researched widely in the literature. Some researchers claim that coping is an unconscious response, born not only in stress but in other kinds of emotions as well. Based on Anshel et al. (2001) and others the present paradigm is that “generally researchers agree that coping consists of conscious psychological and psychical efforts to improve one's resourcefulness in dealing with stressful events or to reduce external demands” (p.45). So whether or not coping is a conscious or unconscious process is argued in the scientific society.

Poczwardowski and Conroy (2002) have identified and categorized five types of coping strategy groups, as illustrated below. According to Poczwardowski and Conroy the coping strategies listed below are the ones most common and most used among athletes.

| Table 1: Coping responses to failure and success among elite athletes and performance artists. |

**Emotion-focused coping.**
- Controlling emotions.
- Seeking support from others.
- I stay confident but humble.
- Success promotes positive feelings about self.
- Enhanced motivation after failure.

**Appraisal-focused coping.**
- Looking into the future.
- Keeping things in perspective.
- I am a vessel of art so I can let go.

**Problem-focused coping.**
- Learning and improving.
- Increased effort.
- Problem in coping is performance problem.

**Avoidance-focused coping.**
- Avoidance to protect self.
- Decreased motivation to perform.
- Decreased effort.

**Failing in coping.**
- Failing to cope well.
- Crying.
According to Crocker and Graham (1995) one group of coping strategies is more frequently used than the others. That coping strategy group is problem-focused coping. Specific strategies used are increased effort, planning, active coping and suppression of competing activities. Different coping strategies are often used in combination and not by themselves. One notable thing in Crocker and Graham’s study is that it shows a high use of self-blame coping. However, rather than being dysfunctional this strategy is, according to Crocker and Graham, a part of problem-focused coping. It shows a responsibility for the performance and is linked to attributions of internal locus of causality.

Conroy, Poczwardowski and Henschen (2001) conducted a study where they identified perceptions and consequences of success and failure drawn from interviews with 16 performance artists and elite athletes. The need to cope with success is born from a fear of success. Oglice and Tutko (1996, ref in Conroy, Poczwardowski, Henschen, 2001) introduced the term success phobia. Success phobia is a feeling of fear when facing success. Oglice and Tutko outlined five syndromes of success phobia (See Table 2). Success phobia is a fear of the consequences that can follow a success. Athletes that suffer from success phobia may, when facing a success, hold back his or her capacity or deliberately fail in the competition. Success phobia is most common in athletes who e.g. have gotten used to be the constantly runners up or athletes that have a fear of discovering their true potential. Athletes that are scared of discovering their true potential may fear that if they do, and/or others do, they will end up in the spotlight and be forced to put in a great amount of time and effort into the sport.

Further more Conroy et al. (2001) define fear of failure derived from Birney et al. “the possibility of nonattainment of an achievement standard can produce fear” (Birney, Burdick & Teevan, 1969, ref in Conroy, Poczwardowski & Henschen, 2001). Birney et al proposed three consequences that are associated with fear of failure (See Table 2). One of them is the fear that if the athlete fails, the athlete has to change the belief about one’s self. Another consequence involves the fear of evaluation from others. The athlete feels that if a failure occurs the athlete will be worth less in the eyes of others.

The study by Conroy et al. (2001) deals with perceptions and consequences of success and failure. From the interviews the authors categorized perceptions of failure into 5 categorizes (see Table 2). The perceived consequences of failure have one thing in common they all have to do with negative perception, negative thinking or negative feelings. According to the study, athletes associate a failure with generating negative thoughts. Thoughts like; not accomplishing goals, poor adoption and disappointing others. Conroy et al. (2001) divided these categories into two main groups. One group called control where the performers described failure as their inability to influence themselves, their performance and their career. And one group called affiliation where performers described failure as a perception. A perception in which evaluation from others and the how the athletes believe that others perceive them are sorted.

When categorizing perceptions of success Conroy et al. (2001) used the same two groups to divide the categories, control and affiliation. Control has the opposite meaning when used to group success. Control has the meaning of “the ability to influence themselves and their career”. Affiliation has the same meaning, the perceptions of how others evaluate the athletes. Perceptions of success include; accomplishing goals, maximizing potential and satisfying others (See Table 2.)
Secondly the study focuses on consequences of success and failure. Seven categories of perceived consequences of failure were identified (See table 2). Consequences of failure included generating negative feelings and emotions just like identified perceptions of failure. But consequences also included things like material loss, increased motivation and learned and improved performance.

Lastly five consequences of success are identified (See table 2). The results of perception and consequences did not have any common identified responses, as with failure. The five identified consequences were; success becoming a bad thing, tangible loss and pressured self not to fail.

Table 2: Fear of success/failure, perceptions and consequences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear of success/failure</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of social and emotional isolation.</td>
<td>Achieved desired outcome.</td>
<td>Pressure to meet higher expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of guilt over asserting themselves in competition.</td>
<td>Implementing desired process.</td>
<td>Performance benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of discover their true potential.</td>
<td>Desire to please others.</td>
<td>Surprising costs of succeeding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of surpassing a previous record established by an admired performer.</td>
<td>Enhanced perceptions of self.</td>
<td>Increased psychological interaction with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of pressure of having to match or exceed previous best performance.</td>
<td>Enhanced perceptions of self.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of non-ego punishment.</td>
<td>Insufficient realistic control.</td>
<td>Attempted adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of having a reduced social value.</td>
<td>Blocked wish for unrealistic control.</td>
<td>Feeling of losing control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generate negative feelings in others.</td>
<td>Shifts in interpersonal exchanges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generate negative feelings in self.</td>
<td>Emotional cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Punitive action directed against self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Embarrassing self-presentational failure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lazarus writes in his article “How emotions influence performance in competitive sports.” (Lazarus, 2000) that emotions theorists often overlook the importance of coping in emotions when doing research on emotions. Coping with emotions is often treated as a separate process and is often categorized under stress. Lazarus says that it is a mistake to treat coping this way, as a separate process from emotions. Coping and emotions are strongly linked to each other. Lazarus writes in his article that it is our emotions that lead to the demand of coping. It is not unusual that two emotions arise at the same time, hope and anxiety for example. When facing
in an uncertain situation, where the outcome can be either success or failure, athletes often feel hopeful but at the same time anxiety.

Two Swedish authors Rydèn and Stenström published a book in 1994 where they discussed psychological aspects of sickness, health and coping. Although the book treats coping with sickness, which is not the same as failure, it contains several relevant things that can be linked to coping in sport and exercise. Mostly they discuss two types of coping strategies, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The authors discuss the difference between them and say that if a person approaches a problem with a problem-focused coping strategy the person might try to make up a plan drawn from previous experience or try to learn as much as possible about the upcoming situation. The person may talk to others who have been in a similar situation before. This is a coping strategy that is based on problem-focused coping. It means that the person addresses the problem and breaks it down into smaller parts and works on them. Emotion-focused coping is in some ways similar to avoidance-focus coping. When a person addresses a problem with an emotion-focused coping the person tries to suppress the negative effects of an eventual loss (e.g. when the person uses alcohol to hold back anxiety or arousal). The two Swedish authors have developed a model derived from Folkman and Lazarus model of coping strategies. The new model describes the characteristics of four different coping responses. The model has two groups of coping strategies, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping; these two groups have each two subgroups cognitive and behaviour (See Table 3).

Table 3: A summary of Rydèn and Stenströms model of coping strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion- focused coping</th>
<th>Problem- focused coping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active cognitive</td>
<td>Repressing/ avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to see difficulties in a positive way.</td>
<td>Preparing for the worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking others for advice.</td>
<td>Trying to repress the feeling with food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping the feeling inside.</td>
<td>One thing at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier experiences.</td>
<td>Did something positive to the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active cognitive</td>
<td>Active behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking on different alternatives.</td>
<td>Finding information on the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coping is often a response to the perception that a situation is threatening. This kind of emotion is often derived from stress or anxiety. Stress is defined as "a substantial imbalance between demand and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet that demand has important consequences" (McGrath, 1970, p.20). It can be drawn from the definition that stress is a perception of psychological threat to the athlete. This argument is supported by Anshel “Psychological stress is based on perception” (Anshel et al, 2001). If this is accurate, a good way to cope with stress would be to adjust how the athlete perceives a situation.

Lazarus (2000) States that emotions influence the way we act. He also says that anxiety is one of the most important emotions in human life. Anxiety is a normal response when facing an uncertain situation or threat. Anxiety is a negative state of mind that has the characteristics of nervousness, worry and an increased state of arousal. The emotion arises when important
values or goals are threatened. “A major source of anxiety in competitive sports is that public competition reveals to everyone who knows about it, including the athlete, their comparative competence in the sport.” (Lazarus, 2000 p.44). From this it can be derived that the source of anxiety is perception, perception of an uncertain or threatening situation. Like a situation after a failure or before success. If this is the case, a good way to cope with anxiety would be to work on how athletes perceive these situations.

As with stress and anxiety it is the perception of the situation that is essential when a person decides how he or she will act. But it is not only the objective perception that decides if the person perceives the situation as threatening or shooting. The person’s values are involved in the outcome for the following behaviour. Lazarus (2000), states that our values are connected to our behaviour and to coping. Our values decide how we as individuals perceive the world around us. When we need to cope in a situation it is our values that tell us that the situation is tough. Lazarus states that “Coping is the second in importance only to appraisal. It has to do with how we manage or regulate our emotions” (Lazarus, 2000). Lazarus means that if we work on our values and on how we value our perceptions, we can reduce our need to cope. If this is true, it means that values play one significant role in sport psychology and in coping. Another very important variable in coping is according to Weinberg and Gould (Weinberg & Gould, 1999) our awareness.

“*You must increase your awareness of your psychological states before you can control your thoughts and feelings. How individuals cope with anxiety is more important than how much anxiety they experience.*” (p.246)

Weinberg and Gould say that the first step to controlling our emotions and behaviour is to increase our self awareness. To be self aware has two meaning. First it means that we are able to listen to our body and understand the signs it gives (e.g. a cold means that the athlete needs to rest from practise). Secondly it means that we are able to understand and interpret cognitive signs that arise, signs like tension, arousal, anxiety and stress. Weinberg and Gould also say that it is important to understand how and why we act like we act in a certain situation. Rather then to know in what type of situation we perceive as threatening.

Attributions (Weiner, 1986 ref Williams, 2001) are explanations to outcomes of situations. When an athlete faces a situation, and especially, when the outcome is unexpected or experienced. For example when an athlete faces a failure he or she tries to explain why this happened. But athletes also give attributions to situations where they are successful. According to Weiner individuals tends to try to give explanations to characteristics that underlie the cause of the outcome and that have motivational significance, rather than to try to explain the direct cause of a success or a failure. Weiner’s attribution theory distinguishes between three types of attributions; causality, stability and control. Causality are explanations that involve internal (e.g. “I’m in a good shape”) or external (e.g. “they are in better shape than me”). Stability are explanations of stable (e.g. “I’m good at this”) and unstable (e.g. luck) things. The third attribution group is control. This group distinguish between controllable (e.g. things the athlete can control) and uncontrollable (e.g. things the athlete can not control) things. Attributions can be a good way to cope with situations that arises unexpectedly. To deal with a situation by trying to explain it can give the athlete a sense of control over the situation. But the attribution the athletes give must be correct. Because attributions influence our feelings and the way we act. A deliberately wrongfully given attribution can be a type of rejection or avoidance. Rejection and avoidance are a negative coping strategy that can lead to
negative feelings and to reduced performance. To give true and reasonable attributions is especially important when explaining things that happen frequently. If a wrong explanation is given to such a thing the result can be that the athlete practices the wrong things at training.

Feeling of control plays a very important role in coping. Antonovsky’s model “Sense of coherence” (Antonowsky, 1987) says that if a person has a feeling of coherence that person will be in a better psychological state then if this feeling does not arise. Control is what Antonovsky’s model is based on. To be in control over one’s self and over a situation or to have the feeling of control is important for the psychological state. If the individual feels that he or she has chosen to be in a certain situation and can, without serious consequences, get out of it. This feeling of control will make it easier to handle stress and other psychological tensions. But if the situation a person is in is not chosen by the person him/herself (e.g. to be in prison or under a signed contract) can have a negative effect on the psychological state.

Hardy, Jones and Gould (1996) designed a model that illustrates the environment an elite athlete lives in. The authors’ says that “elite athletes do not live in a vacuum; they function within a highly complex social and organisational environment which exerts major influences on them and their performance” (p.239). The model shows the environment and the skills needed to reach peak performance in this complex environment (See appendix 1). According to this model coping is just one of many components that are required to reach peak performance, despite the fact that coping is just one part of many in this model it is quite a big and very important part. The part of the model that treats coping consists of association, goal setting, automation, injury coping, attributions, self-talk, imaginary, relaxation.

Kerr and Goss (1996) studied whether or not a psychological intervention had any effect on the rehabilitation on injured athletes. The main question in this study was “If athletes were taught to better manage or cope with their stress, would the injury experience be reduced” (Kerr & Goss, 1996). The result showed that the experiment group experienced significantly less negative stress to the injury period then the control group. This shows that a psychological intervention where different copings strategies is being taught reduces negative stress on injured athletes. If this is the case can these results be applied to athletes in general and to other situations like a competitive situation?

Individual differences are interesting aspects in the coping process. Endler and Parker (1990) discus type A and type B behaviour and their relationship to coping. They indicate that the two different types of personalities are linked to different coping strategies. Type A individuals uses a more emotion-related coping behaviour and are more likely to become angry and upset when stressed. Type A also uses more denial and avoidance strategies than a type B person. This discussion asserts the argument that coping is bound mostly to personality but also to the situation. This statement is grounded on a scientific basis that different types of individuals, type A and type B, perceive one situation in different ways. The situation is an important factor when applying different behaviour. But whether you are a type A or a type B person, you perceive the situation differently. Therefore you adopt different behaviour in similar situations depending on which type of person you are.

Whether or not coping is linked to personality or to the situation is argued in the literature (Rydèn & Stenström 1994). The two standing points differ in many ways. The first one says that coping consists of characteristics that are stable over time and external demands. This states that every person has an individual coping profile. The second standing point claims
that the coping strategy we chose to use depends on the situation we are in. We have a set of useful coping strategies to use and depending on the character of the situation we chose the most useful. This approach results in that one coping strategy can fit many people and that we can be taught a general coping strategy for different situations. There is also a third argument in the discussion; this one says that coping is both bound to personality and to the situation. Individuals have a personality that is stable and influence the way individuals cope with a situation. But depending on the characteristic of the situation individuals uses different types of coping strategies. In a study by Crocker and Isaak (1997), 25 swimmers used a consistent coping style during three competitions and the adherent trainings passes. The result showed that the swimmers adopted different coping strategies during training and competition. The result also showed that coping styles differed between the swimmers. The authors discuss various reasons for the result and they considered; different demands, different individual perceptions and differences between competition and training. Their discussion gives support to the argument that coping is bound both to the individual and to the situation.

Success and failure is an area in sport and exercise psychology that needs more attention according to several scientists. Gould (2001) has identified fear of failure as a major stress source. He also identified that defending a title is more stressful then achieving it from the beginning. Further more Gould looked at stress sources and he found out that elite athletes experienced stress from a variety of sources both performance related and non-performance related. This confirms his model of peak performance where he states that an elite athlete lives in a complex environment where there are a variety of stress sources. Gould supports the standing point saying that coping is a complex process and is influenced both by the personality and the situation the athlete are in. Gould also states that coping strategies vary widely between different athletes which give further support that coping strategy is depending on a persons personality.

**Objective of the study**
Based on the literature reviewed above, several research questions appear. Consequently, the first objective of this study is; Firstly, how do athletes and coaches define success and failure? Secondly, what are there for perceived consequences of success and failure for athletes and coaches? Thirdly, how do athletes and coaches react on success and failure? Fourth, how do athletes and coaches cope with success and failure? Fifth, what strategies do coaches use to help athletes cope?

**Methods**

**Participants**
Ten (n=10) interviews were conducted with athletes and coaches. Five males (n=5) and five females (n=5) voluntarily participated in a semi structured individual interview. Three (n=3) of them was coaches (all males) and seven (n=7) of them were athletes. The average age was; for the whole group 30, 9 years old, for the males 35, 5 years old, for the females 26, 2 years old, for the coaches 39.0 years old and for the athletes 27, 4 years old. All of the interview participants where training and competing in track and field. The different sports represented were sprint (100 & 200 m.), long distance, decathlon, long jump, triple jump and sledge. The participants were recruited by snow ball recruitment. Snow ball recruitment means that one interview participant (or contact) leads or gives tips to the next interview participant. The work of recruiting participants started with two exciting contacts, one in a town in the south east of Sweden and one in the middle of Sweden. This meant that a rather big geographical area was covered. The participants were competing on an elite or sub elite level, either on a high national level or on international level.
**Instrument**

Two interview guides was designed to cover the objectives of the study, one interview guide for athletes and one interview guide for coaches. To increase the reliability of the interview guides contact was taken with Artur Poczwardowski. Poczwardowski had done a similar study to this one and because of this a copy of his already tested and used interview guide was kindly requested. The already created interview guides were then triangulated with Poczwardowski’s interview guide. The questions included were compared to each other and a debriefing and question- parts were added. The interview guides were rather alike from the beginning so the result from the triangulation was not critical. However the final product was two interview guides with a high reliability and that were easy to work with. (See Appendix 2,3,4,5)

**Procedures**

Time and place were scheduled by phone with the interview participants and the interviews were then conducted either in the participants’ own home or at their training facility. The reason for this was that the participants should feel calm and at home. Before the interviews were conducted, all participants were informed of their rights as an interviewee and once again told that the participation in the study was voluntary. No participant refused to answer any question in the interview. The interview guide was followed as closely as possible but to get closer and more familiar with the participants some expansion of the interview guides were allowed. Follow up questions that was not included in the guide was also allowed to further explore the participants world of sport. The interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone. The duration of the interviews was between 45 minutes to 60 minutes and transcribed by the author.

**Data analysis**

First the interviews were transcripted by the investigator. Then a qualitative analysis was performed on the transcripts. A method using categorization, tagging and regrouping of structural concepts similar to the methods suggested by Kvale (1997, p.178,), Neuman (1994, p.404) were adopted. The technique involved four steps of analyzing. The first step was to read through the text several times to get an overview of the context. The second step involved color marking the meaning units in the text. Six different colors were used according to the objectives of the study. The third step involved organizing the raw data into a excel document. The organization was based on the color marking. Success & failure and athletes & coaches were separated. The fourth step involved sorting the data. The sorting of the data was based on two things; firstly, if both athletes and coaches had mentioned a similar raw data unit, secondly, how many of the interviewees had mentioned a raw data unit. The six categorizes which the data was organized under were; background information, definition, reactions, consequences, coping strategies and coach support. However, the category background information was not analysed in the study. The result of the data analyzes is shown in table four and five.

**Results**

The result was categorizes according to the objectives of the study. The categorises were: how athletes and trainers define success and failure, reactions on success and failure, consequences of success and failure, coping with success and failure and at last how coaches help athletes to cope with success and failure. Success and failure was treated separately. A total of 385 raw data units were identified and categorized into 104 categorizes.
### Table 4: Descriptive analysis of success derived from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Athletes (n=7)</th>
<th>Coaches (n=3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of success</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reach goals.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To succeed in something you never done before.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a longed for feeling, to have fun.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body feels strong, fast and in shape.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do a personal best.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions on success.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to test ones abilities and limits.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased training.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euphoric</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euphoric</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport of joy.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirvana feeling.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbeatable.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahead</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovley feeling.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences on success.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self confidence.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything feels easy, good flow.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from one self.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from others, increased expectations.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive experience.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less respect.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets higher goals.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overbearing.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goes out of it stronger, development.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly one of the best in the country.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body and the mental capacity is not on the same level.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (cont.): Descriptive analysis of success derived from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Athletes (n=7)</th>
<th>Coaches (n=3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping with success.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make planes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with the trainer.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks and reevaluate, reflects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, entirety.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take responsibility for the outcome.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines, mental and physical.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks help from others.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to the body.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow a pattern.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving after a feeling that presented itself after a success.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tries to keep sport and personal live apart.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clenches one’s fist, increased effort.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and attitude.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn the situation around.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t feel like it I believe I don’t need it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coach support with success.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding for the athletes, what they want and need.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt the training after the athlete.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss different solutions.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give support, pushes.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a positive environment.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep a conversation.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be at hand, exchange signs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop the entirety.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize, analyze, evaluate, plan.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to keep both feet's on the ground.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition of success**

To reach goals, is according to this study, how both athletes and coaches define success. 100% of the interviewees think that to reach goals is to reach success. To succeed in something that has never been done before were also a significant definition of success. To have a good flow, a state where everything goes easy and almost by itself, was also a definition that was mentioned by both athletes and coaches. Interviewee, athlete (IpA) 4 stated that success is when “you reach the goals you have put up and maybe a little bit more”. IpA 5 said “success is to do a performance just as you have planed it, to reach those results you have struggled after for a long time”. To reach a feeling was also a definition of success. IpA 6 stated that “in front of all it’s the good feeling you get when you have done a personal best”.

**Reactions on success**

Several different reactions on success were identified but above all the feeling of happiness was most often mentioned. Half of the interviewees claimed that a typical reaction upon a success was to feel and to act happy. IpA 10 says “I get so happy that I just go around and smiling”. IpA 10 also said “I jumped around and screamed then I picked up my trainer and shook him around for a while”. Desire to test ones further abilities and limits was also an
important reaction upon success. Interviewee, coach (IpC) 9 says that he “has experienced athletes that after a success feel like there is no end of the possibilities”. One of his athletes said “I’ve got so much more inside me that I want to perform”. To feel euphoric was mentioned as a reaction upon success by three athletes. Four athletes said that when reaching success they train more and none of the coaches had the same perception.

Consequences of success
Increased self confidence, feelings of flow and raised demands were, according to 80% of the subjects, typical consequences of success. IpA 2 said that success had been followed by thoughts like: “Wow, I still have it, now I’m on the right track. I’m starting to believe in myself”. IpA 10 said: “I felt invincible…” Also demands were a substantial consequence of success. Three athletes and one coach said that when reaching success the demands from one’s self raises. All of the three interviewed coaches said that when reaching success some athletes could become overbearing and maybe get some “star- fever” but according to the athletes this phenomenon does not occur. Stress was another interesting identified consequence. Two of the coaches said that athletes could become stressed when they were successful but none of the athletes said anything about this.

Coping with success
A wide range of different coping strategies were used according to the interviewees. Goal setting, making plans, communicate with the coach and thinking, re-evaluating and reflecting were those who received the highest scores. Goal setting was according to all of the coaches a coping strategy that was used by athletes. But according to the athletes, only 3 of them said that goal setting was used when coping with success. As with goal setting, make up plans was identified by three athletes and three coaches. Goal setting and making up plans could be considered as one group but was separated due to the fact that making up plans was more of the dreaming kind of thinking into the future. IpC 3 said “they may not always live in a realistic world in their thoughts. But I think that they must be allowed to dream, as long as there is some realistic nature in their planes”. To re-evaluate the situation was according to IpA 7 a coping strategy that were useful IpA 7 said “when I’m nervous I use usually lay down on the floor and think about what and why I’m nervous about”. Results showed that five of the athletes used routines, both mental and physical, to handle success. Again none of the coaches mentioned this in the interviews. Also seeking help from others, listening to the body and following patterns were mentioned by four athletes and none of the coaches. Understanding of the success and attitude towards the success where mentioned as a substantial coping strategy by coaches but it was not at all mentioned by the athletes.

Coach’s support to athletes experiencing success
Two ways of coach support were mentioned by both athletes and coaches. The first thing was that the coaches have an understanding for the athletes, what they want and what they need. This was mentioned by all three coaches and three of the athletes. IpA 2 said: “My trainer is really good. He knows me, what I want and what I need”. The next thing that was mentioned by both coaches and athletes was that the coach adapted the training after the circumstances. This answer, however, was mentioned by only one athlete and one coach. To discuss different solutions with the trainer was mentioned by four athletes e.g. IpA 5 said: “I look at the training plan and see if there are some things that need to be changed, together with my coach of course”. To have a conversation going with the athletes was mentioned by three (100%) of the coaches e.g. IpC 1 said: “I try to keep a conversation going with the athletes, especially the really good ones. The ones that need to keep both feet on the ground…” Four of the athletes felt that the coach gave support and pushed the athletes while this was not mentioned
by the coaches. Another interesting result was that all three coaches said that they helped the athletes with *goal setting* during success. The athletes did not mention this. Three of the coaches said that develop the entirety, summarize, evaluate, planning and helping the athletes to keep both feet on the ground were ways for helping the athletes deal with the success. Once again none of the athletes mentioned this in the interviews.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of failure derived from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Athletes (n=7)</th>
<th>Coaches (n=3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition failure.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When nothing goes as planned</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body does not feel ok</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions on failure.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative thinking.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel sick.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careful.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad mood.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being careful.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponder a lot.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A feeling of trinity and reservation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resignation.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences on failure.</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development, comes out of it stronger.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from one self.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts of dropout.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening more to the body.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The athletes influence each other.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping with failure.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clench one's fist.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn away negative thinking.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with others.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting, make a plan.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get distance, redirect focus.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (cont.): Descriptive analysis of failure derived from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Athletes (n=7)</th>
<th>Coaches (n=3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seek positive tendencies.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize that it is a part of the circle.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize social connections.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to the body.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparations.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn into one self and look.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One step at a time.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks things outside sport that is wrong.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coach support with failure.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Athletes</th>
<th>Coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapt the training.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce the good things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivate, push.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find new ways, analyze.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make plans.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Definition of failure*

*To get Injured* was, according to this research, a highly classified definition of failure. When getting injured a big part of the season might be at risk. Six athletes and all three coaches defined injury as a failure. IpA 7 said “I felt a big setback when I got injured… the doctor told me that I probably never could run again”. *When nothing goes as planed or as expected* was also considered as a failure. IpA 4 said “When you can’t reach your goals or when you can’t live up to your own expectations. I believe this can be worse then being injured…” The *feeling of not being able to perform at one’s peak* was also a definition of failure. A total of 6 interviewees said that when the body feels heavy or *when you work hard but nothing happens* is considered as a type of failure or setback.

*Reactions on failure*

The analysis shows that six reactions upon failure were mentioned by both athletes and coaches, *negative thoughts, stress, produced fear, frustration, feelings of sickness and to become careful*. Negative thinking was experienced by six athletes and all three coaches as a result of a failure. IpA 7 said “I get into a bad mood, I think a lot and get a little sad and reserved”. IpA 7 also said “I had no feelings, or at least I didn’t think so… then I realised how bad I actually felt”. IpA 2 said “it felt like everything got black, totally black”. Four athletes and two coaches described *frustration* as a reaction upon failure. Moreover four athletes mentioned that getting into a *bad mood* could be a reaction after failure, but no one of the coaches had noticed this. In opposite to failure all three coaches had noticed a *flight behaviour* at the athletes when facing failure and none of the athletes said anything about this in the interviews. Two of the coaches said that they had noticed some *resignation and doubt* in the athletes after a failure but this was not mentioned by the athletes.

*Consequences on failure*

All ten interviewees saw *development* as a consequence of failure. IpC 1 said “when you, at last, come through, you are much stronger than before”. IpA 2 said “it’s hard for a while but
when you come out of it you are so much stronger”. IpA 7 said “you try to learn from setbacks… I see mostly positive things when I think back on them”. Demands, from both others and from ones self, was identified as a consequence of failure by two coaches and 1 athlete. Disappointment and thoughts of dropout were experienced by four athletes. IpA 2 said “…and re-evaluate it. Is it worth it all? Is it worth spending 13 to 15 hours a week training and not be able to do all the things my friends do?” One consequence of failure that was mentioned by three athletes was that they now listen more to their bodies. IpA 5 “this thing has made me more alert on the signs from my body and the relationship to my trainer has strengthened”.

Coping with failure

The most frequent answer to how athletes cope with failure was that they clenched the fist and just tried to move on. This answer was given by five athletes and all three coaches. Athlete IpA 10 said “I took a couple of days off. Then I started with some light training. I knew there was another competition coming up”. The second most used coping strategy was to analyze what had happened. Four athletes and two coaches mentioned this as a coping strategy. IpA 5 said “I analyze everything, to see if there is anything in the training that needs to be changed”. Another coping strategy was to try to turn away negative thoughts. IpA 6 said “it’s so frustrating, every morning when you wake up you feel whether or not it feels a bit better. You seek positive tendencies”. These were the coping strategies that were mentioned by both athletes and coaches. However, five athletes and none of the coaches said that they often discuss things with other people, make up plans and set goals and try to get some distance to the sport. Four of the athletes claim that they realize that failure is just a part of the circle and that this knowledge helps them during difficult times, setbacks and failure. Three athletes mentioned that they utilize their social connections, listen to the signs of the body and that they become more careful with their preparations before competitions. None of these were mentioned by the coaches. However two of the coaches claim that the athletes turn into themselves and looks in times of setbacks. Two coaches mentioned that the athletes need to take one step at the time and not hurry. Two negative strategies were mentioned by two coaches, flight and seeking things outside sport to blame for setbacks. IpA 5 said “failure comes when things outside the sport doesn’t work”.

Coach support with failure

According to this study the most used strategy adopted by coaches to help their athletes was; adapt the training and motivate the athletes. This answer was given by all three coaches. Athletes on the other hand have the perception that adapt the training and reinforce the good things are thing that coaches do. These two things, adapt the training and reinforce the good things, were mentioned by both athletes and coaches but only them. The coaches also mentioned that they help the athletes with goal setting, they communicate, finding new ways and analyzes the training, and last, that they help the athlete to make up planes.

Discussion

The objectives of the study consisted of examining, qualitative, how athletes and coaches define, react and cope with success and failure, how they perceive consequences and how coaches help athletes cope with success and failure. Two general conclusions can be drawn from the results. First, a total of 385 raw data units was identified and categorized into 104 categories. Among these categories, only two were mentioned by all of the participants. First was the definition of success. All of the participants defined success as reaching goals and not, as one can expect to perform high scores. This is an interesting result. Outcome based on
result was only mentioned as a success when talking about doing a personal best, which can be the same as reaching a goal. Except reaching goals success is defined as reaching a good feeling, a flow, or when the body feels strong and in shape. Another sub-category that was mentioned by all of the participants was that a consequence of failure is development and that the athletes come out of a failure stronger then they were before it occurred. These two answers gave a positive impression regarding athletes’ attitude towards success and failure. The second general conclusion is that there was a big difference in identified coping strategies among the athletes and the coaches. This result can derived from that coaches and athletes may have different apprehension about what coping strategies the athletes actually uses.

A part of the interviews was focused on perceived consequences of success. The result showed two identified consequences that received a high answering response. Increased self confidence, less respect for the opponents, setting higher goals and the feeling of flow were according to the interviewed athletes and coaches common consequences of success. Over all the perceived consequences identified by athletes and coaches agreed but there was some consequences that separated the two groups from each other. Not surprisingly, was the experience of success identified as a positive experience. This however, was not a point of view shared by the coaches. All of the three coaches said that athletes sometimes could become reckless, stressed and sometimes when the success comes to quickly the body and the mental capacity could drift apart.

The question concerning how athletes cope with success indicated interesting results. The result showed that athletes and coaches agree that goal setting and making planes are good ways of coping with success. However, while coaches identified seven significant ways of coping with success, athletes identified sixteen different strategies. Is there a reason for the big difference in identified coping strategies? When looking at the results from the athletes there seems to be only two strategies that focus on things outside sport; seeking help from others and to keep sport and personal live apart. The coaches may not be able to influence how the athletes use these two strategies. But the remaining strategies could be further developed if the coaches were more aware of the fact that athletes use them. Strategies like routines, listening to the body and imagery was identified by the athletes but not by the coaches. These ways of coping are all strategies that athletes and coaches can work on together and develop further. An interesting aspect appears when looking at the results from the category; coach support with success. There are only one coping strategy that was mentioned by both athletes and coaches. That is, coaches have an understanding for the athletes and know what they want and need. Interesting is that coaches mentioned more helping strategies than the athletes did. Things like creating a positive environment, conversation, goal setting, develop the entirety summarize, analyze and evaluate were things mentioned by the coaches but not by the athletes. Is there a cause for the fact that athletes identified more adopted coping strategies than the coaches did and that coaches identified more helping strategies then the athletes did? Can the conclusion that; athletes and coaches needs to work on their communication and understanding for each other be correct.

Two interesting reactions on failure were identified by coaches. The two reactions were both a type of avoidance strategy, first a flight behavior and second doubt in one self and in the performance capability. These two reactions were not mentioned by athletes but all three coaches did identify some type of rejection as a reaction to failure. Can the fact that athletes did not mention these types of coping strategies be a sign of rejection? Or do the coaches read more into it than there is. When taking the identified consequences of failure in count the later assumption seems truer. All interviewed athletes and coaches identified development as an
effect of failure. This result indicates that the latest assumption seems truer. If athletes do use a flight behavior as a coping strategy and start to doubt about their capacity, but still see the outcome from a failure as positive, this flight behavior may not have any long going effects.

In coping with failure 15 different strategies was identified. Among them three strategies were mentioned by both athletes and coaches; to clench the fist, analyze and to turn away negative thoughts. Beside these three, seven other strategies were mentioned by athletes and five strategies were identified by coaches. A similar pattern to the one that appeared when analyzing coping with success appears. It seems that athletes and coaches have different perceptions on how athletes cope and what coping strategies athletes’ uses. When looking at the result of how coaches help athletes to cope, this pattern becomes even clearer. Coaches identified seven strategies that they use to help athletes. The athletes only identified two of them. In order for coaches to be able to help the athletes as good as possible they probably need to develop their communications skills and understanding for each other. This is the same assumption that was taken when analyzing coping with success. Since the same pattern appeared with both coping with success and coping with failure there may lay some significance in this assumption.

In the study by Poczwardowski and Conroy (2002) coping strategies are classified into five groups as follows: emotion-focused, problem-focused, appraisal-focused, avoidance- focused and failing in coping. The result from the present study bears some resembling to Poczwardowski’s and Conroy’s study. The result could perhaps be categorized into the same categories. But one interesting thing appears when comparing the two studies. Poczwardowski and Conroy did not identified goal setting and making planes as an adopted coping strategy. These two strategies received high scores in the present study and were clearly significant coping strategies. The difference between the two results may derive from that the present study consists of a more homogenous group. This study consists only of track and field sportsmen while Poczwardowski and Conroy had a group that consisted of a wide range of sports and also performing artists. A second big difference between the two studies is that Poczwardowski and Conroy identified a group they called failing in coping. The present study indicated some but no significant result of such a thing. This can be due to several things. The main thing is that this study focused on successful coping strategies with success and failure but also that failing in coping can lead to drop out and that subject was not touched in this study.

Crocker and Graham (1995) stated that problem- focused coping is the most frequently used coping strategy. Increased effort, planning, active coping and suppression of competing activities were according to Crocker and Graham the most used strategies. The result of the present study gives some support for Crocker and Grahams study. Increased effort and planning were both significant coping strategies in the present study. Suppression of competing activities was not a significant result but it was mentioned as a possibility. Another interesting outcome from Crocker and Grahams study were the identification of self- blame as a coping strategy. The authors claimed that this strategy was not dysfunctional but that it showed a responsibility at the athlete considering the performance and outcome. This type of self- blaming behavior was not identified directly in the present study. But some strategies that were identified had a resembling to how Crocker and Graham described self- blame. Those were; to be aware of the result and the performance, to analyze it and take responsibility for the outcome. IpA 2 said: “Because no one else can influence, the final thing lies with me”. This study indicates that Crocker and Graham might be right in their statement that problem- focused coping strategy is the most frequently adopted coping strategy. When
looking at the different coping strategies adopted by athletes and coaches, problem-focused coping strategies seems to be the most frequently used one.

Oglive and Tutko (1996, ref in Conroy et al. 2001, p.302) identified fear of success and introduced the term success phobia. According to Oglive and Tutko, success phobia consists of five syndromes. And although the present study did not treat the subject of success phobia there were some indications of the syndromes in the result. However, there were no significant direct indications of the phenomena. The indications of success phobia in this study were indirect. Consequences that can be a result of success phobia were stress, and raising demands, both from one self and from others. Even though the present study did not strengthened the theory of success phobia it did not at al reject it. The syndromes that Oglive and Tutko identified may become clearer if conducting a study directly focuses on the subject fear of success. As with success phobia, fear of failure (Birney et al. 1969, ref in Conroy et al. 2001, p.302) was not a subject covered in this study. But again significant results indicated indirectly the existence of the outlined consequences by Birney et al. Negative thoughts, frustration, raising demands and disappointment are all significant results identified in the present study. These results have a resembling to the outlined consequences Birney et al. described. These results also give support to the identification Birney et al. did concerning fear of failure, which might be correct.

Lazarus (2000) says that our emotions are connected to the way we cope. When analyzing the results from the present study Lazarus’ statement could very well be true. The results of the present study indicate that emotions or consequences associated with success or failure may lead to the demand to cope. However, this issue was not covered in the study. The question whether athletes build up a need to cope depending on the individual perception of a situation and the feelings thereby generated or the objective appearance of a situation remains. Lazarus also says that stress is the feeling most likely to generate a demand to cope. Anshel (2001) says that “psychological stress is based on perception”. How a person perceive a situation is depending on the personality. Different persons perceive equal situations differently (e.g. one person can perceive a situation as threatening while another may not). Together these two authors say that the need to cope is depending on the perception of a situation. The question whether the demand to cope is derived from the situation or difference in personality is widely argued in the literature. Yet a third standing point of this question exists. This one states that both the situation and the personality influence the need to cope. The present study supports this last argument that the need to cope is derived both from the situation and from the perception of the situation (personality). Since e.g. one definition of success is to reach goals. When the situation permits the athlete to reach a goal the athlete reacts on this. The most significant answer to reactions upon success was to become happy. But different persons may perceive the situation differently and therefore react differently. The situation does not only create a reaction at the athlete, it creates a consequence for the athlete as well. According to the present study the most common consequence to success is increased self-confidence. This increased self-confidence can make the athletes think that they are capable to perform better then they can and this can, according to the coaches, lead to “a star fever”. In the end of a series of occurrences that started with a specific perception of a situation, comes coping into place. If the situation is of such a kind that the athlete needs to cope with it, the present study indicates that the most likely coping strategy to adopt would be goal setting and making plans.

There is a possibility that personality has impact on the need to cope for athletes. Personality, most likely, has an impact on the coping strategies an athlete chooses to use. Type A and type B persons for examples. According to Endler and Parker (1990) type A persons use more
emotion-related coping behavior and type B persons - more problem-focused coping behavior. The present study does not deal with different personalities but it is a very interesting question to arise. Does our personality reflect on the way we cope? Because of the high amount of different coping strategies identified by different athletes and coaches in this study, the assumption that different athletes use different strategies can be stated. This indicates that athletes with different personalities cope in different ways. Is it then possible that athletes that identified equal coping strategies had some common personality denominator? If there is any significance in this hypothesis, further scientific studies in this area could be of big help for applied sport psychologists.

Lazarus states that coping is only second in importance to appraisal. How athletes value a situation may have great impact on how the athlete perceives a situation. If for example an athlete value a competition very high and the outcome becomes a great disappointment for the athlete. The athlete might perceive the situation as much more devastating than it actually is. So, if athletes and coaches work on enhancing their values and become more aware of them, the need to cope might be reduced. A third important factor in this discussion is our self awareness. Weinberg and Gould (1999, p.246) states that increasing our self-awareness is the first step to self-control. Self-awareness includes values. The result of this study indicates some small level of significance between self-awareness and coping. This indication, however, was mostly directed towards self-awareness of how the body feels, reacts and works. It is, according to Weinberg and Gould equally important to be aware of our psychological self as of our physical self. To be aware of our psychological self involves awareness of how we act and react in certain situations and also what our behavior depends on. If athletes develop this knowledge and awareness of themselves, they might be able to work on the thing that makes them react in a way that is not good in certain situations. When the athlete can do this, the athlete has reached a long way to self control.

Summary
The strength of this study was the in depth interviews that resulted in a good overview over how athletes and coaches perceived the different areas of success and failure. The result of this study showed that there were some common and some idiosyncratic pattern in identified aspects both for athletes and for coaches. The result also showed that to reach goal is dependent how athletes and coaches defined success. A typical reaction to this was to feel happy. Furthermore, the result showed that a common consequence of success was increased self confidence. Moreover, the result showed that there were a number of both common and idiosyncratic identified coping strategies and different coach support strategies. The most common coping strategy with success was goal setting. The support from the coach consisted of an understanding for the athletes needs. The definition of failure was for most interviewed athletes to get injured and a typical reaction on failure such as this was increased negative thinking. The result showed that to clench ones fist and to analyze what was wrong were to ways of coping with failure. According to the analysis coaches helped the athletes to cope with failure by adapting the training. An interesting result in the analysis of failure was that athletes and coaches saw development as a consequence of failure. As with success there were a number of both common and idiosyncratic identified coping strategies. The result strengthened some of the earlier studies and got supported by some of them.

Concerns of the study
One concern of this study was the external validity. The sample group was not selected on random premises. It was drawn with help from exciting contacts. However the interview participants and the interview leader had never met, all except two of the participants. The
other interview participants were contacted in four steps so although the sample was not totally random it was near to it. This study also focused on two ends of a continuum of coping, failure and success. It would be interesting to see if the coping strategies differ on situations in the middle spectrum. Moreover was one concern the imbalance between the numbers of coaches versus athletes.

**Future research**

The area of coping with success and failure needs more attention and the author of this paper hope that this study has both clarified and awakened a few questions. The author also feels that the area of personality and coping strategies needs to be further explored. Is it possible that different personalities prefer different coping strategies or is this not a significant assumption? How much influence has the situation and the personality to the chosen coping strategy? Also the question of whether or not values and perceptions can have influence on the need of coping and chosen coping strategies needs to be further examined.
Figure 1: A model of psychological preparations for peak performance. (Hardy, Jones, Gould, 1996).
Appendix 2: Interview guide for athletes (English).

Athletes.

Background questions:
Tell me a little bit about your self.

- Specific character for you.
- Age.
- Sex.
- Sport.
- Sport experiences.
  - For how long, this specific sport and total.
  - Different sports.
- Level of sport.
- Activities outside sport.
- Education general/sport.

Main questions:

- Define success/failure general.
  - Feelings.
  - Effects positive and negative.
  - Consequences.
- Are success and failure important for you in sport?

Success/failure:
Picture you self in a situation where you experienced success/failure as something difficult.

- Discuss:
  - Feelings before/after.
  - The situation.
    - The competition.
    - Background.
    - Other factors.
Appendix 2: Interview guide for athletes (English).

- Behaviour.
  - Reactions.
  - Relations.
  - What strategies used.
    - Behaviour changing.
    - Goal setting.
    - Thought control.

- Effects.
  - Did it work? Effects.
  - In what ways.

- Consequences.
  - Feelings (now when you think of it).
  - Changes in behaviour.
    - Training.
    - Relations.
    - Goal setting.

- Do you have anything to add?

- Identify coping strategies.
- In what ways do you prepare for a competition?
- In what ways does your trainer help you to deal with situations where you feel the need to cope?
- What help do you have from others?
- Do you think that this interview is about something that you believe is relevant and important for the sport?
- Debriefing and other questions.
Aktiva.

Bakgrundsfrågor:
Berätta lite om dig själv.
- Utmärkande drag för just dig.
- Ålder
- Kön
- Idrott
- Idrottserfarenheter.
  - Hur länge, totalt och denna tävlingsidrott.
  - Olika idrotter.
- Tävlingsnivå.
- Aktiviteter utanför idrotten.
- Utbildning generell/idrottslig.

Huvudfrågor:
- Definiera framgång/motgång
  - Känslor.
  - Effekter, pos. & neg.
  - Konsekvenser.
- Är framgång och motgång viktigt för dig som idrottare.

Framgång/motgång:
Föreställ dig själv i en situation där du upplevt framgången/motgång som något jobbigt.
- Diskutera:
  - Känslan före/efter.
  - Känslan efter/efter.
  - Situationen.
    - Tävling.
    - Bakgrund.
    - Andra faktorer.
Appendix 3: Interview guide for athletes (Swedish).

- **Beteende.**
  - Reaktioner.
  - Relationer.
  - Vilken strategi användes.
    - Beteendeförändring.
    - Målsättning.
    - Tankeförändring.

- **Utfall.**
  - Fungerade det, effekter.
  - På vilket sätt.

- **Konsekvenser.**
  - Känslor (nu när du tänker tillbaka på det).
  - Beteendeförändring.
    - Träning.
    - Relationer.
    - Målsättning.

- **Har du något att tillägga.**

  - Identifiera copingstrategier.
  - Hur förbereder du dig inför en tävling.
  - Vilken hjälp har du från din tränare att klara av copingsituationer.
  - Vilken hjälp har du från andra.
  - Tycker du att det som intervjun har handlat om är något som är relevant och som du skulle vilja lära dig mera om.
  - Debriefing och besvara frågor.
Appendix 4: Interview guide for coaches (English).

Coaches.
Background questions:
Tell me a little bit about your self.
  • Specific character for you.
  • Age.
  • Sex.
  • Sport.
  • Sport experiences.
    o For how long, this specific sport and total.
    o Different sports.
  • Level of sport on your athletes.
  • Activities outside sport.
  • Education general/sport
  • Is you being a trainer a work? Full/half/%.

Main questions:
  • Define success/failure general.
    o Feelings.
    o Effects positive and negative.
    o Consequences (star fever).
  • Are success and failure important for you in sport?

Success/failure:
Picture a situation where one of your athletes experienced success/failure as something difficult.
  • Discuss:
    o Perceived feelings the athlete had before and after.
Appendix 4: Interview guide for coaches (English).

- The situation.
  - The competition.
  - Background.
  - Other factors.
- Behaviour.
  - Reactions.
  - Relations.
  - What strategies used.
    - Behaviour changing.
    - Goal setting.
    - Thought control.
- Effects.
  - Did it work? Effects.
  - In what ways.
- Consequences.
  - Feelings (now when you think of it).
  - Changes in behaviour.
    - Training.
    - Relations.
    - Goal setting.
- Do you have anything to add?

- Identify coping strategies your athletes use. Generalise if possible.
- Significant others.
- In what ways do you help your athletes to deal with situations they feel they need to cope with?
- Do you think that this interview is about something that you believe is relevant and important for the sport?
- Debriefing and other questions.
Tränare.
Bakgrundsfrågor:
Berätta lite om dig själv.
- Utmärkande drag för just dig.
- Ålder
- Kön
- Idrott
- Idrottserfarenheter.
  - Hur länge, totalt och denna tävlingsidrott.
  - Olika idrotter.
- Tävlingsnivå på dina aktiva.
- Aktiviteter utanför idrotten.
- Utbildning generell/idrottslig.
- Är träningsjobbet fulltids/deltids/ideellt.

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Huvudfrågor:
- Definiera framgång/motgång
  - Känslor.
  - Effekter, pos. & neg.
    - Konsekvenser (stiger framgången dem åt huvudet, star fever).
- Är framgång och motgång viktigt för dig som tränare.

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Framgång/motgång:
Föreställ dig en situation där en av dina aktiva befinner sig i en situation där de upplevt framgången/motgång som något jobbigt.
- Diskutera:
  - Känslan som du upplevt hos den aktive före/efter.
Appendix 5: Interview guide for coaches (Swedish).

- Situationen.
  - Tävling.
  - Bakgrund.
  - Andra faktorer.

- Beteende.
  - Reaktioner.
  - Relationer.
  - Vilken strategi användes.
    - Beteendeförändring.
    - Målsättning.
    - Tankeförändring.

- Utfall.
  - Fungerade det, effekter.
  - På vilket sätt.

- Konsekvenser.
  - Känslor (nu när du tänker tillbaka på det).
  - Beteendeförändring.
    - Träning.
    - Relationer.
    - Målsättning.

- Har du något att tillägga.

- Identifiera copingstrategier hos dina idrottare. Ev. generalisera.
- På vilket sätt hjälper du dina idrottare att klara av situationer. Ev. generalisera.
- Signifikanta andra.
- Tycker du att det som intervjun har handlat om är något som är relevant och som du skulle vilja lära dig mera om.
- Debriefing och besvara frågor.
References


