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### **Aussies think sports doping rife: study February 8, 2010, AAP**

New research has found Australians believe many of the nation's elite athletes are drug cheats.

More than 2520 people were surveyed over the phone in the first Australian study of public attitudes towards sports doping.

The joint survey by two universities and Roy Morgan Research found the most commonly held public view was that a quarter of elite and professional athletes use performance-enhancing drugs and more than a third of athletes use recreational drugs.

Study co-author Associate Professor James Skinner, from Griffith University, said the public had the least faith in the stars of track and field, with 20 per cent believing performance-enhancing drugs were commonly used in athletics.

This comes as the International Olympic Committee is investigating a doping case that could lead to the stripping of gold medals from a US women's relay team at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Prof Skinner said 19 per cent believed doping was rife among professional weightlifters and 18 per cent believed it was common among elite cyclists, while a third perceived recreational drug use to be common among AFL and NRL players.

"The overwhelming majority of the Australian public believe sports doping is very serious and almost everyone believes the athlete should be sanctioned for such conduct,

" Prof Skinner said.

"The public also believe that the major stakeholders in sport, including athletes, coaches, sporting bodies and government, should take action, including both fines and bans, when athletes are found to have used banned drugs."

He said nearly 50 per cent of respondents had faith in the current Australian anti-doping regime.

The study was commissioned by the federal health department.

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## ***Burn Out*** ***by Forbes Carlisle (Australia)***

*Assigning me the topic of burnout for the 1999 ASCTA Conference, no doubt the conveners believe that as a long-ago physiologist with a strong interest in testing athletes for signs and symptoms of breakdown in performance capacity, I may be able to shed some light on the problems of athletes who at least temporarily, seem to have reached the end of their tether, performing well below their best.*

*We know that rest, or at least greatly reduced training load, will generally restore the athlete. However, at times weeks, even months are required for complete recovery—and by then some athletes may have given up in despair.*

*Coaches need to intervene early.*

*Just what do we mean by burnout?*

*The Oxford and Macquarie dictionaries quite literally refer to the exhaustion of energy supplies, as seen in the eventual failure of rockets.*

*This may be close to a good definition in many instances—something worn out, expended.*

*How can burnout be prevented?*

*With athletes who overreach (a relatively modern term) and those who overtrain, this being regarded as one step further down a slippery slope—there can often be other important factors concerned in the process besides the stress of exercise.*

*One of these factors quite often is psychological stress. Common usage has given the term burnout an almost complete psychological dimension.*

*On the psychological level, not only athletes but non-athletes, including swimming coaches, can suffer burnout and some do not swim or run a meter more than they have to.*

*However, I don't think this is what the conveners wanted me to talk about. For coaches who may be interested, I seriously suggest they look up burnout on the internet.*

*Here we can read, and I am sure all benefit, from some very good advice.*

*There can be little argument today that in all sports, for top performance, psychological factors play an important role in affecting athletic endeavor, positively or negatively.*

*However when I was a student, more than 50 years ago, my teacher and mentor, the late Professor Frank Cotton (1890-1955) believed differently.*

*With a very modest budget Frank Cotton established Australia's first Sport Science laboratory, during the mid- 1940s at the University of Sydney.*

*The Professor was first and foremost a physiologist. Raise the possibility with him that there was a psychological explanation for diminished performance and he would silence me with a raised eyebrow and a stern look.*

*This, he believed, was a "cop-out." Primarily, he would say, one must search for explanations based on a more "exact science," physiology. My apologies to the psychologists present.*

*I digress a little to comment that for far too long in swimming, and I am as much guilty as anybody, there has been undue concentration on strength, power and endurance, rather than on the biomechanics and hydrodynamics of effective stroke-making, on nutrition and psychology.*

*For many years we pursued the elusive end of the rainbow, seeking that "pot of gold" of valid*

*physiological tests which would identify the fact that an athlete was passing from a well adapted to an overtrained state.*

*We searched for objective tests which would reliably flag an alert which could prevent the overenthusiastic coach from driving an athlete into long-lasting, intransient staleness.*

*So far there are no such physiological tests, certainly no one test which can provide a reliable guide for the coach.*

*Competitive swimming today is as much an art as it is a science, with a background of scientific understanding.*

*If coaches carefully read the logbook remarks of swimmers, listen to swimmers and learn from well-monitored trial swims, we can be aware early of what tests may later only confirm long after the horse has bolted.*

*Well-monitored trials can tell us more than physiological test results about performance capacity.*

*Scientists very often confirm what coaches have already found.*

*For instance, coaches learned that in the crawlstroke, swimmers should move around the central axis of the body and that "miles make champions." It took many decades for coaches to learn this, but still there are some scientists who expound that in general, optimum performance will come with "less volume and more intensity."*

*But ask leading coaches, especially Americans to comment on this today.*

*They will nearly all tell you that "science" led many of them astray and they took the wrong turn.*

*U.S. male distance performances since 1976 will indicate this.*

*At times scientists may have come close to finding useful prognostic tests but the conclusion is inescapable that there has not, and there is not likely to be found, any single physiological parameter which can be tested, and providing an athlete is not found to be suffering*

*from a medically diagnosed illness, can reliably be demonstrated to flag imminent poor performance.*

*An athlete with a clean bill of health may be performing well below his/her best, feeling chronically tired and uninterested both in training and competing. Yet medically tests will not detect symptoms of illness.*

***The coach has a problem.***

*How is the coach to know when the swimmer is a candidate for the overtraining syndrome and greatly worsened performances?*

*As suggested, it is how the athlete feels, what the coach can learn from watching and listening to his swimmer, and being aware of training times and the effort expended which are the most important guides to assessing the effects of the training program.*

*The swimmer's feelings and coach's observations are often a long way ahead of any "scientific" test results.*

*So far, no common denominator has been discovered of any useful physiological tests which will identify with even reasonable reliability the over-stressed or the about-to-be stressed-out athlete who is not responding beneficially to training.*

*As an assistant coach once said to me..."I can tell how much effort is going into repeat swims by observing the swimmer's breathing and watching his face.*

*" He was right. What we should be looking for, with the cooperation of the athlete, is the matching of effort exerted and the times for test swims.*

*Combined with the result of monitored trials under as far as possible standardized conditions and hearing a report of the perceived effort, such swimmer observations are the best indicators of physical condition.*

*Being aware of diminution of performance capacity but accompanied by increased effort, and the coach taking appropriate action lies at the heart of good coaching. In this lies the art of good coaching, which in essence is knowing the athlete.*

*There is an industry carried out by many sport science laboratories within Australia and throughout the world where it is implied that the answer to understanding and optimally directing the training of athletes depends on constant physiological testing.*

*I believe that athletes, at considerable expense, are sometimes being measured with a "crooked ruler," often with invalidated tests. The fact that there is little consensus amongst sports scientists, with no wide agreement on testing protocols, should worry coaches.*

*We have to be very careful about "testing for testing's sake" when all that may be happening is an amassing of more and more fodder for databanks. Reliability and validity of tests are of importance if finance and the athlete's time and effort are to be conserved.*

### ***The Blood***

*Studying the various constituents of blood has long been the focus of the attention of sports scientists. Years ago my wife Ursula and I studied serial hemoglobin concentrations in athletes taken during the resting state.*

*After hundreds of measurements when the level was distinctly below his/her established norm, performances invariably were poor.*

*Usually without nearly complete rest (iron medication may have helped eventually), performances remained depressed.*

*Low serum ferritin (iron) levels are often associated with low performance levels, but then we find there are individuals who are normally on the low side of "normal" and these swimmers continue to feel and perform well.*

*Blood hemoglobin determinations in resting individuals remains a relatively simple, easily carried out, prognostic test.*

*But hemoglobin and ferritin levels can, however, be completely normal but the swimmer may be performing badly!*

*For a while a high serum level of CPK (creatine phosphokinase) was believed to point to overtraining, until it was shown that high blood levels of this enzyme*

*could be the natural result of intensive muscular exercise, but as a rule not a sign of overtraining.*

*Through the years measurement of one physiological parameter after another has been claimed to be a promising "marker."*

*However the validity of most tests have not lived up to early hopes.*

*Nevertheless, as a result of about 10 years work, it seems more than possible that the trail Dr. David Pyne is following at the Australian Institute of Sport, assessing the production of antibodies, the various immunoglobulins produced by the immune system, may prove fruitful in providing information regarding the stressed body's capacity to resist illness.*

*This research appears to be yielding very promising results.*

*Such knowledge, and it seems soon that it will be relatively easily obtained from a saliva test, could well point to when failing adaptation is occurring, reflected by the functioning of the immune system, thus providing a valuable warning for the coach and athlete.*

### ***Adaptation.***

*This is an "in" word used in training circles today.....*

*"How is the swimmer adapting?" It is a good question.*

*Canadian Hans Selye in the late 1940s came up with his then revolutionary theory of The General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) which looked at the sum total effect of a wide variety of stresses on the body, an overloading which could precipitate the onset of many diseases through failure and malfunctioning of various physiological processes.*

*Selye explained breakdown as very often due to the involvement of the adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) produced by the pituitary gland and in turn the effect of this hormone on the various hormonal secretions from the cortical (outer) cells of the adrenal glands.*

*I have long thought that the obvious varying capacities of individual athletes to bear training stress may be*

*related to the productivity of the central hormone ACTH.*

*Perhaps it is significant that the IOC includes ACTH on its list of prohibited substances.*

*It seemed clear to me that there was a direct application of the GAS theory of adaptation to stress and physiological breakdown, in the training of athletes.*

*In a series of papers written in 1955, on the Athlete and Adaptation to Stress (Journal of Physical Education, Melbourne, Feb.-March), appendix 1 and appendix 2, following the Selye model, I set out what may be regarded as a short list of the possible stresses acting on the athlete and postulated that signs and symptoms of failing adaptation could be commonly recognized in the overtrained athlete.*

*Years later, I think in 1973, I introduced a frail Hans Selye at an ASCA Conference in Montreal and Selye surprised me when he said that he had not considered the application of his theory to the athlete in training.*

**Common stresses on the athlete include:**

- muscular exercise of training*
- dietary inadequacy*
- climatic conditions, heat and cold*
- bacterial (and viral) infections and disease*
- emotional conflict and unrest*
- insufficient rest and sleep*
- miscellaneous stress—everyday wear and tear of living.*

*Often more than one of these stresses can be seen to be acting on the athlete.*

**Signs and symptoms of failing adaptation:**

- chronic loss of body weight*
- joint and muscle pain not attributable to a local injury.*
- recurring intestinal upsets*
- swollen lymph glands (tonsils and inguinal glands)*
- blocked nose and one-day colds (rhinitis)*
- skin rashes such as hives (urticaria)*
- psychic unrest, irritability, insomnia, general fatigue often referred to as staleness.*
- general muscular tenseness.*

*These signs and symptoms of overtraining may vary from one athlete to another and a single or a multiple collection of effects may be observed.*

*You will see that the psychological dimension in the General Adaptation Syndrome is listed above as one of the possible results of failure of "adaptation energy" as Selye called it.*

*So you see that the ubiquitous psychic element can be considered to be part of cause and effect of the General Adaptation Syndrome..*

*Today it is generally accepted that the psychological aspects of overtraining are very important, Easily administered, and well validated and (this may be "the rub"), psychological testing would appear to warrant regular use with seriously training athletes.*

*Psychological change often precedes physiological changes.*

**Flattened "T" waves.**

*In 1958 we thought we came close to making some extremely useful observations to indicate failing adaptation.*

*It is a good example illustrating that "all that glitters is not gold," when it comes to physiological testing*

*My wife Ursula and I were at this time measuring as many physiological parameters as was possible with very limited equipment and resources. We were not on a university payroll.*

*Using an even then cast-off item of electronic equipment, an electrocardiograph of ancient vintage—and this was more than 40 years ago, we were excited to discover an interesting phenomenon that had not been reported in the scientific literature.*

*We observed on a daily basis swimmers coming out of their winter "off season."*

*We also seized the opportunity to study top ranking cyclists in a 6-day bicycle race in Sydney.*

*We were able to demonstrate in both the swimmers who were training twice daily, they being driven to quickly reach competitive form, and in the highly stressed*

cyclists, that in all cases there occurred a diminution of the amplitude, considerable flattening of the T waves of the electrocardiograph. In everyday medicine the flattening of the T wave can have serious implications as it is associated with cardiac muscle damage and imminent "heart failure."

The swimmers we tested more than 40 years ago now were all "in the same boat".

They were suddenly precipitated into hard training in October, in cold water, invariably less than 70F (21C), down to 16C. This gave the swimmers no chance for gradual adaptation to a slowly increasing training load and the cold water.

In the cyclists, competing in a 6-day event as expected was a considerable stress.

Typical examples are given of the changes we found in all our subjects (appendix 1 and appendix 2). We still have hundreds of athletes' ECGs taken at this time stored away in our home.

All the swimmers and cyclists tested showed the same changes in various degrees in the T wave on the chest leads, with the greatest flattening appearing in those who appeared most distressed. Several swimmers complained that they found great difficulty in even walking up the steps of the old Drummoyne Pool. The swimmers complained constantly of feeling weak and very tired.

The cyclist whose electrogram is shown (in appendix 2) was taken to hospital during the competition in a state of exhaustion, but returned to finish the race.

A heart specialist to whom we later showed his tracing, which had an inverted T wave, a sign of imminent heart failure asked, "when did he die?". This cyclist later that year finished 4th in his event at the Commonwealth Games.

All the subjects, swimmers and cyclists, eventually, with less severe training and more rest later showed T waves returning more or less to their "normal" shape. However transition to the rested state was usually a slow process, often taking days or weeks.

Ursula and I thought we had discovered the definitive test, a basis for assessing fatigue. But it never turned out this way. Although we have since been told of similar findings in grossly overtrained athletes, few swimmers appear to show marked T wave changes today because they, as a rule, train year-round and do not jump into very hard training from a relatively untrained state.

In 1965 at Indiana University [USA] we tested "Doc" Counsilman's NCAA champion team. There were practically no flattened T waves detected.

The "T wave test" appears to be useful in unusual situations to confirm gross overtraining. But coaches should be aware of this anyway from the athlete's psychological state of well-being.

As a footnote to this story I should tell you that the gross T wave changes probably represent not a damaged heart but an "electrolyte imbalance," the result of maladaptation to exercise stress.

*Heart rates and blood pressure*

We have long known that early morning (basal) heart rate, which we believe should always be carefully monitored, should be noted in the swimmer's logbook and anomalies reported to the coach. This increases with subclinical illness and often in the overtrained state.

Russian research from the 1950s and our observations reported in a study made during the 8-weeks training and testing study we made of the 1960 Australian Olympic team, indicated that abnormal blood pressure changes can occur following a standard exercise which reflect the trained state and failing adaptation.

**Heart rate monitoring**

The linking of heart rate response to performance effort goes back to the beginning of modern sport science. In my early days I was an avid heart rate counter.

Heart rate response can be a useful monitor of performance effort if limitations in the procedure are understood.

One swimmer's "meat may be another's poison." Burnout, overreaching, or overtraining, call it what we will, can occur with some earnest athletes when

*dutifully following what "science" has told their coach about monitoring heart rate for "correct" training speeds.*

*Anomalies using the heart rate response to indicate the intensity of training efforts occur because alterations in the stroke volume are not the same for all individuals. This is obviously a complicating factor in interpreting heart rate response because the amount of blood pumped out is a function of both rate and the changeable stroke volume.*

*There is a salutary reminder of this in an important study by Howat and Robson (Swimming Times, June 1992), referred to in Dr. Brent Rushall's website under the heading Physiology of Training.*

*In this paper there is clear warning that if the coach doggedly insists on training at heart rates according to commonly accepted guides, up to 33% of swimmers will be undertrained and as many as 33% overtrained and may be working well beyond their aerobic capacities.*

*Although normally recommended "heart rate training" procedures would appear to have worked well with some, the method should be tailored to the individual (possibly matching heart rates with lactate responses or perceived exertion). Otherwise this "simple" method of training can with many, represent a seriously flawed procedure.*

#### **To sum up**

*There are no single physiological tests to reliably indicate overtraining.*

*The concept of burnout whilst having mainly psychological connotations can be considered to be part and parcel of the overtraining syndrome.*

*A disturbed mental state will often result in an unhappy and ineffective athlete which alone usually indicates overtraining.*

*Inappropriate use of heart rate in monitoring training can lead to both undertraining and overtraining.*

*On the basis of swimmer-observation by the coach and reliable psychological appraisal, the possibility of burnout/overtraining should be assessed early, and appropriate preventive actions taken.*

## **THE ATHLETE AND ADAPTATION TO STRESS** **By Forbes Carlile**

*(Parts II and III of an address delivered at a Symposium on Training, organized by the Educational and Coaching Committee of the N.S.W. Amateur Swimming Association, July 29, 1955, Sydney).*

### **PART II.**

#### **APPLICATIONS OF THE STRESS CONCEPT TO TRAINING**

*The particular aim of training is to stimulate specific adaptation of the body by continuously repeating physical exercise of a specialized nature. Harmful effects of exercise stress becomes a more likely condition nowadays that rewards for sporting success are many, and high training-mileage has become almost an obsession with many athletes and coaches.*

*Selye's concept that the body has a finite quantity of Adaptation energy and that stresses should be summated when considering their effects on the organism, he has stated to be his most important idea gained from his many observations on stress research.*

*It was stated in Part I that an important result of chronic exposure of the organism to a particular stress is not only to increase the resistance to that stress but also to reduce the nonspecific resistance to other stresses.*

*The implication of this for the athlete becomes apparent. The highly trained athlete may withstand a relatively great load of a particular exercise for which he has been trained, but more easily succumbs to other stressing agents such as chills and bacterial infection than the normal healthy person. This is not an uncommon observation.*

*Any stress, muscular exercise or otherwise, whether major or minor according to Selye, draws on the bank of adaptation energy, but the stresses for which the individual is less well adapted will draw the greatest debit and be most likely to hasten exhaustion reactions.*

## **STRESSES ON THE ATHLETE**

*There are two important practical questions, firstly, what are the main stresses which may make a demand on an athlete's adaptation and, secondly, what signs and symptoms are indicative of a failing store of adaptation energy?*

*Here is a list of stresses which in the author's experience are common to many athletes:*

- muscular exercise,*
- dietary inadequacy,*
- climatic conditions, heat and cold,*
- bacterial infections and disease,*
- emotional conflict and unrest,*
- insufficient rest and sleep,*
- miscellaneous stress-everyday wear and tear of living.*

## **PART III**

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRAIN**

*When the sum total of stresses acting on an individual are such that the body is driven to show reactions of the stage of exhaustion, a few responses have been reported for humans.*

*The author's observations on athletes in severe training for a variety of sports have confirmed Selye's hypothesis that whether a person is ill from disease or stressed by other means such as exercise, he tends to show common reactions.*

*A short list of the more usual signs and symptoms of failing-adaptation includes the following:*

- Chronic loss of body weight.*
- Joint and muscle pain not attributable to a particular local injury.*
- Chronically occurring intestinal upsets.*
- Swollen lymph glands (tonsils and inguinal glands).*
- Blocked nose and one-day cold (rhinitis).*
- Skin rashes such as hives (urticaria).*
- Psychic unrest, irritability, insomnia, general fatigue often referred to as staleness.*
- General muscular tenseness.*

*Loss of weight in the training athlete, whether accompanied, or not, by poor appetite, may be considered as representing the general increased catabolism (destructive processes) of the body tissues which Selye says is characteristic of an advanced*

*G.A.S. response. Some coaches and trainers of animals place considerable faith in the use of this sign as a guide.*

*When visiting the Payne Whitney Gymnasium at Yale University, the author saw the 1952 American Swimming Team candidates under coach R. Kiphuth carefully recording their stripped weights on a chart. This was a daily practice.*

*Joint pains have for some time been recognized as a common symptom of various disease states.*

*Such symptoms in the athlete in terms of the G.A.S. would be interpreted as representing a highly stressed state. The author had some personal experience in this regard. Months after training had commenced and a fairly good specific adaptation to running long distances was demonstrated by improving time-trial performances, joint and muscle pains became a regular occurrence.*

*When these general pains (combined with other symptoms such as extreme irritability) were disregarded, and training load maintained, there was a culmination in breakdown after a marathon race. The chief sign of the physiological breakdown was acute renal failure.*

*Swollen lymph glands, both the tonsils and in the groin area, and urticarial rashes (hives) have been noticed many times by the author both in himself and in other individuals in hard training.*

*Almost immediate relief has always followed when stresses, including muscular exercise, have been removed.*

*Sleeplessness and nervous irritability are classical signs of the condition.*

### ***Do I Care only about Elite?***

*It is partially correct. I do favour some athletes. But it's not the elite athlete; it's the athlete who tries their level best to do what I asked them to do.*

*Usually, that person turns out to be "a star" because they are using me for exactly the correct purpose:*

*"To pick my mind, and my experience, to learn how to be a better athlete and a better person"*

*There is no question that I respond more positively to those who do what I ask.*

*That is all a coach has – Their personal attention – to reward an athlete with.*

*Should I reward inattention, lack of effort, lack of caring, stubbornness, or those who want to show me how much they know rather than what they want to learn?*

***“IF I DON’T REWARD WHAT I THINK IS BEST, WHY SHOULD ANYONE WANT TO FOLLOW MY LEAD?”***

*I clearly give less attention to those swimmers who are not ready, or willing, to focus and improve. The reward is for attention and effort.*

***HOW ELSE WOULD YOU WANT ME TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN?***

*Michael Ursu,  
Head Coach*

## ***The Performance Clock By Wayne Goldsmith***

I often get asked, what’s the difference between sport and high performance sport.

Read the next 800 words and find out.

Winning is rarely about doing it once and walking away.

Winning is about Sustaining Performance: Sustaining Competitiveness: about getting to the top and Staying There.

Lots of people, teams, coaches, athletes and companies win once – but very few are able to adopt the thinking, systems and practices that enable them to sustain competitiveness year after year after year.

Why is Sustainable Competitiveness so important?

No one goes from being Uncompetitive to Winning. Being Competitive means you can launch a winning

campaign or grand final winning plan from a position of relative strength.

It is almost impossible to go from last (or near last) to first in a single year or season.

Sporting teams – particularly football teams – are notoriously BAD at sustaining competitiveness.

They blame the draft. They blame salary caps. They blame the Governing body. They blame injuries. They blame not having enough money. They blame everything except the thing that really makes the difference: their ability to seriously commit to continuous improvement and accelerated change.

With very few exceptions, around the world, most teams feel the need to (unnecessarily) go through the Performance Cycle:

### **Stage One: Non Competitive:**

The organisation is failing to perform and struggling to survive;

**Stage Two: Striving For Success:** A passionate person and / or motivated team ignites the desire to succeed and inspires the organisation to strive for success.

The acceleration of progress comes from embracing change and learning and the commitment to turn learning into action;

### **Stage Three: The Right Culture.**

The right people and the right environment are in place and the opportunity has been created for the Club to be successful;

### **Stage Four: Success:**

The organisation gets to the top but then loses momentum by ceasing to change and learn at the same rate.

They adopt a “secret formula” mentality, i.e., “we know what it takes to win, therefore all we have to do is repeat what we did last year and we will keep winning”.

In the meantime the competition is accelerating their learning and performance – determined to become the next No 1;

### **Stage Five: The Fall:**

Things start to fail. Management and staff get sacked, reviews, reviews and more reviews are commissioned, finally the Board is overthrown, there is public brawling

and the organisation is at the brink of collapsing altogether..... And we are back at STAGE ONE again.

I did some work with a top professional football team which was highly successful in the 1960's.

Now, almost 50 years later, many of the players who starred on the field in the golden days of the club were running the Board, the Management committees, and even had a hands-on role in the coaching.

The biggest problem the club faced was that these people – with the welfare of the club in their hearts and only the best intentions - kept looking for ways of taking the club back to the 60's – because “that's the way we do it here”.

My reply was, “So your way is to fail to perform for 50 years?”

After some heated discussion came the realisation that they needed to retain their proud traditions but embrace effective and meaningful change.

Respect the past but embrace the future.  
Most businesses, sporting organisations and even people perform in cycles.

There are times when they are performing well – and times when they are performing poorly.

The performance cycle of a sporting team can be compared to a CLOCK: the Performance Clock.

**At 10 o'clock**, the organisation is hungry for success and changing rapidly.

They are accelerating their rate of change by learning fast and by being innovative, creative and committed to success;

**At 11 o'clock**, the team is close to their best. They are consistently playing well, making the final series and they are continuing to strive for success.

Most importantly, they have created a culture which has a high likelihood of succeeding;

**At 12 o'clock** – the team wins the premiership or the World Championship, etc., – they are at the peak of

their performance cycle; Then a funny thing happens.....and no matter how many times I present this concept to organisations, it just keeps happening....

Often when a team is at the top of its Performance Cycle it stops doing many of the things it was doing to make it successful.

**1 o'clock** and the team stops being creative and open minded.

They start believing that their way is the only way and that they have the infallible secret formula for success.

This is the beginning of disaster! The teams that have to make the greatest commitment to change and improvement are the ones that are successful – why..... Because your resistance to change is greatest when you believe you have all the answers and that's why most teams fail to repeat success!

So, what happens???? The team starts losing.

**2 o'clock.....3 o'clock.....the coach gets sacked.**  
The club starts spending money on new players, new equipment, new coaches in a frantic attempt to stop the decline in performance; The team keeps losing.

If they are in a relegation / promotion competition, they get relegated to the next league;

**4 o'clock.....5 o'clock....the CEO and Management gets sacked.** The organisation is in disarray;

**6'clock. The team cannot win a game.**  
The fans and the sponsors have deserted it.

It appears that the team may never ever experience success again; But then.....

**7 o'clock** – Someone decides things have to change. They put together a plan and find some people and money to make it happen;

**8 o'clock.....9 o'clock** – People start believing that things can change.

New players, new coaches, new staff, new ideas.....there is enthusiasm and energy and passion in the Club;

**10 o'clock and 11 o'clock** – The cycle is complete and the team can look forward to a short period of success as their Performance Cycle is at its peak once more.

The reality for most sporting teams is that they spend one or two seasons at most between 10 o'clock and 12 and then often spend many many years *between* 1 o'clock and 6 o'clock! And for no reason! There is no reason for sporting organisations to spend years at the bottom of competitions.

The aim is to create a Sustainably Successful High Performance Environment – and to ensure your organisation is always competitive.

Winning once can be luck – sustainable competitiveness comes from good planning, good management, good vision and hard work.

Success is not a destination - success is a moving target and your aim must continually be adjusted if you want to keep it in your sights!

So the difference between sport and high performance sport is this...if you understand this post – congratulations! You have a long career in high performance sport ahead of you. If you don't understand it, enjoy a game of golf or tennis with friends and family now and again but stay out of the pointy end of sport.

### ***The Art of Decision Making***

Each and every day we are tested on how we make the right choices in life.

Nature is very clever as it ensures that each and every human being, no matter how evolved he or she is mentally, spiritually and emotionally, it will keep testing you on a daily basis.

At every moment in our professional and personal lives we are faced with decisions one after another that create and move along the landscape of our lives.

What criteria do you use to make good decisions, what benchmarks do you employ to measure your decision-making process?

Regardless of what business we are in, what projects we

are working on or what interests we have in the world, we are all in the business of relationship building.

In business we are always cultivating relationships with employees, with prospective clients, with colleagues.

In our personal lives we want to ensure that each one around is well taken care of in terms of their vested interests and each and everyone around is in a win-win situation.

The issue of relationships and decision-making are closely linked.

As human beings we need to be in close, clear contact with our own being, i.e., understand ourselves better, so that we can tune into our wisdom that we have gained with life experience.

Whatever decisions we make have an impact on our lives as they keep us moving along a path that is aligned towards integrity, values and goals.

When we allow the rush of events to disconnect us from these deeper desires and dreams, then we do always feel emptiness inside us.

We live in an environment that is constantly changing and it is very important to understand that sound decisions will not only create a life having meaning but also ensure that you are making the necessary impact on the people that surround you.

So how does one cultivate this essential connection or relationship with oneself as well ensure that those decisions that are made are sound and in tune with nature?

Most of us must have learnt that it is good choices that will ensure good decisions are made.

But how do we make good choices? Here is a route to ensure that whatever choices you are making or need to make will ensure that good decisions are made in both your professional life as well as personal life.

**1. Is this choice creative?** A good choice calls on your creativity, your interest in finding solutions that may have been hidden.

Additionally it makes you have a feeling of ownership and a sense of satisfaction that you have been able to solve the challenge you are facing currently and you can feel the energy of your creativity being engaged.

**2. Is this choice healthy?** We are all faced with a decision as to what is the healthiest route both for you and for those involved and perhaps even for the future.

When making healthy decisions one has to evaluate how the impact will be for future generations to come.

Furthermore, we live in an era that focuses on making short-term decisions that are detrimental to the entire The Art of Decision Making By Kamal Vinodrai Shah situation further down the road. So therefore make the right choice with the long-term in view.

**3. Is this choice Open?** (also: Opportunities, Objective):  
Does the decision keep you open to possibilities? Does it bring in a larger field of opportunities?

Are you able to make it an objective as opposed to an emotionally reactive state?

It is very important to have a balance of both the mind and the heart so that you do not leave with regret or be hard on yourself on what has transpired.

**4. Is it Inspiring?:** Inspiration is usually the outcome of a good decision.

Even if the solution is difficult or the next steps hazardous, you know that you are doing the best thing possible in the situation.

This leads to your self-esteem being boosted and raises the energy to face the situation head-on rather than evade the present circumstances you are experiencing.

**5. Is it Empowering?** At the end of the day, do your choices leave you feeling empowered?

Additionally you are the author of your own life and the decisions that you make in your life. If you do get caught in a web of confusion then you need to step back and begin to attend to the issues at hand.

**6. The impact on the mind and soul:** Finally, choices utilize your connection between the mind and soul.

Therefore it is important to have a clear understanding that whatever decision you have made is aligned towards equanimity rather than swaying towards either the mind or the soul.

Life is about balance and decision-making is the same.

Once you can ensure and implement the above you will be able to maintain a stronger connection to the core in you and there will be a sense of strength and power that comes forward in your relationships and choices.

Therefore, the process of decision-making takes into account facts, weighing of potential outcomes, and the history of the issue at hand.

It is very important to ensure that your thoughts, clarity and connection to a deeper well-being is balanced to ensure that choice that you have made is sound and aligned to your values and principles of life.

Additionally, when you make a decision it will have an influence directly on your perceptions, understanding, openness to options and solutions, and the flow of your creative juices thus giving you a deeper understanding and wisdom.

Once you have cultivated the above there is a more essential connection, which makes it easier to see, or sense what is needed in the situation.

Therefore, we experience personal power to stand firm in the face of conflicting opinions or forces.

Additionally, we can keep a perspective that serves the situation and begins to move it along in some creative and hopefully affirmative way that we have envisioned in solving the situation.

Decisions will *never stop* and it is important that whatever you are currently facing in life that you apply the simple principles that will ensure you have a better quality of life.

“No one can defeat us “