

“Shadow Match” is a tool that can assist sports people, coaches and support staff by firstly understanding the habits of sports people, before judging them as weak or giving up on them.

What is a habit?

A habit is an action that repeats itself with no or minimal conscious planning and are formed through repetition. Habits are developed for a reason and associated with some meaningful goal or purpose. This goal or purpose might be something like avoiding discomfort, being successful or being efficient. Any behaviour can become a habit such as waking up early in the morning to go to training. The goal of this habit is to help a person succeed in sport. Another example of a habit is when a tennis player throws his racket due to frustration after making a mistake. It is learned behaviour where the purpose is to relieve his frustration. When sports people cannot freely live by their habits, they find it difficult to function properly and therefore battle to be successful in a specific context. A simple example is a swimmer who is consistently struggling to wake up early in the morning and therefore, misses early morning training sessions on a continuous basis. This swimmer will always be in trouble, will also struggle to complete all his training and therefore, might struggle to succeed.

The role of habits in sport?

Habits play a crucial role in sport. Habits indicate the level of ease with which a sport person can act. If a specific behaviour has been developed as a strong habit, that behaviour is easy to execute and normally requires minimum thinking or energy. This is as if the person is on auto pilot which hopefully increases chances of success. The person will just act with minimum effort and can use all energy on his performance instead of thinking about habits first. However, when an athlete does not have a habit of behaving in a specific way, it doesn't indicate an inability to do it. It means that the athlete doesn't do this as a habit. This athlete might find it more challenging and invest more emotional energy to act in a manner that is not developed as a behavioural habit. For example, a cricketer that is prone to engage in behaviour such as drinking, smoking and staying up late. This does not mean that he can't change his habits. It means that it will take more conscious efforts and emotional energy to live healthy in comparison with someone who has the habit of engaging in a healthy life style.

How can we measure habits?

“Shadow Match” is a tool that measures habits. Sports

people can complete the “Shadow Match” worksheet online. This specific profile is then compared to other successful sports people. Detailed feedback on the sports people strong and weak habits are given after completion.

What does “Shadow Match” do?

“Shadow Match” creates a benchmark of the habits of successful sports people in a specific environment doing a specific job. It then compares individuals to this benchmark and provide results on the match.

What habits does “Shadow Match” identify?

“Shadow Match” provides information on a variety of habits. This article only allows or the discussion of 10 crucial habits.

1. Resilience:

Refers to sports people who give up easily or don't try at all when faced with a challenge versus sports people who apply themselves relentlessly to overcome challenges.

2. Propensity to change:

Refers to sports people who find it very difficult to adapt to change and get comfortable with new ways of doing things or a new environment, for example, sports people that struggle to adapt to a new coach or training programme. The other side is sports people who embrace change and are very comfortable with anything new such as a new training programme or team mates.

3. Propensity to handle frustration:

Frustration occurs when an athlete is obstructed from reaching his/her goals. “Shadow Match” gives an indication whether the athlete has a habit towards applying positive behaviour when dealing with frustrating circumstances.

4. Team / individual inclination:

Refers to whether an athlete prefers to be part of a team or working as an individual. This is an important indicator when choices have to be made between individual or team sport.

“Shadow Match”

as a tool used in sport to understand habits of sports people

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5. Self motivation:

Refers to sports people that have the habit of energising themselves (internal motivation) versus sports people who are dependent on external energisers (external motivation) to stay positive, driven and active. Self motivation is the behaviour of continuous positive action to achieve a goal despite the absence of external energisers such as encouragement from coaches, team mates or the crowd.

6. Routine:

Refers to whether sports people have a habit towards structure, repetition, mundane activities and patterns of behaviour sameness.

7. Responsiveness:

Refers to sports people reaction speed, thus, the habit of acting immediately and quickly if and when necessary. Some sport requires sports people to act quickly whilst others allow time to wait and think very thoroughly before acting.

8. Discipline:

Refers to the habit of working under extreme levels of discipline, where adherence to structure, rules, regulations and time frames are imperative.

9. Self confidence:

Refers to athletes ability to act with conviction and stay with a decision they made. The athlete displays high levels of trust in their own abilities, qualities of judgement, and knowing their own strengths and limitations.

10. Leadership:

Refers to the ability to integrate resilience, discipline, team oriented approach, and self confidence with a positive attitude.

These are amongst others some of the habits that “Shadow Match” provides information on.

To conclude

If athletes display specific behaviour it might be wise to find out whether this is a strong habit or not. For example if an athlete has a habit of giving up in races where they are experiencing failure it might be wise to find out more about the athlete’s habits. Perhaps resilience is just a very weak habit and if the athlete knows this he can change the habit and therefore make it stronger. This will benefit his sporting career. “Shadow Match” is a tool that can assist sports people, coaches and support staff by firstly understanding the habits of sports people, before judging them as weak or giving up on them. Everyone needs a chance in developing their potential and therefore being the best they can be! 🏆