

Performance Point

Game on...Game off: 'Switching' Between Sport and Life

by Bruce Pinel, Sport Psychologist, Canadian Sport Centre Pacific

September 2006

Competing at the highest levels in sport requires a tremendous amount of time and energy each day dedicated to the pursuit of excellence. However, having 'sport' on your brain 24/7 is not healthy and may actually negatively impact your sport performance. Interestingly, often one of the best things you can do to improve your performance is to actually get away from your sport and take 'breaks' during the day; not just physical breaks, but mental breaks as well so that you come back refreshed and ready to go!

If you find that during your physical breaks (i.e. between training sessions, competitive events) you continue to process and think about your sport, you are not providing the mind and body the appropriate rest time needed to regenerate and recuperate the energy levels (both physical and mental) required to perform at your best when required. This is when it is important to develop the ability to '**switch off / on**' from your sport using the skills of **Symbolic Release** and **Symbolic Capture**.

Symbolic Release = a physical action or gesture that represents your commitment to '**switching off**' your **sport-brain** and '**switching on**' your **other-life-interests-brain**.

- Examples of the 'switch' are:
 - closing your locker containing your sport-related gear
 - zipping up your gear-bag
 - putting on your regular clothes
 - your first step out of the sport complex
 - putting away your training / competition journal after you have made your entry

Symbolic Capture = a physical action or gesture that represents your commitment to '**switching on**' your **sport-brain** and '**switching off**' your **other-life-interests-brain**.

- Examples of the 'switch' are:
 - packing your gear bag
 - getting into your car to go to training
 - your first step into the sport complex
 - putting on your training gear
 - touching a team logo before training

By developing skills to "switch on and off" between sport and other life interests you are better able to:

- maximize your training / competition by not 'bringing' external concerns and issues onto the field of play with you
- maximize your time outside of sport by not 'bringing' sport concerns and issues into other life interests.

Consistent with the above message, it is very important for performance athletes to have goals in other areas of life beyond sport (school, career, family, relationships, hobbies, etc.) and to have appropriate outlets to pursue these interests. Canadian Sport Centre Pacific Athlete / Coach Services (ACS) have resources and personnel available to assist you in this pursuit, which will ultimately contribute to



Powering Sport Performance

The Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, in partnership with the network of Canadian Sport Centres and PacificSport Centres, delivers sport performance programs to help athletes and coaches win medals for Canada. Working in support of our national and provincial sport partners, the Canadian Sport Centre Pacific is creating a stronger system for the development of athletes, coaches, performance enhancement teams and sport performance facilities. www.cscpacific.ca