

## Study Guide #7

# Using Five Minutes Before Your Performance

*Parent & Child Study Guides to Watching a Sports Event*

*Association for the Advancement  
of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)*

Watching a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. Within the sporting arena we see both good and poor examples of such topics as: setting and working towards goals, focusing attention, managing emotions, handling disappointment, relating to others, dealing with nervousness, etc.

In order to maximize this learning opportunity, AAASP has developed a series of study guides for parents and children to use while watching a sports event, either in person or on television. Each guide is brief and focused around a limited topic. It suggests certain observations and presents several questions for the parent and child to discuss. The study guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

We hope that these guides will promote a healthy dialogue between parents and their children about various issues that athletes face during sporting events, as well as in preparation for competition. Your child doesn't necessarily need to be an athlete to benefit from these discussions, since children experience most of these issues in daily life, such as in school. We hope that this information is helpful to you in promoting healthy ideas about sport, exercise, and human performance in general.

### **Discussion questions: Using Five Minutes Before Your Performance**

While you watch a sports event:

1. Observe athletes immediately prior to performing their events.
2. What do these athletes do immediately before competition?
3. Do some athletes appear to have a routine (structured sequence of behaviors and thoughts) that they go through?
4. What do you think the athlete is thinking about right now before he or she performs?
5. Are there any differences between the athletes that use routines and the athletes who do not? For example, does either athlete look more relaxed, confident, happy or panicked, rushed, confused, or worried?
6. What do you do immediately before performing a skill?
7. How might playing an important game change your thoughts and behaviors immediately before performing a skill? Might this change affect your performance? How can you remain steady and focused before a big game?
8. How might using a routine help you to stay focused, relaxed, and confident going into your performance?

### **Lesson conclusion**

Successful athletes are appropriately energized, confident, and focused immediately prior to performing. Rather than allowing their surroundings to affect how they prepare,

successful athletes go through the same behaviors and think the same thoughts during the five minutes before every performance. Athletes may physically walk through their performances or some aspect of their performance. For example, they may visualize executing their performances flawlessly (especially watch freestyle aerial ski jumpers who move their arms and body as they would in the air). Some athletes will talk to themselves, saying things to stay confident or say cue words (explode, smooth and strong) that guide them through specific movements. The last five minutes prior to performing a skill can be critical for athletes in focusing their emotions and energy. Some athletes use this time to make sure they are psyched up and ready to explode while others use this time to calm themselves down. Importantly, successful athletes use this time productively to put themselves in a mindset that helps their performance.

AAASP encourages parents to do their part in creating a supportive youth sport environment so their child will develop a life long interest in physical activity and playing sports. By teaching the fundamentals, you can help your child develop a winning attitude, not only in sports but also throughout his or her life.

### **About AAASP**

Founded in 1986, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of the psychology of sport, exercise and health. AAASP is the premier international, multidisciplinary sport and exercise psychology organization, and is the only professional organization in North America that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport, exercise, and health psychology. For more information on this and other topics, or to find a certified sport psychology consultant in your area, visit <http://www.aaasponline.org>.

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