INTRODUCTION

Soccer as an interdisciplinary area of research and consultancy can be addressed from different perspectives: sociological, psychological, pedagogical, physiological, and biomechanical. Psychological aspects of soccer include a system of multiple factors affecting players' personal growth and achievement level. This paper will focus on the role of subjective emotional experiences that can either enhance or impair individual and team performance of skilled soccer players. An attempt will also be undertaken to summarize practical experiences in the assessment, monitoring and intervention during three year still on-going project with the Finnish Olympic soccer team. Conceptually, the approach is based on the individual zones of optimal functioning (IZOF) model developed as an idiographic (individual-oriented) alternative to the study of emotions in elite sport (see for review Hanin, 1997). First, a brief overview of the IZOF model and assessment procedures using individualized scales will be presented. Then selected empirical findings on optimal and dysfunctional emotions and emotion-performance relationships in skilled soccer players will be reported. Finally, implications and future directions for interdisciplinary research extending the IZOF model to other components of psychobiosocial state will be suggested.

THE IZOF MODEL

The IZOF model, developed in top sports setting, combines the within- and between-subjects analysis of emotional experiences related to individually optimal and less than optimal performances. The main emphasis in the model is on enhancing consistency of athlete's successful performance. The IZOF model was used to study optimal pre-competition anxiety and patterns of positive and negative emotions or affect (PNA) in different sports (see for review, Hanin, 1997). As applied to pre-competition anxiety, this approach indicates that each athlete has individually optimal level (high, moderate and low) and the zones of anxiety facilitating an athlete's performance. Successful performance occurs when current precompetition anxiety is near or within the optimal zones. When precompetition anxiety falls outside the zones, that is higher or lower, performance usually deteriorates.

In the IZOF model extended to the study of emotions enhancing and impairing individual performance several new features were developed. First, the framework of five basic dimensions (form, content, intensity, time and context) for the systemic description of emotions as a part of an individual's working state was proposed. Second, the emotion content was conceptualized within the four global categories: positive, pleasant, functionally optimal emotions; negative, unpleasant, functionally optimal emotions; positive, pleasant, dysfunctional emotions; and negative, unpleasant, dysfunctional emotions. Third, the prediction of successful, average or poor performance is based on the "in-out of the zone" principle contrasting player's current (or anticipatory) emotional state with optimal and dysfunctional emotions. High probability of success is expected when PNA is within the optimal zones and outside nonoptimal ranges. Additionally, a step-wise assessment procedures were developed to generate: (a) optimal and nonoptimal PNA profiles and (b) recall, current, and anticipatory measures on individualized self-rating scales with athlete-generated items.
These provided tools for the accurate prediction of individual PNA-performance relationships and post-performance analysis.

EMOTION PATTERNS IN SKILLED SOCCER PLAYERS

Most of the IZOF research at this point is focused on the prototype analysis of the content and intensity of positive and negative emotions that are helpful or harmful for individual and team performance. Individual PNA profiles and a total "soccer" emotion profile including top 5 most frequently selected emotions (optimal and dysfunctional) will be described and functionally interpreted. Furthermore, reliability and validity of anticipatory, current, and recall measures of emotion using individualised PNA scales and procedures matching team's routines and preparation patterns will be demonstrated (Hanin & Syrja, 1995, 1996). The second direction of the IZOF research aims to test the in-out of the zone principle by examining the within-individual dynamics of emotions before, during, and after performance in skilled and in junior soccer players (Hanin, 1997; Syrja, Hanin, Pesonen, 1995). It will be argued that both directions of research seem to provide a complete picture of emotion impact upon individual and team performance in soccer. Finally, a special attention will given to a detailed feedback following the IZOF assessments to the coach and players in the process of preparation of the team. Ways to enhance communication between coach and players will be also discussed.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several directions in the application of the IZOF model in soccer will be suggested including: an in-depth analysis of players' individual strengths and limitations (performance profiling), patterns of active recovery from demanding games during the season, team-building through better awareness of own optimal patterns and those of others, and consistent excellency in performance of individual players and that of the team. It will be argued that future enhanced impact of sport science upon the practice of soccer will depend to a larger degree upon joint and more interdisciplinary efforts in both research and consultancy.

REFERENCES