

# Research Highlight

## Variables Influencing the Performance of Hong Kong Athletes at the 2002 Asian Games and the 2004 Olympic Games

The ultimate aim of every elite athlete is to excel at the premier international events. Identifying factors that might influence athletes' performances, is an important psychological preparation strategy to enable coaches and athletes to better prepare for the demands of successfully competing at the highest level at major events such as the Asian and Olympic Games.

### Objective

The purpose of the study was to identify the variables during, and within 90 days prior to event, which athletes and coaches perceived to have influenced performances at the 2002 Asian Games and 2004 Olympic Games.

### Methodology

Fifty (30 males, 20 females) Hong Kong athletes and 14 Hong Kong coaches (13 males, 1 female) who took part in the 2002 Asian Games, and 25 Hong Kong athletes (13 males, 12 females) and 11 Hong Kong coaches (8 males, 3 females) who took part in the 2004 Olympic Games, were surveyed through questionnaires.

### Results

A synthesis of the common perceptions of coaches and athletes regarding factors strongly influencing performance during the 2002 Asian Games and the 2004 Olympic Games is presented in Table 1. Factors such as strong motivation, confidence, physical conditioning and strategic responsiveness were nominated as positively influencing performance at the Games. Common negative influences on performances were identified as the inability to stay calm and intrusive media.

Common perceptions regarding factors strongly influencing performance in the 90-day lead in to the Games are presented in Table 2. Positive factors included, focused attitude, access to simulated competitions and training at the Games venues, good nutrition, medical and recovery support. Funding constraints curtailing optimal training was the one negative factor identified by both athletes and coaches.

### Implications

The variables nominated by athletes and coaches as strongly influencing performance at the 2002 Asian Games and the 2004 Olympic Games included psychological, physiological, social, and environmental factors. The results suggest that comprehensive pre-event preparation should be specifically tailored to optimise the positive factors. Negative factors may not always be controllable, and clear psychological preparation strategies to manage and prepare for unexpected intrusions should be well planned in advance.

July 2007

Table 1: Coaches' and Athletes' Common Perceptions of Factors strongly influencing performance during Major Games

Factors strongly influencing performance	2002 Asian Games		2004 Olympic Games	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
<b>Factors Directly Related to Competition</b>				
Athletes could make strategic adjustments according to various situations at the Games			+	
Athletes unable to stay calm during the Games		-		
Athletes confident with their capabilities	+			
Athletes strongly motivated to compete in the Games	+		+	
Athletes physically fit	+		+	
Athletes in good physical condition and injury/illness free	+		+	
<b>Team Factors</b>				
Good team cohesion	+			
Harmonious relationship between the coach and the team	+			
<b>Media Factors</b>				
Interviewed by the media at an inappropriate time				-
<b>Delegation Staff Factors</b>				
Timely assistance from doctor or physiotherapist during competition	+		+	
Timely assistance from psychologist during competition			+	
<b>Social Support Factors</b>				
Families or friends provided positive support during the Games			+	
Government valued the Games and allocated enough resources	+			



Table 2: Coaches' and Athletes' Common Perceptions of Factors strongly influencing performance during the 90 days before the Games

Factors strongly influencing performance	2002 Asian Games		2004 Olympic Games	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Doctor or physiotherapist available anytime during training			+	
Speedy recovery from training fatigue			+	
Good nutrition maintained	+		+	
Effective conservation of energy			+	
Funding constraints curtailed training				-
Access to training or competition at the Games venues	+		+	
Focused competition attitude to training	+		+	
Access to Games simulations	+		+	

