

**The Mental Toughness UNIFORM for High School Varsity Water Polo: The Study**

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**Abstract:**

Gilbert and colleagues (Gilbert, 2011, 2017; Gilbert, Gilbert, Loney, Wahl, & Michel, 2006; Gilbert & Lewis, 2013; Gilbert, Moore-Reed, & Clifton, 2017; Johnson & Gilbert, 2004) have studied a sport psychology intervention for youth and adolescent athletes. The intervention is the Psychological UNIFORM and teaches important life skills to adolescent athletes (e.g., how to set effective goals, improve their confidence and focus, etc.) through the use of familiar sport terms. In a study with 138 high school basketball and baseball players, results showed that the intervention group significantly increased their use of relaxation, imagery, goal setting, and self-talk from pretest to posttest (Gilbert & Lewis, 2013). More recently, high school varsity soccer players significantly increased their use of relaxation, goal setting, and self-talk in practice, as well as their use of imagery, goal setting, and self-talk in competition from pretest to posttest (Gilbert, Moore-Reed, & Clifton, 2017). The large numbers of high school students that compete in sport, coupled with the positive benefits that can occur when they are exposed to sport psychology interventions, warrant the need for further investigations. The studies cited thus far, have shown positive results when a graduate student or sport psychology professional teaches the sport psychology concepts. However, coaches are with their student-athletes on a regular basis and may be in the best position to be able to teach sport psychology (Gilbert, Moore-Reed, & Clifton, 2017; Voight, 2005). Further, they are charged with doing so (NASPE, 2006). Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to implement a sport psychology curriculum (i.e., The Psychological UNIFORM; Gilbert, 2011) to student-athletes at a high school within a local school district when the curriculum is taught by the coach. More specifically the research questions are: (a) Can student-athletes learn sport psychology skills and apply them on their own during practice when taught them by their coach? (b) Can student-athletes learn sport psychology skills and apply them on their own in competition when taught by their coach?, and (c) If the student-athletes do learn sport psychology skills and apply them on their own when taught by their coach, can these changes be observed in a follow-up period a minimum of four weeks after the intervention is complete? The coach and primary researcher initially

mapped out a schedule that would allow for pretesting, intervention, posttesting, and follow-up testing with the student-athletes (n = 25) to be completed by early Spring 2019. However, the coach changed the timeline, and while pretesting is complete, the intervention period is currently still underway. To date, observation notes from more than 40 field visits have been completed and the head coach has been interviewed. Initial data analysis suggests that the student-athletes are learning the UNIFORM skills when taught by their coach and that they are using these skills at practice and competition. Quotes from the coach interview and the observation notes will be provided to support these findings.