

Taryn Book

*Psycho-Cybernetics: Mental Imagery and Athletic Performance Connection*

My basketball coach has said, "Perfect practice makes perfect," but how do you practice perfect? Is there a direct correlation between practicing using mental imagery and athletic performance? The hypothesis, "If three groups of five secondary school students were to attempt to improve their free throw shooting, one group actually shooting, another group using only mental imagery, and a final group with no practice at all, then the group with mental imagery will show the most improvement," was tested. Fifteen volunteers were selected for this project. A well-defined sports activity, shooting a basketball free throw, which has a measurable outcome, was selected as the test activity. All volunteers were asked to shoot 10 free throws as a base line starting point. The number of shots made was recorded. Five of the participants were then asked to physically practice shooting free throws for eight days. The second group of five was asked to only mentally practice shooting ten free throws for the same amount of time, and the third group was asked to refrain from practicing the activity each day during the assigned data collection time. The performance of all the volunteers was tested again after the eight days of practice. The mental imagery group improved shooting percentage by 22.5%, the shooting group improved percentage by 2.5%, and the group that did nothing improved by 10%. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported, indicating mental imagery may improve free throw shooting percentage.