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Citation:

Didymus, FF and Fletcher, D (2013) A review of stress appraising in sport performers: Where are we now and where do we go from here? In: Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (BPS), 16 Dec 2013 - 17 Dec 2013, Manchester, UK. (Unpublished)

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A Review of Stress Appraising in Sport Performers:
Where are we now and Where do we go From Here?

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RELATED THEME: Psychology for performance

BACKGROUND: According to transactional stress theory and sport psychology research, appraising is an important component of athletes' stress transactions. This is because appraisals provide the basis for various psychological, physiological, emotional, and behavioural outcomes. Thus, a review of the sport psychology literature that focuses on appraising is required to facilitate a greater understanding of performers' stress transactions.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this review was to critically examine the sport psychology research on appraising. In addition, the review aimed to draw on occupational, organizational, and general psychology research to explore four main areas: 1) appraising in stress transactions, 2) situational factors that influence appraising, 3) person factors that influence appraising, and 4) the notion of reappraisal.

METHOD: A thorough search of the literature was conducted to identify relevant studies. All of the studies were rigorously examined.

KEY POINTS: Understanding appraising is central to understanding stress transactions. However, little is known about appraising in sport and, in particular, the situational and personal factors that influence this process. The research does, however, suggest that situational clarity and mental toughness may help to prevent potential negative outcomes of stress transactions.

CONCLUSIONS: This review has enhanced understanding of performers' stress transactions and identified gaps in the empirical literature. A substantial research agenda that addresses these gaps needs to be conducted before practical recommendations can be made. Non-sport research should be used to work toward a better understanding of the factors that influence athletes' appraisals and the impact of these appraisals on sport performance.

Keywords: appraisal, reappraisal, primary appraising, secondary appraising, transactional stress theory

Word count: 248 words