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Over the year we have covered many different mental skills and performance situations that might be improved through sport psychology services. But what do you look for when choosing a sport psychologist (SP)? Here are some things you may want to consider when hiring a SP for your team or yourself:

1. Issue – in other words, what do you want assistance with? Is your team not cohesive? Is there no or minimal leadership? Are you so anxious before and during competitions that you don’t perform at the level you want? Are problems in your relationship seeping over into your training and performances? Knowing what the problems are and how you want to improve is necessary for deciding who to hire.

2. Credentials – like any other profession, there are credentials that indicate a minimum level of training and proficiency. Certification as a sport consultant through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) is one important credential. These SPs have the skills and knowledge to provide mental toughness training, teach mental skills to athletes and coaches, and work with teams on issues like cohesion and confidence. Some SPs also are licensed psychologists and thus can also provide counseling services, addressing such issues as relationship problems, self-esteem, depression/anxiety, eating disorders…etc. Ask about the SP’s credentials to make sure they have the training necessary to provide you with the services you want.

3. Reputation – talk with other coaches about the SP you are considering using to see if anyone has worked with them or has an opinion about the quality of their work. You also might ask the SP for information on athletes with whom they have worked and with whom you might speak. Know, though, that because of issues of confidentiality, SPs may not always be able to reveal athletes or teams with whom they have worked or provided services.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence at the University of North Texas, we have a staff of certified and licensed sport consultants who are committed to helping your coaches and players perform consistently in practice and competition. If you would like more information about our consultations please call us at 940-369-7767, email us at sportpsych@unt.edu, or check out our website at www.sportpsych.unt.edu. And as always, we leave you with our sport quote of the week:

“The glorification comes from the journey, not the outcome.” Phil Jackson