GOAL ORIENTATION PROFILE OF ITALIAN MASTER SWIMMERS

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Introduction
The involvement in competitive sport of older individuals is increasing (Italian Olympic Committee, 2006). However, there is a lack of information regarding the relationship between goal orientations and motivations toward sport participation of older athletes. Thus, the aim of this study was to examine the goal orientation and motivational profile of Italian master athletes.

Methods
One hundred-twenty five master swimmer (men: n=83, age=59.9 +/-9.8 yrs; women: n=42, age:58.5 +/-10.4 yrs) were administered the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ, Duda, 1989) and the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS, Pelletier et al., 1995). The self-determination index (SDI) was calculated (Vallerand, 1997) and goal orientation profiles were obtained by means of cluster analysis (Hodge and Petlichkoff 2000; Etnier et al, 2004). A.N.O.V.A. was performed to test whether there are significant (p<0.05) differences in SDI between orientation profiles.

Results
Older swimmers resulted more task (3.8 +/-0.7) than ego (2.4 +/-0.9) oriented. As compared to the literature on younger adult athletes, high SDI positive scores (17.8 +/-13.8) were found. Only 4 goal orientation profiles emerged (i.e., High Task/Low Ego: n=37; Moderate Task/Moderate Ego: n=33; Low Task/Low Ego: n=33; and High Task/High Ego: n=22). Significant differences (F(3;121)= 11.47 p<.01) in SDI were found between goal orientation profiles, with lower SDI values for athletes with moderate (15.8 +/-8.7) or low levels of both task and ego orientation (8.7 +/-13.6) than for athletes with high task orientation linked to either low (24.1 +/-13.2) or high ego orientation (24.1 +/-13.3).

Discussion
Older swimmers resulted highly self determined in their sport participation, indicating that they mainly rely on intrinsic motivation (Vallerand, 1997). The present results showed that the level of task orientation within the goal orientation profile seems to be a relevant factor modulating self-determination. In fact, high task values are related to greater persistence, enjoyment, and satisfaction in sport participation (Duda et al, 1995). However, further research is needed to explore the relationship between self-determined motivation and level of competition in older individuals.

References