RETAINING EXPERTISE: WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR OLDER EXPERT ATHLETES TO CONTINUE TO EXCEL?

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This paper examines what motivates older athletes to continue to train / compete, as well as the type of training they typically engage in. The motivation of masters athletes is examined via the Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan et al., 1993, 2003) revised in accordance with the conceptual variables of volitional and obligatory commitment proposed by Wilson et al. (2004). In the experiments described, for older athletes we have been able to explain approximately 84% of the variance in volitional commitment via the determinants of satisfaction, social constraints and lack of involvement alternatives. Obligatory commitment has proven more elusive to assess and explains roughly 50% of the variance in one’s motivation. Social constraints are typically of greatest importance for obligatory commitment.

The second focus of the paper is an examination of the microstructure of training engaged in by highly successful masters athletes. Our studies of national level masters athletes in running and swimming have provided evidence that while the training regimen for older athletes is often similar to younger high performance athletes (in terms of relative time spent in activities related to technique, endurance, power, and cross-training) the absolute number of training hours per week is roughly one-third of that engaged in by younger expert athletes. The issue of how much training is appropriate and /or too much will be the focus of this section of the talk.

References

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