



# Performance Profiling in Sports: A Mini-Review of Its Progress and Potential in Athlete Development

Spyridon Plakias<sup>1\*</sup>, Charoula Kasioura<sup>2</sup>, Olga Moustou<sup>3</sup> and Georgia Karakitsiou<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, University of Thessaly, Trikala, Greece

<sup>2</sup>Department of Biomedical Sciences and School of Health and Care Sciences, University of West Attica, Athens

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Education, 8th Primary School, Karditsa, Greece

<sup>4</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Medical School, Democritus University of Thrace, Alexandroupolis, Greece

\*Corresponding author: Spyridon Plakias, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, University of Thessaly, Trikala, Greece

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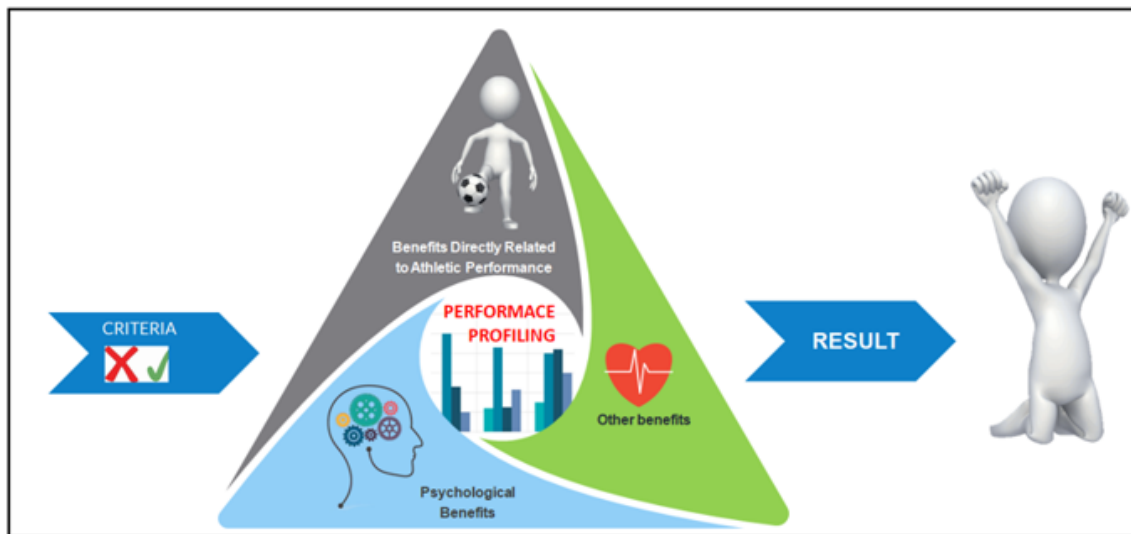
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## Abstract

This mini review explores the evolution and utility of performance profiling (PP) in sports psychology (SP) and performance analysis (PA), highlighting its pivotal role in customizing athletic development strategies. PP has evolved from a basic tool used by psychologists into a comprehensive framework that enhances an athlete's physical, psychological, tactical, and technical performance. Despite focusing primarily on qualitative research and reviews, this work emphasizes PP's significant benefits in fostering dynamic athlete-coach interactions and offering a structured approach to athletic training and strategy. The significance of this review in international literature lies in its potential to fill a critical gap by synthesizing existing literature, thereby enriching both academic discourse and practical applications in sports settings. It underscores the necessity of integrating both subjective perceptions and objective data to tailor strategies that align with individual athlete profiles. Practically, this review delineates criteria for effective PP, enhancing the interaction between athletes and coaches. This delineation is crucial for devising personalized training that adapts to the fluid nature of sports environments. Future research should focus on empirical validation to enhance the scientific rigor of PP methods. In conclusion, this review advocates for the broader implementation and continuous refinement of PP, promoting a personalized, data-driven approach to athlete development. It calls for further research to solidify foundational theories and expand practical applications, ensuring PP's role as a cornerstone in advancing SP and PA.

**Keywords:** Sports Psychology; Performance Analysis; Personal Construct Theory; Sports Coaching; Training Strategies

**Graphical abstract**

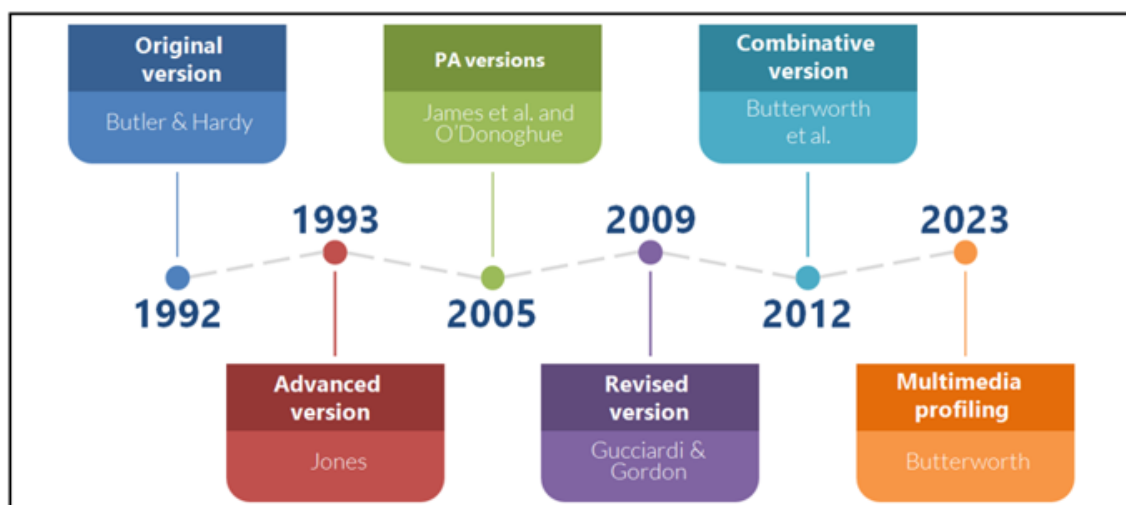


**Abbreviations**

**Table 1:** Abbreviations.

PA	Performance Analysis
PCT	Personal Construct Theory
PP	Performance Profiling
SP	Sports Psychology

**Introduction**



**Figure 1:** Historical review of PP.

The journey of PP in sports has been marked by successive refinements to better capture the multifaceted nature of athletic performance (Figure 1). Initiated by Butler and Hardy in 1992, the original version grounded in PCT aimed to heighten athletes' self-awareness regarding the physical, psychological, tactical, and technical facets of their performance. Athletes identified key performance areas and evaluated their current and potential best levels [1]. Advancements by Jones in 1993 introduced a more interactive approach where the coach could offer additional areas for consideration, leading athletes to a deeper evaluation of each aspect's significance and prompting immediate attention to areas with the greatest discrepancy [2]. Two PA versions were proposed by James and O'Donoghue in 2005 [3]. They shifted focus towards objective performance indicators, typical performance patterns, specific match performance, and variability. Gucciardi and Gordon in 2009 revisited the psychological framework, emphasizing a dualistic approach where athletes defined key qualities alongside their opposites, ranked them, and self-assessed on a scale that adhered to PCT's dichotomy corollary [4]. In 2012, Butterworth, Turner [5] merged subjective athlete perceptions with objective coach ratings using notational analysis for a more holistic view. Finally, in 2023, the multimedia PP by Butterworth [6] leveraged modern technology to pair objective data with corresponding videos and graphics in a singular, dynamic output [7].

In a landscape increasingly data-driven [8,9], the imperative for comprehensive PP within SP and PA grows ever more prominent. As a crucial facet of athletic development, PP presents an underutilized opportunity to harness in-depth insights into an athlete's capabilities across various domains. Yet, despite its potential to revolutionize training and competitive strategies, it remains a somewhat peripheral focus in scientific literature [3]. Addressing this gap is not only integral to advancing our understanding but is pivotal for the holistic development of athletes, as the creation of nuanced performance profiles can guide more effective training regimens, tactical preparations, and strategic decision-making processes.

Therefore, the current mini review aims to synthesize the available research on the benefits of PP, outlining not only the psychological advantages and direct competitive enhancements but also the criteria necessary for developing effective profiles. By scrutinizing the methodological nuances and scientific robustness of PP, this work aims to fill the literature void and elevate the discourse, presenting it as a dynamic, multifaceted tool that bolsters both the mental fortitude and athletic prowess of individuals and teams alike. The overarching goal is to provide a comprehensive overview that substantiates PP's place as an indispensable pillar of SP and PA, affirming its capacity to foster a more tailored, insightful, and ethically sound approach to athletic development.

## Discussion

### Criteria for creating effective performance profiles

In SP, PP has been embraced as a method that prioritizes the

athlete's perspective, encouraging a deep dive into self-assessment to enhance self-awareness and motivation. As Butler and Hardy [1] and Bird, Castillo [10] articulate, rooted in PCT, this technique ensures that profiles are not only individualized but also resonate with the athlete's unique perspective and experience in their sport. It moves beyond the traditional, prescriptive assessments, which often position the athlete in a more passive role, to one that is engaging and actively involves the athlete in the construction and evaluation process [2]. Such involvement is not just about reflection; it provides athletes with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their development, as supported by the findings of Weston, Greenlees [11] and Gucciardi and Gordon [4], who emphasize the importance of the athlete's intrinsic motivation and the dynamic nature of PP. Moreover, this process bolsters the athlete-coach relationship, enabling tailored training that addresses specific needs and goals, thus directly impacting performance [12].

However, the efficacy of this approach rests on its scientific rigor and empirical validation. Weston, Greenlees [13] highlighted the necessity for scientific evaluation to confirm the benefits and limitations of PP. Through the methodological applications delineated by Butterworth, O'Donoghue [3] and Butterworth [14], the importance of integrating various data sources to create a robust and comprehensive analysis of performance becomes clear. This should not only encompass quantitative data but also qualitative insights that offer a richer, more contextual understanding of an athlete's performance [15]. By incorporating reliable performance indicators and accommodating the various external influences that impact performance, such as context and conditions, the profiling process is substantiated with a solid scientific foundation [16]. This attention to detail ensures that the profiles generated are not just methodologically sound but also resonate with the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of sports performance.

To remain effective and relevant, PP must exhibit procedural flexibility and a commitment to continuous improvement. Butler's (1993) application in amateur boxing showcases profiling as a dynamic and iterative process, adaptable and responsive to the evolving nature of an athlete's training and development journey [17]. This is echoed in the work of Dale and Wrisberg [12], who demonstrate the role of profiling in enhancing team cohesion and communication. The methodology allows for ongoing feedback and refinement, ensuring that training and strategies are aligned with the athlete's progress and development needs [2]. As performance environments and demands change, so must the tools we use to assess and enhance athletic prowess. The use of PP thus becomes a powerful ally in the athlete's quest for excellence, supporting not just the immediate goals but also the long-term development and success within their sport [4,11]. In conclusion, the application of PP in sports requires a balance between individual adaptation and active participation by the athlete, a strong foundation in relevant scientific theories and methods, and the procedural flexibility to ensure profiles are accurate, current, and conducive to continuous improvement. (Table 2) summarizes all the aforementioned criteria.

**Table 2:** Summary of criteria.

Individual Adaptation and Active Participation:	Scientific Foundation and Accuracy:	Procedural Flexibility and Continuous Improvement:
- Profiles should be athlete-led.	- Empirical evaluation and validation.	- Adaptability of the profiling technique.
- Engagement in self-assessment.	- Should be theoretically driven.	- Capability for timely updates.
- Encouraging intrinsic motivation and self-awareness.	- Performance data should be collected from multiple sources and over multiple performances and seasons.	- Profiles should support a multimedia approach.
- The process should enhance the athlete's autonomy and responsibility.	- Inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data.	- Ability to represent typical and individual performances.
- Fosters open communication and mutual understanding.	- Validity and reliability of performance indicators.	- Ongoing usage and monitoring.
- Facilitates goal setting and progress tracking.		- Real-time applicability.
- Promotes a sense of ownership.		- Include a method for analyzing and evaluating performance indicators.

### Benefits of PP

PP in sports psychology, grounded in the client-led approach of PCT, offers significant psychological benefits to athletes [10]. It empowers athletes with enhanced self-awareness, facilitating an in-depth reflection of their competencies and areas requiring development. This process inherently nurtures an athlete's intrinsic motivation, instilling a sense of ownership and active participation in their development trajectory [3,13]. Additionally, PP aids in setting personal goals, underpinning increased confidence and motivation, and paving the way for a collaborative and communicative environment between coaches and athletes, fostering robust and supportive relationships [2,18].

Directly relating to athletic performance, the bespoke nature of PP allows for the tailoring of training programs to meet individual athletes' needs [4]. Such personalization ensures that coaching strategies are effectively aligned with the athlete's self-assessed profile, enhancing tactical planning and mental preparedness. It also provides a systematic framework for the continuous monitoring of progress, ensuring that athletes remain on track towards achieving

their peak performance levels [12]. The methodological rigor of PP, therefore, not only assists in identifying performance patterns but also in strategizing and managing stress, which are pivotal during competitive events [15].

Beyond psychological and performance-related advantages, PP has the potential to contribute to broader sporting integrity. For instance, it can enhance anti-doping efforts by tracking performance data to detect unnatural performance enhancements, thereby supporting fair play [16]. Furthermore, it can assist in revealing unethical behaviors such as match-fixing, offering a multifaceted tool to uphold the sanctity of sports competitions [1]. In summary, the multifarious benefits of PP underscore its indispensable role in contemporary sports psychology. It bridges the psychological aspects with direct athletic performance, while also touching upon the broader implications for sporting integrity. The versatility and impact of this approach are evident, as it not only contributes to the psychological well-being and improved performance of athletes but also fosters an ethical and fair sporting environment [10,13]. (Table 3) summarizes all the aforementioned benefits.

**Table 3:** Summary of benefits.

Psychological Benefits:	Benefits Directly Related to Athletic Performance:	Other Benefits:
- Enhanced self-awareness and reflection.	- Tailored training programs to individual athlete needs.	- May contribute to fairer and more targeted anti-doping efforts.
- Increased intrinsic motivation and ownership of development.	- Framework for monitoring and evaluating progress.	- Could help in recognizing and addressing match-fixing or other unethical behaviors.
- Improved confidence through understanding of strengths and areas for improvement.	- Enhanced tactical planning responsive to various conditions.	- Supports ongoing learning and adaptability.
- Goal setting and achievement based on personal insights.	- Development of team cohesion through aligned goals.	
- Strengthened athlete-coach relationships.	- Mental preparedness and stress management.	
- Effective communication channels between athletes and coaches.	- Identification of performance patterns and influences.	
- Fostered sense of responsibility for personal progress.		

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this mini review has distilled the evolution and application of PP in SP and PA, underscoring its critical role in personalizing athlete development strategies. We have traversed the theoretical underpinnings initiated by Butler and Hardy (1992) [1] and navigated through the enhancements that have molded PP into a multi-dimensional tool [5, 6]. This tool is crucial for optimizing all attributes necessary for maximizing athlete performance, including physical, psychological, tactical, and technical aspects. [19, 20]. Despite the useful insights this review provides, it is not without limitations since it did not consider quantitative research, but only review articles, qualitative research, and book chapters found in the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Nevertheless, the synthesis of our findings highlights the value of using performance profiles. The practical applications of this review are manifold; it delineates criteria for creating impactful performance profiles and highlights the dynamic nature of the athlete-coach interaction facilitated by PP. Significantly, this work extends beyond academic dialogue, providing actionable insights for practitioners in designing and implementing PP strategies tailored to individual athlete needs and responsive to the fluidity of sports environments [21]. It is our hope that this review will catalyze further inquiry and adoption of PP, fostering a culture of nuanced, data-driven, and athlete-centered development across sports disciplines.

## Acknowledgement

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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