

Psychology in competitive sports

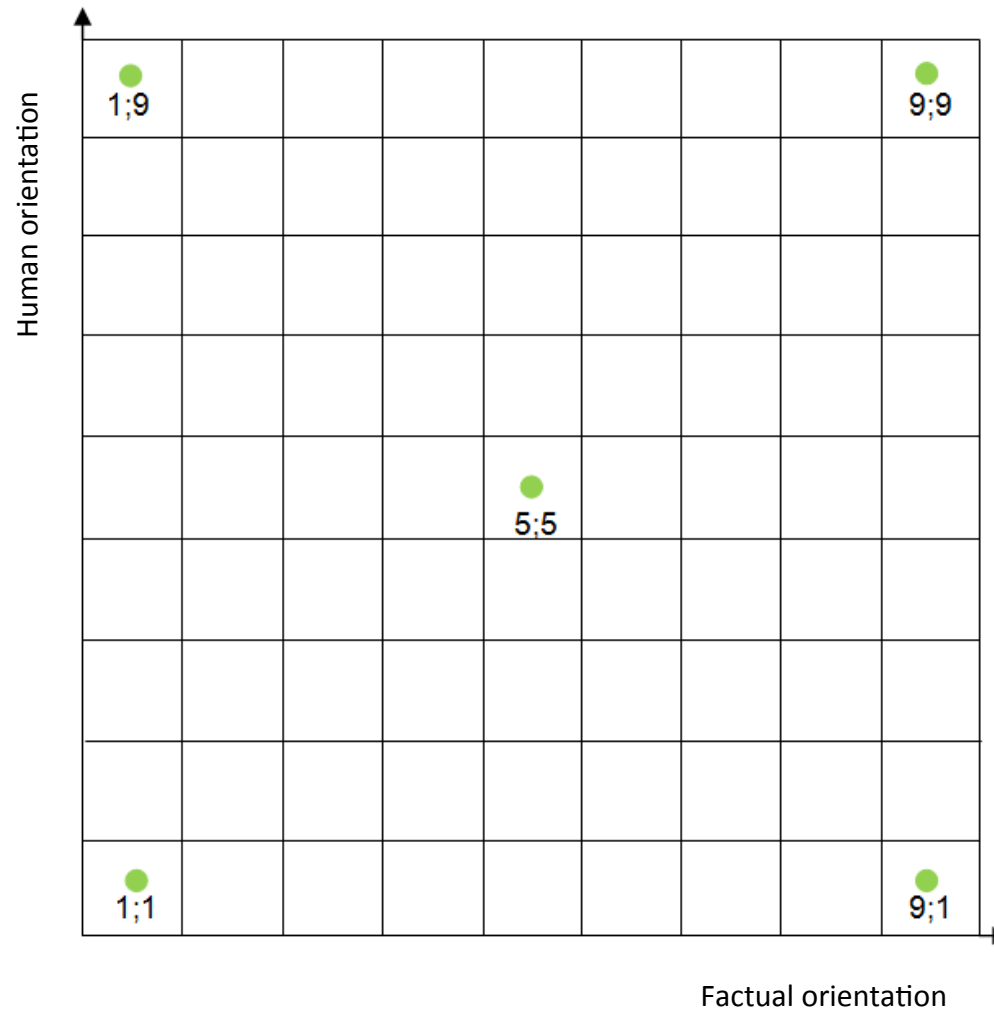
Opportunities!

Limits!

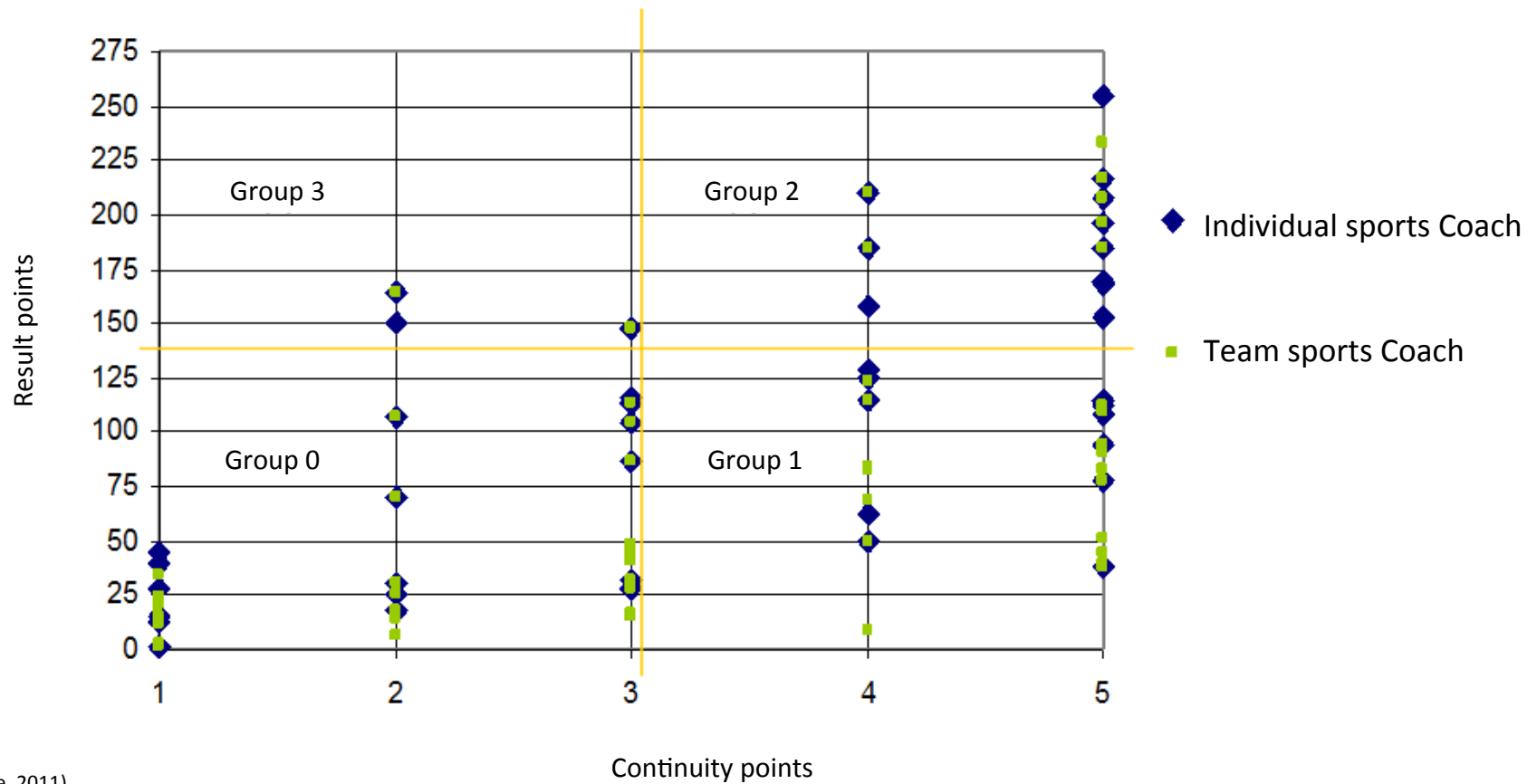
A necessity?



Tammo van Lessen / rudern.de



Blake & Mouton (1964)



(Göke, 2011)

Group 0: “The Unsteady Type”

- Very heterogenic in personality traits
- Single deficiencies in social skills
- High sociability or team orientation, but low assertiveness
 - Harmony and athlete oriented working atmosphere, didn't give clear targets and goals

Group 1: “The Constant Mediocraty”

- Deficiencies in

Occupational behaviour

- No specific strategy, they decide very often from their guts
- Let themselves get enthusiastic quickly are very spasmodic
- A common thread in activity is missing

Soft skills

- Sensitivity and openness to contact are low
- Difficulties in communication with athletes
- Low sociability → they offend athletes easily (combined with low sensitivity and openness to contact)

Group 3: “The Spasmodically Successful Coaches“

- Little deficiencies in social skills
- Psychological constitution is low (self-confidence and emotional stability)
 - **Cannot deal with failures**
 - **Criticism makes them unsure → in competitive sport harsh words are normal**

Group 2: “The Serial Winner“

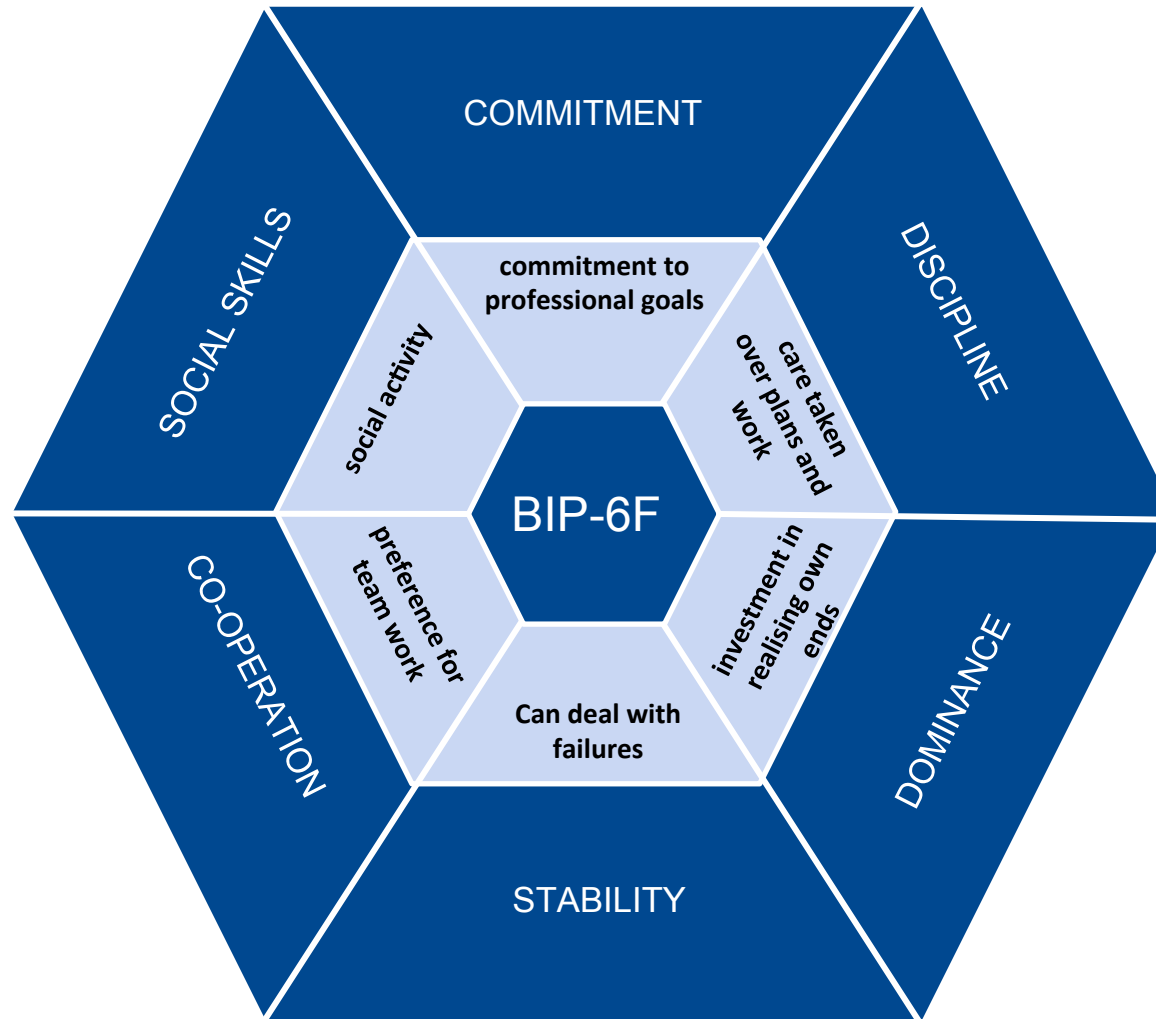
- Average – high motivation
- High willingness to get into conflicts (low sociability and high assertiveness)
- Good in openness to contact
- Good in generating enthusiasm
- Stable psychological constitution
 - **Athlete oriented**
 - **Give clear targets and goals**

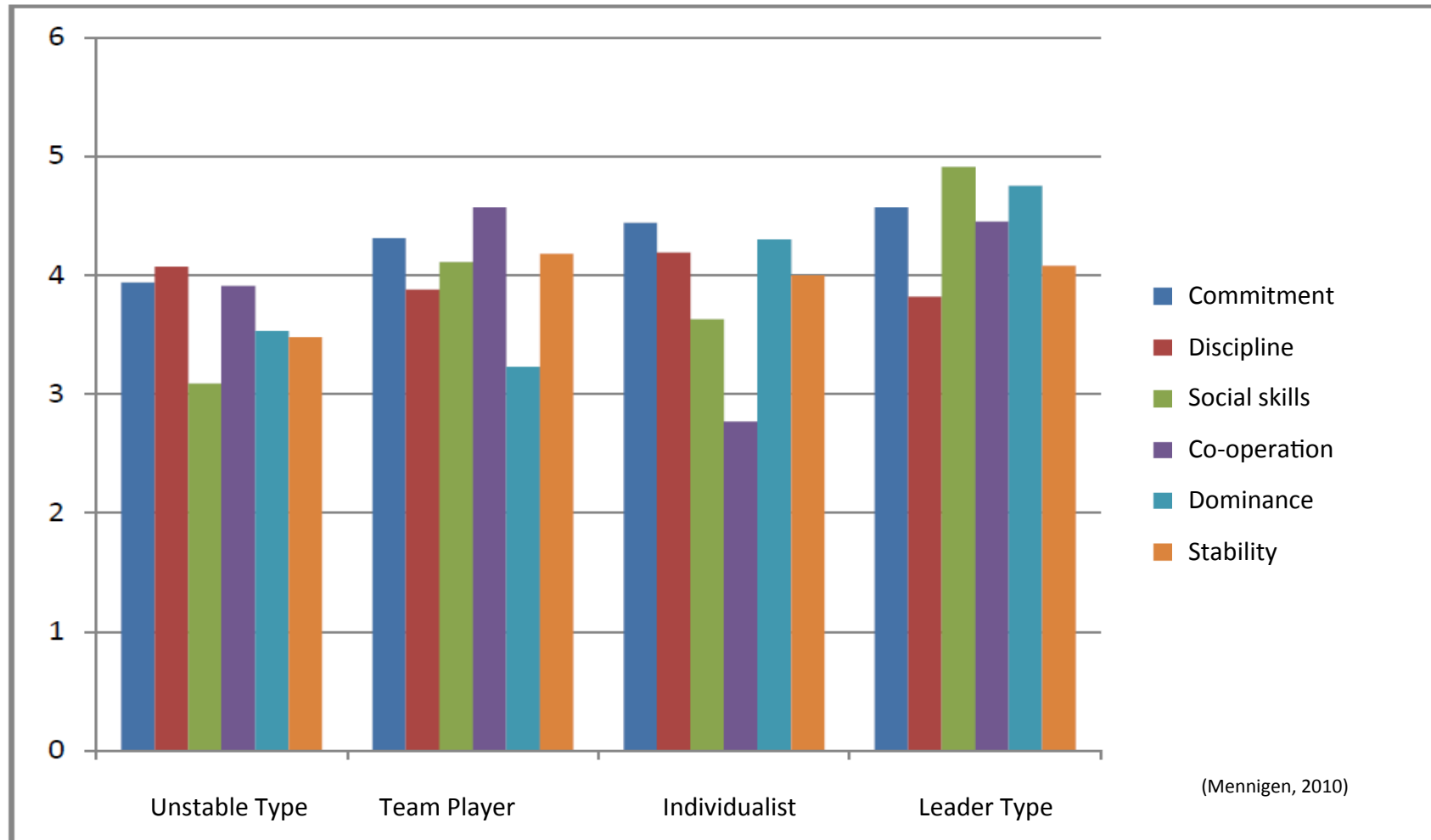
- To be a good coach is more than looking back on a career as an elite sportsman
- Coaches are recruited from this small network
- Know-how on its own is not enough
- Personality traits are relevant for a coach`s success
 - Medium – high motivation
 - High social skills
 - Good psychological constitution

- Develop a requirement profile for coaches (specialist know-how, methodical abilities and social skills)
- Design job profile accordingly
- Develop a selection process that considers all aspects (multimethodical)
 - Interview
 - Uses business-focussed personality inventories
 - Design a worked example as a coaching unit with specific focus
- Have several applicants for a job to be able to make a decision

- Optimise further development of existing coaches
- Focus more on the qualification of social skills in the coaching curriculum
- Possible seminar contents: athlete-oriented communication, social skills, conflict management, reflect on one`s own leadership philosophy, maintain one`s own work-life-balance
- Contents should closely follow practical issues – e. g. How to tell an athlete that he won`t be sitting in the boat this year and is only a substitute and at the same time keep his motivation high
- Potential analysis of coaches who are already on board to target their personnel development
- Personal coaching of coaches

- “As a coach one often works and decides on one`s own: So I had a neutral sparring partner who took a different perspective of things.”
- “A psychological coach can break up his own patterns (blind spots) and patterns for dealing with athletes, that have slipped in during the cause of time.”
- “Our cooperation was extremely helpful, as this contributed to us working towards an improved team structure.”
- “The deep psychological effect is long-term and should therefore also be integrated into the Association.”
- “An important approach would be “Coach the Coach”.”





Type Character	Unstable T.	Team Player	Individualist	Leader Type
high	2nd highest characteristic in discipline	Social skills, commitment, co-operation, stability	commitment, dominance, highest in discipline	Highest in dominance, commitment, social skills
low	Stability, social skills, dominance, commitment	dominance	Co-operation and social skills	Discipline, but insignificant

- **Unstable Type**

- Will have greater difficulties in social contexts and under pressure than the other three types
- Individual coaching with regard to social skills and stability (emotion-regulating training, relaxation techniques, positive thinking and finding out the causes of the low stability)

- **Team Player**

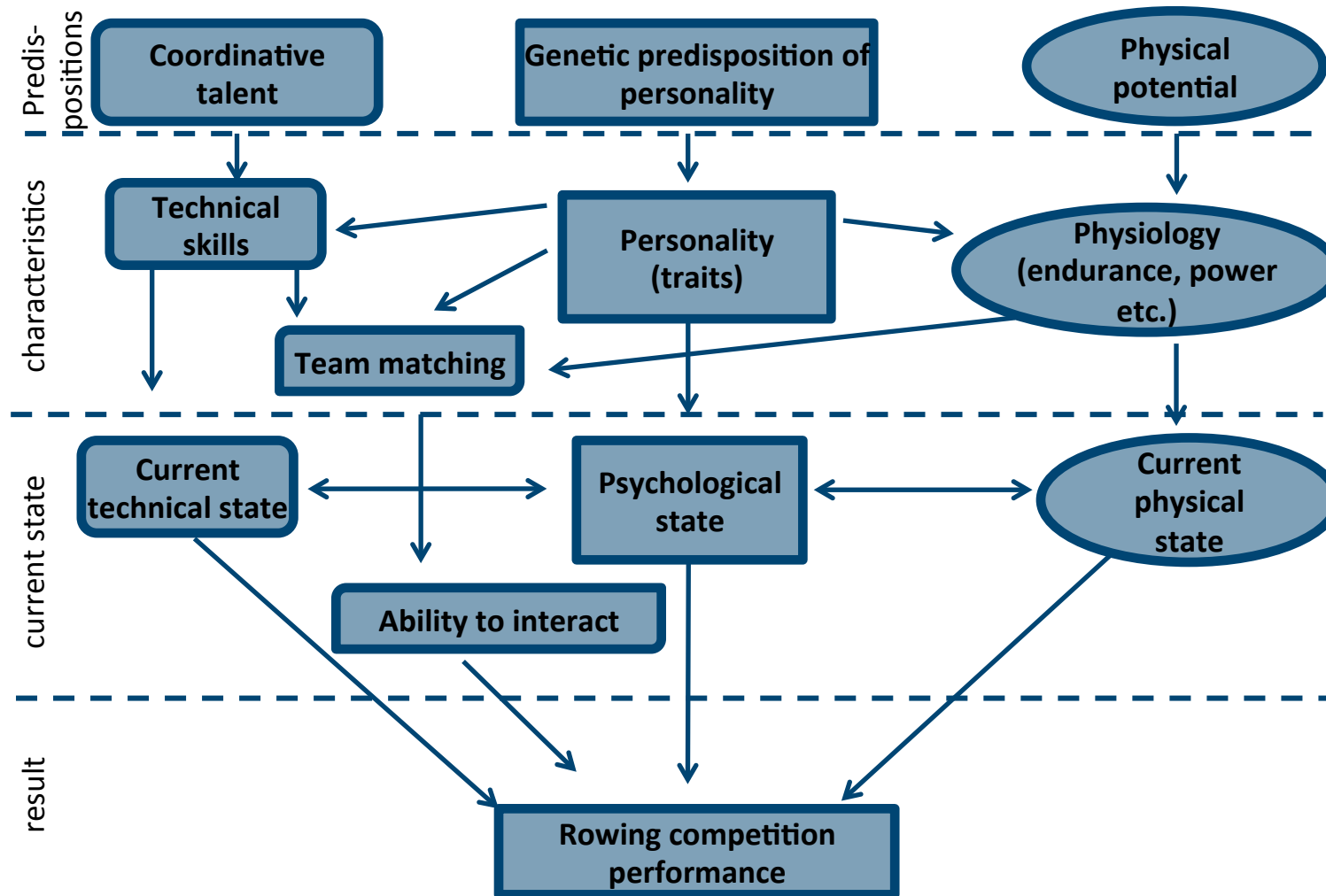
- Are important for a good performing boat team
- Fits well into a group structure
- Can be a stabilising factor in team conflicts

- **Individualist**

- Preferably suitable for individual disciplines like Single Scull
- More difficult in large boats as many social interactions are present
- Needs lots of freedom, e. g. let him do several coaching units on his own
- Strong tendency towards autonomy – react negatively to authoritarian coaching style
- Difficult to motivate development of social skills, as no insight exists

- **Leader Type**

- Wants to have the leading position in a team
- Wants to have a say in team meetings, training arrangements etc.
- Too many athletes of this type in a boat can become critical due to their unfulfilled claim to leadership
- Can significantly influence a team - in any direction
- Psychological intervention important when claim to leadership cannot be fulfilled – reduction of frustration and conflict potential



- **Basics**

- Relaxation (breathing techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training)
- Feeling of belonging in a team
- **Debriefing**
- Recuperation-stress-balance

- **Skills**

- **Self motivation** (Self talk)
- Communication in the boat / with the coach

- **Intervention in Crises**

- **Conflicts in the boat**
- Fear reduction (imagination, run through situations)
- **Dealing with failures** (scenario technique)
- Personal topics (work-life-balance)

Goal

- Following up on competitions/tests
- Active removal of negative thinking
- Mental and emotional regeneration

Procedure

1. Select place and time
2. Self-analysis of performance – **self-reflection**
3. External feedback – from the coach, video analysis etc.
4. Define goals to be changed

- What has happened during the competition?
- What goals did I have for this competition?
- What is my performance like compared to my fellow rowers?
- What was I thinking and feeling during the competition?
- Did I use all my potential?
- What can I change?
- How can I implement this?

Goal

- Develop extend and appropriate perspectives
- Removing thinking barriers

Procedure

- Best-case scenario
- Worst-case scenario
- Trend-case scenario
 - How do you react in this situation?
 - What resources can you draw on in this case?
 - What do you have to keep in mind in this case?

- Personality shouldn't be a decisive selection criterium, but to be taken into account when making up boat teams
- Important when making up coaching groups
 - The unstable type can be supported by team players and leaders
- Implement "coach the coach"
 - Coaches have to choose what higher pressure is and, at the same time, communicate transparently – How do coaches deal with this pressure?
 - Coaches have to, bring the athletes to their physical limits and sometimes exceed these and get the athletes to follow the coach's training schedule
 - How can a coach make athletes do this best individually? (know the athlete's personality type)
 - The coach's behaviour is shaped by his own personality here.

- Coach`s should not get involved in athlete`s personal problems, as the coach decides about his rowing career at the same time, which can lead to conflicts.
- The psychologist should, of course, be a part of the interdisciplinary team
- Psychology is an underestimated performance factor and will be a highly relevant factor in the future and will be one of the decisive factors determining success or failure

**Thanks for your attention
and thanks to Dr Gaby Bussmann!**

For further questions:

Dr Annelen Collatz

E-mail: mail@acollatz.de