

Getting better results with AMSP

Profiling in a sports environment

Phil Moore uses AMSP to help coach individuals to improve their performance and team contribution, while also improving the climate and performance of the team as a whole. Could you do the same?

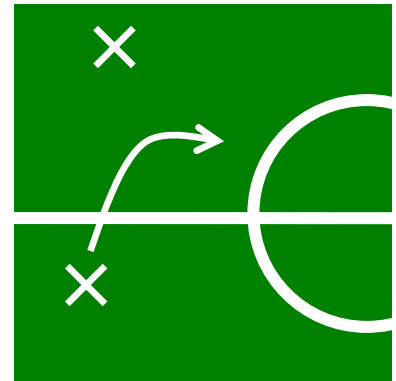
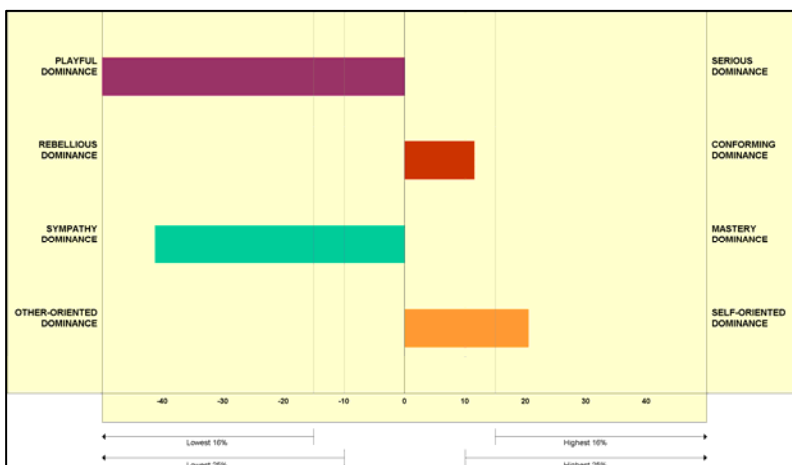
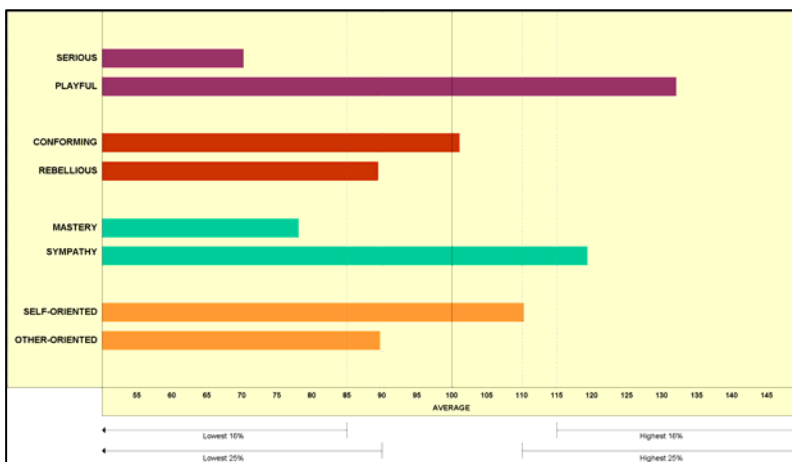
As a Sports Psychologist, Phil works very closely with teams and individuals, to help them achieve outstanding performances in a highly competitive environment. After he successfully used AMSP with the members of a high profile national sporting team, he shared some insights into how it was done.

As in other circumstances, the basic approach is to consider:

1. What the Profile itself indicates, especially about the dominances and patterns.
2. How this connects to performance and behaviour in given situations.
3. How to intervene to develop the performance of the individual – and hence the team.

Case 1 – ‘Bob’*

Looking at Bob’s charts, what do you notice? What are the key features you think would be most worth discussing?



Time to raise your profile?

‘AMSP provides a great way to help athletes and coaches understand themselves and use that knowledge to achieve their best performance under pressure’

Phil Moore
Sports Psychologist

Case notes:



Phil Moore
Sports Psychologist

Phil has been involved in high performance sport for 20 years as an athlete, coach and now psychologist. He worked with Olympic teams for the Sydney and Athens Games.

He has been using reversal theory in his work for the last six years and the AMSP during the last year.

* Some details have been changed to maintain client confidentiality.

As emphasised in our QP training, a profile only really comes to life once we make the connection with the life and situation of the subject. We need to connect the profile to what is going on in their life. What is most useful to know is when they are (for example) playful, and how well do they do it – that adds the vital situational data that AMSP cannot.

Situational data - for Bob

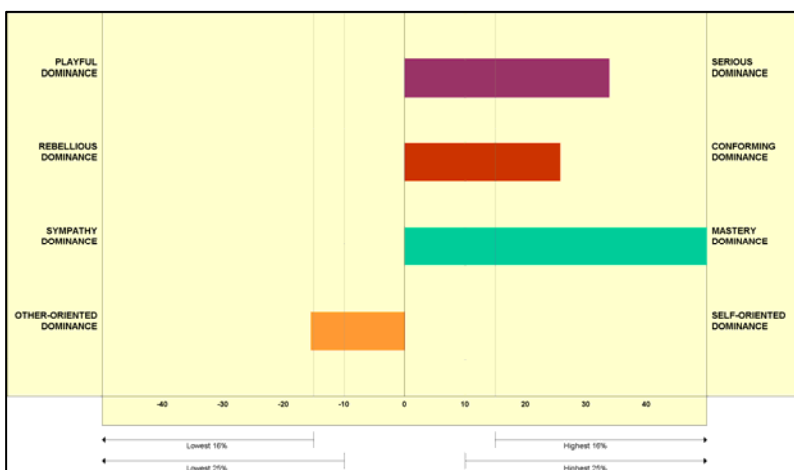
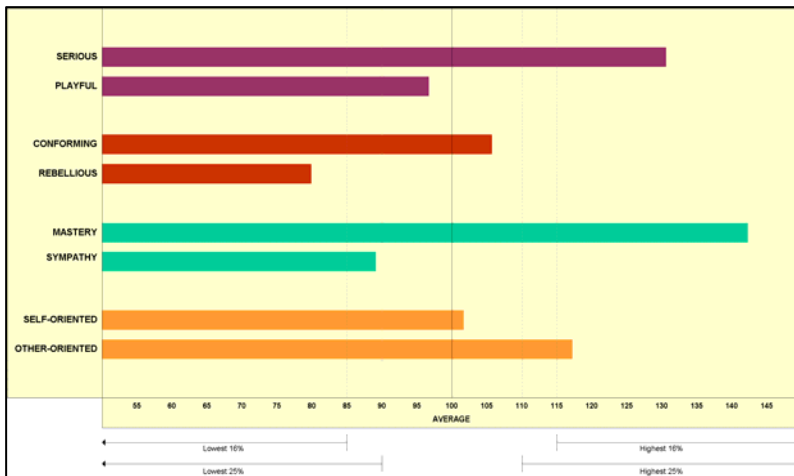
Bob is a 29 year old who was very high achieving at a young age. He is very individualistic and gifted. His style is to do his own thing – he often frustrates other team members, but he is a very effective attacker. He is influential, but unpredictable.

With a history as a gifted youngster, he hasn't previously had much responsibility within the team, but he has now been made vice captain. He has noticed that more recently he has felt "anxious and uptight" before and during games – an experience he is not used to. It has affected his performances.

Taking this information into account, Phil was able to share the results of the profile with Bob and develop a course of action, as outlined in 'Bob's story' (see right).

Case 2 – 'Bart'

Using this same framework, we can look at a couple of other cases. This is Bart's profile:



Bob's story:

How can we interpret his situation?

Bob's playful self-sympathy has served him well as an individual over a long period. But he is beginning to grow out of his 'Peter Pan' disposition.

New responsibilities have caused him to be serious and conforming in game situations (ie high arousal), and this in turn has caused him to experience this as anxiety. This is the cause of his variable performance.

What can be done to help him?

Clearly, as in all coaching situations, once we create awareness with this kind of analysis, the solutions have to be owned by the subject.

In Bob's case, the analysis led to real recognition, and he was able to revert to his dominant profile in game situations as it serves him so well.

The development also meant using serious, conforming, and other states outside of game situations – in this case to develop leadership skills and help to coach the younger members of the squad.

Situational data – for Bart

The situation is that Bart is a successful lawyer, able to combine sport with career. At 27, he is team captain, and has been a natural leader for many years within the team. He often plays the role of critical father to the rest of the team, and has little time for what he sees as ‘mucking about’.

Not surprisingly, he feels a strong sense of responsibility for the performance of the team – particularly when they play poorly.

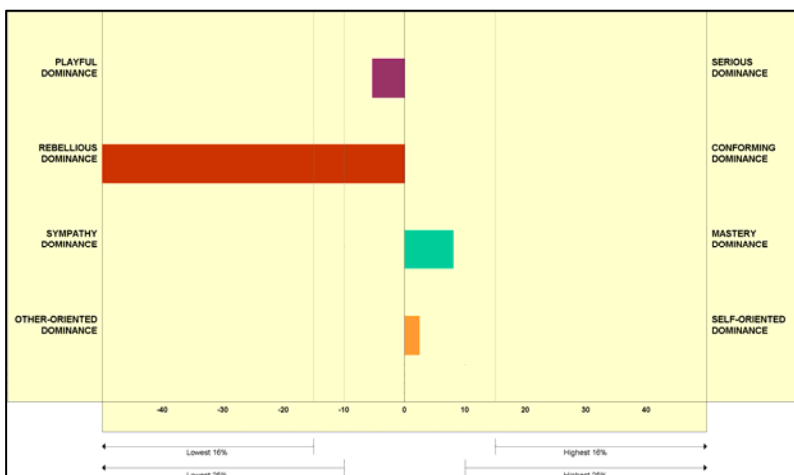
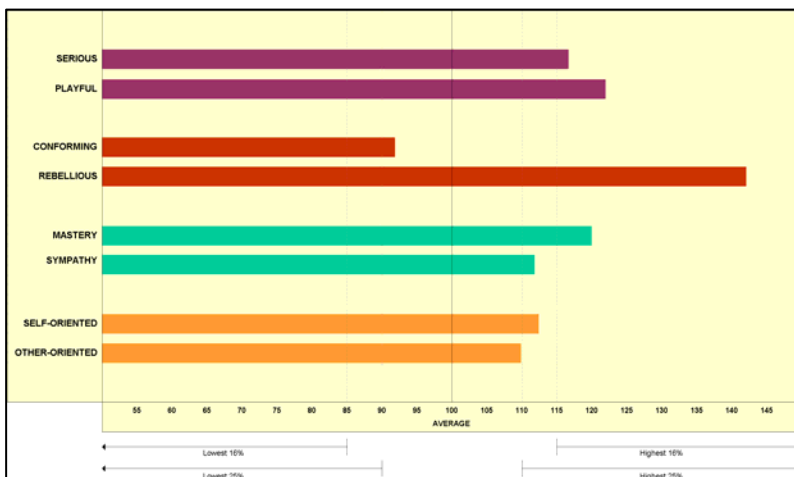
These ‘burdens’ reflect on his own performance, and colour his attitude and emotions around match time. They can manifest as headaches, frustration and angry self-talk.

These could be predicted from his serious, conforming other-mastery dominances.

As before, by putting the profile into context, Phil was able to provide a series of practical strategies to help Bart to begin to perform more effectively – see ‘Bart’s story’ (right).

Case 3 – ‘Billy’

As a final example, here are the charts for Billy:



Bart’s story:

What can be done to help him?

Again, de-briefing the profile leads to recognition, and particularly the anxiety associated with high seriousness. Bart also identified that he performed best in the playful/conforming states but sometimes struggled to achieve this combination under pressure.

Bart worked on a set of strategies to achieve his optimal performance state:

Plan A Timing was the key; he focused on doing the ‘work’ (seriousness, conforming) early and in training, so freeing him to create a more playful approach in preparation for game situations.

Plan B If he still found himself in serious/conforming then the aim was to use cognitive and physical arousal management techniques (like self-talk) to help to become more calm and relaxed.

Plan C Another strategy he worked on was to learn to flip (reverse) to rebelling by generating anger – for Bart, this was easier than reversing into the playful state at times of high arousal.

Having a set of plans also helped Bart maintain a Mastery state as he felt in control of his emotions rather than being subject to their fluctuations whilst in the sympathy state.

Situational data – for Billy

Billy is a 26 year old natural athlete who has been a professional athlete for 3 years. He recently made a career move and has a new and demanding job in media marketing. He has a low motivation for training, is questioning and critical of management decisions, and his sense of humour (as the team clown) is not always appreciated by the other team members.

When he is playing well he is excellent, although he is a liability on other days. His disciplinary record is poor, and other teams know they can exploit his inconsistency by winding him up, and this has led to a poor disciplinary record. He knows he needs to change.

His main dominances are rebellious (the main driver of his behaviour) together with mastery and playfulness. However, in close competition, he reverses into seriousness. If his need to feel in control is frustrated he reverses into self-sympathy. This triggers bad decisions, inconsistency and errors. Rebelliousness and high arousal can mean anger or even the 'red mist'.

See what happened next in 'Billy's story' (right).

Taking all the results together

As a result of these interventions and developments, not only did the performance of the individuals improve, but by sharing their insights and developing mutual knowledge and recognition, the performance of the team improved substantially over a period.

The result was that the team won its first international gold medal in 10 years.

Summary

The key to success in this case study was that the AMSP allowed the individual athletes to recognise what was happening to them as a consequence of experiencing different situations in particular states. This allowed them to consider the alternatives and, using well established techniques, to generate the most effective combination of motivational states to achieve their best performances more consistently. In particular, success is often determined by an athlete's ability to manage their thoughts and emotions under extraordinary pressure. Reversal Theory (and the AMSP) provide an effective means of understanding and achieving an optimal performance mindset.

Billy's story:

What can be done to help him?

The AMSP profile was a revelation for Billy – he recognised immediately that he was capable of achieving the optimal combination of states in his professional career but had been less able to do so in his sport. The development for Billy was to learn to recognise the situations that triggered reversals to less useful combinations (serious/rebelling) and to plan his reactions to those triggers in advance.

By associating rebelliousness with playfulness, he now laughs off frustrations and channels his reactions in a more provocative, creative and spontaneous ways. Since working on this approach his disciplinary record has been exemplary and he has been more constructive in his creative and challenge behaviour in the team environment.

'Sharing profiles makes a huge difference, because it allows team members to better understand the diversity of the team and use that as a strength rather than allowing differences to divide us'

Phil Moore
Sports Psychologist

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