

THE BUSINESS OF **SPORT** **MANAGEMENT**

SECOND EDITION



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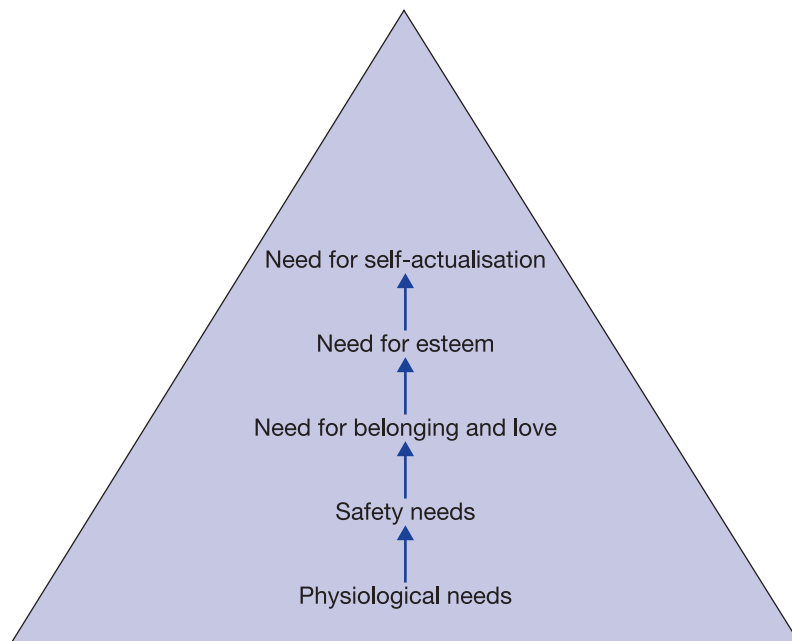


Figure 8.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Source: From *Motivation and Personality*, 3rd edn, Pearson Education Inc. (Maslow, A.H., Frager, R.D. and Faidman, J. (1987)). Reprinted and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

that meal has been obtained and the tummy filled, the motivation to find food will no longer be of significance and a higher need will emerge until the individual reaches that AML point of self-actualisation. This is a point where the normal that lies hidden in the pathological becomes manifest (Pavlov, in Kutznetsov, 1982: 282), and s/he simply feels the need to be what s/he must be, in the same way that dolphins have the natural urge to swim and humming birds must fly. This behavioural construct of 'what a wo/man can be s/he would be' is well illustrated in Case 8.1, which features the nature of 'playing without fear' in the Capoeira Roda.

Case 8.1 Motivation and true potentialities within the Capoeira Roda

'Pure love' or 'playing without fear'

The East has Zen

Psychoanalysis was developed in the West

In Brazil we have Capoeira.

(Capoeira, 1992: 106)

According to the laws of aerodynamics as defined by modern physicists, it is asserted that a bumble bee should not be able to fly. However, someone obviously forgot to tell that to the bumble bee. So day by day, it simply proves the scientific definitions wrong and continues to fly anyway with grace and purpose, in spite of the disabling labels of powerlessness tendered by armchair human sceptics, for whom memory of the awe-inspiring sacred laws and power of Nature is simply a matter of convenience.

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In a similar mode, the Capoeira Roda (i.e. Ring of Liberation) enabled its enslaved African pioneers to find their own ability to dance, communicate and move gracefully behind the disabling labels of oppression and exclusion in the Quilombo dos Palmares of Brazil, over 500 years ago. And today, in spite of such prevailing negative social stratifications, Capoeira at its visceral level acknowledges no class, colour, creed, race or blood, and is genuinely respected by its practitioners – now worldwide – as ‘pure love’ or ‘playing without fear’. In other words, when one enters the Capoeira Roda it’s what one learns after one thinks one knows it all that counts. In his book *Capoeira and Candomblé*, Merrell (2005) further contextualises this unique ‘music–dance–sport–play’ activity when he affirms that there is little or no need for language in the Roda. Rather, there is only a sensing, a consciousness through the *bodymind-kinesomatic* activity.⁵ This encapsulates the feeling of what there is to feel deep within the fabric of each player’s bones. Moreover, it epitomises an awareness with the inner trust of so-called lower organisms like the ostracised bumble bee, which have not yet been conditioned to surrender to those cognitively constraining ‘human virtues of disbelief, skepticism, cynicism, or nihilism’ (ibid.: 58).

Still, to induce the Capoeira Spirit in *bodymind-tacit* mindfulness, there must be the Axé (pronounced ah-SHEH). This term is the name the Yoruba slaves from Western Africa gave to wo/mankind’s ‘life force’ – a creative principle analogous to the Eastern notion of *qi*.⁶ In Capoeira, the phenomenology of that creative force or *élan vital* refers to the good vibes and powerful energy which enables the capoeiristas to know what needs to be done within the sanctum of the Roda, and as a collective of *bodymind-kinesomatic* vibrations, they just do it! In fact, Axé and *kinesomatics* represent the fundamental essence of Capoeira, where two *bodyminds* in silent reciprocal discourse negotiate a recursive relationship of *conformity–resistance–change–conformity–resistance–change*, through an intricate vocabulary of personal, stylised, movements. Unified in motion, they complement each other to the extent that, like ‘human pylons’, both capoeiristas relay a continuum of polyrhythmic and infinite possibilities which instinctively result in a subtle interweaving, yet purposeful performance. To attain this phoenix-like state of transfiguration and to know it can be akin to aspiring towards their highest AML need/potential, or what the ancient philosophers of the East would call the *Tao* in sport.

Capoeira in the Roda thus becomes a spiritual roadmap to self-discovery, emotional literacy, and to understanding the universal paradoxes of this ‘dance of war’, wherein the politics is pure, and consequently the savagery simply more refined. As Capoeirista warrior Tesha-Dawn Safiya Brathwaite so eloquently reflected after a recent *Batizado*⁷ in ‘Capoeira – I Breathe You’ (2009):

To know one’s self is an unbearable ache.
To contemplate the human condition I cannot bear.
Thoughts live in me, feed off my sweet flesh.
My need to be perfect.
My need to not just be.
I cry,

(continued)

⁵ That natural intelligence existing within a unified state of body and mind, where one instinctively knows *how* to do things, which then become manifest by imagining (visualisation) and feeling the body going through certain motions, before actually realising those movements. For example, the Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt imagining his winning performance before actually stepping onto the track to *do it*.

⁶ Vital energy which flows within all living beings.

⁷ Batizado – A baptism into the art of Capoeira.

I yearn and long to be free of the need for you to see that which I need to see in me.
 You wrench my soul and I love you because you free me.
 But I cannot have you until I learn to free me.
 Capoeira – I breathe you.
 For you are nothing at all.

As a combative theatre sport, Capoeira is therefore a quintessential experience of processual arrangements, in which it would be futile to exhaust one's mind in an attempt to unify 'defeat and joy', 'struggle and serenity', 'anarchy and peace', 'fear and confidence', since to do so would only connote what the Taoist elders call 'three in the morning'. What is this 'three in the morning'? Consider the story of the man who fed monkeys with chestnuts and said to them: 'Three portions in the morning, four in the afternoon.' The monkeys all became sad. The man then compromised: 'All right then, four in the morning and three in the afternoon.' The monkeys all jumped around with excitement. Note that the food and the quantity had not changed, only the processual arrangement, which initially triggered sadness and then happiness – two sides of the same coin (see Lin, 2007). So, it's what someone learns after they think they know it all that counts in managing the 'three in the morning' processual arrangements of Capoeira – a game which never becomes a finished product. Why? Because there is unrelenting change within the Roda's liberation space and pace, with no fixed rules, tempo or movement repertoire to interrupt the players' motivation to attain their true potentialities.

Of course, what each capoeirista learns during this martial rite of passage is the art of 'pure love' or 'playing without fear' – the *sine qua non* of creative vitality. Such animated fearlessness thus becomes essential to attaining true spiritual awareness, and key to the revivification of those indigenous souls sequestered and beleaguered by the antiseptic staleness of the larger colonial culture. For quite often, oppression comes in the form of convention, and Capoeira has served strategically for centuries as an indigeneous antidote to the oppressive processes of bourgeoisie routinisation in Brazil. But more importantly, it is what each capoeirista manifests in the Roda or Ring of Liberation, when thought (visualisation) becomes tacit and prompts a rise in his/her physical optimum arousal level. At such an instinctive height of consciousness, the players' anxiety, motivation and focus are ideal, and this results in peak performance. From then on, the power and effulgence of their 'improvigraphy'⁸ compels and comports all capoeiristas to humbly converge with the spirit of Capoeira (à la the bumblebee in flight) while dancing with great acrobatic athleticism and kinesomatic intelligence, and seeking *moksha*⁹ amidst the polyrhythmic rays of Nature's sun.

Finally, it is axiomatic that the messianic spirit of freedom is embodied in the capacity and courage of all capoeiristas to improvise. For whereas indigeneous bodies were once enslaved, indigeneous spirits are now emancipated to create and interpret according to 'natural intelligence', and the laws of the moment. It is that basic ability to freely initiate and 'improvigraph' with such *joie de vivre* which denotes one of the central differentiating factors of this African-derived, extralinguistic martial arts from all other martial arts. And as such, Capoeira remains both paramount and indispensable to the salvific struggle for survival and authentic existence in Afro-Brazilian life today. Axé!

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⁸ Improvised movement choreography, created within the spontaneity of the moment.

⁹ Sanskrit (*Moksha*) which literally means *release*.

Discussion question

- 1 Discuss the cross-cultural prospects and quandaries in applying the motivational psychology of 'pure love' or 'playing without fear' underpinning the 'bodymind-kinesomatic' activity effectively demonstrated in the Brazilian Capoeira Roda, to the empowerment of human capital in a conventional Western sports enterprise you are familiar with.

When a capoeirista enters the Roda, s/he embarks on a *bodymind-kinesomatic* journey of anaesthetising complexity. This enactment demands the biopsychological coordination of a giddy multiplicity of neural and muscular facets in an extremely discriminating yet integrated mode. For instance, picture the African-American basketball legend Michael 'Air' Jordan flying through space, while simultaneously bringing a ball around his body with his right hand and then powering down an acrobatic slam in a National Slam Dunk Exhibition. There is an elaborate interface between his eyes and the hands, as they work in harmony with one another, from action to reaction, and then anticipation of more action through refined movements of attenuation. It is this inner sense of 'e-motion', when thought becomes tacit and the body is in total synchronisation with the mind, that signifies the *bodymind-kinesomatic* activity of Capoeira. In Case 8.1, the message of such a subtle co-dependency between perceptual (visualisation) and motor systems effecting optimum arousal level and rapid-fire peak performance in the game, is quite a poignant one. This is particularly so when one observes that 'traditional' and 'regional' capoeiristas who do not essentially play to acquire medals (a tangible reward in sports), are instead quite satisfied to strive for 'personal bests' in their 'improvigraphy' (which can be juxtaposed with aspiring towards their highest AML need or potential).

Of great significance here is the manner in which these capoeiristas from all walks of life embody the 'metaphysics of motivation' confirmed by the bumble bee, which aerodynamically should not be able to fly, since its weight-to-lift ratios are all wrong. On the other hand, the saga of the bumble bee itself is no different to that of autistic human beings, who are to all intents and purposes segregated from their psycho-sociocultural milieu in terms of non-verbal communication. Like the bumblebee, they do not know that they are not strong enough, not fast enough, or even not attractive enough, yet they 'keep on flying anyway' with incorruptibility, being driven by their inner voice – a silent, extralinguistic dialogue between the body and the mind: *bodymind*. Such an extraordinary, harmonious co-dependency of *bodymind-kinesomatic* intelligence and spatial awareness oftentimes takes these autistic savants quite effortlessly beyond the boundaries of our traditional comfort zones, and gives the lie to scientific neo-Cartesian claims that wo/mankind's profound wisdom is reductionistic, not integrative, and not related to our underlying dignity: to our *Ubuntu*,¹⁰ flowing, for many, from our resemblance to the universal creative source.

In the turbulent world of American professional sports, the remarkable basketball story in Case 8.2 of Jason McElwain (nicknamed J-Mac) stands as living testimony to this *bodymind-kinesomatic* dynamic of 'pure love' or 'playing without fear', when an autistic player is allowed to fulfil that highest AML need and creates his own slam-dunk scoring bonanza – a feat many sports scientists believe even a professional player would find challenging today.

¹⁰ An ancient South African Bantu word meaning humanness.

Case 8.2 J-Mac: autistic person or *bodymind-kinesomatic* spirit in flight?

Born on 1 October 1988 and diagnosed with autism when he was three, J-Mac grew up exhibiting behaviour typical of many autistic children and had trouble interacting with other kids. However, during his teenage years he was enrolled at a number of special schools, where both speech and behavioural therapists helped him to gradually nurture his social and academic skills. J-Mac was always infatuated with basketball, so Jim Johnson, the basketball coach at Greece Athena High School in Rochester, New York, appointed him mascot of the team.

On 15 February 2006, it was Greece Athena v. Spencerport High School, with a major division title at stake. Greece Athena had a substantial lead, so Johnson made the benevolent decision to allow J-Mac to play during the last four minutes, thereby keeping a promise he made to the young lad just before this last game of the season. Although cheered on by a huge ovation from the crowd, J-Mac missed his two initial shots. Disappointed, but not discouraged, Johnson (as he later confirmed) prayed 'Dear God, just get him a basket'. Then the transfiguring power of *bodymind-kinesomatic* intelligence was suddenly released, performed and manifested 'without fear', when J-Mac scored six three-point shots and one two-pointer. By the time he concluded his four-minute fusillade, the crowd dashed onto the court in celebration, and J-Mac had been transformed from an ambitious autistic savant to actual team lead scorer, who declared after the final buzzer rang 'I was on fire. I was hotter than a pistol!' The amateur video¹¹ of his electrifying exhibition was not only posted on the internet (attracting hundreds of thousands of viewers globally), but it triggered a frenetic scramble for the rights to his life saga by Hollywood agents after being shown on national television.

J-Mac's story evoked such an overwhelming response when it was reported in 2006, that the then American President George W. Bush confessed he wept after seeing the video clip of America's newest improbable hero literally 'flying' in the face of all neo-Cartesian logic and scientific laws of aerodynamics. J-Mac has since appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, shaken hands with Hillary Clinton, and his performance has been voted the best sports moment of 2006 in an ESPN (cable television network) poll. He also earned a film contract with Colombia pictures, a book contract with a best-selling ghost writer and is now represented by a personal agent at the prominent New York-based William Morris agency. So, is it Jason McElwain: autistic person or *bodymind-kinesomatic* spirit in flight? How about Hollywood slam-dunk hero: hotter than a pistol? I rest my case and await the movie.

Source: Based on Tony Allen-Mills in *The Sunday Times*, 4 March 2010, 24.

Discussion question

- 2 How do you see the AML principles of benevolent decision making and trust as exemplified by J-Mac's coach, contributing toward managing diversity and increasing the efficacy of HR strategies and practices in the business of sports.

¹¹ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tui8EOdv_VU&NR=1

'J-Mac's' mother, Debbie McElwin, observed that the whole experience was an immense confidence booster for her son. But it can be further averred that with his transformation from team manager to star of the show, he not only affirmed his leadership 'expectations' as the squad's highest scorer ever, but, approximating the capoeirista warriors in the Roda, he also fortified his self-image of sovereignty in the process. Here we must acknowledge the importance of self-image to motivation and the '**impact of expectancy**' when managing people in sports.

Self-image is a person's own view of him/herself. It is:

- learned (acquired through important life experiences);
- moulded by the reactions of others (e.g. parents, peers, coaches);
- susceptible to change;
- extremely important both on and off the sports field.

Self-image also affects:

- motivation (drive to pursue some goal);
- learning (acquisition of new knowledge or new skills);
- athletic performance (as well as performance in other areas);
- personal relationships (liking for others and acceptance by others);
- life satisfaction (realisation of personal goals);
- personal satisfaction (how a person feels about themselves).

It can be argued that Coach Jim Johnson therefore encouraged 'J-Mac' towards cultivating a positive self-image, by:

- showing acceptance;
- offering specific praise;
- giving him personal attention;
- emphasising his self-responsibility as a team mascot.

Coach Johnson also demonstrated a level of interpersonal competence deficient in many non-self-actualised individuals. He showed himself to be an 'emotionally intelligent'¹² sports leader, as opposed to the scientific management style associated with the American engineer F.W. Taylor. As described above, this martial approach to the imposition of 'lean' in workplace organisation and job design is based on the classical principle of giving as much initiative as possible to managerial experts about how tasks are done. These experts

¹² In his text *Working With Emotional Intelligence* Daniel Goleman (1998) contends that the world of work has essentially neglected an extremely important array of skills and abilities – those which deal with human relations and emotions. Goleman focused specifically on the need to have appreciation for one's own emotional life, adapting one's own feelings, and understanding the emotions of others, while being able to work with and have empathy for other people. He wrote of various methods to improve our emotional competence (especially where children are concerned), while he averred that the business world in particular would be a more convivial environment if employers and employees nurtured emotional intelligence as conscientiously as they now endorsed cognitive intelligence or the IQ (see also Gardner, 1999). Goleman's stance on the limitations of cognitive intelligence and such related tests is supported quite robustly by Segall et al. (1990: 59) in their earlier publication *Human Behaviour In Global Perspective*.