



UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

This is a peer-reviewed, post-print (final draft post-refereeing) version of the following published document, Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives License and is licensed under Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 license:

**Mesagno, Christopher, Hill, Denise M. ORCID: 0000-0001-8580-4048 and Larkin, Paul (2015) Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre- and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 19. pp. 85-94.  
doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005**

Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005>

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005>

EPrint URI: <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/2307>

#### **Disclaimer**

The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

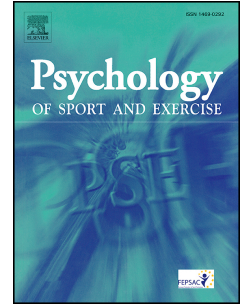
The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.

# Accepted Manuscript

Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre- and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study

Christopher Mesagno, Ph.D, Denise M. Hill, Paul Larkin



PII: S1469-0292(15)00028-X

DOI: [10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005)

Reference: PSYSPO 985

To appear in: *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*

Received Date: 18 August 2014

Revised Date: 15 January 2015

Accepted Date: 16 March 2015

Please cite this article as: Mesagno, C., Hill, D.M., Larkin, P., Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre- and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* (2015), doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.005.

This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

1

2 Running head: EXAMINING PERFORMANCE ROUTINES

3

4

5

6

Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre-  
and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study

8

9

10

Christopher Mesagno

11

Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

12

13

Denise M. Hill

14

University of Gloucestershire, Gloucester, United Kingdom

15

16

Paul Larkin

17

University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

18

19

20

21 Re-Submitted to *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*: January 14th 2015

22

23

Please direct all correspondence to Christopher Mesagno, Ph.D.

24

Faculty of Health

25

Federation University Australia

26

P.O. Box 663

27

Ballarat, Victoria 3353 AUSTRALIA

28

Phone: 61 3 5327 6136

29

Email: [c.mesagno@federation.edu.au](mailto:c.mesagno@federation.edu.au)

30

Running head: EXAMINING PERFORMANCE ROUTINES

Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre-  
and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study

1 **Abstract**

2 *Objectives:* Researchers have identified that pre-performance routines improve performance  
3 under pressure, yet have not investigated the effects of post-performance routines. Thus, the  
4 purpose of the current study was to examine whether the type of performance routine training  
5 could improve tenpin bowling accuracy and in-game performance.

6 *Design:* A mixed-method design was adopted, whereby the impact of a performance routine  
7 intervention on performance accuracy and in-game performance was examined. This was  
8 followed by participants completing semi-structured interviews which explored the perceived  
9 effect of those routines.

10 *Method:* Thirty-six experienced tenpin bowlers completed 30 accuracy shots pre- and post-  
11 intervention training, with league scores obtained for in-game performance comparison. Four  
12 groups (i.e., pre-performance routine [PPR], post-performance routine [POST], combined pre-  
13 post routine, and a control group) practiced 12 games across four weeks while listening to the  
14 group specific routine instruction on an iPod.

15 *Results:* It was noted that accuracy improved (albeit non-significantly) for the PPR and combined  
16 pre-post routine group, but not the other groups. Critically, all intervention groups (PPR, POST  
17 & COMBO) improved in-game performance. The qualitative data indicated that both the PPR  
18 and POST was perceived to influence positively performance, attentional and emotional control,  
19 self-awareness, self-confidence, motivation. The PPR was also considered to enhance a state of  
20 readiness, and perceived control.

21 *Conclusions:* Results indicate that the PPR training enhanced accuracy and in-game  
22 performance, with the POST training acting as a supportive role for in-game performance as  
23 evidenced by the qualitative and quantitative data. Future research should continue to investigate  
24 the effects of POSTs.

1 Keywords: Pre-shot routine, post-shot routine, self-regulation

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

1 **Examining the accuracy and in-game performance effects between pre-**  
2 **and post-performance routines: A mixed methods study**

3 Applied sport psychologists attempt to improve athlete performance, in part, by educating  
4 them to become more aware of performance inconsistencies, apply volitional control to reduce  
5 negative spontaneous reaction to competitive situations, and use more adaptive self-regulation  
6 (Hemmings & Holder, 2009). Self-regulation is the management of cognitive, emotional,  
7 motivational, and social processes to make decisions, engage in behavior, and process stimuli in  
8 the pursuit of goals (Cameron & Leventhal, 2003). Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice (2007) explain  
9 that self-regulation is any effort by an individual to alter thoughts, emotions, and actions in  
10 accordance with his/her desires. Therefore, functional self-regulation facilitates desirable  
11 behavior because the individual resists inappropriate impulses and persists with correct behavior  
12 (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994).

13 One self-regulation strategy offered by applied sport psychologists to improve their  
14 athletes' attentional and emotional control is a pre-performance routine (PPR). Moran (1996)  
15 states that a PPR is a sequence of task-relevant thoughts and actions an athlete systematically  
16 engages in prior to performance of a sport skill. Moran's definition is the most widely adopted  
17 among studies investigating PPRs (see Cotterill, 2010 for a review). To date, PPRs have been  
18 adopted predominantly to improve the performance of closed and self-paced tasks (e.g., putting  
19 in golf, free-throw shooting in basketball, or executing a ten-pin bowling delivery).

20 Researchers have provided equivocal results regarding the effectiveness of PPRs, with  
21 novices appearing to benefit the most (Beauchamp, Halliwell, Fournier, & Koestner, 1996;  
22 Crews & Boutcher, 1986; McCann, Lavalley, & Lavalley, 2001); while studies involving  
23 experienced athletes have indicated mixed results following PPR training (e.g., Boutcher &  
24 Crews, 1987; Cohn, Rotella, & Lloyd, 1990; Kingston & Hardy, 2001; Lobmeyer & Wasserman,  
25 1986; Marlow, Bull, Heath, & Shambrook, 1998). Cohn et al. (1990) for example, examined the  
26 effects of a cognitive-behavioral PPR intervention on three male collegiate golfers during

1 competition and reported that although the intervention increased PPR adherence, there was no  
2 immediate performance increase. During subsequent interviews however, the participants  
3 expressed immediate subjective improvements in unobservable mental skills, such as  
4 concentration and confidence. Though such perceptions were not directly observable in objective  
5 performance scores. Follow-up testing after four months verified an improvement in all three  
6 players' performances, with the golfers' interview data indicating they believed the PPR was  
7 beneficial. These results should be viewed with caution however, for the perceived benefit may  
8 be due to other variables such as physical practice. Marlow et al. (1998) also found the penalty  
9 shot accuracy of three experienced water polo players increased by between 21% and 28%  
10 immediately following the implementation of a PPR. Furthermore, Velentzas, Heinen, and  
11 Schack (2011) investigated whether two types of routine methods (i.e., imagery or introduction  
12 to a PPR), trained over a 7-week intervention period could improve volleyball serving  
13 performance. Velentzas et al. found that both intervention groups improved serving performance  
14 from pre- to post-intervention, with the imagery group being the most effective routine training.  
15 In addition, it has also been established that PPRs may lower arousal levels (Boutcher & Crews,  
16 1987), increase intrinsic motivation, reduce negative introspection (Beauchamp et al., 1996), and  
17 increase attention to task (Cohn et al., 1990; Cotterill, Sanders, & Collins, 2010).

18 A number of researchers (e.g., Anshel, 1995; Bartholomew, 2003; Dale, 2004) have  
19 posited that a PPR is a suitable intervention to aid athletes in coping effectively with pressure  
20 during real-world competition. Mesagno, Marchant, and Morris (2008) employed a single-case  
21 design method to demonstrate improved performance under pressure of three "choking-  
22 susceptible" (i.e., likely to experience "choking under pressure") ten-pin bowlers using an  
23 extensive PPR. The extensive PPR included modifying or incorporating cognitive and behavioral  
24 elements into their pre-existing PPR, such as a deep breath, cue word and behavioral steps. Due  
25 to limitations associated with a single-case design, Mesagno and Mullane-Grant (2010)  
26 subsequently conducted a follow-up experimental study with a larger cohort, to assess which



1 elements of the PPR were most effective for improved performance. Participants were assigned  
2 into one of five groups: deep breath (i.e., took three diaphragmatic deep breaths); cue word (i.e.,  
3 developed a cue word to focus attention to the task); temporal consistency (i.e., counted down  
4 aloud from five to maintain temporal consistency); extensive PPR (i.e., educated on extensive  
5 PPR similar to Mesagno et al., 2008); and control (i.e., no intervention training). Results  
6 indicated the extensive PPR group improved performance under pressure more than groups using  
7 only independent PPR elements, with the control group decreasing performance. In support of  
8 Mesagno and Mullane-Grant (2010), Hill, Hanton, Matthews, and Fleming (2011) demonstrated,  
9 in a longitudinal study of elite golfers, that a PPR could alleviate choking under pressure as part  
10 of a mental skills program through increased perceived control, lowered debilitating anxiety, and  
11 improved focus. Collectively, these studies indicate a PPR may be an effective intervention to  
12 improve in-game performance when pressure may be heightened.

13 Despite the considerable research attention exploring the effectiveness of PPRs on  
14 performance, few studies have investigated behavioral or psychological routines undertaken after  
15 performance execution (i.e., post-performance routine). We define a post-performance routine  
16 (POST) as a series of behavioral or psychological strategies undertaken after performance  
17 execution, yet prior to the PPR of the next performance attempt. Hill, Hanton, Matthews, and  
18 Fleming (2010) were the first to identify that the use of POSTs may be a mechanism to improve  
19 performance under pressure. Hill et al. interviewed six elite golfers who frequently experienced  
20 choking under pressure and five elite golfers who frequently excelled under pressure. They found  
21 those golfers who excelled under pressure, performed a consistent POST after each shot, which  
22 tended to include constructive task-related reflection, followed by a behavioral response (i.e.,  
23 removal of glove) that triggered attention to be directed towards the next shot. However, those  
24 who experienced choking under pressure appeared to rarely or intermittently complete a POST.  
25 Much of the psychological turmoil that athletes encounter during competition may stem from  
26 maladaptive thoughts associated with unacceptable shot performance, which in turn may lead to

1 misdirected concentration and emotional upheaval during the POST. As Hill et al. explained,  
2 “participants who excelled under pressure were less self-critical (than “chokers”) after poor  
3 performances, as they accepted mistakes and used negative experiences to improve their  
4 game...interventions that encourage the “chokers” to accept poor performances...could prove  
5 beneficial” (p. 235).

6 Similarly, Oudejans, Kuijpers, Kooijman, and Bakker (2011) used concept mapping to  
7 analyze written responses of seven expert athletes from a range of sports about their focus of  
8 attention in high-pressure situations. Concept mapping involves a sequence of group activities  
9 focused on qualitative analysis that provides thematic clusters of aggregated text across  
10 participants. Oudejans et al. found that worries related to negative thoughts and uncertainty /  
11 doubt were two of the five clusters with the highest importance rating of cognitions associated  
12 with performance under pressure, and thus in-game, real-world cognitions. The Oudejans et al.  
13 study did not differentiate when these worries occurred, nevertheless, it would be logical that  
14 these worries could be present either prior to, during, or following skill execution within real  
15 world (rather than laboratory based) competitions.

16 From the aforementioned research, using POSTs as an intervention could improve coping  
17 responses and minimize negative reactions to skill errors that lead to self-deprecating cognitions  
18 and performance inconsistency, by providing athletes a central attentional focus after  
19 performance execution. This could prove particularly helpful for athletes who have a tendency to  
20 be highly self-critical (i.e., dysfunctional perfectionists), and who suffer from low confidence  
21 and poor attentional control. Thus, it could be inferred that focusing on a routine may decrease  
22 negative introspection, increase functional self-regulation and improve performance outcomes  
23 (Singer, 2002). Further research on POSTs and their effectiveness for in-game performance (and  
24 under pressure) would be advantageous. Such information could help applied sport psychologists  
25 augment their psychological skills repertoire to implement empirically tested and validated  
26 interventions related to after shot psychological recovery.

## 1 **Purpose and Hypotheses of the Current Study**

2 Through a mixed-method approach, the purpose of the current study was to examine  
3 whether the type of performance routine training (e.g., pre- or post-performance) could improve  
4 tenpin bowling accuracy and also in-game performance using real-world competition (i.e., league  
5 averages). It was hypothesized that the PPR, POST, and combined (i.e., PPR & POST) training  
6 groups would perform more accurately, and would improve in-game performance after a four-  
7 week intervention training period, compared to a wait-list control group. Thereafter, the  
8 perceived effects of the PPR and POSTs were explored through individual semi-structured  
9 interviews.

## 10 **Method**

### 11 **Methodology**

12 A mixed-method design was adopted to address the aims of the study, in which inferences  
13 and conclusions were drawn from the collection and analyses of both quantitative and qualitative  
14 data (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). By converging quantitative and qualitative methods in this  
15 manner, the strengths of both approaches are maximized and their limitation minimized, to  
16 provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2003).

### 17 **Participants**

18 Thirty-six league bowlers ( $M_{age} = 40.50$ ,  $SD = 14.72$ ), with a reported bowling league  
19 average between 142 and 207 ( $M_{average} = 179.03$ ,  $SD = 17.10$ ) for at least 24 games, participated  
20 in the study. A league average of between 140 and 210 was necessary to represent intermediate  
21 to sub-elite bowlers because novices (below 140 average) may not be able to apply the POST  
22 procedures due to inconsistency, and elite bowlers (above 210 average) were likely to have  
23 relatively consistent PPRs and a ceiling performance effect might occur. A demographic  
24 questionnaire was completed prior to testing as a screening device for bowling experience (i.e.,  
25 league average) and sport psychology training. Participants were untrained in sport psychology  
26 principles with only six suggesting they had “attended group workshops with a sport

1 psychologist”, though they did not explore / discuss performance routines specifically. At least  
2 one participant who had received sport psychology training was included in each of the groups  
3 (i.e., 2 PPR, 2 POST, 1 combined pre-post performance routine, & 2 control group), and so is  
4 unlikely to act as a confounding variable.

#### 5 **Equipment**

6 Standard bowling equipment and facilities similar to Mesagno et al. (2008) were used. The  
7 audio recording of the PPR and POST (group specific instructions) was recorded to a “clip on”  
8 Apple Ipod shuffle with earphones (2 GB) so it could be attached to the participant’s clothes, and  
9 listened to during the intervention training phase.

#### 10 **Measures**

11 **Demographics questionnaire.** Demographic data including age, gender, tenpin bowling  
12 experience (e.g., whether bowling in a sanctioned league, number of leagues per week, and  
13 highest league average), and sport psychology training (e.g., worked with a sport psychologists  
14 in any capacity) were recorded.

15 **Task and performance measure.** Tenpin bowling was chosen as the experimental task  
16 because it is a self-paced closed skill that is conducive to PPRs and POSTs. Furthermore,  
17 routines may have a direct influence on performance because the impending shots are taken  
18 quickly (if a spare is attempted after the “strike” shot) and only short breaks are allowed between  
19 frames. Therefore bowlers are required to perform soon after errors in performance execution.

20 The accuracy task was identical to that used within the Mesagno et al. (2008) study,  
21 whereby participants attempted shot attempts at a target on the bowling lane. Bowlers are usually  
22 instructed to focus attention at a target 15 feet (e.g., arrows) rather than 60 feet (i.e., the pins)  
23 away for easier identification of targeting and improved accuracy (Wiedman, 2006). Thus,  
24 absolute error, in centimeters (cm), from center of the target to center of the ball track was  
25 examined. Mean absolute error (MAE) for all shot attempts was the dependent variable; reduced

1 MAE indicated improved accuracy (the reader is referred to Mesagno et al. for additional  
2 details).

### 3 **Training groups**

4 Participants were randomly allocated into one of four training groups: PPR, POST,  
5 combined pre-post-performance routine, or wait-list control. The PPR group involved  
6 participants developing, or modifying their existing PPR. Boutcher (1990) advised that PPRs  
7 should involve a series of physiological, psychological, and behavioral steps. Within the PPR,  
8 optimal arousal levels (e.g., deep breaths), behavioral steps (e.g., wiping the ball off with a  
9 towel, watching their foot slide into the correct position on the approach, etc.), attentional control  
10 (e.g., focusing on a target), and cue words (when needed) were considered for inclusion into the  
11 PPR. Since the PPR was personalized for each participant, these steps were possible elements to  
12 include, but were not necessarily uniform across all PPR and combined group participants. The  
13 first author (a certified tenpin bowling coach and sport psychology consultant) attended the pre-  
14 intervention test sessions (see the *Procedures* section for test session information) and identified  
15 appropriate components of the PPR while taking extensive notes on each participant's routine.  
16 Considering each bowler's PPR was individualized and existing routines may be more  
17 inconsistent for novice compared to experienced bowlers, PPR modifications were tailored to  
18 each participant's individual routine with no standardized routine implemented. While  
19 developing the behavioral steps for the routine and to ensure understanding, the routine was  
20 practiced to the satisfaction of both the participant and the first author, and terminated when the  
21 participant performed five repeated "shadow shots" (i.e., shots without the ball) using the PPR.

22 The POST group used a psychological POST, whereby each participant answered a series  
23 of questions, which related to the previously delivered strike shot. The series of questions was  
24 developed by elite level coaches ( $n = 2$ ; average coaching experience = 24.5 years) and the first  
25 author. This sequence of questions was perceived by the elite coaches (but has not yet been  
26 empirically tested) to help the bowler remain psychologically composed, accept the effectiveness

1 of performance execution, and make appropriate target alignment adjustments to remain closer to  
2 the “pocket” (i.e., area at the pins where strikes are more likely).

3 The series of questions included (in sequential order): 1) Did I execute the shot well? 2)  
4 Did I hit the target in which I was aiming? and 3) Did the ball hit the “pocket”? If the participant  
5 answered “no” to any of these questions, then no target alignment adjustment was made (e.g.,  
6 move feet, move target, change bowling balls etc., to change angle or direction to the pocket) and  
7 better performance execution was attempted on the next strike shot. If the participant answered  
8 “yes” to all of these questions, then the question, “Where did the ball hit the pins?” should be  
9 answered to identify which type of target alignment adjustment to make. Similarly to the PPR,  
10 the POST was explained to the participant in enough detail that he / she understood the  
11 questions, and knew when / how to make possible target alignment adjustments when answering  
12 the question, “Where did the ball hit the pins?” Accordingly, the process adopted within the  
13 POST was aligned to the reflection phase of Zimmerman’s (2000) self-regulation theory,  
14 whereby participants were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through the  
15 use of strategies that encouraged evaluation of their performance.

16 The combined pre-post performance routine group (hereafter labeled simply as  
17 “combined”) completed both the PPR and POST training as described above. The wait-list  
18 control group completed the intervention training phase without PPR or POST education.

#### 19 **Procedures**

20 Upon receiving approval from the lead author’s University Research Ethics Committee,  
21 participants were recruited from tenpin bowling leagues ( $n = 3$ ) in an Australian major city, by  
22 asking league officials for their consent. Volunteer bowlers were addressed prior to a league  
23 competition session / event, and those recruited completed an informed consent form and  
24 demographics questionnaire to determine eligibility (i.e., a league average below 210).  
25 Participants completed the study independently and took part in three phases: pre-intervention  
26 test, intervention training, and post-intervention test phases.

1 The pre-intervention test phase involved 30 attempts (with a 2-minute break between  
2 blocks of 10 shots) at a target on the bowling lane to measure accuracy, with an independent  
3 research assistant (i.e., blind to the purpose of the study) completing data collection. Immediately  
4 following the pre-intervention test, an individualized (but group-specific) routine education  
5 session was offered (i.e., participants were educated about his / her individually tailored routine  
6 based on the intervention training group in which they were allocated) to each participant in the  
7 intervention training groups (i.e., PPR, POST, or combined). Audio recording of each bowler's  
8 individual routine was made for the participant to use during the four-week intervention training  
9 period. The audio recording provided instructions, at a comfortable speed, of the step-by-step  
10 routine for each participant in the intervention groups. After the education session, the recording  
11 was transferred to an Apple Ipad shuffle for each participant to use throughout the intervention  
12 training phase. During the intervention training phase, participants practiced three games per  
13 week over four weeks (12 total games) while listening to their acquired routine on the Apple  
14 Ipad.

15 The post-intervention test phase was identical to the pre-intervention test phase with the  
16 exception that participants in the intervention training groups implemented their performance  
17 routine training during post-intervention accuracy test.

18 To investigate in-game performance changes, and therefore real-world performance  
19 responses, the 12 competition (i.e., league-based) games prior to the pre-intervention test phase,  
20 and 24 competition games immediately following the post-intervention test phases, respectively,  
21 were obtained from the league secretary. The 24 games post-intervention training were divided  
22 into two separate 12 game sets, with the initial 12 games hereafter referred to as post-  
23 intervention training and the final 12 games called follow-up intervention training. The follow-  
24 up intervention training games were obtained to determine the robustness of the routine training.



1 Interviews were conducted immediately following the post-intervention test to explore in  
2 further detail the perceived impact of the intervention training. No interviews were conducted  
3 with the wait-list control group.

#### 4 **Training Logbook**

5 During the intervention training phase, all participants completed an intervention training  
6 logbook after each week of training and submitted their logbook to the first author. Participants  
7 logged the number of bowling games practiced, which confirmed they completed the required  
8 training during the intervention training phase. The logbook also included the number of extra  
9 practice games participants completed above the intervention training games, to determine if all  
10 participants were practicing, or competing, equally during the training weeks. In addition,  
11 participants who received an Ipod answered the question, *How much did you pay attention to the*  
12 *Ipod instructions during the training games?* Participants answered the question on a 10-point  
13 scale ranging from 1 (*I did not pay attention to the Ipod at all during training*) to 10 (*I paid*  
14 *attention to the Ipod instructions on all shots of training*) for each of the four training weeks they  
15 used the Ipod.

#### 16 **Individual Interviews**

17 An interview guide of open-ended questions was derived from the relevant PPR and  
18 performance literature and finalized after consulting two sport psychologists. The purpose of the  
19 interview was to explore the perceived emotional, cognitive, behavioral effect of the intervention  
20 training on performance accuracy, and perceived in-game (i.e., league average) performance  
21 before and after routine training. In line with the recommendations of Teddlie and Tashakkori  
22 (2009), the interviews completed within this mixed methods study were semi structured. That is,  
23 participants were encouraged to articulate in detail, and from their own viewpoint, the perceived  
24 effect of the pre- and / or post-performance routines on their performance. The questions were  
25 open ended (i.e., prefaced by how? why? in what way?) and probes were used to gain further  
26 insights where necessary (e.g., can you tell me more about that?). The interview schedule is



1 available on request from the lead author. Interviews were completed by the lead author, and  
2 ranged from 16 to 54 minutes with clarification and elaboration questions stimulating participant  
3 responses (Patton, 2002).

#### 4 **Results**

5 Due to injuries to three participants during the study (2 PPR & 1 POST participant), only  
6 33 participants were included in the analyses. Initially, to identify that ability level was similar  
7 among groups, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the reported league  
8 average prior to study involvement. To strengthen the results of the performance data and rule  
9 out other possible confounding variables, separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted for total  
10 number of leagues and total extra games bowled during intervention training per week, total  
11 games practiced with Ipad during the training intervention phase, and average Ipad use for  
12 intervention groups during the intervention training phase. Then, a 4 (Group: combined, PPR,  
13 POST, control)  $\times$  2 (Test: pre-, post-intervention test) mixed-design ANOVA with repeated  
14 measures on the Test factor was conducted for mean absolute error (i.e., performance accuracy).  
15 Finally, a 4 (Group)  $\times$  3 (Test: pre-, post-, follow-up intervention test) mixed-design ANOVA  
16 with repeated measures on the Test factor was conducted on mean league scores of the 12 games  
17 collected in each phase. Partial eta squared (partial  $\eta^2$ ) was used as an indicator of effect size for  
18 ANOVA calculations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and an alpha level of .05 was set for all  
19 statistical tests.

#### 20 **Homogeneity of Groups**

21 The reported league average indicated no significant Group differences,  $F(3, 32) = .04, p >$   
22  $.10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ , indicating that groups were equal in initial bowling ability prior to  
23 involvement in the study.

#### 24 **Homogeneity of Possible Confounding Variables**

25 The total number of leagues bowled per week indicated no significant Group differences,  
26  $F(3, 32) = 2.12, p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .18$ . The total number of games practiced with the Ipad

1 during the training intervention phase indicated no significant Group differences,  $F(3, 32) =$   
 2 1.37,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$ . The total extra games practiced during the training phase also  
 3 indicated no significant Group differences,  $F(3, 32) = 0.64$ ,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ . The average  
 4 Ipod use for the intervention groups during the training phase indicated no significant Group  
 5 differences,  $F(2, 23) = 0.15$ ,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ . These results indicate that the groups were  
 6 similar in amount of games bowled during the intervention training phase and each group's  
 7 attention to the Ipod was similar for the intervention training groups and that performance could  
 8 be equated to the training groups' performance differences.

### 9 **Performance Accuracy**

10 Initial exploratory analysis for performance accuracy indicated that two participants (one in  
 11 PPR, and one in control group) were outliers in the post-intervention MAE score, thus, those  
 12 participants were deleted from the performance accuracy analysis. From the remaining  
 13 participants ( $n = 31$ ), performance results indicated no significant Group,  $F(3, 27) = 1.05$ ,  $p >$   
 14  $.10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ , or Test main effect,  $F(1, 27) = 2.21$ ,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .08$ . There was also  
 15 no significant interaction,  $F(3, 27) = 1.41$ ,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ . Noteworthy is that the PPR  
 16 and combined groups improved accuracy the most (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

17 **\*\*Insert Table 1 here\*\***

### 18 **In-Game Performance**

19 Analysis of in-game performance, via league scores, indicated no significant Group main  
 20 effect,  $F(3, 29) = .22$ ,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ , or significant Group  $\times$  Test interaction,  $F(6, 58) =$   
 21 1.04,  $p > .10$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ . There was, however, a Test main effect,  $F(2, 58) = 3.60$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  
 22 partial  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Pairwise comparisons indicated that league scores in the post-intervention ( $M =$   
 23 184.76,  $SD = 17.37$ ) and follow-up intervention tests ( $M = 184.53$ ,  $SD = 16.76$ ) were  
 24 significantly different to performance scores in the pre-intervention test ( $M = 179.50$ ,  $SD =$   
 25 19.73), with no significant difference between the post-intervention and follow-up intervention

1 tests. The difference in league averages was largely because of the intervention groups  
2 improving their average after the intervention training in comparison to the control group.

### 3 Interview Results

4 The interview data were analysed through qualitative content analysis (see Schreier, 2012  
5 for a review), which is a systematic means of describing a phenomenon, while identifying  
6 relationships between concepts. The analytical process broadly followed the steps advocated by  
7 Mayring (2010). That is, interviews were transcribed verbatim and read several times to ensure  
8 familiarisation. Thereafter, raw data quotations / phrases were extracted from the transcript,  
9 providing pertinent examples of the perceived effect of PPR and POST on participants accuracy  
10 and in-game performance. Any raw data quotations with similar meaning were subsequently  
11 placed into overarching codes, which in turn were organized and collated further into sub-  
12 categories to construct an increasingly explicit representation of the participants' experience of  
13 the intervention. During the analytical procedure, bracketing was employed. This process  
14 involves the researcher becoming aware of any assumptions and predispositions of the subject  
15 material they may have, and setting them aside to avoid them unduly influencing the research  
16 outcomes (see Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Transcripts with the emergent codes / categories were  
17 sent to the participants for member checking.

18 The interviews revealed seven over-arching themes regarding the perceived effect of PPR  
19 and five for POST. Several themes were similar for both PPR and POST (see Table 2 and Table  
20 3 for summaries), with the effects of the routines independent of whether they were adopted as  
21 individual strategies or used in combination (i.e., the combined pre-post performance routine  
22 group). The themes included: *performance, attentional and emotional control, self-awareness,*  
23 *self-confidence, motivation, a state of readiness (PPR only), and perceived control (PPR only).*

24 **\*\*Insert Table 2 and 3 here\*\***

25 Of the 24 participants who were interviewed [ $n = 7$  PPR; 8 POST; 9 combined], 23  
26 perceived the adoption of a routine (i.e., within the PRE, POST, or combined groups) had

1 improved their performance, primarily through increased consistency. For example, Bill<sup>1</sup>  
2 explained, “*I was stringing the strikes together more consistently because of the*  
3 *routine...Instead of getting 2 or 3 strikes in a row, I would be getting 5 or 6*”. Indeed, Tom  
4 indicated the PPR maintained consistency by preventing catastrophic performances (i.e., a  
5 considerable and dramatic decline in performance standard). For participants who had adopted a  
6 POST, such consistency was associated closely with an increased effectiveness of identifying  
7 and attending to required technical, target alignment adjustments. As summarized by Carl:

8 I used to just throw the ball...and if it was wrong just carry on doing the same thing, so it  
9 would go downhill from there. Now, I go through the routine. If something was wrong, I  
10 think what was wrong? And adjust...I am definitely benefiting.

11 All participants from each group (i.e., PPR, POST, or combined), who perceived a  
12 performance improvement, primarily attributed it to enhanced *attentional and emotional control*.  
13 With regards to attention, the routines enhanced task-related focus. That is, the PPR encouraged  
14 an external-narrow focus prior to and during skill execution (i.e., “*I was probably more target*  
15 *orientated in the last four weeks then I have been maybe in the last four years... in the past... my*  
16 *measure would be okay, how well did I execute that shot*”), while the POST initiated a focused  
17 reflection on necessary target alignment adjustment after skill execution. This in turn allowed  
18 participants to block out distractors that would have previously affected their performance  
19 detrimentally (including anxiety-related thoughts and self-presentational concerns). Such  
20 enhanced attentional control was considered particularly beneficial after a mental / performance  
21 error. For example, Anna explained, “*I have the [pre-performance] routine running through my*  
22 *head, so I turn off from everything that’s happening around me...Previously, I would be thinking*  
23 *about what’s going on around me...and what I’m doing wrong*”. Another participant, Danielle  
24 suggested that, “*[after an error] instead of focusing on being a bad bowler whilst taking the next*

---

<sup>1</sup> All participant names are pseudonyms.

1 *throw...I'm thinking about the [pre-performance] routine...My thoughts are directed to re-*  
2 *focusing on that". Similarly, when discussing the POST, Cheryl explained, "I now focus on*  
3 *something other than the emotions I may feel after the shot...So regardless of what's happened, I*  
4 *would think about whether I executed that...whether I hit this....and that helps me stay focused*  
5 *on the game".*

6 Furthermore, 15 out of 16 participants who received a PPR [ $n = 7$  PPR; 8 combined]  
7 identified it had improved their attentional control by either preventing the explicit monitoring of  
8 skill execution (i.e., directly focusing on the technique and attempting to consciously control the  
9 skill execution), and / or enabling re-focus in-between shot attempts. Interestingly, 50% of  
10 participants identified their routine had lowered their performance initially, due to the distraction  
11 it caused. Thus, for many, perceived improvements only occurred once the routine was  
12 embedded (after approximately two of the four intervention training weeks). Understandably,  
13 participants in the combined pre-post performance routine group predominantly (though not  
14 exclusively) required a longer period of time before they experienced the associated benefits of  
15 the routines. Notably, some of the combined group participants explained that they focused more  
16 on the PPR during the routine training sessions than the POST, which may indicate that the PPR  
17 was adhered to more than the POST, leading to the performance differences among groups.

18 The one participant, Simon, who perceived the PPR did not improve performance,  
19 admitted he had not adhered to the PPR, was sceptical about psychological skills training, and  
20 was uncomfortable using the Ipod during training: "...the Ipod thing, it just kept falling out [of  
21 my ears], so I just gave up. I just couldn't do what it said. I don't think I've learnt anything to be  
22 honest. It's [PPR] nothing that would benefit me." Curiously, though, Simon improved his  
23 league average considerably after the intervention training (by 28 pins).

24 Concerning *emotional control*, most participants [ $n = 5$  PPR; 7 POST; 7 combined]  
25 suggested the PPR and POST alleviated negative emotions (e.g., frustration & anxiety) while  
26 encouraging positive emotional responses (e.g., relaxation). Sam, who adopted a PPR explained:

1 *“It helped me re-group and start again. I used to get upset when I messed up, so I’d miss another*  
 2 *shot and get worse. Now, I focus on the routine...on what I have to achieve...it helps me stay*  
 3 *calm.”* Similarly, when recalling the effects of a POST, Bobby suggested, *“It deals with my*  
 4 *reactions of a strike and non-strike...It calms my emotional side down, so I get back to focusing*  
 5 *on asking different questions about what has just happened. It’s definitely made me a lot*  
 6 *calmer”*. Regarding anxiety, a number of participants [ $n = 5$  PPR; 2 POST; 3 combined]  
 7 recognized the PPR and POST was helpful because it reduced its debilitating effects. Terry  
 8 explained, *“The [pre shot] routine deals with my butterflies...Last night I had two occasions*  
 9 *where I got strikes at the end of the game. It [PPR] meant I could screen out those*  
 10 *pressures...just execute the shots properly and not worry about the result”*. Moreover, the post-  
 11 shot routine *“helped me get on top of those negative thoughts”*.

12 The qualitative data indicated that the routines had affected 14 participants’ [ $n = 3$  PPR; 6  
 13 POST; 5 combined] *self-awareness*, which enabled an enhanced management of their current  
 14 performance, while also informing strategies for future self-development. When reflecting on the  
 15 role of PPR, Steve explained, *“It made me think about what I am doing and why; whereas*  
 16 *before, I just bowled.”* Another participant, Helen, stated, *“...the routines made me aware I was*  
 17 *not concentrating before. I hadn’t realised...You then take the game more seriously...you then*  
 18 *start to analyse yourself to look for improvement.”* Such improved self-awareness was  
 19 particularly evident within the POST group for it specifically encouraged increased awareness of  
 20 technical errors, *“Until using it [POST] I didn’t realise I was releasing it [the ball] wrong;*  
 21 *[be]cause I was just throwing the ball down. It all makes sense now...and so I am now working*  
 22 *on that with my coach”*. Similarly, Eddie explained:

23 So my [post shot] routine makes me notice if I am hitting the specific area of my target. I  
 24 am now thinking about where I am throwing and how I can hit the pocket...how to  
 25 improve each shot...I now adjust really quickly...and so learning how to bowl really well  
 26 and consistently.



1 Interesting, Cheryl found the POST had initially been, “frustrating” and “stressful”, for although  
2 it enabled her to identify which aspect of performance required adjusting, she did not have the  
3 technical knowledge to make those corrections.

4 The majority of participants [ $n = 6$  PPR; 5 POST; 5 combined] noted they experienced  
5 improved *self-confidence* as a result of the PPR and POST. Such raised confidence emerged  
6 from trusting and expecting the routine to encourage successful skill execution. The effect of  
7 PPR on confidence was summarized by Terry who explained, “*I focus on the pre-shot routine*  
8 *because I know it will get my \*\*\*\* [expletive] together, and so I then know I will strike out*”.  
9 Such increased confidence was particularly notable after a performance error:

10 The first time I put a ball in the gutter [a very poor shot] it didn’t bother me as much as it  
11 would have before, as I realised it must have been a consequence of losing focus. I knew  
12 I just had to go back to my [pre-shot] routine, make sure I follow it. That meant I didn’t  
13 throw two bad balls...It was really reassuring.

14 A similar impact was noted with the POST, “*I feel so much more confident bowling because I am*  
15 *making adjustments when necessary. I step back every time, and think about my shot, and have a*  
16 *clear plan of action as a result*”. Importantly, it was recognized that the POST enabled  
17 constructive reflection after a performance error, which minimized participants’ self-criticism  
18 and so protected their self-confidence.

19 It was also reported by nine participants that the PPR and POST led to raised motivation.  
20 With regards to the PPR, it was suggested by Helen that, “*If I had thrown a few bad balls in the*  
21 *past, I would have given up, because I didn’t have any base to go back to. Now I have the routine*  
22 *to go to and it keeps me going*”. A similar example was offered from Carl within the combined  
23 group, “*Thing is, I can actually do things to make it better...so by focusing on it [POST] and*  
24 *knowing I can make it better, I’m not going to give up*”.

25 Several participants [ $n = 8$ ] also acknowledged the PPR encouraged a *state of readiness*  
26 prior to the task. It fostered a slower and more considered / planned approach for skill execution,

1 and the opportunity to self-regulate emotions. As explained, “*I’m taking the deep breath, and*  
2 *then really thinking about my shot, and looking at my target. Instead of just getting up and*  
3 *bowling and throwing bad shot after bad shot. It slowed me down.*” Likewise, Terry reported, “*If*  
4 *I’m a bit anxious, I tend to rush and that’s when I miss. A pre-shot routine stops this*”.

5 Of the seven participants within the PPR group, five identified their performance had been  
6 affected as a result of the routine raising their levels of *perceived control*. Sam offered a  
7 summary of this process:

8 The routine is a set of rules to achieve a goal. You just focus on applying those rules  
9 every time. It’s like a protocol manual. No matter what the circumstances...or the lane  
10 conditions... that is the procedure. It is the best thing mentally...as you just focus on  
11 this...It makes me feel I am in control of what I am doing. I now know what I need to do,  
12 and if I do it repeatedly, I’ll have a good game.

13 Moreover, it was suggested that when a performance / mental error occurred, returning to focus  
14 on the PPR tended to increase levels of perceived control over the situation, emotions, and  
15 subsequent performance.

16 Finally, the data revealed that most participants within the PPR group also adopted their  
17 own POST that was predominantly an evaluation of their PPR and shot execution. Likewise,  
18 participants who were assigned to the POST group often developed a PPR that attended to the  
19 outcome of their POST reflection (i.e., they focused on technical adjustments). Accordingly, the  
20 qualitative data indicated a blurred line between the three participant groups, though recognizes  
21 the independent perceived impact of a PPR and POST on the participants and their performance.

## 22 Discussion

23 The aim of this study was to examine the effect of a pre- and post-performance routine on  
24 experienced ten-pin bowlers’ accuracy and in-game performance. The findings indicated an  
25 increase (albeit non-significantly) in performance accuracy from pre- to post-intervention  
26 training for groups using the PPR. Critically, all intervention groups’ in-game performance



1 improved, in contrast to the control group. The in-game and performance accuracy of the PPR  
2 and combined groups improved more than the POST group, inferring that the PPR may hold  
3 primary responsibility for the performance effect, with the POST offering a supplementary  
4 supporting role. Thus, the findings offer further, ecologically valid, empirical evidence that a  
5 PPR can enhance athletic performance in a real world setting (Cotterill, 2010), and reinforce the  
6 preliminary suggestion that POST contributes to optimal performance (Hill et al., 2010).

#### 7 **Quantitative Performance Differences**

8 For performance accuracy, those groups that were provided with the PPR training (in  
9 isolation or in combination with the POST) improved accuracy the most from pre- to post-  
10 intervention training, whereas the POST and control groups showed minimal accuracy changes.  
11 These findings are similar to other PPR studies (e.g., Marlow et al., 1998) who found that using a  
12 PPR improved accuracy on water polo penalty shooting accuracy. In their single-case design,  
13 Marlow et al. found percentage improvements, rather than statistical significance, for the  
14 participants who used the PPR. In the current study, where statistical significance could be  
15 obtained, the PPR groups did not show significant changes in accuracy. However critically, the  
16 intervention training had improved in-game performance from pre- to post-intervention, and also  
17 to the follow-up intervention test. Immediate in-game performance improvements were found in  
18 the current study with further effects occurring at the four week follow-up intervention test.  
19 Cohn et al. (1990) however, found no immediate improvements in performance but delayed  
20 improvements four months later. The current research was the first to investigate the retention  
21 effect of routines to determine the robustness of the training on in-game performance using a  
22 larger sample, irrespective of performance measure (i.e., accuracy or in-game), rather than a  
23 single-case design. In combination, using a PPR appears to help improve performance accuracy  
24 and enhance in-game performance, as it acts as a mechanism for athletes to focus attention for  
25 accuracy and within competition.

2       The quantitative results may be explained through the qualitative data, which indicated that  
3 although the PPR and POST affected performance through similar mechanisms (i.e., attentional  
4 and emotional control, self-awareness, self-confidence, and motivation) the exceptions were that  
5 the PPR (only) engendered a state of readiness and perceived control. As such, the PPR  
6 specifically prevented the participants from rushing the execution of their skill, enabled the  
7 planning of their response to the task, and allowed appropriate emotional adjustments to be  
8 made. Thus, as explained through Baumeister's (1997) work, the PPR in particular, affords  
9 athletes an opportunity to self-regulate, and organize the thoughts, feelings and actions required  
10 for optimizing psychological state and performance outcome. Moreover, the PPR was  
11 exclusively found to increase the participants' sense of perceived control prior to the task. This  
12 result is important, for a sense of perceived control over emotions and the environmental demands  
13 (see Chen & Singer, 2002) is known to encourage clutch performance (Otten, 2009), alleviate  
14 performance failure (Hill et al., 2011), and may allow athletes to manage their anxiety symptoms  
15 more effectively (Hanton, O'Brien, & Mellalieu, 2003). All of which are apparent in this study.

16       Irrespective of group allocation, participants perceived the PPR and POST enhanced in-  
17 game performance as a result of improved consistency. That is, fluctuations in performance  
18 levels were minimized, and there appeared to be less 'catastrophic' performances. Therefore,  
19 although the study does support the claim that performance routines are effective in improving  
20 performance under perceived pressure, it identifies this may be achieved principally through the  
21 maintenance of expected performance standards *throughout* the game / competition.

22       The qualitative data revealed that for the most part, performance effects were perceived to  
23 be due to enhanced attentional control. That is, the PPR and POST enabled the athletes to focus  
24 on the task at hand, re-focus in between shots / games, and block distractors (e.g., organizational  
25 and competitive stressors). Such positive performance effects for the current study support other  
26 researchers (e.g., Cohn et al., 1990; Cotterill et al., 2010) findings regarding attentional control.

1 Critically, the PPR was also considered to encourage an external-narrow focus on the target,  
2 which is necessary for optimizing performance (Wulf, Shea, & Park, 2001). Moreover, the PPR  
3 also prevented certain participants from focusing on, and adjusting their technique during skill  
4 execution. With explicit monitoring associated strongly with choking under pressure (see  
5 Beilock & Gray, 2007), this finding indicates that a PPR may be of use to athletes vulnerable to  
6 choking (Hill et al., 2011; Mesagno et al., 2008; Mesagno & Mullane-Grant, 2010). Using a PPR  
7 to prevent choking via the explicit monitoring hypothesis is a new suggestion / finding to current  
8 theory matched choking intervention research, which indicates that a PPR should mainly be used  
9 for athletes who experience choking through distraction-based models (Mesagno et al., 2008;  
10 Mesagno & Mullane-Grant, 2010). While the POST preserved a task focus during performance,  
11 it was identified as being a particularly important tool in the maintenance of attention after a  
12 performance error. This finding is similar to Hill et al. (2010), who also found that a POST  
13 enhanced attention after a performance error within their sample of golfers.

14 Several participants however, found implementing the performance routines distracting  
15 during the first two weeks (approximately) of competition, and so initially, the performance  
16 routines were perceived to influence performance detrimentally. This was particularly relevant  
17 for the combined group because the information being learned was twice that of other groups.  
18 Accordingly, having to learn both routines simultaneously might have been overwhelming for  
19 the athletes. This is similar to Hill et al. (2011), whose participants took approximately four  
20 weeks to implement fully a pre- and post-performance routine, along with several other strategies  
21 (e.g., imagery). In contrast, however, Mesagno and colleagues (Mesagno et al., 2008; Mesagno  
22 & Mullane-Grant, 2010) found immediate performance accuracy under pressure for participants  
23 who were only provided a short (i.e., less than 30 minutes) performance routine training session.  
24 It is possible that in the current study, the use of a recorded message on an Ipod (to prompt  
25 completion of the performance routine), may have been distracting initially, and caused a  
26 delayed learning response. Practitioners should therefore, remain mindful of this response when

1 introducing performance routines to athletes, and ensure the strategy is embedded fully prior to  
2 competition. Moreover, other forms of routine delivery should be considered that may include an  
3 imagery script or video observation.

4 Both the PPR and POST were considered by participants to facilitate emotional control,  
5 which contributed to their improved in-game performance under perceived pressure. Both  
6 routines appeared to encourage positive affect and minimize negative affect. Namely, the PPR  
7 was effective in lowering participants' arousal levels and increasing relaxation (Boutcher &  
8 Crews, 1987), while also reducing the intensity of their anxiety symptoms by promoting a task-  
9 focus that blocked anxiety-related cognitions / emotions (see Hazell, Cotterill, & Hill, 2014).  
10 Importantly, however, this study identified the critical role that the POST plays in controlling  
11 emotions effectively after a performance error, by preventing frustration in particular. As such,  
12 an immediate constructive reflection of errors may improve performance, not just as a result of  
13 informing relevant technical adjustments required, but also through the maintenance of  
14 emotional control.

15 The PPR was perceived to improve participants' performance within the current study  
16 through perceptions of enhanced self-confidence, which supports other researcher's findings  
17 (e.g., Cohen et al., 1990). The PPR and POST both led to raised expectations of successful  
18 performance as participants began to trust the routines would facilitate effective in-game  
19 performance. Subsequently, it appeared that participants became more focused on executing the  
20 routines during performance, and less concerned with the performance outcome. It can be  
21 inferred therefore, that the PPR and POST may have afforded higher levels of confidence as a  
22 result of the sense of control gained over their performance, through achieving a more process,  
23 rather than outcome focus (see Kingston & Wilson, 2009). In addition, similarly to Hill et al.  
24 (2010), this study found the POST protected the participants' self-confidence, by ensuring the  
25 reflection of errors was constructive, and so self-criticism was minimized.

1 With the exception of Beauchamp et al. (1996), the impact of performance routines on  
2 motivation has received limited research attention. The findings from this study offer an  
3 indication that both the PPR and POST may enhance athletes' levels of motivation, which  
4 manifests itself with increased persistence after errors. In this case, participants chose to persist,  
5 rather than withdraw effort after mistakes because the routine provided them with a focus they  
6 considered could help regain performance standards.

7 Finally, an interesting finding was that several participants acknowledged that the routines,  
8 and in particular the POST, encouraged a greater level of self-awareness. They were able to  
9 recognize, through constructive reflection, the reasons for performance errors, and thus their  
10 technical adjustments were more effective and performance improved subsequently. This finding  
11 appears to align with Zimmerman's self-regulation theory (2000), which suggests there are three  
12 cyclical phases of self-regulation; namely, a forethought phase (goal setting and planning), a  
13 performance phase (using strategies to improve learning), and a reflection phase (adopting  
14 strategies to evaluate different parts of the performance after learning). It is acknowledged that  
15 each phase will encourage individuals to become increasingly self-aware, goal-oriented, and  
16 problem-focused, and more likely to achieve their goals as a result. Thus, whilst the POST was  
17 designed initially to encourage reflection (only) within the current study, it would appear it also  
18 stimulated participants to engage with the forethought and performance phase, and thereby  
19 encourage effective self-regulation and the development of sporting expertise (see Kitsantas &  
20 Zimmerman, 2002).

21 As an aside, while it may be suggested that raised self-awareness can induce choking  
22 through explicit monitoring, it was not found to be the case within this study (indirectly from the  
23 interviews). As summarized by Carr (in press), post-performance reflection may aid the  
24 performance of an established (i.e., automatic) skill, if it is aimed specifically at repairing  
25 technical and / or performance errors. Moreover, and critically, the post-performance routine  
26 adopted within the current study was designed to encourage focus on target alignment

1 adjustments prior to the skill execution, and therefore was unlikely to interfere with skill  
2 execution.

### 3 **Limitations and Future Research**

4 We attempted to control for confounding variables, however, we understand there may be  
5 some limitations, which researchers should consider when exploring the effect of routines on  
6 athletic performance in future. Firstly, the number of league games obtained may not provide an  
7 accurate determination of league averages. Tenpin Bowling Australia guidelines indicate that 24  
8 games is an appropriate number of games to establish a reliable league average, however, we  
9 decided on 12 games because we wanted the number of league games and intervention games to  
10 be consistent. Secondly, it is possible that the use of an Ipad with a recorded message of the  
11 performance routine(s) from the lead author, may have delayed participant learning and  
12 encouraged distraction initially. Researchers should consider asking participants to generate their  
13 own voice recording to prompt each stage of their PPR and POST to decrease distraction.  
14 Thirdly, it became apparent during the interviews that participants within the PPR and POST  
15 groups had also spontaneously adopted POST and PPR's, respectively. Indeed, it is highly likely  
16 that the control group also contained individuals who possessed their own PPR and POST.  
17 Therefore, it remains challenging to establish objectively and with certainty, the extent / size of  
18 effect that each discrete routine had on performance. However, in this study, the qualitative data  
19 identified a distinctive perceived effect the PPR and POST had on performance, reinforcing the  
20 advantages of the mixed method approach adopted.

21 Future research should continue to investigate PPR, but also expand the POST literature  
22 For example, a clearer understanding of whether POST are used (and their function) in sport  
23 generally to differentiate their benefits. Furthermore, it is not possible to generalize these POST  
24 findings, and to assume the same routine can impact athletic performance within other sports,  
25 considering this was a bowling specific POST. Thus, future research could differentiate between  
26 the effectiveness of other POSTs such as those using behaviours, other cognitions, or emotional

1 regulation. It is also conceivable that pre-and post-performance routines should be individualized  
2 further, in order to achieve optimal benefit.

### 3 **Summary and Conclusion**

4       The current study was the first to investigate quantitative and qualitative differences in  
5 PPR and POST training on accuracy and in-game performance. This unique mixed-method  
6 design contributes considerably to the extant literature by providing further evidence that both  
7 PPR and POST training can improve performance standards within real-world (arguably more  
8 pressurized) situations. Furthermore, we have extended the PPR literature to include POST  
9 training as a means of improving in-game performance, even though this sport-specific PPR did  
10 not improve accuracy. We found additional evidence that PPR are effective in improving, but  
11 extended this to confirm that in-game performance was improved through an improvement in  
12 increased accuracy. The qualitative data has provided an indication of the mechanisms which  
13 were responsible for this effect. That is, both the PPR and POST enhanced performance through  
14 increased consistency, which was the result of improving the participants' focus, emotional  
15 control, self-confidence, motivation and self-awareness. Accordingly, the findings of this study  
16 can be of considerable value to practitioners working with athletes who perform under  
17 competitive pressure.

18



1

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

**Acknowledgements**

2           This study was financially supported by a grant approved by the Association for Applied  
3 Sport Psychology (AASP). We would like to thank AASP for their financial support of this  
4 project and also thank Ashlee Brown, Alex Culvenor, and Mitch Murray for helping with data  
5 collection and Rachel Gilbert for data entry assistance.

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT



- 1  
2 Anshel, M. H. (1995). Anxiety. In T. Morris & J. Summers (Eds.), *Sport psychology: Theory,*  
3 *applications and issues* (pp. 29–62). Brisbane, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.
- 4 Bartholomew, J. B. (2003). *Attaining peak performance under pressure*. Ames, IA: Champonline  
5 Sports Videos and Books.
- 6 Baumeister, R. F. (1997). Esteem threat, self-regulatory breakdown, and emotional distress as  
7 factors in self-defeating behavior. *Review of General Psychology, 1*, 145-174.  
8 doi:10.1037/1089-2680.1.2.145.
- 9 Baumeister, R. F., Heatherton, T. F., & Tice, D. M. (1994). *Losing control: How and why people*  
10 *fail at self-regulation*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press
- 11 Baumeister, R. F. Vohs, K. D., & Tice, D. M. (2007). The strength model of self-control.  
12 *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 16*, 351-355.
- 13 Beilock, S. L., & Gray, R. (2007). Why do athletes choke under pressure? In G. Tenenbaum &  
14 R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 425-444). Hoboken, NJ:  
15 Wiley & Sons.
- 16 Beauchamp, P. H., Halliwell, W. R., Fournier, J. F., & Koestner, R. (1996). Effects of cognitive-  
17 behavioral psychological skills training on the motivation, preparation, and putting  
18 performance of novice golfers. *The Sport Psychologist, 10*, 157-170.
- 19 Boutcher, S. H. (1990). The role of performance routines in sport. In G. Jones & L. Hardy (Eds.),  
20 *Stress and performance in sport* (pp. 231-245). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- 21 Boutcher, S. H., & Crews, D. J. (1987). The effect of a pre-shot attentional routine on a well-  
22 learned skill. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 18*, 30-39.
- 23 Boutcher, S. H., & Zinsser, N. W. (1990). Cardiac deceleration of elite and beginning golfers  
24 during putting. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 12*, 37-47.

- 1 Cameron, L. D., & Leventhal, H. (2003). Self-regulation, health, and illness: An overview. In L.  
2 D. Cameron & H. Leventhal (Eds.), *The self-regulation of health and illness behaviour*  
3 (pp. 1–14). London: Routledge.
- 4 Carr, T. H. (in press). Strengths and weaknesses of reflection as a guide to action: Pressure  
5 assails performance in multiple ways. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.
- 6 Chen, D., & Singer, R.N. (2002). Self-regulation and cognitive strategies in sport participation.  
7 *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 23, 277-300.
- 8 Cohn, P. J., Rotella, R. J., & Lloyd, J. W. (1990). Effects of a cognitive-behavioral intervention  
9 on the preshot routine and performance in golf. *The Sport Psychologist*, 4, 33-47.
- 10 Cotterill, S. T. (2010). Pre-performance routines in sport: Current understanding and future  
11 directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 3, 132-153.
- 12 Cotterill, S. T., Sanders, R., & Collins, D. (2010). Developing effective pre-performance routines  
13 in golf: Why don't we ask the golfer? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 22, 51-64.
- 14 Creswell, J.W. (2003). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods  
15 approaches (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- 16 Crews, D. J., & Boutcher, S. H. (1986). Effects of structured pre-shot behaviors on beginning  
17 golf performance. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 62, 291-294.
- 18 Dale, G. A. (2004). *Becoming a champion athlete: Mastering pressure situations*. Ames, IA:  
19 Chamonline Sports Videos and Books.
- 20 Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. In P.  
21 M. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology:*  
22 *Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp. 243-273). Washington, DC:  
23 American Psychological Association.
- 24 Hanton, S., O'Brien, M., & Mellalieu, S. D. (2003). Individual differences, perceived control,  
25 and competitive anxiety. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 26, 39-55.

- 1 Hazell, J., Cotterill, S. T., & Hill, D. M. (2014). An exploration of pre-performance routines,  
2 self-efficacy, anxiety and performance in semi-professional soccer. *European Journal of*  
3 *Sports Science*, doi: 10.1080/17461391.2014.888484.
- 4 Hemmings, B., & Holder, T. (2009). *Applied sport psychology: A case-based approach*.  
5 Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons
- 6 Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Matthews, N., & Fleming, S. (2010). A qualitative exploration of  
7 choking in elite golf. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 4, 221-240.
- 8 Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Matthews, N., & Fleming, S. (2011). Alleviation of choking under  
9 pressure in elite golf: An action research study. *The Sport Psychologist*, 25, 465-488.
- 10 Kingston, K., & Hardy, L. (2001). Preperformance routine training using holistic process goals.  
11 In P. R. Thomas (Ed.), *Optimising performance in golf* (pp. 264-278). Brisbane, Australia:  
12 Australian Academic Press.
- 13 Kingston, K. M., & Wilson, K. (2009). The application of goal setting in sport. In S. D.  
14 Mellalieu & S. Hanton (eds.), *Advances in applied sport psychology: A review* (pp. 75-  
15 123). Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- 16 Kitsantas, A., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Comparing self-regulatory processes among novice,  
17 non-expert, and expert volleyball players: A micro-analytic study. *Journal of Applied Sport*  
18 *Psychology*, 14, 91-105.
- 19 Lobmeyer, D. L., & Wasserman, E. A. (1986). Preliminaries to free throw shooting:  
20 Superstitious behavior? *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 9, 70-78.
- 21 Marlow, C., Bull, S. J., Heath, B., & Shambrook, C. J. (1998). The use of a single case design to  
22 investigate the effect of a pre-performance routine on the water polo penalty shot. *Journal*  
23 *of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 1, 143-155.
- 24 Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Social Research*, 1 (2). [http://nbn-](http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:de:0114-fqs00033204)  
25 [resolving.de/urn:de:0114-fqs00033204](http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:de:0114-fqs00033204).

- 1 McCann, P., Lavalley, D., & Lavalley, R. M. (2001). The effect of pre-shot routines on golf  
2 wedge shot performance. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 1(5), 1-10.
- 3 Mesagno, C., Marchant, D., & Morris, T. (2008). Using a pre-performance routine to alleviate  
4 choking under pressure in “choking-susceptible” athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22, 439-  
5 457.
- 6 Mesagno, C., & Mullane-Grant, T. (2010). A comparison of different pre-performance routines  
7 as possible choking interventions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 22, 343-360.
- 8 Moran, A. P. (1996). *The psychology of concentration in sport performers: A cognitive analysis*.  
9 London: Taylor & Francis.
- 10 Otten, M. (2009). Choking vs. clutch performance: A study of sport performance under pressure.  
11 *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 31, 583-601.
- 12 Oudejans, R. R. D., Kuijpers, W., Kooijman, C. C., & Bakker, F. C. (2011). Thoughts and  
13 attention of athletes under pressure: Skill-focus or performance worries? *Anxiety, Stress &*  
14 *Coping*, 24, 59-73.
- 15 Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks,  
16 CA: Sage Publications.
- 17 Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage  
18 Publications.
- 19 Singer, R.N. (2002). Pre-performance state, routines and automaticity. What does it take to  
20 realize expertise in self-paced events? *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 24, 359-  
21 375.
- 22 Tabachnick, B., & Fidell, L. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn &  
23 Bacon/Pearson Education.
- 24 Tashakkori, A., & Crewell, J.W. (2007). The new era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed*  
25 *Methods Research*, 1, 3-7.

- 1 Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks,  
2 CA: Sage Publications.
- 3 Velentzas, K., Heinen, T., & Schack, T. (2011). Routine integration strategies and their effects  
4 on volleyball serve performance and players' movement mental representation. *Journal of*  
5 *Applied Sport Psychology*, 23, 209-222.
- 6 Wiedman, D. (2006). *Bowling: Steps to success*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- 7 Wulf, G., Shea, H., & Park, H. (2001). Attention in motor learning. Preferences for and  
8 advantages of an external focus. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 72, 335-344.
- 9 Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation. A social cognitive perspective. In. M.  
10 Boekarts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation*, (pp. 13-39).  
11 San Diego, CA, US: Academic Press.
- 12

1 Table 1.

2 *Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) for accuracy (Mean Absolute Error- MAE) and in-game*3 *performance scores (league average) pre- and post- intervention for the different groups.*

Group	Reported League Average (SD)	Pre-intervention MAE (SD)	Post-intervention MAE (SD)	Mean (SD)- Pre-intervention league	Mean (SD)- Post-intervention league	Mean (SD)- Follow-up intervention league
Combined	179.00	4.01	3.47	177.39	187.36	183.81
	(16.09)	(1.62)	(1.43)	(18.68)	(17.85)	(10.69)
PPR	179.86	3.40	2.69	180.10	190.29	191.24
	(23.60)	(1.08)	(0.60)	(29.12)	(19.84)	(20.84)
POST	177.38	2.97	3.24	179.38	181.39	185.06
	(10.99)	(0.47)	(0.84)	(6.30)	(6.06)	(12.30)
Control	179.89	3.54	3.30	181.26	180.95	179.56
	(17.10)	(0.84)	(0.78)	(22.99)	(22.35)	(21.99)

4

1 Table 2.

2 *The perceived effects of the PPR.*

Overarching Category	Codes
	Perceived improvements
<i>Performance</i>	Increased consistency of performance, thoughts and emotions Negative impact [predominantly short-term]
<i>Attentional and Emotional Control</i>	Blocked / alleviated negative emotions Improved task-related focus Relaxation / lowered anxiety
<i>Self-Awareness</i>	Increased ability to recognize and correct errors Re-evaluate / recognition of mental training
<i>Self-Confidence</i>	Raised performance expectations Performance resilience
<i>State of Readiness</i>	Slowed preparation and execution Enabled planned skill execution Emotional regulation
<i>Motivation</i>	Increased persistence and effort
<i>Perceived Control</i>	Over self, emotions an performance

3

1 Table 3.

2 *The perceived effects of the POST.*

Overarching Category	Codes
	Perceived improvements
<i>Performance</i>	Increased consistency of performance, thoughts and emotions Effective / efficient technical adjustments Negative impact [short-term]
<i>Attentional and Emotional Control</i>	Improved task and process -related focus Blocked / alleviated negative emotions Relaxation / lowered anxiety
<i>Self-Awareness</i>	Increased ability to recognize and correct errors Recognize how to self-develop
<i>Self-Confidence</i>	Raised performance expectations Constructive post-error reflection
<i>Motivation</i>	Increased persistence and effort

3



- Pre-performance routines improve accuracy from pre- to post-intervention training.
- All training groups improved in-game performance from pre- and post-intervention.
- All training groups maintained performance levels at a follow-up intervention.
- Qualitative themes were similar for the pre- and post-performance routine groups.
- Readiness and control were also themes for the pre-performance routine groups.