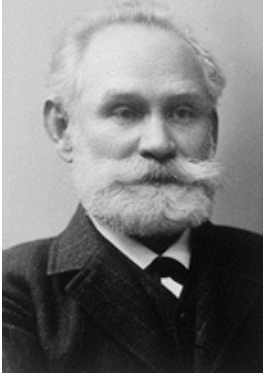


Learning Theories

In this essay, I hope to give you, the audience, the basics of the three main learning theories: Classical, Operant, and Cognitive. The main question in sport is how do these theories apply to certain sport and how can a coach/teacher use them in order to get his/her point across. To give an answer to this I will try to give examples of how I was taught or a way in which I have used a theory in teaching when on work experience for one example.

Classical Conditioning

This is the most difficult of the three main theories to apply to a sporting context as sport often consists of multiple choices. This however links one stimulus, trigger, to one response, for example trained his pet dogs to respond to a bell, which he rang every time they were to eat. The dogs over time learnt this and every time Pavlov rang the bell, the dogs' response was to get ready to eat.



Ivan Petrovich
Pavlov

This reward of food would have strengthened the **Stimulus Response bond (SR bond)**. This is Positive reinforcement. Reinforcement is an action that increases the likelihood of a response occurring again. The only way in which the theory can be associated with a sport is when a whistle or a hooter sounds the play stops/begins. For instance in a PE lesson at my previous school, my teacher would blow the whistle in a football game and play would begin or stop, according to his decision.

Operant Conditioning

This is similar to the Classical Conditioning but allows one stimulus to be reacted to by a number of responses. This involves the stimulus-organism response. Olsen (1981) explains this; 'Product acceptance and behaviour can be categorised into four stages:

1. Stimulus input is the relationship between the stimulus, product, and the athlete from first contact to the end. Environment or circumstance will affect the outcome.
2. Identification is the stimulus translated from a physical experience to a psychological phenomenon. Input is encoded and identified with existing knowledge. This existing knowledge may affect this process.
3. Interpretation is how the individual decides how to react. This involves what the athlete senses and how s/he feels.

4. Response is how the athlete reacts after processing all of the above. From this some behaviour types have been found.

Cognitive

This is the early phase of three-stage learning process. This is the rookie stage of an athletes 'sporting life'. It involves the athlete having to recall old habits from his/her past experience to form an executive programme. This means that the athlete will have to be tough new instructions to this new sport. This means that feedback and appraisal for performances is needed. Demonstrations are also needed. At this stage, the athlete will be less confident in his/her approach to the sport.

The next stage in this learning programme is the Associative stage. This is the 'Intermediate stage' where the athlete begins his own internal reaction as well as gaining external reaction from a coach/teacher. However, even though more experienced the athlete is still in need of demonstrations and feedback in order to further the development of the skill.

The final stage of the learning course is the Autonomous stage. This consists of the athlete being able to make automatic responses. The athlete has to be extremely dedicated to reach this stage. Only minor feedback is needed from a coach or a teacher. This is the 'pro stage' of the athlete's career.