



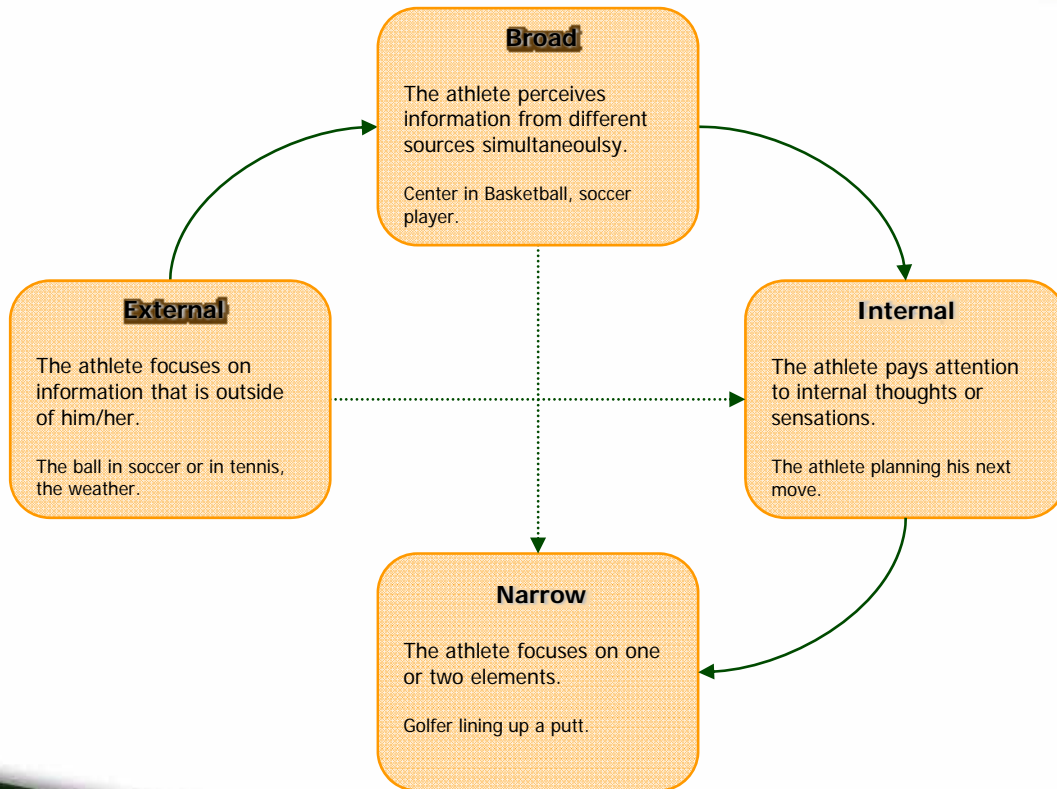
# UNIT 1

## ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION

## ► What is concentration?

- It is the focusing of attention on specific cues and the maintenance of this attentional focus.
  - The attentional capacity to focus on the routine task requirements, altogether with the elimination of external stimuli are essential for successful completion of the action.
  - No doubt: Fatigue affects Concentration
  - When the body is fatigued it is harder to maintain prolonged attentional focus.
  - The moment one starts noticing Fatigue is when one should try to concentrate with more intensity.

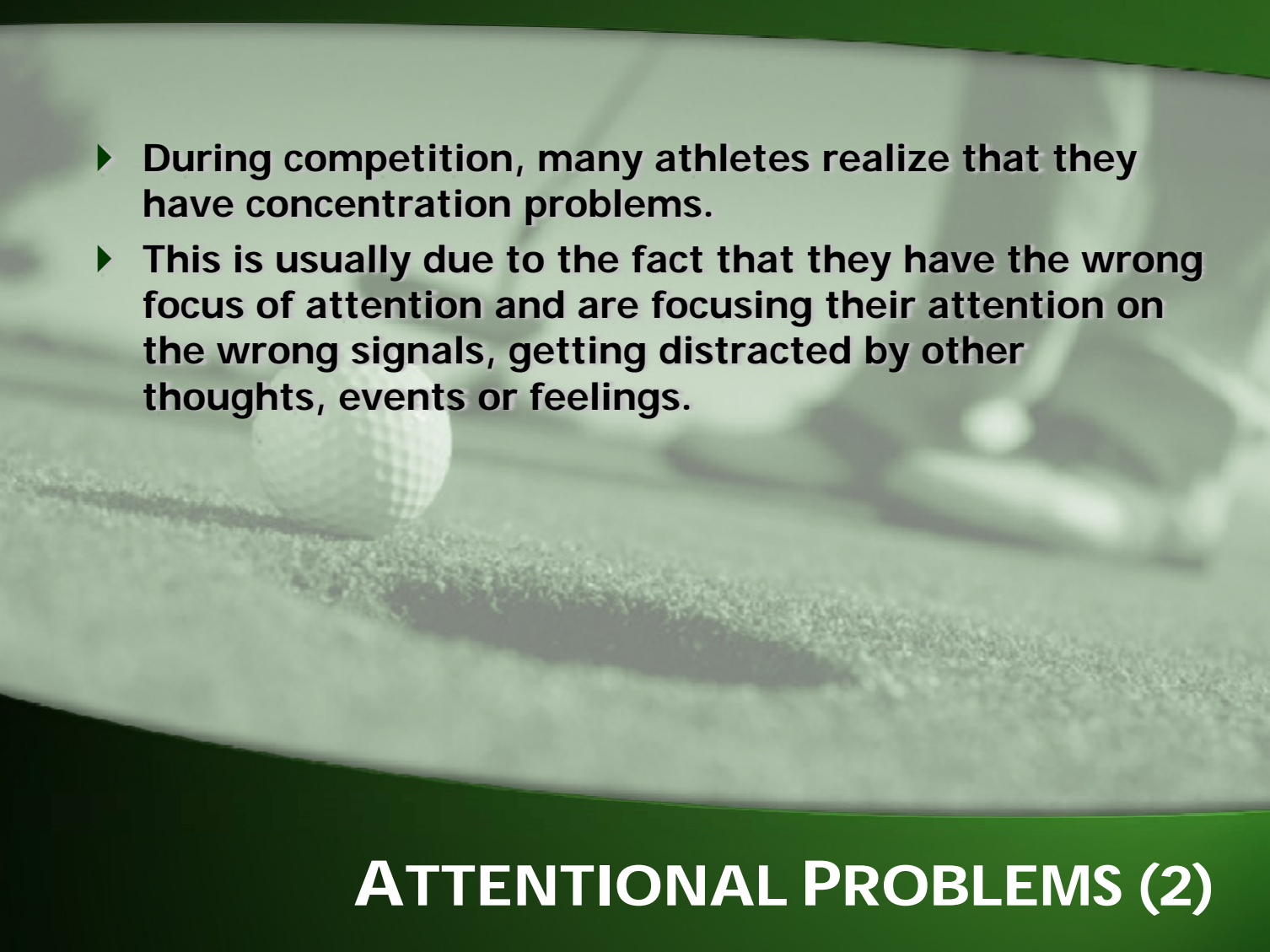
# ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION



# TYPES OF ATTENTIONAL DIMENSIONS

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- ▶ **Events**
    - ▶ Past
    - ▶ Future
  - ▶ **Too many cues**
  - ▶ **Body Mechanics**

## ATTENTIONAL PROBLEMS (1)

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- ▶ During competition, many athletes realize that they have concentration problems.
  - ▶ This is usually due to the fact that they have the wrong focus of attention and are focusing their attention on the wrong signals, getting distracted by other thoughts, events or feelings.

## ATTENTIONAL PROBLEMS (2)



## ▶ Attending to other events

### ▶ Past

- ▶ Some people cannot forget what has just happened, particularly if it was a major mistake.
- ▶ Focusing on past events has been the demise of many talented athletes, because that precluded focusing their attention in the present.

### ▶ Future

- ▶ Young athletes are more prone to focusing their attention in the future, concentrating usually in the consequences of certain behaviors. Often these thoughts take the form of anxious apprehensions: what will happen if...
- ▶ The worry is not just a distraction, but it results in excessive muscle tension, which causes a further decrease in performance.

# ATTENTIONAL PROBLEMS (3)



## ▶ Attending to too many cues

- ▶ One of the reasons why it is hard to remain focused during a long exercise or a competition, is the presence of too many distracters in the environment, calling for the athlete's attention.
- ▶ Most people want to perform well in front of friends and family, and that turns into added pressure, increased tension and expecting too much of oneself. The result is decreased performance, which is the main thing one wanted to avoid, and increases nervousness.
- ▶ Of course there are exceptions! Some people perform better in front of familiar audiences, but for the majority, having friends and family in the audience decreases the degree of concentration.

# ATTENTIONAL PROBLEMS (4)

- ▶ **Paying too much attention to mechanics. Another ineffective focus:**
  - ▶ Focusing too much on
    - ▶ Mechanics
    - ▶ Body movements
  - ▶ This is the normal stage when learning a new skill. That is what training is about!
  - ▶ Focusing on improving technique by acquiring a better movement sense
  - ▶ When the athlete engages in a mechanical analysis the most likely consequence is the loss of performance rhythm during the action. During competition evaluations should be global rather than by segments.

## ATTENTIONAL PROBLEMS (5)



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- ▶ **How can we improve the ability to remain focused in the present?**
    - ▶ **Training**
    - ▶ **Cue words**
    - ▶ **Non-Critical thoughts**
    - ▶ **Routines**
    - ▶ **Visual control**
    - ▶ **Present**

**CONCENTRATING IN THE MOMENT**

- ▶ **Training with distractions**
  - ▶ Being used to training with distractions and under challenging circumstances, prepares athletes well to cope with them during competition.
- ▶ **Using cue-words**
  - ▶ Cue words are used to elicit a specific response. They can be instructional or motivational.
  - ▶ The key: To maintain the access to simple words and allow for the desired effect.
- ▶ **Use of non-critical thinking**
  - ▶ One of the bigger hurdles athletes must overcome to maintain their concentration is their tendency to evaluate the performance and label it as good or bad. That is, there is value judgment attached to what they are doing.
  - ▶ In general, evaluation and judgment done in the field results in performance decreases. Criticizing our performance often spirals down into general negativity.

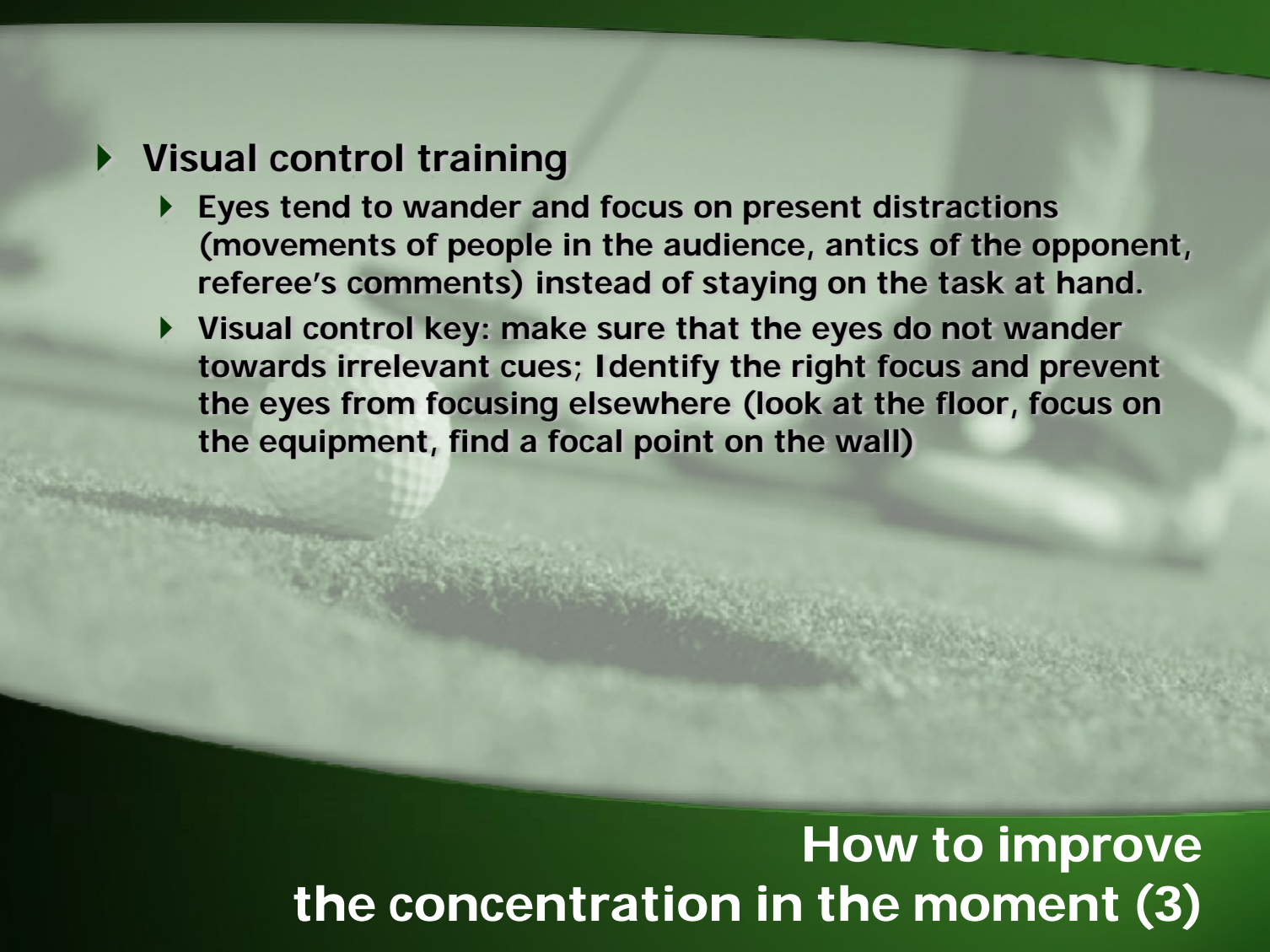
How to improve  
the concentration in the moment (1)



## ► Establishing routines.

- Routines can set concentration and help with psychological preparation for future performances.
- Routines can help organize the time before performance or in between different phases, so that the athlete is mentally focused when the time for action arrives.
- Routines must be easy and should help improve the clarity of the focus as the moment of performance approaches.
- Pre-performance routines structure the athlete's thought processes and their emotional states by keeping attention on the present and on relevant task cues.

How to improve  
the concentration in the moment (2)



## ► Visual control training

- Eyes tend to wander and focus on present distractions (movements of people in the audience, antics of the opponent, referee's comments) instead of staying on the task at hand.
- Visual control key: make sure that the eyes do not wander towards irrelevant cues; Identify the right focus and prevent the eyes from focusing elsewhere (look at the floor, focus on the equipment, find a focal point on the wall)


How to improve  
the concentration in the moment (3)

## ► Focusing on the present

- Our mind is open to all messages and it is hard to remain focused in the present. There is a strong attraction to replay that missed shot or re-examine the wrong choice made or the never completed task. Also at times it is appealing to look ahead and think about what will happen.
- In general, thoughts focused on the past or the future create attentional problems.
- Staying in the present requires focused concentration for the duration of the event. It is important to have a cue word, such as “focus” that can help to get back to the present .

How to improve  
the concentration in the moment (4)



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- ▶ **Attentional Problems.**
    - ▶ Attention to past events
    - ▶ Attention to future events.
    - ▶ Attending to too many cues.
    - ▶ Excessive attention to mechanics
  - ▶ **How to improve the concentration in the moment**
    - ▶ Training under distraction.
    - ▶ Use of cue words.
    - ▶ Non-critical thoughts.
    - ▶ Setting up routines
    - ▶ Visual control training.
    - ▶ Focus on the present.

# CONCLUSION