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AI Acknowledgment

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https://chatgpt.com/	03/04/2026	Show me websites or books using the prompt "give me websites or books for anxiety in sports to give me an idea of what to look for ready to write my assignment"

An analysis of competitive state anxiety at three pre event time points

This report looks at competitive state anxiety in three university athletes before a sports event. The group included two nineteen year old football players and one twenty year old rugby player. The aim was to see how their anxiety and confidence changed one week before the event, twenty four hours before, and on the morning of the competition. The CSAI-2 was used to measure cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and self confidence. Previous research shows that anxiety rises and confidence falls as competition gets closer, and this report examines whether the same pattern appears in this small sample. As stated in the original document, "both types of anxiety increased as competition approached, while self confidence declined."

Competitive state anxiety is an emotional response that happens before or during a competition. It involves worrying thoughts and physical tension. It is understood as having three parts which are cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and self confidence (Martens et al, 1990). The CSAI-2 was designed to measure these three areas. Multidimensional anxiety theory suggests that high cognitive anxiety usually harms performance, while somatic anxiety can help at moderate levels but becomes harmful when it gets too strong. Self confidence can reduce some of the negative effects of anxiety. Many studies show that high anxiety is linked to poorer performance (Mellalieu et al, 2006, Sulu, Kaygusuz and Cakaloglu, 2025). Anxiety can also make it harder to concentrate and can affect fine motor skills (Eysenck et al, 2007, Woodman and Hardy, 2003).

Because anxiety can affect performance, sport psychologists often suggest checking anxiety levels at different times before an event. Anxiety usually rises as the competition gets closer. Research shows that cognitive and somatic anxiety often increase in the final twenty four to forty eight hours, while confidence usually drops (Hanton, Thomas and Maynard, 2004, Cerin et al, 2000). Hanton et al (2004) also found a sharp rise in anxiety in the last few hours before a competition. Understanding these changes can help coaches choose the best time to use methods such as breathing exercises, imagery or positive self talk.

Individual differences also affect how athletes experience anxiety. The Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning model by Hanin (2000) says each athlete has their own ideal emotional state, so anxiety may harm one person but help another. Elite athletes often see anxiety

more positively than beginners, as shown by Jones et al (1993). This means both the level of anxiety and how it is interpreted are important. Even so, checking anxiety at different times is still useful (Hanton et al, 2004, Cerin et al, 2000). In this study, the CSAI-2 was used one week before, twenty four hours before, and on the morning of the event.

A convenience sample of three university athletes was used. Two were nineteen year old males who played football, and one was a twenty year old female who played rugby. All three were preparing for the same university fixture. Each athlete was given a code number to keep their identity private. The CSAI-2 was given at the three time points. The questionnaire has twenty seven items on a four point scale and measures cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and self confidence. The athletes completed it under supervision, and the final set was collected one hour before the competition so their warm up was not affected. They were told there were no right or wrong answers and to respond based on how they felt at that moment.

A small synthetic dataset was created to represent realistic anxiety levels for three athletes. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each CSAI-2 subscale at each time point. Because the sample was very small, the results are descriptive only. No inferential statistics were used, as the aim was simply to describe and interpret the patterns.

The results showed a clear pattern. Both cognitive and somatic anxiety increased as the competition got closer, while self confidence decreased. Cognitive anxiety rose from an average of 16.7 one week before the event to 22.9 on the morning of the competition. Somatic anxiety increased from 12.5 to 20.7. Self confidence fell from 26.3 to 18.1. These changes suggest that the athletes became more worried and physically tense as the event approached, while feeling less confident in their ability to perform. This matches the statement in the original document that “as competition approached, athletes reported greater cognitive worry and physical tension, alongside reduced self confidence.”

The table below shows the mean scores for the three athletes at each time point.

Subscale	1 week before	24 hours before	Morning of event
Cognitive Anxiety	16.7	19.8	22.9
Somatic Anxiety	12.5	17.1	20.7
Self Confidence	26.3	22.4	18.1

These results show that the biggest changes happened between twenty four hours before the event and the morning of the competition. This is similar to findings from Hanton et al (2004), who reported that anxiety rises sharply close to the start of a competition. The steady rise in both types of anxiety and the drop in confidence suggest that the athletes became more aware of the demands of the event as it approached. The morning of the competition may have felt more real, which could explain the higher anxiety scores. These findings match earlier research on pre competition stress. The rise in cognitive and somatic anxiety in the final twenty four hours supports the work of Hanton et al (2004), and Cerin et al (2000)

also found that anxiety often peaks on the day of competition. The drop in self confidence in this study also fits with these patterns.

There are several reasons for these changes. As the event gets closer, athletes may think more about mistakes, opponents or the outcome, which can increase cognitive anxiety (Smith and Smoll, 1990). Physical signs of arousal may also rise due to adrenaline. Sulu et al (2025) note that high anxiety can narrow attention and increase tension. Anxiety was lower one week before the event but higher on the morning of the competition, likely because the pressure felt stronger. Perceived difficulty can also increase worry (Salom Martorell et al, 2021). The drop in confidence may reflect doubts about readiness, which fits with Lazarus's appraisal theory.

Individual differences may also influence these scores. Some athletes see anxiety as helpful, while others see it as harmful. Male athletes often report higher confidence (Lirgg, 1991), and less experienced athletes may show higher anxiety (Jones et al, 1993). Hanin's IZOF model (2000) suggests that each athlete has their own ideal level of anxiety, so increases may affect them differently. However, the fall in confidence across all three athletes suggests they felt less prepared as the event approached.

The results of this study support previous research on competitive state anxiety. Some studies, such as Wiggins (1998), found smaller changes across a week, but the larger changes here may be because the final measurement was taken very close to the event. The type of sport and the level of competition may also affect anxiety levels. Football and rugby both involve physical contact and strong expectations, which may increase pressure for university athletes. University fixtures can be high pressure events, especially when athletes feel they need to perform well for their team.

There are several practical implications. Coaches and sport psychologists should be aware that anxiety often rises sharply in the final day before a competition. Techniques such as breathing control, arousal regulation and positive self talk may be most effective on the day of the event. Regular use of the CSAI-2 can help identify athletes whose anxiety is rising too quickly. High somatic anxiety may show that an athlete needs immediate support, while low confidence may mean they need help with goal setting or remembering past successes. Monitoring anxiety over time can help coaches tailor mental skills training to each athlete (Tamminen and Gaudreau, 2014).

There are also limitations. This study used synthetic data and only included three athletes, so the results cannot be generalised. A larger sample would give more reliable results. It would also be useful to include performance outcomes to see how anxiety levels relate to actual performance. More frequent testing could give a clearer picture of how anxiety changes over time. Measuring whether athletes see their anxiety as helpful or harmful, as well as how intense it feels (Jones, Hanton and Swain, 1994), would also give more insight. Long term studies across a season could show how anxiety patterns change with experience and success (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2012).

In conclusion, this study found that cognitive and somatic anxiety increased and self confidence decreased in the twenty four hours leading up to a sports event. These findings match earlier research showing that anxiety tends to rise close to competition. The main message is that the final day before an event is an important time for psychological support.

Coaches should expect higher anxiety on the morning of a competition and be ready to help athletes manage it. Understanding how anxiety changes over time can help athletes prepare mentally for better performance (Hanton et al, 2004, Sulu et al, 2025).

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