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A Review of the Clinical Utility and Psychometric Properties of the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28): Percentile Rankings and Qualitative Descriptors

The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28), developed by Smith et al. (1995), is a 28-item self-report measure that assesses seven distinct dimensions of psychological skills and coping strategies employed by athletes in competitive sports settings. This technical review synthesises current literature on the ACSI-28's psychometric properties and provides clinicians with comprehensive scoring frameworks and qualitative descriptors. We present an interpretive system that enhances the clinical utility of the ACSI-28 through evidence-based guidelines and practical implementation strategies. The document outlines the dimensional structure of athletic coping skills and their relationship with performance outcomes, while addressing important considerations for assessment and intervention planning. This framework enables sports psychologists to effectively incorporate ACSI-28 findings into case conceptualisation and treatment planning for athletes seeking to enhance psychological performance.

View the ACSI-28 on NovoPsych.com

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Developer & Author

The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28) scale was developed by Smith et al. (1995):

> Smith, R. E., Schutz, R. W., Smoll, F. L., & Ptacek, J. T. (1995). Development and validation of a multidimensional measure of sport-specific psychological skills: The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17, 379-398. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.17.4.379

This document was developed by NovoPsych to review contemporary literature and to describe original scoring methodologies and to provide interpretation material, enhance normative data and provide qualitative descriptors.

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Description

The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28) is a 28-item self-report measure designed to assess the psychological skills and coping strategies employed by athletes in competitive sports settings (Smith et al., 1995). The ACSI-28 can be used with adolescents or adults (ages 14+). Developed within a sports psychology framework, the ACSI-28 evaluates seven distinct but related dimensions of psychological coping skills:

1. Coping with Adversity - assesses the ability to remain positive and enthusiastic during competition despite unfavourable situations, maintaining emotional control and bouncing back quickly from mistakes and setbacks.
2. Peaking Under Pressure - measures how athletes respond to competitive pressure situations, including whether they perceive pressure as a challenge rather than a threat and their ability to perform well under pressure.
3. Goal Setting/Mental Preparation - evaluates the athlete's tendency to set specific performance goals, plan, and mentally prepare for competition.
4. Concentration - assesses the ability to focus on the task at hand and maintain attention during both training and competition, even when faced with distractions or adverse situations.
5. Freedom from Worry - measures the tendency to avoid putting pressure on oneself through excessive worry about performing poorly, making mistakes, or concern about others' perceptions.
6. Confidence and Achievement Motivation - evaluates confidence levels and motivation, particularly the tendency to give 100% during practice and competition and work consistently to improve skills.
7. Coachability - assesses openness to instruction, willingness to learn from coaches, and the ability to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally or becoming upset.

For sports psychologists, the ACSI-28 offers several distinct advantages, particularly in understanding how psychological factors may contribute to athletic performance. Research demonstrates that psychological skills—not merely physical talent—play a crucial role in athletic success (Christensen & Smith, 2018). The ACSI-28 has been shown to predict performance in various sports, including baseball (Kimbrough et al., 2007), volleyball (Belem et al., 2014), extreme sports (Young & Knight, 2014) and team sports (Belem et al., 2014; Özcan, 2021).

The ACSI-28 aids in assessment, treatment planning, and intervention evaluation. As an assessment tool, it helps identify patterns of psychological strengths and weaknesses that may affect performance, facilitating a more nuanced approach to case conceptualisation. This can be particularly valuable when working with athletes who demonstrate discrepancies between their physical abilities and actual performance outcomes (Christensen & Smith, 2018).

In treatment planning, specific dimensional scores on the ACSI-28 may indicate the need for targeted interventions addressing particular aspects of psychological performance. For example, low scores on Concentration might suggest the need for attention training, while deficits in Coping with Adversity could point to the benefits of stress management training. Recent research has demonstrated that psychological skills, as measured by the ACSI-28, can effectively "level the playing field" by reducing the influence of disparities in physical talent (Christensen & Smith, 2018).

During consultations, understanding an athlete's ACSI-28 profile can inform the focus of interventions. Research has shown positive correlations between athletes' coping skills and their engagement in sports activities (Özcan, 2021), suggesting that effective psychological coping strategies enhance not only performance but also commitment to sport.

The ACSI-28 has demonstrated value across diverse populations, from collegiate athletes to elite competitors. The ACSI-28 is one of the most psychometrically sound instruments available for assessing athletic coping skills (Pereira et al., 2020), making it a valuable tool for sports psychologists seeking to understand and enhance the psychological aspects of athletic performance.

Psychometric Properties

The ACSI-28 was developed through a four-phase process involving exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses with multiple samples of athletes. Developed from the 42-item ACSI (Smith & Smoll, 1991), the final 28-item version was established through confirmatory factor analysis strongly supporting the seven-dimension structure of the ACSI-28 (CFI = .91, RMSEA = .044) (Smith et al., 1995). These seven factors accounted for 53% of the variance for males and 58% for females. Follow-up principal component analyses confirmed the dimensional validity for both male and female athletes (Smith et al., 1995).

The internal consistency of the ACSI-28 has been demonstrated, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the total scale (α = 0.86) and individual subscales showing good reliability: Coping with Adversity (α = 0.66), Peaking Under Pressure (α = 0.78), Goal Setting/Mental Preparation (α = 0.71), Concentration (α = 0.62), Freedom from Worry (α = 0.76), Confidence and Achievement Motivation (α = 0.66), and Coachability (α = 0.72) (Smith et al., 1995). Subsequent studies have produced similar reliability coefficients, supporting the consistency of the measure across diverse athlete populations (Bourgeois et al., 2003; Young & Knight, 2014).

Test-retest reliability coefficients, calculated from a sample of 94 male and female college-age athletes after one week, ranged from .47 (Coachability) to .87 (Peaking Under Pressure) for the seven subscales, with the Personal Coping Resources total score demonstrating strong stability (r = .87) (Smith et al., 1995). The majority of the subscales (five of seven) demonstrated test-retest coefficients exceeding .70, indicating good temporal stability.

Construct validity of the ACSI-28 is supported by its theoretically consistent relationships with measures of psychological distress and wellbeing. The ACSI-28 demonstrates significant correlations with Rosenbaum's (1980) Self-Control Schedule (r = .44), which measures cognitive-behavioral coping skills, and Coppel's (1980) Self-Efficacy Scale (r = .58), which measures generalised behavioral self-efficacy (Smith et al., 1995). Discriminant validity is demonstrated through the correlations with the Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS). As expected, the Freedom From Worry subscale shows a substantial negative relation (r = -.59) with the SAS worry factor, but lower correlations with the somatic anxiety or concentration disruption factors (Smith et al., 1995). The ACSI-28 total score correlates -.43 with the SAS total score, supporting the theoretical relationship between coping skills and competitive anxiety.

Of particular note for psychologists, research indicates that different dimensions of athletic coping skills show different patterns of relationships with performance outcomes. For example, in a study of professional baseball players, the ACSI-28 subscales predicted performance and career survival, with the Confidence and Achievement Motivation subscale being the strongest predictor of batting (.34) and pitching (.33) performance (Smith et al., 1995). These findings suggest that the ACSI-28 subscales can be used independently to provide targeted insight into specific psychological skills.

For clinical interpretation, ACSI-28 scores are typically evaluated dimensionally, with higher average scores indicating greater psychological coping skills in specific domains. Based on the combined sample (N = 1,024; 594 male and 433 female varsity athletes) from Smith et al. (1995), the following means and standard deviations provide reference points for interpretation:

- Coping with Adversity: M = 6.26, SD = 2.23
- Peaking Under Pressure: M = 6.40, SD = 2.87
- Goal Setting/Mental Preparation: M = 5.48, SD = 2.75
- Concentration: M = 7.02, SD = 2.19
- Freedom from Worry: M = 6.46, SD = 2.82
- Confidence and Achievement Motivation: M = 7.86, SD = 2.28
- Coachability: M = 8.87, SD = 2.43
- Total Personal Coping Resources: M = 48.35, SD = 9.64

These means and standard deviations are used to create percentiles which are then NovoPsych used these to create descriptive categories for each subscale and the total score:

- Low (16th percentile or below): Indicates significantly less psychological skills and coping strategies than most other athletes.
- Average (17th to 83rd percentile): Indicates a typical level of psychological skills and coping strategies compared to other athletes.
- High (84th percentile or above): Indicates significantly more psychological skills and coping strategies than other athletes.

The relationship between ACSI-28 scores and social desirability has been examined in several studies. Correlations with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale range from .19 to .33 for the subscales (Smith et al., 1995), with the total score correlating .43 with social desirability (Smith et al., 1995). While these correlations are not remarkably high compared to other non-pathological scales, they do suggest that impression management may influence ACSI-28 responses to some degree. However, subsequent research by Bourgeois et al. (2003) found correlations with the Balanced Inventory of Desired Responding (BIDR; Paulhaus, 1988) to be much lower than the correlations found by Smith et al. (1995). Although most ACSI-28 subscales were significantly correlated with impression management, the maximum correlation observed (with Coachability $r = 0.18$) accounted for only 3% of the variance between the two variables. All ACSI-28 subscales were significantly related to self-deception (Bourgeois et al., 2003), but as individuals scoring higher on self-deception are better adjusted than are individuals with lower self-deception scores (Verkasalo and Lindeman, 1994) and measures of self-deception appear to "reflect a positively biased, psychologically well-adjusted, self-presentation" (Barrick & Mount, 1996, p. 262), this could be a normative relationship between ACSI-28 scores and self-deception.

Scoring & Interpretation

The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) scores consist of a total score (between 0 and 84) and scores for each of the seven subscales (raw score between 0 and 12). Higher scores represent higher levels of psychological skills and coping strategies. Scores are provided for the following subscales of the ACSI-28:

1. Coping with Adversity (Items 5, 17, 21, and 24) - assesses the ability to remain positive and enthusiastic during competition despite unfavourable situations, maintaining emotional control and bouncing back quickly from mistakes and setbacks.
2. Peaking Under Pressure (Items 6, 18, 22, and 28) - measures how athletes respond to competitive pressure situations, including whether they perceive pressure as a challenge rather than a threat and their ability to perform well under pressure.
3. Goal Setting/Mental Preparation (Items 1, 8, 13, and 20) - evaluates the athlete's tendency to set specific performance goals, plan, and mentally prepare for competition.
4. Concentration (Items 4, 11, 16, and 25) - assesses the ability to focus on the task at hand and maintain attention during both training and competition, even when faced with distractions or adverse situations.
5. Freedom from Worry (Items 7, 12, 19, and 23, all reverse scored) - measures the tendency to avoid putting pressure on oneself through excessive worry about performing poorly, making mistakes, or concern about others' perceptions.
6. Confidence and Achievement Motivation (Items 2, 9, 14, and 26) - evaluates confidence levels and motivation, particularly the tendency to give 100% during practice and competition and work consistently to improve skills.
7. Coachability (Items 3R, 10R, 15, and 27) - assesses openness to instruction, willingness to learn from coaches, and the ability to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally or becoming upset.

In addition, scores are presented as percentile ranks, where a percentile of 50 indicates the typical score compared to 1,027 male and female athletes (Smith et al., 1995). These percentile ranks are used to derive descriptive categories that aid in clinical interpretation. The descriptive categories for each subscale and the total score are:

- Low (16th percentile or below): Indicates significantly less psychological skills and coping strategies than most other athletes.
- Average (17th to 83rd percentile): Indicates a typical level of psychological skills and coping strategies compared to other athletes.
- High (84th percentile or above): Indicates significantly more psychological skills and coping strategies than other athletes.

On first administration a plot is presented displaying the ACSI-28 total and the subscale percentiles. The percentiles are presented with the qualitative descriptors in the background for ease of interpretation. When administered on multiple occasions, a longitudinal plot is displayed showing the subscale percentiles over time. When ACSI-28 scores are available from multiple timepoints, changes in scores can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of interventions or developmental changes in psychological skills and coping strategies. For comparative interpretation, changes of at least 0.5 standard deviations in raw scores are considered clinically meaningful (the minimally important difference) (Norman et al., 2003; Turner et al., 2010). When interpreting changes, attention should be paid to both the total score and the patterns of change across subscales.

Supporting Information

Percentile Calculations

The percentile rankings for the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28) are derived from lookup tables based on the normative sample reported in the scale development study (Smith et al., 1995). For both subscale and total scores, the percentile rankings represent the position of a given raw score relative to the distribution of scores in the normative sample.

The distribution of average scores in the normative sample was used to establish percentile rankings. For each subscale and the total score, the mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ) from the normative sample were:

- Coping with Adversity: $\mu = 6.26$, $\sigma = 2.23$
- Peaking Under Pressure: $\mu = 6.40$, $\sigma = 2.87$
- Goal Setting/Mental Preparation: $\mu = 5.48$, $\sigma = 2.75$
- Concentration: $\mu = 7.02$, $\sigma = 2.19$
- Freedom from Worry: $\mu = 6.46$, $\sigma = 2.82$
- Confidence and Achievement Motivation: $\mu = 7.86$, $\sigma = 2.28$
- Coachability: $\mu = 8.87$, $\sigma = 2.43$
- Total Personal Coping Resources: $\mu = 48.35$, $\sigma = 9.64$

To derive the percentile lookup tables for each subscale and the total score, the following approach was taken. For each possible raw score value (ranging from 0 to 12 for subscales and 0 to 84 for the total score), the corresponding z-score was calculated:

$$z = (X - \mu) / \sigma$$

where X is the average score, μ is the mean for that subscale from the normative sample, and σ is the standard deviation. These z-scores were then converted to percentiles using the cumulative normal distribution function:

$$\text{percentile} = \Phi(z) \times 100$$

where Φ is the standard normal cumulative distribution function.

The lookup tables provide a direct mapping from raw scores to percentile ranks for each subscale and the total score. For subscales, all possible raw scores (0-12) have corresponding percentile ranks. For the total score, values from 13 to 84 are included in the table, with any score below 13 assigned to the 0.01 percentile. These percentiles are then categorised into descriptive ranges to aid clinical interpretation:

- Low (≤16th percentile): Indicates significantly less psychological skills and coping strategies than most other athletes.
- Average (17th-83rd percentile): Indicates a typical level of psychological skills and coping strategies compared to other athletes.
- High (≥84th percentile): Indicates significantly more psychological skills and coping strategies than other athletes.

Percentile Table

Table 1.Coping with Adversity

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	0.2
	1	1
	2	3
	3	7
	4	16
Average	5	29
	6	45
	7	63
	8	78
High	9	89
	10	95
	11	98
	12	99

Table 2.Peaking Under Pressure

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	1
	1	3
	2	6
	3	12
Average	4	20
	5	31
	6	44
	7	58
	8	71
High	9	84
	10	90
	11	95
	12	97

Table 3.Goal Setting

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	2
	1	5
	2	10
Average	3	18
	4	30
	5	43
	6	57
	7	71
	8	82
High	9	90
	10	95
	11	98
	12	99

Table 4.Concentration

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	0.1
	1	0.3
	2	1
	3	3
	4	8
Average	5	18
	6	32
	7	50
	8	67
High	9	84
	10	91
	11	97
	12	99

Table 5.Freedom From Worry

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	1
	1	3
	2	6
	3	11
Average	4	19
	5	30
	6	44
	7	58
	8	71
High	9	84
	10	90
	11	95
	12	98

Table 6.Confidence and Achievement

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	0.03
	1	0.1
	2	1
	3	2
	4	5
	5	10
Average	6	21
	7	35
	8	52
	9	69
High	10	84
	11	92
	12	97

Table 7.Coachability

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	0	0.01
	1	0.1
	2	0.2
	3	1
	4	2
	5	6
	6	12
Average	7	22
	8	36
	9	52
	10	68
High	11	84
	12	90

Table 8.Total Score

Descriptor	Score	Percentile
Low	13	0.01
	14	0.02
	15	0.03
	16	0.04
	17	0.06
	18	0.08
	19	0.12
	20	0.16
	21	0.23
	22	0.31
	23	0.4
	24	0.6
	25	0.8
	26	1
	27	1.3
	28	1.7
	29	2.2
	30	3
	31	4
	32	4
	33	6
	34	7
	35	8
	36	10
	37	12
	38	14
Average	39	17
	40	19
	41	22
	42	26
	43	29
	44	33
	45	36
	46	40
	47	44
	48	49
	49	53
	50	57
	51	61
	52	65
	53	69
	54	72
	55	75
	56	79
	57	82
High	58	84
	59	87
	60	89
	61	91
	62	92
	63	94
	64	95
	65	96
	66	97
	67	97.3
	68	97.9
	69	98.4
	70	99
	71	99.1
	72	99.3
	73	99.5
	74	99.6
	75	99.7
	76	99.8
	77	99.85
	78	99.9
	79	99.93
	80	99.95
	81	99.96
	82	99.98
	83	99.98
	84	99.99

Note. Scores less than 13 are allocated a percentile of 0.01.

Interpretive Text

The interpretive report for the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) is constructed from several components that are conditionally displayed based on the athlete's scores and assessment history. The report follows a structured format designed to provide clinicians with meaningful insights into the athlete's psychological coping skills profile.

If the athlete has completed the ACSI-28 previously, the report begins with a comparison of current results to previous scores:

- "Since the athlete first completed the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) on [date], their total score has [significantly improved/significantly deteriorated/shown minimal change/not changed at all] by [X] points (from [initial score] to [current score]). It has [changed/not changed] from the [previous descriptor] level to the [current descriptor] level. At the subscale level, [subscale names] [have/has] shown significant improvement, [subscale names] [have/has] shown significant deterioration, and [subscale names] [have/has] shown minimal or no change."

If the initial assessment used different normative data (prior to the update date of 28 April 2025), a note is included:

- "Note: The initial assessment on [date] used different normative data (male athletes only). The current assessment on [date] uses updated norms based on combined male and female athlete data. This may affect the direct comparison of percentile scores between assessments."

For comparative interpretation, changes of at least 0.5 standard deviations in raw scores are considered clinically meaningful (the minimally important difference). The specific half-standard deviation value used for determining significant change in the total score is 4.82 points (based on SD of 9.64).

The report always includes an interpretation of the total ACSI-28 score:

- "Overall Coping Skills: The athlete's total Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) score is [score], which falls at the [percentile] percentile compared to other athletes. This represents a [low/average/high] level of overall psychological coping skills."

The interpretation text varies based on the descriptor categories, which are defined as:

- Low (≤16th percentile): "Lower overall psychological coping skills compared to most athletes may indicate opportunities for developing mental skills that could enhance performance."
- Average (17th to 83rd percentile): "Typical level of psychological coping skills compared to other athletes may indicate some areas of strength while others may benefit from development."
- High (≥84th percentile): "Strong overall psychological coping skills compared to most athletes may indicate that mental skills likely contribute positively to performance outcomes."

The report includes an analysis of the athlete's strength areas (high percentile subscales):

- If one or more subscales are rated High (≥84th percentile), the report includes "Areas of Strength" with detailed interpretations for each high-scoring subscale.
- If no subscales are rated High but one or more are in the upper Average range, the report includes "Areas of Relative Strength" with interpretations for the highest-scoring subscales.

For each strength area, specific interpretive text is provided:

- Coping With Adversity (High): "The athlete demonstrates a strong ability to remain positive despite setbacks and mistakes, likely recovers quickly from errors, and maintains emotional control during challenging situations."

- Peaking Under Pressure (High): "The athlete thrives under competitive pressure and likely performs best when stakes are high, viewing pressure situations as challenges and opportunities to excel."
- Goal Setting and Mental Preparation (High): "The athlete sets clear, specific performance goals and systematically prepares mentally for competition, likely using visualisation and other mental preparation techniques effectively."
- Concentration (High): "The athlete demonstrates a strong ability to focus on the task at hand and maintain attention even when faced with distractions or adverse situations."
- Freedom From Worry (High): "The athlete experiences minimal worry about performance outcomes or others' judgments, likely approaching competition with confidence and without undue pressure on self."
- Confidence and Achievement Motivation (High): "The athlete demonstrates strong confidence and achievement motivation, consistently giving maximum effort in training and competition, and continually seeking to improve skills."
- Coachability (High): "The athlete is highly receptive to coaching and instruction, actively seeks feedback, views criticism as an opportunity to improve, and implements guidance effectively."

Similar but modified text is provided for subscales that are in the Average range but represent relative strengths.

The report also includes an analysis of development areas (low percentile subscales):

- If one or more subscales are rated Low (≤16th percentile), the report includes "Areas for Development" with specific interpretations and intervention suggestions for each low-scoring subscale.

For each development area, specific interpretive text is provided:

- Coping With Adversity (Low): "Low scores may indicate difficulty maintaining a positive outlook when facing adverse situations. Consider developing resilience strategies and techniques for emotional regulation during competition."
- Peaking Under Pressure (Low): "Low scores may suggest difficulty performing optimally in high-pressure situations. Consider pressure simulation training and cognitive reframing techniques to view pressure as an opportunity rather than a threat."
- Goal Setting and Mental Preparation (Low): "Low scores may indicate approaching competition without clear goals or systematic mental preparation. Consider implementing structured goal-setting practices and developing consistent pre-competition mental routines."
- Concentration (Low): "Low scores may reflect difficulties maintaining focus, especially when faced with distractions or adverse conditions. Consider attention training exercises and developing mindfulness skills for competition settings."
- Freedom From Worry (Low): "Low scores may indicate significant performance anxiety or preoccupation with others' judgments. Consider techniques to manage performance anxiety, cognitive restructuring, and self-compassion practices."
- Confidence and Achievement Motivation (Low): "Low scores may reflect struggles with confidence or maintaining consistent motivation. Consider confidence-building exercises, success journaling, and strategies to enhance intrinsic motivation."
- Coachability (Low): "Low scores may indicate difficulties receiving feedback or instruction. Consider developing a growth mindset and reframing criticism as valuable information for improvement rather than personal judgment."

For each development area, the report may also include specific items from the assessment that received low scores, presented with the original item text to help focus interventions on specific areas of difficulty.

If no subscales are rated Low, the report indicates: "No specific subscales were identified in the low range requiring targeted intervention."

Developer

Smith, R. E., Schutz, R. W., Smoll, F. L., & Ptacek, J. T. (1995). Development and validation of a multidimensional measure of sport-specific psychological skills: The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17, 379-398. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.17.4.379

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Assessment Questions

NovoPsych

Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28)

Instructions:

The following are statements that athletes have used to describe their experiences. Please read each statement carefully, and then recall as accurately as possible how often you experience the same thing. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please indicate how often you have these experiences when playing sport.

		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1	On a daily or weekly basis, I set very specific goals for myself that guide what I do.	0	1	2	3
2	I get the most out of my talent and skill.	0	1	2	3
3	When a coach or manager tells me how to correct a mistake I've made, I tend to take it personally and feel upset.	3	2	1	0
4	When I'm playing sports, I can focus my attention and block out distractions.	0	1	2	3
5	I remain positive and enthusiastic during competition, no matter how badly things are going.	0	1	2	3
6	I tend to play better under pressure because I think more clearly.	0	1	2	3
7	I worry quite a bit about what others think of my performance.	3	2	1	0
8	I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals.	0	1	2	3
9	I feel confident that I will play well.	0	1	2	3
10	When a coach or manager criticizes me, I become upset rather than feel helped.	3	2	1	0
11	It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to.	0	1	2	3
12	I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform.	3	2	1	0
13	I set my own performance goals for each practice	0	1	2	3
14	I don't have to be pushed to practice or play hard; I give 100%.	0	1	2	3
15	If a coach criticizes or yells at me, I correct the mistake without getting upset about it.	0	1	2	3

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		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
16	I handle unexpected situations in my sport very well.	0	1	2	3
17	When things are going badly, I tell myself to keep calm, and this works for me.	0	1	2	3
18	The more pressure there is during a game, the more I enjoy it.	0	1	2	3
19	While competing, I worry about making mistakes or failing to come through.	3	2	1	0
20	I have my own game plan worked out in my head long before the game begins.	0	1	2	3
21	When I feel myself getting too tense, I can quickly relax my body and calm myself.	0	1	2	3
22	To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome.	0	1	2	3
23	I think about and imagine what will happen if I fail or screw up.	3	2	1	0
24	I maintain emotional control regardless of how things are going for me.	0	1	2	3
25	It is easy for me to direct my attention and focus on a single object or person.	0	1	2	3
26	When I fail to reach my goals, it makes me try even harder.	0	1	2	3
27	I improve my skills by listening carefully to advice and instruction from coaches and managers.	0	1	2	3
28	I make fewer mistakes when the pressure is on because I concentrate better.	0	1	2	3

Developer Reference:

Smith, R. E., Schutz, R. W., Smoll, F. L., & Ptacek, J. T. (1995). Development and validation of a multidimensional measure of sport-specific psychological skills: The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28. Journal of sport and exercise psychology, 17(4), 379-398.

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Sample Result

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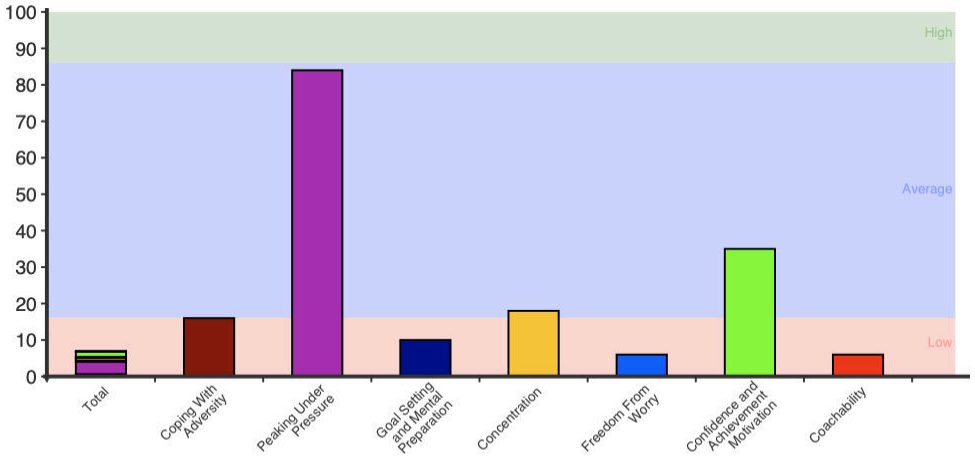
Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28)

Client Name	Generic Client	*Date administered*	29 Jul 2025
Date of birth (age)	17 Feb 1975 (50)	*Time taken*	12 min 8s
Assessor	Dr David Hegarty		

Results

	Raw Score	Athlete Percentile	Descriptor
Total (0 to 84)	34	7	Low
Coping With Adversity	4	16	Low
Peaking Under Pressure	9	84	High
Goal Setting and Mental Preparation	2	10	Low
Concentration	5	18	Average
Freedom From Worry	2	6	Low
Confidence and Achievement Motivation	7	35	Average
Coachability	5	6	Low

ACSI-28 Total and Subscale Athlete Percentiles



Interpretation

Overall Coping Skills:
The athlete's total Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) score is 34, which falls at the 7th percentile compared to other athletes. This represents a low level of overall psychological coping skills. Lower overall psychological coping skills compared to most athletes may indicate opportunities for developing mental skills that could enhance performance.

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Client Name	Generic Client

Area of Strength:
The athlete demonstrates a notable psychological strength in the following area:

Peaking Under Pressure: Measures how well an athlete performs under competitive pressure, and whether they perceive pressure situations as challenges rather than threats. The athlete thrives under competitive pressure and likely performs best when stakes are high, viewing pressure situations as challenges and opportunities to excel.

Areas for Development:
The athlete may benefit from focused attention in the following psychological skill areas:

Coachability: Assesses openness to instruction, willingness to learn from coaches, and the ability to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally. Low scores may indicate difficulties receiving feedback or instruction. Consider developing a growth mindset and reframing criticism as valuable information for improvement rather than personal judgment.
Specific items that may benefit from targeted intervention:
- 3. When a coach or manager tells me how to correct a mistake I've made, I tend to take it personally and feel upset. (R) (Often)
- 10. When a coach or manager criticizes me, I become upset rather than feel helped. (R) (Often)

Freedom From Worry: Measures the tendency to avoid putting pressure on oneself through excessive worry about performing poorly or what others might think. Low scores may indicate significant performance anxiety or preoccupation with others' judgments. Consider techniques to manage performance anxiety, cognitive restructuring, and self-compassion practices.
Specific items that may benefit from targeted intervention:
- 7. I worry quite a bit about what others think of my performance. (R) (Almost Always)
- 12. I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform. (R) (Almost Always)

Goal Setting and Mental Preparation: Evaluates the athlete's approach to setting specific performance goals, planning, and mentally preparing for competition. Low scores may indicate approaching competition without clear goals or systematic mental preparation. Consider implementing structured goal-setting practices and developing consistent pre-competition mental routines.
Specific items that may benefit from targeted intervention:
- 8. I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals. (Almost Never)
- 13. I set my own performance goals for each practice (Almost Never)

Scoring and Interpretation Information

For comprehensive information on the ACSI-28, see here.

The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28) scores consist of a total score (between 0 and 84) and scores for each of the seven subscales (raw score between 0 and 12). Higher scores represent higher levels of psychological skills and coping strategies. Scores are provided for the following subscales of the ACSI-28:

1. Coping with Adversity (Items 5, 17, 21, and 24) - assesses the ability to remain positive and enthusiastic during competition despite unfavourable situations, maintaining emotional control and bouncing back quickly from mistakes and setbacks.

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2. Peaking Under Pressure (Items 6, 18, 22, and 28) - measures how athletes respond to competitive pressure situations, including whether they perceive pressure as a challenge rather than a threat and their ability to perform well under pressure.
3. Goal Setting/Mental Preparation (Items 1, 8, 13, and 20) - evaluates the athlete's tendency to set specific performance goals, plan, and mentally prepare for competition.
4. Concentration (Items 4, 11, 16, and 25) - assesses the ability to focus on the task at hand and maintain attention during both training and competition, even when faced with distractions or adverse situations.
5. Freedom from Worry (Items 7, 12, 19, and 23, all reverse scored) - measures the tendency to avoid putting pressure on oneself through excessive worry about performing poorly, making mistakes, or concern about others' perceptions.
6. Confidence and Achievement Motivation (Items 2, 9, 14, and 26) - evaluates confidence levels and motivation, particularly the tendency to give 100% during practice and competition and work consistently to improve skills.
7. Coachability (Items 3R, 10R, 15, and 27) - assesses openness to instruction, willingness to learn from coaches, and the ability to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally or becoming upset.

In addition, scores are presented as percentile ranks, where a percentile of 50 indicates the typical score compared to 1,027 male and female athletes (Smith et al., 1995). These percentile ranks are used to derive descriptive categories that aid in clinical interpretation. The descriptive categories for each subscale and the total score are:
- Low (16th percentile or below): Indicates significantly less psychological skills and coping strategies than most other athletes.
- Average (17th to 83rd percentile): Indicates a typical level of psychological skills and coping strategies compared to other athletes.
- High (84th percentile or above): Indicates significantly more psychological skills and coping strategies than other athletes.

On first administration a plot is presented displaying the ACSI-28 total and the subscale percentiles. The percentiles are presented with the qualitative descriptors in the background for ease of interpretation. When administered on multiple occasions, a longitudinal plot is displayed showing the subscale percentiles over time. When ACSI-28 scores are available from multiple timepoints, changes in scores can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of interventions or developmental changes in psychological skills and coping strategies. For comparative interpretation, changes of at least 0.5 standard deviations in raw scores are considered clinically meaningful (the minimally important difference) (Norman et al., 2003; Turner et al., 2010). When interpreting changes, attention should be paid to both the total score and the patterns of change across subscales.

Client Responses

		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1	On a daily or weekly basis, I set very specific goals for myself that guide what I do.	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**

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Client Name	Generic Client

Client Responses (cont.)

		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
2	I get the most out of my talent and skill.	0	**1**	2	3
3	When a coach or manager tells me how to correct a mistake I've made, I tend to take it personally and feel upset.	3	2	**1**	0
4	When I'm playing sports, I can focus my attention and block out distractions.	0	**1**	2	3
5	I remain positive and enthusiastic during competition, no matter how badly things are going.	0	**1**	2	3
6	I tend to play better under pressure because I think more clearly.	0	1	2	**3**
7	I worry quite a bit about what others think of my performance.	3	2	1	**0**
8	I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals.	**0**	1	2	3
9	I feel confident that I will play well.	0	**1**	2	3
10	When a coach or manager criticizes me, I become upset rather than feel helped.	3	2	**1**	0
11	It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to.	0	**1**	2	3
12	I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform.	3	2	1	**0**
13	I set my own performance goals for each practice	**0**	1	2	3
14	I don't have to be pushed to practice or play hard; I give 100%.	0	1	2	**3**
15	If a coach criticizes or yells at me, I correct the mistake without getting upset about it.	0	**1**	2	3
16	I handle unexpected situations in my sport very well.	0	1	**2**	3
17	When things are going badly, I tell myself to keep calm, and this works for me.	0	**1**	2	3
18	The more pressure there is during a game, the more I enjoy it.	0	1	**2**	3
19	While competing, I worry about making mistakes or failing to come through.	3	2	1	**0**
20	I have my own game plan worked out in my head long before the game begins.	0	**1**	2	3

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Client Name	Generic Client

Client Responses (cont.)

		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
21	When I feel myself getting too tense, I can quickly relax my body and calm myself.	0	**1**	2	3
22	To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome.	0	1	**2**	3
23	I think about and imagine what will happen if I fail or screw up.	3	**2**	1	0
24	I maintain emotional control regardless of how things are going for me.	0	**1**	2	3
25	It is easy for me to direct my attention and focus on a single object or person.	0	**1**	2	3
26	When I fail to reach my goals, it makes me try even harder.	0	1	**2**	3
27	I improve my skills by listening carefully to advice and instruction from coaches and managers.	0	1	**2**	3
28	I make fewer mistakes when the pressure is on because I concentrate better.	0	1	**2**	3