

## SUPPORTING YOUR ATHLETE DURING SELECTIONS: A RESOURCE FOR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

The selection phase is a stressful time for athletes and coaches given the value that is placed on selection. Training intensity is often high and prioritising physical and mental recovery is key. Every athlete draws on significant others during critical times in their career and when preparing for selection is when your support is vital. The time you spend with your athletes can be valuable in helping he/she manage stress and approach selections in a calm and confident manner. This resource provides you with some considerations when interacting with athletes to help you maximise the support you provide:

- ✓ In the lead up stressful events such as selection, it is common for athletes to overthink and ruminate on the upcoming event. Spending too much time thinking about the upcoming selection event can be draining and disrupt an athlete's optimal physical and psychological recovery. Try and be mindful of this when interacting with athletes and consider how you can limit questions related to selections or post-selection plans to support athletes' recovery and preparation.
- ✓ Leading into selection can often be a stressful and chaotic time. As best as you can, try to maintain your normal routines when interacting with your athlete. Engaging in predictable and familiar routines can be an effective way to maintain a sense of calm during these chaotic periods.
- ✓ Stress and anxiety are normal reactions when preparing for selection events. When interacting with your athlete, try your best to keep things simple, calm and, if unsure, ask your athlete how you can best support them during this phase. Hearing from athletes directly removes assumptions and the risk of potential issues.
- ✓ Be mindful and stick to your role in supporting your athlete and respect the roles of other parties (i.e., coaches, medical support staff). Offering unsolicited advice can confuse athletes and create unnecessary stress for athletes when preparing for selection events.
- ✓ As much as you can, encourage your athlete to keep the selection event in perspective and see it as one isolated and exiting moment in time in the life of your athlete. Exaggerating the importance or the influence of an isolated event doesn't help athletes prepare or execute when required.
- ✓ Given the increased demands in the lead up to selection events, try your best to accept that contact between you and your athlete may be inconsistent and may need to be on your athlete's terms.

Significant others play a critical role in supporting athletes in the lead up to, during and after selection (see additional resource 'Dealing with de-selection & strengthening your coping skills'). If your athlete would like additional support to help prepare for selections, see below for contact details of State Academy and Institute Sport Psychologists associated with Australian Canoeing:

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