What is it?
Sports Psychology is a subspecialty of psychology that deals with human participation and performance in sport, athletics, physical activity and exercise. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines it as a specific form of performance psychology. “Applied sport psychology is the study and application of psychological principles of human performance in helping athletes consistently perform in the upper range of their capabilities and more thoroughly enjoy the sport performance process.” The APA traces the origins of the field to 1938 when a psychologist first applied psychological principles in an effort to improve human athletic performance for the Chicago Cubs baseball organization.

Performance optimization skills and abilities
The capabilities of a Sports Psychologist include:
• Identification, development and execution of the mental and emotional knowledge, which are skills and abilities required for excellence in athletics
• The understanding, diagnosing and preventing of the psychological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and psychophysiological inhibitors of consistent, excellent performance
• The improvement of athletic contexts to facilitate more efficient development, consistent execution and positive experiences in athletes.

Sports Medicine Evaluation & Treatment
Sports medicine is an interdisciplinary field and is collaborative in nature. Sports medicine physicians come from many backgrounds and specialties and work together to serve both the individual athletes and teams.

Sports psychologists often work in conjunction with these physicians in an effort to maximize the health and performance of these athletes. As such, your sports medicine provider may refer you to a sports psychologist. The sports psychologist will conduct an initial evaluation by discussing the concerns and goal(s) of the athlete. Treatment varies and may depend on the various factors including time, cost, and the goal(s) of the athlete. Individualized plans can be tailored with these factors in mind.

Injury Prevention
The pressure of impending competition, as well as business and personal life factors, may contribute to psychologic causes of injury and poor performance. A sports psychologist may be able to sensitively approach these factors to help optimize performance.

Return to Play
Sports psychologists may play a role in return to play decisions in conjunction with your sports medicine physician depending on the specific nature of your limitations or restrictions. These decisions are typically collaborative in nature and may include the athlete, coaching staff and medical staff.

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References: