



Psychologist studies sports 'choke'

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CHICAGO, Sept. 21 (UPI) -- People who "choke" under pressure aren't rattled by "nerves" but are undone by an information logjam in the brain at a critical moment, a U.S. researcher says.

A University of Chicago psychologist says thinking too much about what you are doing, because you are worried about failing, can lead to "paralysis by analysis," a university release reports.

"Choking is suboptimal performance, not just poor performance," Sian Beilock said. "It's a performance that is inferior to what you can do and have done in the past and occurs when you feel pressure to get everything right."

Some of the most spectacular and memorable moments of choking occur in sports when the whole world is watching, she says.

Choking in such cases happens when the polished programs executed by the brains of extremely accomplished athletes go awry, Beilock says.

Paralysis by analysis occurs when athletes try to control every aspect of what they are doing in an attempt to ensure success. Unfortunately, this increased control can backfire, disrupting what was once a fluid, flawless performance.

"Highly skilled golfers are more likely to hole a simple 3-foot putt when we give them the tools to stop analyzing their shot, to stop thinking," Beilock said. "Highly practiced putts run better when you don't try to control every aspect of performance."

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