

# Performance Breakdown / Choking

WHAT IS IT?

# What is a Performance Breakdown?

“ [When] heightened levels of **perceived pressure** and where **incentives** for optimal performance are at a maximum lead to **acute** or **chronic** forms of suboptimal performance or performing more poorly than expected given one’s **skill level** and self-set performance **expectations**,”

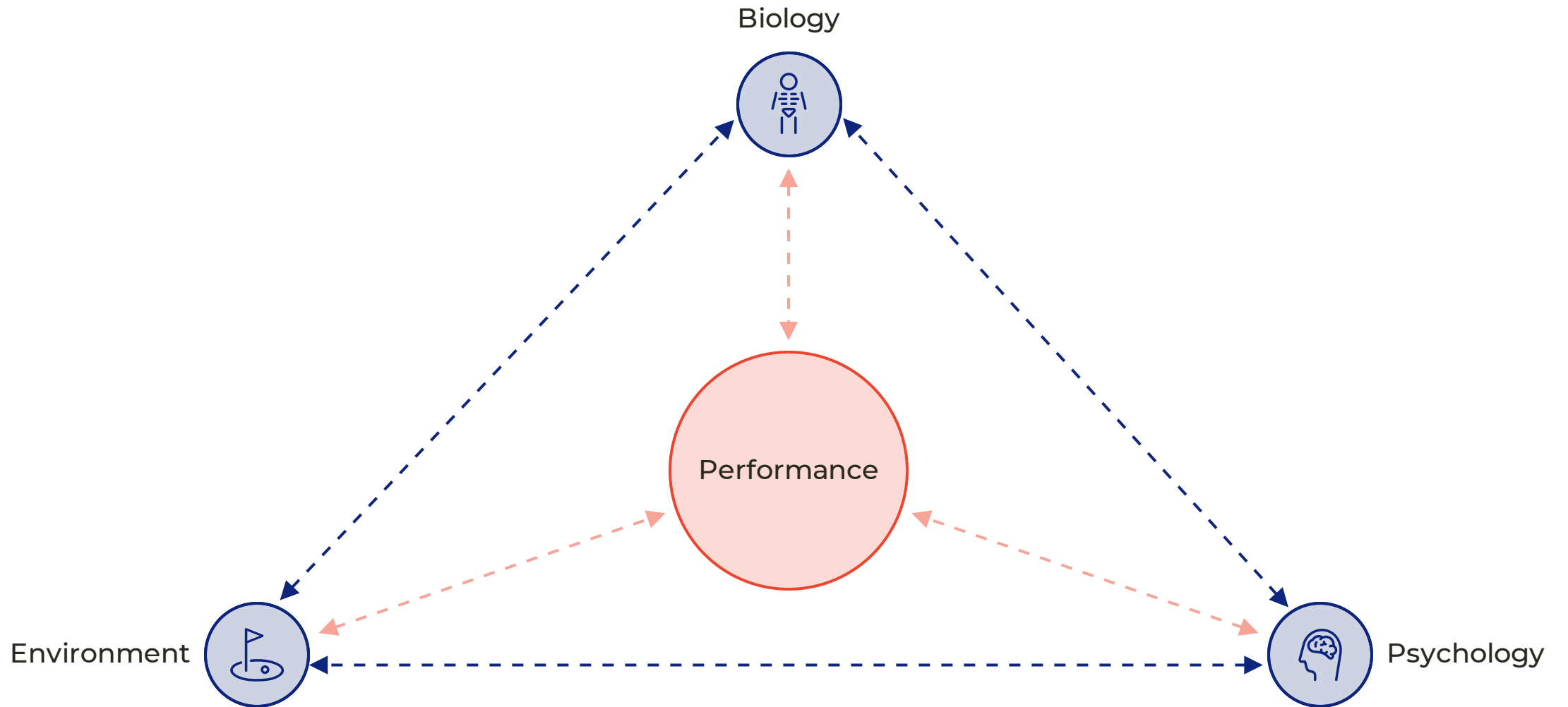
Carson, H. J., & Collins, D. (2011). Refining and regaining skills in fixation/diversification stage performers: The Five-A Model. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4(2), 146-167.

# What Changed?

Driving  
Range

Golf  
Course





CAUSES

# Attentional Focus

“Attentional focus refers to the location to which a performer pays attention while performing a certain movement.”

Park, S. H., Yi, C. W., Shin, J. Y., & Ryu, Y. U. (2015). Effects of external focus of attention on balance: a short review. *Journal of Physical Therapy Science*, 27(12), 3929-3931.

# Types of Foci

## Internal Focus

---

Directing attention to something inside the body

## External Focus

---

Directing attention to something outside of the body

## Holistic Focus

---

Directing attention to the overall "feel" of the movement



# Focus of Attention Examples

Internal Focus	External Focus	Holistic Focus
Push off your trail foot	Push off the ground	Explosive
Load into your lead foot	Squash the bug	Strong
Move the hands inward	Move the clubhead inward	Connected
Hinge the wrists	Point the clubhead to the sky	Passive

# Task

1 | Sign your name

2 | Trace your name

Signing

Noah Sachs

Tracing

Noah Sachs

Automatic

Noah Sachs

Manual

Noah Sachs

# What Causes Performance Breakdown?

1 | Explicit Monitoring Hypothesis

2 | Constrained Action Hypothesis

# Explicit Monitoring Hypothesis

“Performance pressure increases the amount of **internal focus** on the step-by-step processes of skill execution. This results in the **deautomatization** of high-level performance.”

Land, W., & Tenenbaum, G. (2012). An Outcome- and Process-Oriented Examination of a Golf-Specific Secondary Task Strategy to Prevent Choking Under Pressure. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 24(3), 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2011.642458>

# Constrained Action Hypothesis

“An **external focus** of attention promotes greater **automaticity** in movement control while an internal focus of attention constrains the neuromuscular system. This inadvertently disrupts the body’s automatic movement control processes.”

Vidal, A., Wu, W., Nakajima, M., & Becker, J. (2018). Investigating the constrained action hypothesis: a movement coordination and coordination variability approach. *Journal of motor behavior*, 50(5), 528-537.

# Novice vs Expert

*“...novices have been shown to perform better when focusing **internally** on skill execution, whereas experts...perform better when focusing externally on the effects of their movements on the environment”*

Bell, J. J., & Hardy, J. (2009). Effects of attentional focus on skilled performance in golf. *Journal of applied sport psychology*, 21(2), 163-177.



# PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

# Practical Solutions

1 | External & Holistic

2 | Tendencies

3 | Contingency Plan

# Intentional attention