

## Nine for IX Film Discussion Guide: *Runner*

### Key Concepts:

- Applied Sport Psychology
- Optimal Performance
- Mental Toughness
- Sportsmanship
- Motivation Orientation & Motivational Climate
- Personality And Sport
- Overconformity To The Sport Ethic
- Early Sport Specialization
- Sport Marketing
- Correlates Of The Psychology Of Sport Injury
- Olympics & Cold War Politics

### Discussion Questions:

1. From an applied sport psychology perspective consultants often teach athletes to focus on what they can control, including one's reaction to failure, and to take responsibility for one's successes and failures. What was Decker's reaction to challenge, setbacks, and failure throughout the film that both facilitated and hindered her performance? Did her attribution of failure change over time?
2. In the film Decker states if a woman is strong and confident she is a bitch, and if a woman is emotional she is a crybaby. Do you think this is true today for female athletes? Is this characterization also true for male athletes? Why or why not?
3. How was Decker characterized and constructed by the filmmaker Shola Lynch and more broadly the sport media? How, if at all, did Decker's media characterization change over time? What is Decker's legacy to running and to women's sport?
4. Mary Decker Slaney specialized in one sport at a very early. What does current sport science literature say about sport specialization and potential positive and negative outcomes of early specialization for athletes?
5. Mary Decker Slaney experienced numerous sport-related injuries but continued to come back and compete. Some scholars argue some athletes engage in a form of deviance called "the sport ethic." Analyze Decker using the concept of the sport ethic.

6. Researchers have identified that both personal and situational/environmental factors can contribute to increased likelihood for sport injury. From what you observed in the film identify similar and different stressors for Decker and Zola Budd.
7. Can you think of examples in other sports where the Key Concepts listed at the beginning of this guide are present?

### **Additional Readings:**

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Nyland, J. (2014). Coming to Terms With Early Sports Specialization and Athletic Injuries. *Journal Of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*, 44(6), 389-390.

Tamminen, K. A., Holt, N. L., & Neely, K. C. (2013). Exploring adversity and the potential for growth among elite female athletes. *Psychology Of Sport & Exercise*, 14(1), 28-36.

Wiese-Bjornstal, D. M. (2010). Psychology and socioculture affect injury risk, response, and recovery in high-intensity athletes: a consensus statement. *Scandinavian Journal Of Medicine & Science In Sports*, 20, 103-111.

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**Additional Activities:**

1. Go online and see what Mary Decker and Zola Budd are doing today? Can you think of other female athlete rivalries that are/were as intense as the Decker-Budd rivalry?
2. Is there a current Olympic policy about a minimum age requirement for athletes to be eligible for competition? Is the age policy consistent by sport and gender?
3. Mary Decker faced a few inquiries related to bad behavior depicted in the film and doping allegations. What came of these inquiries?
4. Investigate and read more about why the US decided to boycott the 1980 Moscow summer Olympic games. Did other countries boycott the Olympics along with the US? Has the US boycotted or threatened to boycott other Olympic games?

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