

Finding 13: Somatic State Declaration as Reference Signal Installation

Statement

Deliberate somatic practices install and stabilize reference signals in the nervous system by providing somatic anchors.

Mechanism

Somatic state declaration involves consciously attending to specific bodily sensations—ground contact, breath, postural alignment, muscle tone—and deliberately organizing the nervous system around these sensations. By repeatedly declaring and attending to these somatic states, the athlete installs reference signals that become stable and accessible.

Somatic sensations are continuous and available. The athlete can access them at any time by simply attending to their body. This makes somatic-anchored reference signals more accessible and more stable during performance than reference signals based on mental imagery or cognitive instructions.

Over time, with repeated practice, the somatic-anchored reference signals become increasingly stable and automatic. The athlete does not need to consciously declare the somatic state—it becomes available automatically when the athlete attends to the somatic sensations that anchor it.

Key Implications

- **Reference signal stability can be improved through deliberate somatic practice:** Trainable skill

- **Somatic anchoring is particularly effective under stress:** Does not depend on cognitive resources or mental clarity
- **Elite athletes use somatic practices deliberately:** Pre-shot routines and between-point rituals are somatic state declarations

Practical Applications

1. Identify key somatic states that anchor important reference signals
2. Practice somatic state declaration regularly (daily or multiple times per week)
3. Integrate somatic-anchored reference signals into training and competitive performance
4. Measure improvements in reference signal stability and performance consistency

Competitive Context

Elite athletes maintain consistent performance under pressure because their reference signals are anchored in somatic sensation. They use visible somatic practices (breathing patterns, postural adjustments) between points to reinstall reference signals. These are not superstitions—they are deliberate nervous system management.

Study 001 — Control Loop Framework Research
The Unfinished Athlete — Scott Felluss, PhD