

**Female Performance Psychology Consultants Impact  
Male Teams with Valuable Perspective--  
*Share Strategies for Success in Male Dominated Workplace***

CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio – March 2016 – In the male dominated sport and military workplace where gender challenges have been known to exist, female sport and performance psychology consultants offer their clients a unique and valuable perspective. Three successful and respected members of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology shared their strategies for success during a recent conference, and how overcoming gender challenges allowed them to grow personally while contributing to the teams they serve.

**Getting in and staying in: The keys to thriving with male teams and groups**

Cindra Kamphoff, Ph.D., High Performance Coach and Professor at Minnesota State University (Mankato) works in the NFL and with a variety of collegiate teams including football, basketball and baseball and knows the importance of “owning” your unique perspective to the game. “Gaining entry into working with male teams as a female can be difficult. Our world is shaped by gender and this influence is particularly powerful in sport. Our gender is part of our multiple, intersecting cultural identity and is always present in the work we do. When I began working with male teams, I tried to emulate other male consultants. Although I was successful, my work did not begin to thrive until I embraced my identity as a female and “owned” that it brought a unique perspective to the game.

As Kamphoff began to understand herself and embrace these strengths, she was able to bring more passion and energy to her work. This had a direct impact on the male teams she worked with given that each had the most team success in terms of winning percentage and post-season play. “When you embrace your unique perspective, you can have a larger impact on the group or team you are working with. The keys to gaining entry and “staying in” include knowing yourself, building relationships, doing outstanding work, working to be your best each day, understanding the male sport culture and having confidence in your knowledge and ability to work with male groups.”

**Consulting in the male dominated environment and culture**

According to Angela Fifer, Performance Enhancement Trainer at US Military Academy at West Point, sport psychology consultants providing mental skills to athletes and soldiers navigate the inherent challenges to gain entry, overcome biases, and thrive in a male dominated entity. A female consultant must be cognizant about the male-female dynamics that exist within a men’s team culture (e.g., masculinity, sexuality, gender roles, and stereotypes). However, once a professional relationship is established, subjects may feel comfortable meeting with a female sport psychology consultant without threat to their masculinity or toughness.

“Being one’s authentic self, building relationships with staff and team members, and understanding the environment and culture are essential in both the sport and military contexts. Practicing what you preach enhances your ability to gain and keep buy-in from male athletes and staff. Navigating the gender biases

that exist in the sport and military world continues to be a mix of challenging and rewarding experiences,” said Fifer.

### **Understanding and being true to yourself**

“If you are a female working with an all-male population, first impressions can be highly significant, particularly when working with a team that has not had female staff members. The ability to establish trust and show capability is essential to “getting in.” Getting in with a male population begins with knowing yourself and your specialty. Studies have found the importance of a professional education, interpersonal skills and an athletic background are characteristics that impact an athlete’s preferences for a sport psychology consultant,” Cecilia Clark, Performance Coach, Cleveland Indians.

During her career, Clark has worked with all-male military units and in Major League Baseball. Her work consists largely of immersion work, meaning that the people with whom she works with are primarily the people she sees every day, with little outside contact. In her experience, knowing yourself, your strengths and continually pursuing areas in which you need work are factors to success. To impact her own career she has used techniques such as performance profiling, shown with athletes’ to positively impact self-awareness and goal setting. “It is important to be true to yourself as a female. Being true to yourself may mean that your communication with and your expression of support for your athletes will likely have a ‘female style’ and this may be to your benefit.”

*The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes ethical practice, science, and advocacy in the field of sport and exercise psychology. Since 1986, AASP has been an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals in the field of sport and exercise psychology. With more than 2,000 members in 54 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its website, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org).*

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