

DISAPPOINTMENT IS FAIR GAME *Champions face adversity and turn it into victory*

CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio – May 2012 – Every Olympic and Paralympic athlete envisions the end result – standing on a platform with his or her national anthem playing while accepting a medal. But not every athlete will have that experience at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

“Part of the mental side of sport during the Olympic and Paralympic Games or any competition is coping with a disappointing performance, especially after devoting years of training for only a few moments of competition,” said Karen Cogan, Ph.D., CC-AASP, Senior Sport Psychologist with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). “Successful athletes pursue excellence, not perfection. When they are disappointed, they focus on what can be learned and how to improve or refocus for the next event.”

If athletes win every competition, Dr. Cogan said they eventually look for a new challenge, possibly even a new sport. At the Olympic and Paralympic Games, athletes compete with only the best in their sport and they must be mentally prepared to meet their competitors with their best game.

So what do athletes do if they fall short of their original goals? The important piece of advice for Olympians and Paralympians to remember is that sometimes events that happen during performances are unplanned and require the ability to quickly cope and move forward. At times, the athletes themselves make mistakes. Other times, the environment, a competitor or even an official can knock an athlete off track. Successful athletes learn from their mistakes and quickly move past them.

Resilient athletes limit the effect of adversity on future performances, allowing them to return to their potential. Successful athletes are able to embrace emotions, such as anger or frustration, and find ways to quickly bounce back.

Mental skills can be the distinguishing factor between an athlete and a champion. To bridge that gap, many athletes enlist the assistance of a consultant from the field of sport psychology. CC's-AASP interact with coaches, athletes and teams to help prepare athletes to give their best performance in the venue that is packed with the pressures of the most elite level of competition in the world.

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes ethical practice, science and advocacy in the field of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals in the field of sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,500 members in 39 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its website, www.appliedsportpsych.org.