

ATHLETES PREPARE MENTALLY FOR SOCHI OLYMPIC GAMES

*Certified Consultants of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology Provide
Mental Skills Coaching For Olympic Athletes and Coaches*

CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio – January 2014 – As athletes finalize preparations for the upcoming Olympic Games in Sochi, mental training will be important in providing a competitive edge. Certified Consultants of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) are an important part of the behind the scenes team preparing athletes with mental skills that may prove to be as valuable as their physical skills in achieving their personal best performances far from home.

Sean McCann, an AASP Certified Consultant (CC-AASP), Past President, and Senior Sport Psychologist with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), explains that mental preparation for Olympic athletes is a critical task and a special challenge for athletes. “Olympic pressure exposes any weaknesses in your mental game, and there are certain aspects of the Olympics that athletes never see during other competitions. Even athletes who are able to go to more than one Games are very different people four years later, and thus preparing for each Olympic Games is a custom work of anticipation, planning, active mental challenges to prepare for Olympic pressure, and trust in the plan. Sport psychologists help coaches and athletes execute all these tasks in the months and years leading up to the Games.”

According to McCann, there are likely to be location-specific mental challenges for American athletes in Sochi such as competing far from home. Russian athletes will have the home-field advantage versus home-field pressure and athletes may need to manage changes if the variable weather delays events. Hear more from Sean McCann on factors that affect Olympic athletes in the video at <http://youtu.be/DXjQHGUQQ8>.

McCann noted that there are a number of issues athletes may face both on and off the snow and ice. For example, Olympic performance issues that must be immediately dealt with, returning to action after an injury, distractions from life issues outside of sport, and handling the pressure of being a favorite.

Speed skater Patrick Meek has credited USOC sport psychologist Alex Cohen with providing him strategies to make his intense practice and competition schedules sustainable and mentally manageable.

Connecting U.S. Olympic Athletes with Sport Psychology Consultants

In addition to the USOC’s in-house team of sport psychologists, athletes preparing for Olympic competition can take advantage of a valuable referral service, the USOC Sport Psychology Registry, which was established in 1983. Sport psychologists listed on the USOC Registry have a doctoral degree in psychology or sport sciences and are an AASP Certified Consultant. According to Karen Cogan, USOC Senior Sport Psychologist, “When we get a request from an athlete, coach, or NGB (National Governing Board) for sport psychology services, I go to the Registry to find a provider in that area of the country. I also try to find a good fit in terms of expertise.” Consultants may provide individual sport psychology consultations in person, over the phone, or via email, as well as group sessions.

For more information on sport psychology and mental training related to the Olympic Games, click [here](#).

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes ethical practice, science and advocacy in sport and exercise psychology. Founded nearly 30 years ago, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals. With more than 1,900 members in 47 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader and shares research and free resources for athletes, coaches and parents via www.appliedsportpsych.org. The online “Consultant Finder” helps locate a Certified Consultant to assist all levels and ages of athletes.