Enjoying the Ride: From Jekyll Island to Portland and Beyond

Coleman Griffith Lecture AASP October 2019
Richard Gordin, EdD, CMPC, Emeritus

The Early Years

Bruce C. Ogilvie
Dick Motta and the Chicago Bulls, 1968

Journals Available in Early Years
USOC Sport Psychology Registry, 1982
Shane Murphy, First USOC Sport Psychologist

- Education
- Research
- Clinical

Journals in Later Years
Seoul, 1988

Sochi, 2014
The Coach/Athlete Influence

“It's what you learn after you know it all that counts” John Wooden

APA Monitor, 2019 Trends to Watch, November, 2018 Issue

A GROWING DEMAND FOR SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

With the issues of mental health, violence, and activism in sports on the rise, more athletes and teams are seeking the expertise of sport psychologists.

BY KIRSTEN WEIR

A GROWING DEMAND FOR SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

Sports are a microcosm of society, as the old maxim goes—and that's never been more apparent. When elite athletes such as swimmer Michael Phelps and basketball player Kevin Love speak out about their mental health struggles, it reflects a growing awareness of mental health among society at large. When football players like Colin Kaepernick kneel during the national anthem, it sparks a national conversation about social justice. When Olympic champions speak out about the sexual abuse they endured from USA Gymnastics national team doctor Larry Nassar, it adds gold-medal weight to the #MeToo movement.

As athletes navigate these difficult topics, sport psychologists are playing an expanded, and increasingly important, role.

Sport psychologists are best known for helping athletes overcome mental roadblocks and improve their performance: for example, helping a baseball player snap out of a hitting slump or supporting a runner as she regains confidence postinjury. While that performance emphasis remains a cornerstone of sport psychology, it's only a slice of what sport psychologists are now doing to support athletes.

Their expanding roles include helping athletes navigate interpersonal issues and address mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders. The practice of sport psychology is also finding fans beyond athletics. Sport psychologists' skills are increasingly sought out by professionals in high-stress jobs, such as surgeons, firefighters, and performing artists. In fact, the U.S. Army is now the country's largest employer of sport psychology professionals, who help soldiers learn to focus in combat and deal with stressful events.

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PRESENCE OF MIND
TWO STUDENTS TRY TO GET ATHLETES TO TREAT MENTAL HEALTH LIKE THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH

The soccer player, Nathan Braaten, is from Highlands Ranch, Colo. A midfielder on the men’s team, he chose OSU because the school’s campus, in rural Corvallis, reminded him of his hometown. He’s a senior now, studying finance and minoring in economics. He interned last summer at Nike and even started his own painting company.

But during his freshman year his mom called with news that a friend from home had died of a drug overdose. Braaten broke down in the middle of doing homework. He had nightmares for months. “I didn’t want to admit what happened, so I didn’t go back for the funeral,” he says. “I didn’t want to think about it… I struggled with my mental health for a long time after that.”

The gymnast can sympathize. Her name is Taylor Ricci, and she grew up in the north end of Vancouver in a single-parent household. The first person in her family to attend college, she served on student-athlete advisory committees for OSU and the Pac-12 and won the...
Putting the person before the performer
William Parham leads a new National Basketball Players Association initiative that puts players’ mental health and wellness on center stage
By Shauna Reid
April 2019, Vol 50, No. 4
Print version: page 76

Irrespective of one’s sport or occupation, mental health and wellness should always be at the table of conversation,” says William D. Parham, PhD, ABPP. “This is not a unique problem of basketball. We’re addressing a human condition.”

That deep appreciation of mental health and wellness is among the many strengths Parham brings to his position as inaugural director of the National Basketball Players Association’s (NBPA) new Mental Health and Wellness Program. Believed to be a first in professional sports, the program will serve as a resource for all NBPA members.

Parham, a counseling professor in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, has worked with professional and collegiate athletes throughout his career, including with the National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League, USA Soccer, USA Tennis and the USA Olympic women’s volleyball team. He spoke to the Monitor about his initiative.

The athletic brain
The Sport & Exercise Psychology Lab at Florida State University takes an in-depth look at athletes’ cognitive processes
By Kirsten Weir
March 2019, Vol 50, No. 3
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Athletes get a lot of attention for their physical attributes: speed, strength, coordination, grace. But excelling in sports requires more than muscles and physical prowess. An experienced athlete takes in important visual cues, tunes out extraneous ones, spots patterns and makes plans—all in the blink of an eye.

In the milliseconds before basketball players take a free throw or baseball players aim a pitch, they fix their gazes on the net or the catcher’s mitt. They absorb key information such as the location and distance of their targets, the location of other players or the direction of the wind. Attention researchers use the term “quiet eye” to describe that moment of taking it all in before springing into action.

But when the eyes are quiet, the brain is anything but, explains Gershon Tenenbaum, PhD, who directs the Sport & Exercise Psychology Lab at Florida State University (FSU). In fact, quiet eye is strongly linked to performance. Tenenbaum and his colleagues used eye-tracking technology to follow the gazes of tennis players as they returned serves to their opponents. They found that highly skilled players had longer quiet eye periods than those who played at an intermediate level. And among skilled players, the longer the quiet eye period, the better the shot (Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2018).

Those findings have proven true beyond tennis. The pattern holds across a range of sports, including golf, hockey, basketball and pistol shooting, as Tenenbaum and his colleagues reported in a review of more than two dozen studies of quiet eye (Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, Vol. 38, No. 5, 2016).

For a researcher like Tenenbaum who is interested in attention, perception, decision-making and other cognitive abilities, quiet eye is a fascinating puzzle to solve. What’s happening during that instant? Can people be trained to develop it? How long should it last to maximize the chance of a perfect shot?

“We know that when quiet eye becomes longer, you have a greater chance to perform well. But you can’t concentrate forever, and in fact concentrating too long can cause a deterioration in performance,” he explains. “So, what’s good? We’re trying to determine the optimal zone of the quiet eye for novice, intermediate and expert players.”

The quiet eye research is just one example of the varied projects in Tenenbaum’s lab. Much of the work has direct applications for improving athletic performance, while other studies aim to answer fundamental questions about the ways we process information.

Professional Athletes Speak Up
The Future in Sport & Performance Psychology

Resources Available
Employment Opportunities

- Intercollegiate Athletics
- Professional Sport
- Military
- Private Sport Academies
- Performing Arts

High-Risk Careers
- Business
- Youth Sport
- Private Practice
- Medical or Law Schools

Future Trends

- Certification Advances (From 1992-present)
- Proficiency within APA Division 47 (Started in 2003)
- Examination of Professional Training Toward Scientist Practitioner Model
- Continued Improved “Sport Specific” Science and Research
- More Career Changes (Increasing interest within AASP)
Future Trends

- Development of Business Skills including Social Media
- Preparation of “New” CMPC's
- Use of More Social Media Applications
- More Potential Clients Requesting Service Delivery
- Increased Media Coverage
- Continued Professionalization of the Field

Thank you AASP!