

Report from AASP's Inaugural International Regional Conference



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On February 21-22, 2015, AASP held its first International Regional Conference at Loughborough University (UK), the first AASP conference ever held in Europe. This historic two-day event provided an exciting setting for international scholars, early career researchers, and practitioners to exchange ideas and explore numerous topics within sport and exercise psychology. The 111 delegates who attended from Europe created a fantastic platform to share ideas and learn from different cultures. As space precludes a detailed description of each presentation, this review will present a brief overview of the conference.

Pete Lindsay (English Institute of Sport), who shared the lessons he had learned from an extensive career in applied sport psychology, delivered the opening keynote presentation. The attendees were treated to a fascinating insight into the applied world of the English Institute of Sport (Manchester, UK). Lindsay spoke of the unique position sport psychology has by being a consistent underpinning element of all sport science disciplines. However, he reminded delegates that the service could only retain this position by being tangible and accessible to everyone. The

keynote ended with details from his work with the Great Britain national teams at the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Chris Harwood (Loughborough University) delivered the second keynote and spoke about the importance of relationships. His insightful presentation explored some of the key interpersonal relationships in sport that require the attention of a sport psychologist. Drawing on his wide-ranging personal experiences of working with junior and senior athletes, coaches, parents, and national organizations, Harwood identified specific examples of relationships, such as the one between the coach and the athlete, and explored strategies to ensure their effective functioning. His presentation offered students a meaningful and deep understanding of the relationship challenges facing practitioners as well as useful practical tips on how to ensure these are appropriately addressed.

Urban Johnson (Halmstad University) delivered the final keynote presentation that focused on the psychological aspects of injury and recovery. Johnson discussed a variety of psychological interventions derived from



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his research activity that can reduce the occurrence of injury, particularly with high-risk athletes. Topics included mindfulness, mental skills training, and cognitive behavioral interventions. He concluded his presentation by giving examples of strategies that sport psychology consultants could use to support athletes during injury rehabilitation.

David Fletcher (Loughborough University), Mustafa Sarkar (University of Gloucestershire), and Paul Morgan (Buckinghamshire New University) delivered an absorbing interactive workshop on developing resilience. The presenters discussed a resilience training program, outlining the important interaction between psychosocial team, individual qualities, and a facilitative environment. They spoke of the ways in which resilient teams function, including transformational leadership, shared team leadership, team learning, social identity, and positive emotions. The presenters noted that resilient teams consistently refer back to the big picture during challenging moments. The workshop concluded with a discussion of the strategies that practitioners might use to develop resilience within teams and individuals, including the use of cognitive behavioral techniques.

The 'My Story So Far' workshops gave delegates an insight into the world of applied sport psychology from the perspective of mid- and early-career practitioners. Martin Jones (University of Exeter) delivered a stimulating presentation in which he described what he considered the key attributes of successful sport psychologists. These assets included the need to have an extensive knowledge base, leave a lasting impression, and "passing the good guy test." He spoke of the importance of professionalism and warned delegates of the numerous pitfalls of social media. In a further workshop, Gillian Cook (Loughborough University) discussed the importance of building and developing relationships with a variety of individuals within teams. Cook drew upon her experiences to discuss the benefits of integrating theoretical knowledge from her PhD research into applied practice with athletes and coaches.

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She concluded the workshop with a number of anecdotes from her work with National Governing Bodies and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

There was an excellent poster session with 15 submissions that had an international flavor and covered a diverse range of interesting subjects. The posters were displayed in a setting that encouraged delegates to mingle and discuss the implications of the work. Students and early-career researchers and practitioners shared their experiences over cups of coffee and lunch, with many of the conversations extending into the bar area following the afternoon sessions!

To conclude, Loughborough University provided a fantastic platform for the lively, educational, as well as informative keynotes, workshops, lectures, and posters that were presented during the two-day conference. The international nature of the conference supported the sharing of ideas across national boundaries and promoted the development of practical and research initiatives by engaging fellow students and young practitioners. We are certain that all of the delegates will be eagerly anticipating the next AASP international Regional Conference.