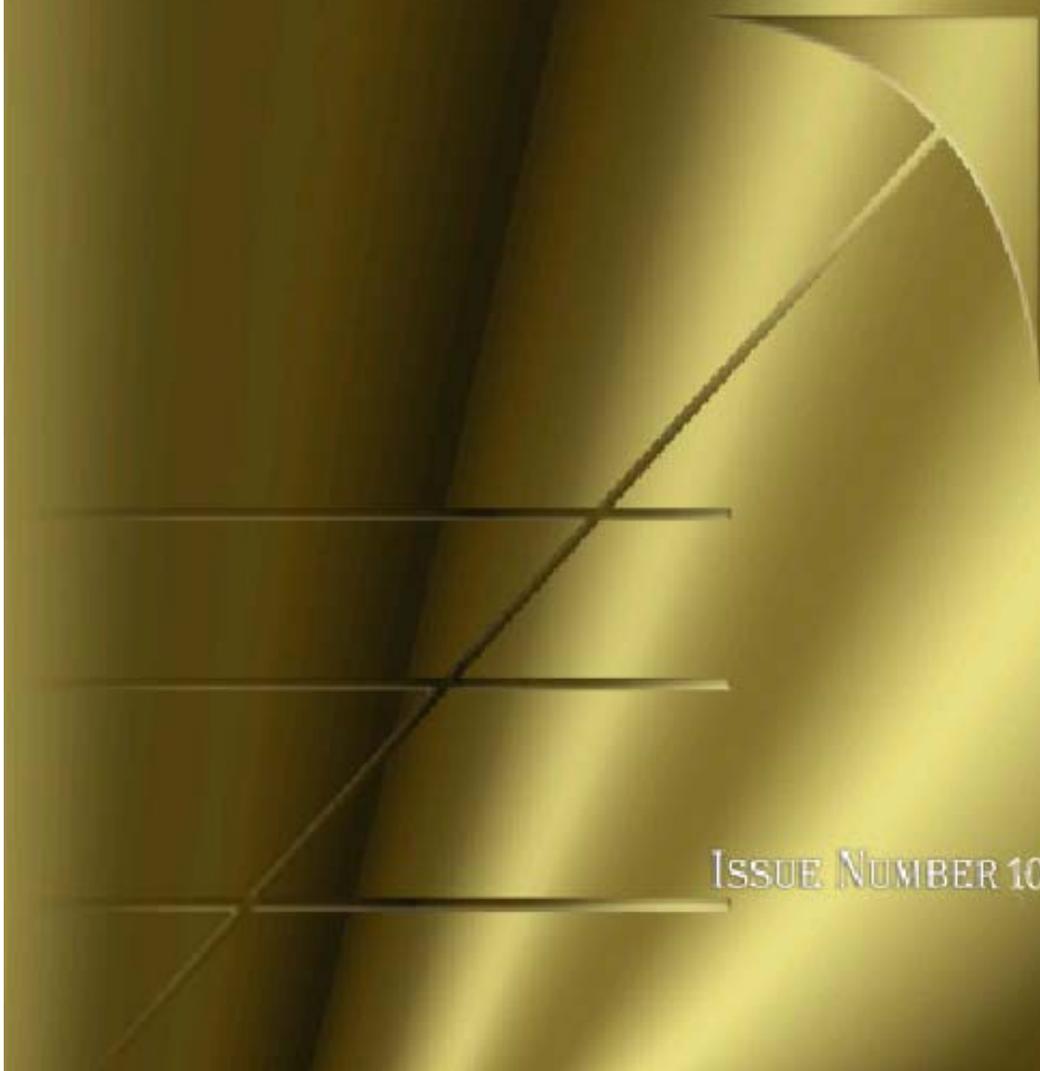


# THE JOURNAL OF EXCELLENCE



ISSUE NUMBER 10

## Table of Contents

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<b>Journal of Excellence Mission Statement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Articles</b>	
<b>Introduction to Journal 10</b> Terry Orlick	<b>4</b>
<b>The Meaning of Enjoyment for Recreational Golfers: Insights for Enhancing Sport Enjoyment</b> Emma J. Stodel	<b>6</b>
<b>Maintaining Perspective: Recommendations for Elite Performers</b> Matt Brown, Cal Botterill and Kathy Cairns	<b>35</b>
<b>Building on the Positives: Two Tennis Players' Experiences with Sport Psychology</b> Noah Gentner	<b>44</b>
<b>Bringing out the Best in the Whole Child in a Day Care Setting</b> Marie Wahlberg	<b>60</b>
<b>Comprehensive Sports Psychological Services for the Junior “A” Hockey Leagues in Canada</b> Derek Robinson and Kerry Bernes	<b>66</b>
<b>The Coach as an Asset in the Business Setting: No Brain No Gain</b> Po Lindvall	<b>80</b>
<b>What Mental Skills Ironman Triathletes Need and Want</b> Karine Grand'Maison	<b>86</b>
<b>The Magic Circle: A Mental Tool for Creating Quality Concentration</b> Emma J. Stodel	<b>95</b>
<b>Editorial Statement</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Instructions to Contributors</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>About ISMTE</b>	<b>99</b>

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## Mission of the Journal of Excellence

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**Terry Orlick, PhD** – Founder and Editor in Chief, the Journal of Excellence.

My mission with the Journal of Excellence is to fill some important gaps in our knowledge, actions and our lives, that are essential to the successful pursuit of personal and professional excellence. The Journal of Excellence is devoted to nurturing excellence in all human endeavors and all worthy pursuits. Our focus is centered on the pursuit of excellence in the working and performing parts of our lives, as well as our lives outside the workplace or performance domain. Our goal is to inspire excellence, provide a forum to discuss the positive pursuit of excellence, and share practical strategies and perspectives for pursuing meaningful high-level goals.

The Journal of Excellence is committed to nurturing a positive vision of education and training for better people, better performers and a better world.

There is much value in pursuing excellence, in education, sport, health, the performing arts, parenting, teaching, coaching, health care, political, government and business leadership, and every workplace. There is also much value in the pursuing excellence in quality living, quality relationships and the development of a higher level of humanity. This is the first and only journal, which has **EXCELLENCE** in multiple domains as its sole focus. The ultimate mission of the Journal of Excellence is to provide insights and strategies that will help us to collectively become more successful in the pursuit of performance excellence and more fulfilled through excellence in living.

My vision is a journal that is applied in orientation, relevant in content and wide ranging in application. We are committed to:

- 1) Learning from and sharing the experiences of exceptional performers and inspiring people.
- 2) Developing a more thorough understanding of the mental links to excellence.
- 3) Promoting excellence in performance and excellence in living.
- 4) Initiating positive real world change.

**If you have experiences, applied research or meaningful insights that are relevant to the pursuit of excellence in any worthy human endeavor, for any age group, we encourage you to submit your material to the Journal of Excellence to be considered for publication.**

## Introduction to the Journal 10

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We hope you gain from the wisdom of the athletes and performers who shared their experiences, and the authors who presented their wisdom in Issue # 10 of the Journal of Excellence. We have much to learn from performers in various fields, and from our colleagues who are meaningfully engaged in researching, coaching and consulting in the performance and life enhancement field. If you would like to share some of your applied work or experiences we encourage you to submit an article to the Journal of Excellence send it by email to [Journal@zoneofexcellence.com](mailto:Journal@zoneofexcellence.com).

After reading all the articles in the Journal of Excellence, Issue # 10, I was left with the strong feeling that all of these articles are inter-related. Each article is focused on a different population of people - recreational golfers, elite performers, children in a day care center, aspiring young athletes, Ironman triathletes and business executives. Yet the issues of joy, perspective, balance, nurturing the best in people at all ages, performance enhancement and positive coaching comes through in all these different contexts. This is one of the most inspiring part of working in this performance and people enhancement/mental training/applied sport and performance psychology field. There so much that we can do and so many ways in which we can contribute.

In the first article, **The Meaning of Enjoyment for Recreational Golfers: Insights for Enhancing Sport Enjoyment**, Emma Stodel shares one of the first ever mental training intervention studies which was designed specifically to enhance enjoyment in sport. Hopefully it will open the door and our minds to do more in an area that we often talk about without moving to action.

In the second article, **Maintaining Perspective: Recommendations for Elite Performers**, Matt Brown, Cal Botterill and Kathy Cairns. put their heads together and came up with some very meaningful and specific recommendations on how to help high performance athletes keep a sense of perspective in their sport and their lives. Their recommendations have relevance in virtually every high performance domain.

In the third article, **Building on the Positives: Two Tennis Players' Experiences with Sport Psychology**, Noah Gentner shares the personal experiences of two high performance tennis players who reflect on what was most important and most useful in the interactions with each of their mental training/performance enhancements consultants.

In the fourth article, **Bringing out the Best in the Whole Child in a Day Care Setting**, Marie Wahlberg shares an innovative life skills program which she implemented with pre-school children in a Swedish day care setting. The areas she focused on and the outcomes were very positive and hopeful.

In the fifth article, **Comprehensive Sports Psychological Services for the Junior “A” Hockey Leagues in Canada**, Derek Robinson & Kerry Bernes share some interesting thoughts on the need for both mental training programs and psychological services for teenage athletes who aspiring to play as professionals. They challenge us to think about developing and implementing a wide ranging education/intervention program for entire leagues of young developing athletes.

In the sixth article, **The Coach as an Asset in the Business Setting: No Brain No Gain**, Po Lindvall shares the results of a five year study on what makes successful companies successful. The main factor that both managers and employees, saw as paving their way to success was a coaching approach in leadership, including respect for the individual, “go and see” – be present, approach the person that the “situation” concerns – ask questions, talk with people not to them – have a dialogue, involve people in planning and decision making, equality – no prestige, cooperation, create resources, support individuals and teams in discussions, decision making and daily tasks, follow up, show interest and help.

In the seventh article, **What Mental Skills Ironman Triathletes Need and Want**, Karine Grand'Maison, a graduate student in sport psychology and Ironman triathletes, shares what a group of triathletes of varying abilities say they want and need in the way of sport psychology services. This was not part of her thesis work but rather was a first step in beginning consulting work with triathletes by finding about what they are doing now and what they feel would be most useful to them in the area of sport psychology.

In the eighth and final article, **Magic Circle: A Mental Tool for Creating Quality Concentration**, Emma Stodel shares a simple focusing approach which she designed for helping recreational golfers to improve their positive focus and enhance the joy of their game.

I would like to thank each of the authors for submitting their meaningful work to the Journal of Excellence. I would also like to thank Rémi Simard and Karine Grand'Maison for their excellent work in putting the Journal together and formatting the on-line Journal of Excellence.

Embrace the Simple Joys,

*Terry Orlick,*

Editor in Chief

## The Meaning of Enjoyment for Recreational Golfers: Insights for Enhancing Sport Enjoyment

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Emma J. Stodel, Canada

Emma J. Stodel, Ph.D., is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. Her research interests span from enjoyment in sport to online learning. As a result of her experiences in these two seemingly diverse areas, Dr. Stodel started to explore the possibilities of merging these two fields through the concept of online mental training. She has published theoretical papers in this area and hopes to translate her ideas into practice.

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### Abstract

Despite the important role enjoyment plays in prolonging sport participation and enhancing quality of life, it is a construct that remains understudied in the literature. This inquiry made steps towards remedying this shortcoming. The purpose of the inquiry was twofold. First, to obtain a rich description of the meaning of golf enjoyment for recreational golfers and, in the process, identify the factors that underlied and undermined their golf enjoyment. Second, to consider the implications of these findings for tailoring mental training to maximize opportunities for experiencing enjoyment in sport. Seven older recreational golfers were interviewed regarding their golf enjoyment. For each participant, a rich description of the meaning of golf enjoyment was presented. A cross-case analysis was then conducted to identify the shared sources of enjoyment as well as the factors that undermined enjoyment. Recommendations for enhancing enjoyment are presented.

Since World War II, the discipline of psychology has focused on pathology and how people endure under conditions of adversity (Jackson, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Attention to wellness, prevention, and positive emotions has been sorely lacking. To some extent, the field of sport psychology has mirrored this trend (Farres, 2002; Jackson). Abundant research on anxiety, stress, and related topics exists; yet in sport psychology there has also been attention paid to positive experiences, albeit to a lesser extent. Nonetheless, Jackson voiced concern that “the growing trend toward clinical approaches within sport psychology

may reinforce a focus on problems and difficulties rather than optimisation” (p. 136). In the field of psychology, Seligman is being instrumental in the push towards a positive psychology (Jackson; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi). With my work on enjoyment I hope to mirror this trend in the field of sport psychology.

The study of enjoyment is important as it promises to improve quality of life and also plays an important role in prolonging sport involvement (Ebbeck, Gibbons, & Loken-Dahle, 1995; Frederick, Morrison, & Manning, 1996; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002;

Weiss, Kimmel, & Smith, 2001). When one considers the psychological and physical benefits associated with sport and exercise, the importance of remaining active and making “sport for life” becomes apparent. In addition, enjoyment has been found to be a factor in peak performance (Cohn, 1991). Peak performance has been defined as “an episode of superior functioning” and is considered to be a state “more productive, creative, or efficient than typical functioning” (Cohn, p. 1). Given the influential role of enjoyment in sport it seems appropriate to divert effort and attention towards understanding how we can maximise opportunities for experiencing enjoyment in sport. In order to do this, we must first ask “What is it about sport that makes it enjoyable?” Indeed, a number of researchers (e.g., Bakker, De Koning, Van Ingen Schenau, & De Groot, 1993; Boyd & Yin, 1996; Brustad, 1988; Gould, Medbery, & Tuffey, 2001; Ommundsen & Vaglum, 1991; Pinel, Enoka, Hodge, & McKenzie, 1999; Scanlan, Carpenter, Lobel, & Simons, 1993; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989; Yoo & Kim, 2002) have addressed this question by examining individuals’ sources of sport enjoyment and determining which best predict enjoyment.

Research examining sources of enjoyment has indicated that youth sport participants and elite athletes from a variety of sports report similar sources of enjoyment (Bakker et al., 1993; Gould et al., 2001; Pinel et al., 1999; Scanlan et al., 1989, 1993; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985; Yoo & Kim, 2002). From the results of these studies it appears that athletes derive enjoyment from factors associated with the process of participating (e.g., expending effort, learning, mastery) as well as the outcome of participating (e.g., rewards, special events, affiliation). Scanlan et al. stated that these results are in contrast to the widely held idea they termed “The Pizza Parlour Phenomenon”. The Pizza Parlour

Phenomenon is “the notion that enjoyment is what occurs at the pizza parlour *after* the hard work and skill learning are over for the day, week, or season” (Scanlan et al., p. 282).

Orlick (1998) also investigated sources of enjoyment, or what he termed “highlight domains”. Orlick identified five highlight domains within which individuals may experience joy, namely human contact; nature; play, physical activity, and sport; personal growth or accomplishment; and sensual experiences. Orlick suggested that “life is full of extraordinary opportunities for embracing simple joys within ordinary experiences” (p. 4) and that it is necessary for individuals to look for highlights within all the domains in order to stay healthy, reduce stress, live joyfully, and add a sense of balance and perspective to life.

Another trend in enjoyment research has been to determine what factors best predict enjoyment. Common predictor variables that have been investigated are perceived competence (Boyd & Yin, 1996; Brustad, 1988; Ommundsen & Vaglum, 1991; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986), motivational/goal orientation (Boyd & Yin; Brustad), self-esteem (Brustad; Ommundsen & Vaglum), effort and mastery (Scanlan et al., 1993), ability (Brustad), significant others (e.g., parents, coaches) (Brustad; Ommundsen & Vaglum; Scanlan & Lewthwaite), positive team interactions and support (Scanlan et al.), learned helplessness in sport (Boyd & Yin), age (Scanlan & Lewthwaite), and years of participation in sport (Boyd & Yin).

Of the studies reviewed that investigated the predictors of enjoyment, over two-thirds found perceived competence to be a predictor of sport enjoyment (see Table 1). Unfortunately, only a handful of studies (Ashford, Biddle, & Goudas, 1993; Boyd &

Yin, 1996; Brustad, 1988; Ommundsen & Vaglum, 1991) investigated the individual contribution each of the predictor variables made to explaining sport enjoyment variance. However, for two of these studies (Boyd & Yin; Ommundsen & Vaglum) perceived competence was found to be the single most important predictor of sport enjoyment. Moreover, high positive correlations between enjoyment and perceived competence have been found for both adults and children (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001; Frederick et al., 1996; Spray, 2000; Williams & Gill, 1995). In conclusion, it appears that perceived competence plays an important role in the onset of enjoyment for both adults and children.

These findings propound that by strengthening individuals' perceptions of their competence, increased enjoyment may ensue. As individuals' goal involvement, that is whether they are task- or ego-involved, is predicted to determine how they assess their competence (Nicholls, 1984, 1989, 1992), a consideration of achievement goal theory is warranted within the study of enjoyment. According to Nicholls' achievement goal theory, individuals who are task-involved are predicted to use self-referenced judgments of competence. For these individuals success is defined, and perceived competence strengthened, by improvement, learning, and task mastery, and they set their goals accordingly. Conversely, ego-involved individuals are predicted to use other-referenced judgments of competence. These individuals consider themselves successful, and therefore strengthen their perceptions of competence, when they demonstrate superior ability compared to others. However, if they do not win (as defined by objective outcome) in competitive situations, and are therefore unable to demonstrate superior ability, their perceived competence will be undermined (Nicholls).

Within this framework, it is apparent that individuals' goal involvement and the goals they set will play a role in strengthening or undermining their perceived competence. Based on implications from previous research, goal involvement is therefore likely to have an effect on enjoyment levels. Indeed, empirical research bears this prediction out. Research has revealed the existence of strong positive relationships between task involvement and positive affect, such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and intrinsic interest, and either no relationship or a negative relationship between ego involvement and positive affect (Boyd & Yin, 1996; Duda, Chi, Newton, Walling, & Catley, 1995; Duda, Fox, Biddle, & Armstrong, 1992; Gano-Overway, 2001; Goudas, Biddle, & Fox, 1994; Goudas, Biddle, Fox, & Underwood, 1995; Kohl, 2002; Roberts, Treasure, & Kavussanu, 1996; Vlachopoulos, Biddle, & Fox, 1996; Williams & Gill, 1995). In addition, negative affect such as anxiety, tension, pressure, and boredom has been found to be positively correlated with ego involvement and negatively correlated with task involvement (Duda et al., 1992, 1995; Hall & Kerr, 1997). However, Vlachopoulos et al. found that for ego-involved individuals, the higher their perceptions of competence, the more likely they were to experience positive affect.

Although there appears to be substantial support for the existence of a link between task involvement and enjoyment, there does not appear to be any research that has investigated whether enjoyment can be increased by strengthening task involvement. In fact, there are very few writings in the literature indicating how practitioners can help athletes increase enjoyment. Those that do exist stem from the work of Orlick and Pinel and are summarised below.

Orlick and colleagues (Orlick, 1996, 1998; St. Denis & Orlick, 1996) increased children's enjoyment by facilitating the development of positive perspectives through highlight training. Highlight training involves encouraging individuals to identify, record, and discuss their daily highlights (Orlick, 1996, 1998). Orlick (1996) described a highlight as "any simple pleasure, little treasure, joy, lift, positive feeling, meaningful experience, magic moment, or anything that has lifted the quality of the day for that person" (p. 18). Research has indicated that when individuals spend time thinking about and recording their highlights, they experience more enjoyment and have more positive self-perceptions (Orlick, 1998; St. Denis & Orlick). Enjoyment profiling (Pinel, 1999) is a similar technique that has been used as a means of increasing enjoyment with both youth and professional athletes (Pinel; Pinel et al., 1999). Although there is no empirical evidence to suggest the effectiveness of enjoyment profiling in enhancing enjoyment, its intuitive appeal is apparent. Enjoyment profiling is based on the concept of performance profiling (Butler & Hardy, 1992). In the first step of enjoyment profiling individuals brainstorm for sources of enjoyment in their sport. Next, they choose the sources that are most important to them and rate them as to their importance on a scale of 1-10. Of these important sources of enjoyment, individuals identify those that are under their control. In the last stages of the enjoyment profiling process, individuals choose two important sources of enjoyment that are under their control and identify specific strategies that will help them focus on these sources of enjoyment while they are participating in their sport. Similarly, other research-practitioners (e.g., Gould et al., 2001) have advocated identifying athletes' sources of enjoyment so coaches can build them into their coaching practices.

Despite the fact that many mental training practitioners (e.g., Anderson, Miles, Mahoney, & Robinson, 2002; Bull, 1991; Cox, 2002) have espoused that the aim of mental training is to enhance enjoyment (as well as performance), the role mental training could play in increasing enjoyment has received minimal attention in the literature and its effectiveness in this regard has never been examined. More research in this area is desperately needed. Specifically, we need to further our understanding of how mental training can be used to enhance enjoyment. Consequently, the purpose of this inquiry was twofold. First, to expand the youth and elite athlete-focused knowledge base of what makes sport enjoyable to include older recreational athletes by obtaining rich descriptions of the meaning of golf enjoyment for older recreational golfers. Second, to consider the implications of these findings for tailoring mental training to maximise the opportunities for experiencing enjoyment in sport.

The decision to focus this inquiry on recreational golfers arose in part because I was seeing so many disgruntled players in the clubhouse after a poor round of golf. A pursuit they engaged in for fun and recreation seemed to have incredible potential to immerse them into a bad mood and elicit relatively strong feelings of anger and frustration. For some, this negative affect endured throughout the day and many questioned why they persisted playing.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this inquiry was to identify the factors that underlied and undermined golf enjoyment for recreational golfers and provide practical suggestions for enhancing enjoyment based on these findings. The following research questions guided the inquiry:

1. What is the meaning of golf enjoyment for recreational golfers?
2. How can enjoyment be enhanced?

## Participants

Participants were seven recreational golfers (4 males, 3 females) who played golf at least twice a week on a regular basis. They were retired expatriates who spent their winters at La Manga Club, a resort on the southeast coast of Spain that boasts three golf courses. The participants varied in the number of years they had been playing golf (2-30 years), ability (handicap 19-36), and time spent practising (0-2 hours per week). All the participants were over the age of 45, the oldest was 73 (see Table 1). Pseudonyms were used throughout the report to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

## Procedure

This inquiry was qualitative in nature and conducted from a constructivist perspective. Each participant engaged in an in-depth semi-structured interview; the purpose of which was to develop an understanding of the meaning of golf enjoyment for each of the participants. The interviews were guided by an interview schedule and participants were asked to clarify and expand on responses that were unclear or ambiguous. Throughout the interviews I exercised caution so as not to lead the participants towards predetermined conclusions. When I felt as if all the questions had been fully answered and the participants had nothing more to add, the interviews were terminated. The interviews were audio-taped with the participants' permission and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were returned to the participants who were asked to read and amend them if they felt it would clarify or better represent their answers. The partici-

pants were also invited to expand their responses to any of the questions.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by Merriam (1998) and Bogdan and Biklen (1998). I read and reread the first interview transcript and wrote notes, comments, and observations in the margin with regards to interesting data that was relevant to developing an understanding of the meaning of golf enjoyment for that participant. While reading the data I began to develop a preliminary list of emergent categories into which I grouped the notes and comments. These categories were guided by the purpose of the inquiry, my knowledge and orientation, and the meanings made explicit by the participants (Merriam). The categories were constructed through the constant comparative method. A list of these categories was compiled and attached to the data. I then analysed the second interview. As I read the second transcript I kept the previously constructed list of categories in mind as I made notes, comments, and observations in the margin. The notes, comments, and observations from the second data set were then grouped into categories and a list of the categories compiled. The two lists were then compared and merged to create a master list. This process was repeated until all the data had been analysed.

The categories were then given names. Category names emerged from the participants, the literature, and/or my knowledge. Once I was satisfied with the categories, the data were assigned to the categories. Taking a clean copy of the data, I fractured the data into meaning units and assigned them to the relevant categories by writing the category code in the margin. Using Microsoft Word, I then created separate files for each category for each participant and cut and pasted the meaning units into the relevant category

thereby creating a file containing all the data for that category. For each participant I then linked the categories together to provide a rich description of his/her meaning of golf enjoyment. Direct quotations were used throughout the report in order to preserve the voice of the participants. A cross-case analysis was then conducted to identify the commonalities across participants. Based on this cross-case analysis, recommendations for how mental training may be used to enhance enjoyment were presented.

## Findings

### *Tom*

Tom portrayed his experience of enjoyment as “a feeling of well being, a good glow all over, inside”. Many sources of his golf enjoyment were related to his performance. He enjoyed playing well, the challenge of playing well consistently, and recognizing the improvements he made. However, his golf enjoyment also stemmed from factors relating to the environment, exercise, the social aspects of golf, and betting. Slow play, poor performance, and unfavourable environmental conditions diminished his enjoyment. These themes will be elaborated in the remainder of this section.

Simply put, Tom enjoyed playing well. He stated, “To me, enjoyment in golf is hitting a good shot”. It did not matter what type of shot it was – a tee shot, a fairway shot, a chip, or a putt – but he attested there “is a tremendous lot of satisfaction [when you] do the occasional perfect shot”. Tom described the satisfaction he felt when he played well: “You come off after having had a good score and [feel] ‘There’s life in the old dog yet. I can still do it. I’m not too old’. And that’s a very satisfied feeling. It motivates you”.

Tom kept a record of his golf scores and calculated his average score on each golf

course in La Manga. At the end of each year he compared the averages to those from the previous year: “If the scores are lower, or the average Stableford points are higher, then that’s very satisfying and I get a lot of enjoyment because I know, very slightly, I’m improving”. In addition, Tom revealed:

I’ve got a list of just about every golf course I’ve ever played on and the best score I ever achieved on that course... If I beat it, do better, then I’ll change it. That’s just a little bit of personal pleasure I get out of doing these things and try and make them better.

The challenge to hit the “perfect shot” or make an important putt also served to fuel Tom’s golf enjoyment. Indeed, the inherently challenging nature of golf was critical to Tom’s enjoyment of the game:

Most of us are capable of doing the perfect drive, the perfect putt, the great chip – chip it in the hole – and having done it, we know we can do it. Physically and mentally we’re capable of doing it but the problem is we can’t do it as often as the experts and this is why you have this challenge... I think what I’m saying is probably true of most golfers, they’re determined to do these perfect shots more often. It certainly is [true] for me, [I enjoy] the challenge.

Just as playing well served to increase Tom’s golf enjoyment, playing badly undermined it. Playing badly caused Tom to get angry and frustrated, especially if a poor shot was due to his carelessness or not taking enough time to prepare for the shot and compose himself.

Besides performance related sources of enjoyment Tom enjoyed the exercise inherent in golf and being outside in the fresh air. In

fact, regardless of whether he was playing golf or not, Tom enjoyed walking: “I think it’s very good for a person, especially someone my age, to get that fresh air and have exercise”. Tom particularly liked playing golf on a nice sunny day when it is “not too hot”, “not freezing cold”, and “not raining”.

Although Tom enjoyed playing golf in good company with friends, golf was not a social event for him. He noted, “I don’t like to talk a lot on the golf course. I like to think about the game”. Nonetheless, the occasional sidebet with his playing partners added to his enjoyment and made the game more interesting for him.

Besides playing badly and playing in bad weather, slow play and course maintenance were two factors that negatively impacted Tom’s golf enjoyment. Tom did not enjoy playing on temporary tees or temporary greens. He explained, “[With] temporary greens... it’s like putting over a ploughed field... You could hit a perfectly good putt and two inches from the hole it could turn at right angles. That sort of thing, it’s not golf”.

Neither did Tom like slow play. He described himself as an impatient golfer and became irritated and annoyed if he played with slow players or the flight in front was slow and held him up. Because slow play had a tendency to affect his performance it was a double blow for him with regards to his golf enjoyment.

### ***Nancy***

Nancy’s golf enjoyment stemmed from a variety of sources. The main factors that underlied her golf enjoyment were the environment, exercise, performance, sensual experiences, and feelings of achievement. Conversely, playing poorly and/or in bad weather conditions, other players’ actions on

the course, slow play, and fatigue detracted from Nancy’s golf enjoyment.

The scenery and views afforded through playing golf were central to Nancy’s enjoyment of the game: “I enjoy the West Course particularly here because I enjoy the scenery of golf. The views are spectacular wherever you play... The senses are alert and appreciating the natural wonders of life”. Moreover, Nancy enjoyed golf the most when the course was “very lush and very green”.

Another critical environmental factor that affected Nancy’s enjoyment was the weather. She noted, “There would be no way that I would go out [and play golf] in the rain and cold and sleet and snow. That would be of no fun to me whatsoever. So, being here [in southern Spain] is wonderful”. Indeed, Nancy recounted a time when she pulled out of a competition because it was “cold and windy and awful”.

Nancy also enjoyed the exercise afforded through playing golf as it provided her with “physical well being and [a] sense of achievement”. The sense of achievement resultant from playing well was also a source of her golf enjoyment, whether it was hitting a good shot: “I enjoy hitting a good ball. There’s nothing like it. It really is a tremendous sense of achievement”; or achieving a good score overall:

I’m not out there to win prizes. I’m out there for me, to have a good time... And if I happen to win something one day, which I did, I mean, that was such a fantastic achievement... I mean, that was just wonderful... It wasn’t the winning, it was achieving my first ever 36 points.

Performance emerged repeatedly as an underlying factor of enjoyment for Nancy. Sometimes the joy came from hitting a su-

perb shot, other times it resulted from a feeling of having played well in general. Her enjoyment of hitting a good shot was further heightened when her senses were also stimulated: “I enjoy seeing that little ball going into the hole and the nice ‘clunk’. I enjoy hearing the correct ‘clunk’ or ‘ting’ when I hit a good shot”. Indeed, it transpired that performance played a pivotal role in Nancy’s golf enjoyment and involvement in golf: “I suppose if I’m playing well, it’s wonderful and I can’t wait to get out there again. And if I’m not playing well, my attitude is ‘Leave it alone. Forget about it’”. Nevertheless, even when Nancy was not playing well she noted, “I still quite enjoy it because I enjoy the walk and the views”.

The social aspects of golf were not a great allure to Nancy. Instead, she enjoyed playing alone:

I love playing golf on my own... You can talk to yourself. I can play at my own pace. I don’t have to listen to idle chatter and I’m confident that I’m not holding up the players behind,... I like to get on with it. In fact, I find it disruptive if people want to chat all the way round the course and I get a bit bored [with] people telling me where they had dinner last night, who they went out with. I’m not interested. I’m there to play golf. I want to hit the ball and get on with it.

For sure, slow play irritated Nancy and detracted from her golf enjoyment as it caused her to “feel under pressure” and “uptight”. Furthermore, players who do not take care of the course, by replacing divots and repairing pitch marks for example, nor abide by the rules of golf, also aggravated her.

### **Sam**

Without a doubt, Sam derived great pleasure from playing golf. Moreover, he enjoyed

having an interest in golf. When Sam was growing up in Wales sports outside rugby had no appeal to him, something that changed since he discovered golf:

Sport really in Wales consisted of rugby football and rugby football!... So all the other things that quite a lot of my friends used to play, such as tennis or whatever, never really interested me. I rather enjoy being interested in golf; and I am interested in it, it’s nothing that I have to force myself into being interested in. It’s a pastime that I thoroughly enjoy.

Indeed, Sam pronounced, “I very rarely come off the course very depressed. I do enjoy almost every round”. However, while we were talking about the meaning of enjoyment within the context of golf Sam commented, “I find it very difficult to be quite clear as to why or what constitutes enjoyment and what doesn’t”. Despite this, he was able to articulate the factors that both underlied and undermined his golf enjoyment, many of which appeared to be related to physical comforts. Sam portrayed how these factors impacted his enjoyment of the game: “I think, really, I’m very much a hedonist. I think it’s the physical things, it really is. If I’m wet, if I’m miserable, if I’m too cold, if it’s too early for me – I’m not enjoying myself”.

Sam derived enjoyment from the scenery on the golf course: “From an enjoyment point of view I enjoy dramatic courses”; and being outdoors: “One of the things that I enjoy is the very basic business of being outside in the open air for four-and-a-half or five hours”. Sam also enjoyed the walk and carrying his golf bag rather than using a trolley.

Although Sam highlighted he did not play golf for social reasons, he did derive enjoyment from the social aspects of golf; for

example, the opportunity to meet new people:

It's the social aspect of meeting people with a very different mind-set or approach to my own. Because an awful lot of them, very obviously, are sport oriented and I never really was... And obviously there are loads of different people here [at La Manga], different personalities, different backgrounds, different interests.

Playing in good company was another crucial element in Sam's golf enjoyment. Not only did he "enjoy the company" of his playing partners, but "good company" defined the meaning of enjoyment within the context of golf for Sam. He also enjoyed playing with his family, especially his wife. He described why he thought this was the case:

[Golf] is something that my wife and I do together. I find that enjoyable... It isn't the companionship aspect, it's more that it's something that we have not done before,... something we've only been doing for the last two years. That in itself is very enjoyable. [Also], I don't feel very competitive towards my wife.

Playing well was a further source of Sam's golf enjoyment. When he plays a good shot he related: "I don't quite jump up and down, but mentally I do". This feeling was possibly exaggerated when Sam played consistently well over a few holes. Sam indicated that, for him, the meaning of enjoyment is "playing two or three holes consistently". He went on to describe an occasion where he was really delighted with his play:

We were playing the North Course and the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and I had a good-ish drive and an absolutely excellent second shot.

So I had two good shots one after the other. I was very happy with that... And if truth be told, as I was walking over the bridge there were some people that I knew who had seen the shot. So I was pleased with that as well, to be honest.

Sam had a benign tremor that caused him to shake, especially his hands. It appeared that the satisfaction Sam felt when he played well was particularly heightened because of the additional challenge his tremor presented. Indeed, the inherent challenge of golf was integral to Sam's golf enjoyment:

I enjoy the sport aspect of the hitting of the stationary ball. I mean, I know from other games like billiards and snooker how difficult that is. There's a greater ease, it seems to me, in hitting a moving ball than a stationary ball... I do find [it] difficult [to hit a stationary ball], and it is the challenge I suppose.

Although Sam highlighted that part of his golf enjoyment came from the challenge associated with "the sport aspect of the hitting of the stationary ball", it was not so much the "physical whacking" of the ball he enjoyed as what happened to the ball after it had been struck that he found enjoyable:

For me it has to be the end product, it's the way the ball goes. I do find it aesthetically a very pleasing sight when the ball rises after a certain trajectory and goes up in the air and then seems to hang in the air forever and then comes down.

It was apparent that Sam enjoyed golf for a number of reasons. However, certain things detracted from his enjoyment. One of these factors was poor performance. Sam tended to become resigned and angry when he was not playing well, which made golf less enjoyable for him. Nor did he enjoy having to

play on wet and cold days. The only other aspect of golf that lessened Sam's enjoyment was certain behaviours of his playing partners:

There are occasions when you're playing with people who... talk an awful lot about what they have to do and what they're not going to do and that does annoy me. That does irritate me, analysing every shot. [It's] that their ambitions, or their efforts to improve their game, are impinging on me.

Other players' comments towards his game also sometimes impacted Sam's enjoyment levels. He reported getting annoyed when others said things like, "That was almost a good shot' . . . Not because people are being patronising, but they're being too kind and that I don't think is too enjoyable".

### *Lee*

Lee enjoyed golf for a number of diverse reasons. He described golf as a "mélange of so many attractions", explaining:

It's a total package of things that we derive pleasure from. Some physical, some mental, some emotional, [and some] spiritual. It's because golf is on so many different levels like that, that makes it special... [Golf is] mentally, physically, [and] emotionally so demanding and satisfying.

Indeed, these challenges were quite central to Lee's enjoyment of the game:

I think we enjoy being challenged as a basic instinct,... I think we all like to be tested. We all like to be doing something stimulating and interesting... [and golf is] very, very challenging... I think, really, at any level, at any age, we all are convinced we can improve our personal

performance and the anticipation of doing that is quite central to my motivation for playing [golf].

By viewing golf as a positive challenge, Lee enjoyed the competitive and demanding aspects of the sport. The sense of achievement that is felt when the challenge has been met and one performs well, proved to be a great source of enjoyment for Lee:

Say you do well on a difficult hole, you tend to remember that. And some clubs, as you well know, are more difficult to play with than others; one tends to remember those, when you've done particularly well... Talking about it like this, I mean, it sounds a bit dumb, but these are the kinds of thing that make one feel, 'That was all rather good'. There's nothing on a more intellectual or philosophical level.

Evidently, playing well was a significant source of enjoyment for Lee and he summarised this quite succinctly: "If I've done well I feel good. If I've done badly I don't feel good".

Lee's enjoyment of golf was not limited to sources related to his performance. As highlighted above, Lee derived enjoyment from many different aspects of golf, one of which related to the social component. Lee enjoyed meeting interesting people and playing in good company. A sub-theme of the social sources of enjoyment that emerged for Lee was playing with family:

The most enjoyable golf I've played is when we had our two sons here... The older one and I went and played 9 holes together and that was brilliant... It was a joy to watch him as his game has improved so much. When you play with the

family that's wonderful, to play with your own kids.

Although Lee delighted in describing this round with his son, he hastened to point out that the enjoyment of playing with his family did not always extend to playing with his wife. He revealed, "We don't find that conducive to good marital relations".

The physical activity involved in golf emerged as another source of enjoyment for Lee: "The fact that this is also a physical thing adds to the appeal;... it is good to do something physical. When I was your age, we expected people my age now to be dead".

In sum, when asked to describe the ideal conditions in which to play golf Lee responded:

Playing with people who are roughly contemporaries, but better than I am because we all get charged up when playing with better players;... on a pleasant day; probably here [in La Manga]; no pressure, nobody in front holding us up, nobody behind breathing down our necks; and playing well, consistently at all times, beating the others and coming in with 40 points.

The only unenjoyable aspect of golf that Lee identified was playing badly. However, it was more than the simple act of hitting a bad shot that detracted from Lee's enjoyment of the game:

At the age that I am we all accomplish certain things in our lives. We get used to winning and being good at stuff that we take on board. It's been totally frustrating to be playing golf and not playing well. You think 'Oh God,... am I over the hill? How much time do I have left

to get better at this?' So it does get quite personal.

### *Laura*

A number of different factors underlied Laura's golf enjoyment, yet it was environmental factors and the social aspects of golf that emerged as the more dominant themes. Laura could be described as a "people person". She repeatedly commented on how much she "enjoy[s] being in the company of other people" when she is playing golf and she also stressed the importance of being "able to have a laugh and a giggle" with the people she is playing with. Indeed, the opportunity afforded her through golf to meet new people was an underlying component of her golf enjoyment. She revealed, "Being by myself,... it's a big benefit to be here [in La Manga] and be able to join in a game of golf in the day time and the social aspects in the evening".

However, Laura's golf enjoyment was grounded in more than simply being in the company of others. Laura described how her golf enjoyment could be heightened or diminished depending on who her playing partners were:

You must get on with people. If you have any sort of... bad feeling;... when you don't like somebody and you think, 'Oh, they're not a nice person',... it's very difficult to enjoy the game. I want to be comfortable with the people [I am playing with]... I had a social round, yesterday with friends,... nice people, and that makes a good round of golf.

Aside from the enjoyment the social aspects of golf offered Laura, being outdoors, experiencing the scenery, and playing in good weather were also key factors underlying Laura's enjoyment of golf. Laura left no doubt about her love for the outdoors:

If I can be outdoors, I'm outdoors... I like to be in lovely surroundings [and] that's what you get when you play golf generally... I enjoy the nature, the countryside. When I'm on the West Course sometimes I feel like that's being in heaven, because there are times... when there are not many people and you think you have your own private golf course. Then automatically, when you feel that way, everything falls into place – you play well, you get physical exercise.

Without a doubt, “having gentle exercise while you go round, to keep well” added to the meaning of Laura's golf enjoyment.

Playing well also contributed to Laura's golf enjoyment. Indeed, she encapsulated the meaning of enjoyment simply as “being able to play well”. She went on to describe how she experienced this enjoyment:

Well, you have a good shot – maybe in the long game, in the short game, or you have a super putt, or a super chip – and you just have got like a light happy feeling coming inside yourself... You think ‘Yippee! Brilliant! I've done something! Why can't I do it all the time?’

Not only did Laura's own good performance add to her enjoyment of the game, but Laura also iterated that she found it “very enjoyable seeing somebody else playing well”. Despite the enjoyment Laura obviously derived from golf, she found it difficult to portray the depth of her golf enjoyment: “I can't say. I don't know how to describe it... I would give it an 8 out of 10”.

Aside from instances when Laura did not feel comfortable with her playing partners, she was unable to identify any factors that undermined her golfing enjoyment. She noted, “There are none for me really, as long

as I'm playing reasonably and it's not too distracting with outside noises, I enjoy the game”. However, lack of organization on the first tee prior to the start of the game was a source of aggravation for her:

It's frustrating when people don't turn up for their tee times... [If] you have to wait... before you tee off I find that very frustrating, especially when it's always going back and forwards. It's not like [the marshals say,] ‘Oh, Laura, you are playing now with these people’,... they change their minds.

### *Phil*

Phil struggled to define the concept of enjoyment to his satisfaction. He philosophised over the meaning and experience of enjoyment and what he believed determined whether something was enjoyable. He arrived at what seemed to be the most satisfactory explanation for him through considering the concept of friendship:

I struggled to define friendship the other day. The Americans use the term very freely, they don't really mean friendship by my yardstick. But even I found it hard to define, anymore than I could define enjoyment really. To me it's thinking about friends, however distant, and it's a sort of inward smile, if you like. Reflecting about them you get some warmth of an inward smile. With enjoyment it's not so different... But what is that that makes you say ‘I enjoyed that’? It's almost incapable of definition;... I'm not sure I can define it, the feeling of enjoyment.

Nonetheless, Phil was able to articulate the factors that underlied and undermined his golf enjoyment.

Phil's golf enjoyment was strongly related to his performance. Specifically, Phil derived pleasure and satisfaction from hitting the ball a long way. Reflecting on why he found this pleasurable he noted, "I think partly because it's not that frequent that it becomes ordinary. It's something exceptional. Something rather nice that you have done that comes off. Something rather good". Another performance related source of golf enjoyment for Phil was hitting a good shot where "it gets almost precisely where you aimed for and intended it to be, and that's not easy. And then you get a succession of those and it adds to your enjoyment". Phil's enjoyment was further heightened with appreciation for how difficult the game of golf is. Indeed, feelings of achievement were an important source of Phil's golf enjoyment:

Enjoyment is that I have done things that I have wanted to do as well as I would like them to be done. When it was climbing it was sort of 'conquering', [whether it was a] fear of heights or maybe feeling faint, or a particular rock face... [I derive enjoyment from achieving] something that I didn't think I could do or trying something that I thought was difficult. There was one difficult situation where on the North [Course] I was in the barranca<sup>1</sup> with some stones and to get to the green I had to get a lot of lift as there were trees in the way. And it was one of the rare things where everything went absolutely right. I missed the stones, I shot the ball high from in the barranca, out the barranca, over the trees, and it landed by the pin.

Recognition of his improvement and the learning experience in golf also served to enhance Phil's golfing enjoyment, especially if it was something that he consciously worked towards improving:

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<sup>1</sup> *Barranca* is the Spanish term for ravine

I think there is some satisfaction that's more worked for, where with some effort results are better... If I concentrate on [one thing, and] there's improvement in one area by a little more diligence and careful thought then that's nice too. I think, 'Ah, I did that, you know two weeks ago I was nowhere near'.

Although task oriented, and focused on his own performance, winning in a competitive situation amplified Phil's enjoyment. He remarked, "If you happen to be winning as well then that's an extra, that's a nice thing". When playing in a team event Phil's enjoyment was heightened when he was able to make a contribution to his team:

If it's a team thing, like a Thursday [Owners' Scramble, and] I've made a good contribution to the team effort then that matters too... Some Thursdays, when we're in a bit of difficulty, I can sometimes produce something out of the hat, which helps... That's a plus, in nice company, when I can make a contribution.

Besides performance related factors, Phil also derived his golfing enjoyment from being outside, the physical activity associated with walking round the course, and the social aspects of the game. Throughout his life, Phil had always enjoyed being outdoors. Although he could not pinpoint what is was about the outdoors he enjoyed so much, he reported:

I certainly get more pleasure from outdoor life than being indoors... I've [always] been an outdoorsman, whether it's been bird watching or sailing or being on the sports field. I'm not sure why. All I know is that is what I've wanted to do – spend time on farms or game reserves in Africa. Maybe there's much more going

on there than indoors [where] we have created much of the structures [and] it's our own input and not so much input from other naturally occurring things. There is a lot of interest there in the big wide world; we can find something new all the time.

Besides providing Phil with the opportunity to be outdoors, golf also provided him with “an excuse for a good walk”. He explained:

I can't just go and exercise normally without having some motive: hitting a silly little ball around or getting to the top of that hill to see some views I haven't explored before... [Golf] provides a motive, however trivial... It gives some sort of rationale for being out walking. Otherwise you'd be walking back and forth and you'd start to think how daft this is. But if you take the ball with you it's less crazy!

Phil attested, “Playing with people you enjoy being with is also significant [to golfing enjoyment]”. Phil and his wife derived a lot of enjoyment from playing with each other and he enjoyed playing in good company in general. Furthermore, when his playing partners played well, especially if they were friends or regular competitors, it added to his golfing enjoyment.

Although Phil derived his golfing enjoyment from a number of different sources, two factors undermined his enjoyment: poor performance and slow play. He noted, “I'm not a perfectionist, I settled for 98% a long time ago, but I think it's when [my performance] falls short of what I'm capable of then it's frustrating, irritating, and not very satisfying”. Phil expanded:

If the shots are going well I'm pretty happy walking round [the course]. If I

have a bad shot I can usually put that by, [but] if I get a second bad shot or a third bad shot then I start to think about that, which I shouldn't. I should put it aside and start afresh. But it's part of me. I don't enjoy it. I feel frustrated [and] I feel I'm being rather stupid and I don't like being stupid. So that's part of it and that detracts from the enjoyment.

Playing badly had an overt effect on Phil's demeanour; a change his wife recognized even when she was not playing in the same group as him.

Slow play was another source of frustration for Phil. Not only did he not enjoy having to wait with nothing to do between shots, but the hold-ups also broke his rhythm, which had a negative impact on his performance:

I need involvement and active sport... There are times on the West [course] when you can be hanging around the tee for 20 minutes. So having got mobile and the stroke has become reasonably fluid, you start from scratch again,... [which] is not the way I'm going to play the best golf.

### *Annika*

Annika derived her golf enjoyment from a number of diverse sources, including opportunities for personal development, social factors, exercise, the environment, the privilege of being able to play golf, care for personal appearance, and her performance.

Golf was more than just a physical sport for Annika. In the three to five months preceding the interview she had come to value the more intellectual and stimulating aspects of the game. Annika viewed golf as an activity with multiple dimensions and something “deeper” than merely hitting a ball around a course. As such, she saw golf as a vehicle

for personal development and growth. Certainly it was her appreciation of these different levels that fuelled her golf enjoyment: “People should see in golf not only the sporting aspects, but also the mental dimensions. Working both body and muscles as well as mental and meditative goals will give you more fulfilment for the time you spend in golf”. In fact, given her lifelong concern for personal growth and her desire to “try to give the situations in life depth, [whether] it be a social engagement or to improve personal discipline etc”, it is not surprising that she transferred this attitude to her golf game. Indeed, part of her enjoyment of golf came from the personal responsibility she felt for her self-development and her quest to expand her knowledge:

[The enjoyment comes from] the responsibility to bring me on a higher level of thinking and feeling and doing things, not only to do them without any respect. That I think is important. You can combine [golf] with a lot of feelings, with aesthetic things. You can combine it with spirituality. There are such a lot of things and I know only so much. There may be a lot more and it’s very interesting to bring it into discussion... I am very interested... in people who are thinking like this.

Indeed, Annika professed that this social discourse and the opportunities that arise in golf “to take part in the life of another person and in the way these men or women... play, make you more rich”. In fact, she likened the experience to reading books by different authors.

A second aspect of golf that Annika enjoyed was that it is a game that provokes “discussion with yourself” and in which no one can be blamed save yourself. Annika explained:

You have discussion with yourself because golf is not a sport where you can say, ‘My partner, he did not hit the ball in this way. He did everything wrong. He was not on my level’. With golf, if you make a mistake, if you miss a point, or something else, it’s you, only you, and that’s very interesting. Because not every day’s the same, your condition and your co-ordination are different. If the moon is full it’s another day. All these influences.

Due to the nature of golf there are plenty of opportunities to set goals; a characteristic that greatly appealed to Annika as it allowed her to plan and monitor her personal development:

[Goals provide] a clear perspective in an area of your life within which you can encourage yourself every day or every week, however you want it, to go [forward]. And you have an interest which gives you the feeling that you can work on it and you can create something with you... Besides, it’s not only fun, it’s also a thing you have to do; you should always work on your personal development.

The social aspects of golf also made an important contribution to Annika’s golf enjoyment. Being in contact with other people was central to her enjoyment. She attested, “It’s nice to have people around you, it gives you also good feelings [when you’re] close to friends”. Meeting new people and developing friendships were also vital elements of enjoyable golf for Annika:

The social thing is very important, I didn’t believe it before, but in golf you are always with people – acquaintances, friends, and people you don’t know, but you always find a way to join them.

That, for me, is very important because I'm very interested in contact... I think also you can find friendship, which, for me, is very important.

Furthermore, social contact with individuals from diverse countries provided Annika the opportunity to speak different languages thereby further developing her language skills and contributing to her personal development.

Perhaps related to the importance Annika placed on the social aspects of golf, it became apparent that interaction with her playing partners during the round was critical to her golfing enjoyment:

You should be sure that the other players are interested in your game as well as in their own. That's important. That's a social and psychological point... I'm not interested to play with people who are only concerned with their thing and their ball and their movement and they don't react to whatever you say... For me, the atmosphere between people is one of the main things in my life.

Annika's golfing enjoyment was heightened when her playing partners were able to create a relaxed, positive, and warm friendly atmosphere in the flight and provide encouragement.

Besides enjoying the physical activity inherent in golf, Annika also enjoyed the resultant health benefits from this exercise. She had noticed her physical condition had improved since she started playing, which in turn contributed to a sense of well-being and satisfaction:

I think it's nice to go, to move, not to sit too long, to do it for your blood. It's like a motor for your circulation and that

gives me a good feeling. If I walk such a long time and my condition is well, and afterwards, when I lay down for half an hour I feel a little bit tired but in a very good mental feeling, I think, 'I've done a lot. I feel well'. It's nice.

The environment was also a source of Annika's golf enjoyment, both in terms of weather (Annika enjoyed the sunshine and "hated" the wind) and the scenery:

I look around at the animals I see and the palms. And I enjoy the attitudes of the animals. There are some small black birds and they don't fly away, they stay. These things. I look to the nature and to the green and I take the atmosphere and circumstances around me.

Annika appreciated being able to live in such a beautiful location and felt privileged she was able to play golf:

It's kind of special. It gives me always a feeling of happiness, to have the freedom to do it, to be free and able to have the time to spend on [golf]. And I think it's a kind of privilege to have. It makes me happy. I'm happy to stay here and this happiness I don't forget. It's every day I say it once or twice. And when I stand on the high level [of the tee] and look over the barranca I'm happy to be here.

Annika's performance affected her golf enjoyment. Playing well made golf more enjoyable for her. However, a poor performance would not only detract from her golfing enjoyment during the round, but could also affect her feelings once the round was finished. She recounted a recent round:

One day I was so bad. [I was] disappointed about my golf and I thought I

never will bring it to a better position. And at first I was very angry and tears came. It takes me the whole evening to find my self-confidence and I didn't find it this evening. It was totally confusing for me that I could be so disturbed from this golf. And nothing helped me, saying 'It's only a game', no.

Annika described one last source of her golf enjoyment: "One of the important things is to look trendy! Which trousers, which shirt to look nice? And to have pleasure with these things too".

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

The preceding descriptions of the participants' meanings of golf enjoyment revealed the unique ways these individuals derived enjoyment from golf, in addition to providing an understanding of the factors that detracted from their golf enjoyment. Despite the apparent differences between participants, a number of commonalities existed. Rather than presenting these common themes with the individual findings I have chosen to present them as part of the discussion and use them as a platform for considering how practitioners can tailor mental training to help athletes derive greater enjoyment from their sport. The recommendations that resulted are presented under four main headings: Performance and enjoyment; Personal development and enjoyment; Non-performance factors and enjoyment; and Balanced attitude and enjoyment.

### **Performance and Enjoyment**

All seven participants derived enjoyment from performing well on the golf course. Notably, only one participant reported that getting a good score at the end of his round was a source of his golf enjoyment. Five of the remaining participants reported that it was the act of hitting a good shot that they found enjoyable and three defined enjoy-

ment as hitting a succession of good shots or playing consistently throughout the round. One participant enjoyed being able to contribute to his team's score when playing well in team events. Three of the participants mentioned winning as a source of enjoyment, though at least one noted that this was an added bonus to performing well. Perhaps not surprisingly given the above findings, six of the participants noted that playing badly undermined their golf enjoyment.

Given the link between performance and enjoyment it seems important that mental training practitioners continue to assist athletes in the development of the necessary mental skills to enhance performance in their pursuit of increasing enjoyment. The use of a multi-modal approach to such training has been advocated by many research-practitioners (e.g., Stodel, 2004; Taylor, 1995). Moreover, by using highlight training (Orlick, 1996, 1998) athletes can be encouraged to reflect on their performance and focus on what they did well. By encouraging athletes to focus on the things that went well and forget about the low points of their performance, they are more likely to come away with positive perceptions of how well they did.

Furthermore, by facilitating the development of athletes' mental skills so the athletes have a sense of control over their performance, practitioners may be able to further increase sport enjoyment. Stodel (2004) found that after 15 weeks of mental training participants enjoyed golf more because they had developed a sense of control over their golf performance. In short, they commented that they had learned skills that, when applied, allowed them to play better golf. Before the training many of the participants were unaware that they could learn to control their performance and that it was possible to develop skills that would enable them to focus

or relax more effectively and therefore facilitate enhanced performance. Certainly there appears to be a necessity for practitioners to educate in this regard.

In order to increase enjoyment, it appears worthwhile for practitioners to help individuals develop skills and approaches that will allow them to develop a sense of control over their performance. One such approach is the preshot or preperformance routine (Singer, 2002; Wrisberg & Pein, 1992). Lidor and Singer (2003) noted “by developing a personalised and meaningful routine, the athlete feels more in control over what he or she is about to do and, therefore, the performance outcome” (p. 71). Practitioners should help athletes develop a routine that helps them attain a confident, focused, and optimally aroused state prior to, and during, skill execution (Cox, 2002; Lidor & Singer). For guidelines for developing preshot routines see Cohn (1994); Cohn and Winters (1995); and Lidor and Singer. In addition, simple arousal and attentional control techniques used outside the context of a routine, such as deep breathing and self-talk, may also be beneficial in helping golfers obtain a sense of control (Stodel, 2004).

A further suggestion for cultivating a sense of control in athletes emanates from research in the area of flow; a concept often likened to enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Dattilo, Kleiber, & Williams, 1998; Kimiecik & Harris, 1996; Kimiecik & Jackson, 2002; Stevens, Moget, De Greef, Lemmink, & Rispens, 2000). Flow has been described as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, p. 4). The central component of flow is the “challenge-skill balance” (Csikszentmihalyi; Jackson, 2000; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi,

1999). That is, the individual must have the necessary skills to meet the demands of the task for flow to occur. If the challenge of the task is greater than the individual’s skill level then there is little chance he or she will feel in control and therefore will not experience flow. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi argued that in order to gain control, and have a chance of experiencing flow, individuals need to define the challenge in terms of something that is realistic. Consequently, helping athletes set realistic goals that are within their control may help them develop a sense of control over their performance. Indeed, Gilbourne and Taylor (1998) found that goal setting can empower injured athletes “with skills that . . . create an enhanced sense of control” (p. 124).

### **Personal Development and Enjoyment**

Six participants reported that factors relating to their personal development on the golf course contributed to their golf enjoyment. All six derived enjoyment from feelings of achievement on the course and three noted, more specifically, that their enjoyment came from recognition of improvement. One individual also believed that golf led to personal growth and this was a source of her enjoyment of the game. These findings support those in the extant literature. Feelings of improvement and mastery have been linked to enjoyment in the past, both as sources and predictors of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Gould et al., 2001; Orlick, 1998; Scanlan et al., 1989, 1993). The finding that improvement is a source of enjoyment suggests that in order to enhance enjoyment practitioners should help athletes plan for improvement, develop the mental skills necessary for improvement, and focus on the improvements they make. Approaches practitioners can take within these three areas will be delineated in the remainder of this section.

In order to plan for improvement athletes should have an understanding of their current skill level and their desired skill level. Practitioners have used both objective and subjective assessment tools to solicit such information. Several experienced practitioners have shied away from psychometric testing and instead have emphasised interviewing, observation, and self-evaluation tools as key elements in identifying athletes' needs and their strengths and weaknesses (Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 2003). One such tool, performance profiling (Butler & Hardy, 1992), is growing in popularity with practitioners, as it actively involves the athlete in the assessment process (Farres & Stodel, 2003; Weinberg & Williams, 2001).

Once an athlete's strengths and weaknesses have been identified, goals can be set to plan for improvement. As the athletes engage in the process of developing their skills they should be encouraged to regularly evaluate their progress. Orlick (2000) noted that ongoing learning centres on reflecting on what went well during a performance, why it went well, and what can be improved; drawing out lessons from each performance and then acting on these lessons; and assessing how important factors, such as focus and commitment, affect performance. Evaluation records, such as those used by Orlick (1986, 1998) and Stodel (2004) may be developed to help the athlete with this process.

The fact that improvement emerged as a source of enjoyment in this inquiry, as well as in other research, suggests it is important that practitioners facilitate the individual's development of the necessary mental skills for improvement. Indeed, this is the primary aim of mental training and its effectiveness in enhancing performance is well documented in the literature (e.g., Perkos, Theodorakis, & Chroni, 2002; Rogerson &

Hrycaiko, 2002; Terry, Mayer, & Howe, 1998; Thelwell & Greenlees, 2001).

Moreover, the finding that improvement is an important contributor to enjoyment underscores the importance of focusing on learning and improving rather than on how well one is doing in comparison to others. According to achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1984, 1989, 1992), fostering a task involvement will encourage individuals to focus on their own improvements rather than make normative comparisons. Whether an individual is task or ego involved in any given achievement situation is dependent on his or her dispositional goal orientation and his or her perception of the motivational climate (Duda et al., 1995; Kavussanu & Roberts, 1996; Roberts, 2001). The question of whether dispositional or situational factors play the more important role in shaping individuals' goal involvement remains to be answered. However, preliminary findings suggest that affective responses are more heavily influenced by situational factors, whereas cognitive and behavioural responses are more influenced by individual factors (Newton & Duda, 1999; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2000; Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992). These findings imply practitioners should intervene at both levels, but especially at the situational level in the case of maximising enjoyment.

Consultants are likely to maximise their effectiveness in strengthening task involvement if they take an interactionist approach. By teaching significant others in the environment how to foster a mastery oriented climate, and helping athletes strengthen their task orientation, the quality and frequency of positive sport experiences may be augmented. Unfortunately, unless the practitioner is also the coach they might find it difficult to impact the motivational climate and will have more chance of impacting the in-

dividual's dispositional goal orientation. By targeting interventions at the individual level it may be possible to strengthen dispositions so they override conflicting cues in the environment. Practitioners should assist athletes in goal setting, establishing practice sessions, evaluating their performance, and taking control over their learning (Duda & Treasure, 2001). Moreover, practitioners must make an effort to work in a task involving manner during all their interactions with athletes. What practitioners say and do, how they reward the individuals they work with, and their performance expectations all convey their values to the athlete (i.e., whether they value winning or improving).

### **Non-Performance Factors and Enjoyment**

The participants also derived enjoyment from sources that were neither related to their golf performance nor their personal development. These sources can be organized into the following four categories: social, environmental, exercise, and sensual experiences. The social aspects of golf cultivated the participants' golf enjoyment in a number of ways. Six of the participants enjoyed playing in good company, while the remaining participant indicated that she enjoyed playing alone. Three of the participants simply enjoyed playing with their family, while a further two enjoyed being in contact with other people on the course. Four of the participants enjoyed the opportunity golf afforded them to meet people. Playing with better golfers was a source of enjoyment for two of the golfers and three noted that they particularly enjoyed golf when their playing partners were playing well. Lastly, one participant reported that she enjoyed being involved in her playing partners' game.

Not only did the social aspects of golf underlie all seven participants' golf enjoyment,

so did the exercise inherent in golf. All the participants reported that they enjoyed the physical activity associated with playing golf and three of them talked about feeling healthy as a result of playing golf and/or mentioned that it gave them a sense of well being. A less common (noted by only two of the participants), but no less important source of enjoyment related to the sensual experiences golf provides. For example, the sound of a good shot or the ball falling into the hole.

Factors relating to the environment also emerged as sources of the participants' enjoyment. The most commonly cited source of enjoyment regarding the environment was playing in good weather; all the participants except one talked of this. In addition, each of four participants derived enjoyment from being outdoors and the scenery and views afforded from being on the golf course. Lastly, two participants emphasized that the condition the course was in could impact their golf enjoyment.

As practitioners, we want to encourage athletes to focus on these other sources of enjoyment inherent in their sports besides their performance. An appreciation of the non-performance sources of enjoyment is especially important when the athlete is not performing well. Focusing on something you are not doing well is not enjoyable. In the case of golf, rather than focusing on mistakes and the negative emotions associated with them, we need to teach golfers to switch their attention to such things as the scenery, the company of their playing partners, or some other source of enjoyment. As a result, they will be less likely to maintain a negative frame of mind for the round, which will make the game more enjoyable for them.

The key thing as a practitioner is to help athletes develop strategies that will help them derive enjoyment from all sources of sport enjoyment. Pinel (1999) suggested using enjoyment profiling as a framework within which to do this. Within the context of golf, Stodel (2004) used the concept of the ‘circle’ (See “The Circle of Focus in Golf” in this Issue of the Journal of Excellence). The ‘circle’ is designed to help golfers vary their focus while playing so they are able to focus appropriately on their upcoming shot during the preparation and execution phase and then switch their focus away from their performance between shots. Stodel reported that golfers found that by turning their attention away from golf in-between shots they had more time to appreciate other sources of enjoyment. Furthermore, the participants felt more comfortable enjoying these other elements of golf as they knew they had developed a new tool (i.e., the ‘circle’) that would help them return their focus to golf when necessary.

An idea similar to the ‘circle’ may be applied to tennis. Performance in tennis, similar to golf, is interrupted by periods of relative inactivity between points and games. At these times it is important that the players do not focus on how well or how poorly they are playing. As with golf, these periods of downtime provide the perfect opportunity for tennis players to focus on elements of tennis they enjoy that are not related to their performance. For example, the smell of new tennis balls, the warmth coming off the court on a summer’s day, the feeling of exerting oneself, and the sounds of the birds. Practitioners can help tennis players develop a cue to switch their focus away from their performance once the point is over and then switch it back onto the game in time to prepare for the next point. Obviously time between performance episodes in tennis is

significantly less than that in golf, but this type of strategy may still be effective.

More often, sports require continuous performance. Consider distance running, cycling, and cross-country skiing. Typically there are no breaks in performance in these sports. However, they place little attentional demands on the participants so provide ample opportunities for the individual to appreciate diverse sources of enjoyment. Setting a watch to ‘beep’ every few minutes can serve as a cue for these athletes to look for highlights in what they are doing and help them focus on positive aspects of their workout. Alternatively, they could search for highlights every kilometre they run, ride, or ski.

### **Balanced Attitude and Enjoyment**

Although the participants greatly enjoyed golf and derived this enjoyment from diverse sources, a number of factors undermined the participants’ golf enjoyment. All but one of the participants indicated that playing badly took away from their enjoyment of the game. In addition, three of the participants reported that slow play made their golf less enjoyable. Moreover, despite the fact that all except one of the participants cited social factors as contributing elements to their golf enjoyment, four described instances where their playing partners undermined their enjoyment of the game. Similarly, despite the fact that all the participants derived their enjoyment from sources related to the environment, four of them also reported that aspects of the environment, such as the weather, the course conditions, and the time of day they were playing, could make golf less enjoyable.

The majority of these factors are out of the golfers’ control. Golfers cannot control the slow play of the group ahead or of their playing partners; they cannot turn a cold, windy day into a warm sunny one; they can-

not change other golfers' behaviours; and sometimes, despite all their best efforts to prepare properly, focus on each shot, and stick to their game plan, they will still not play as well as they would like. Yet these aspects of golf are all too often the source of golfers' frustration and anger. It is not surprising that this frustration and anger undermines golf enjoyment; as Orlick (2000) noted, "getting angry . . . interferes with your reason for being there, whether you are seeking enjoyment, consistency, or a high quality performance" (p. 92). Not only is anger a negative emotion, but it is also impossible to be angry and focus on the upcoming shot at the same time and therefore performance will be affected. In order to enhance enjoyment, our efforts as practitioners may best be directed towards helping athletes develop more balanced and accepting attitudes towards the more negative aspects of their sport and teaching them to control any anger and frustration that remains.

Stodel (2004) found that recreational golfers developed more balanced attitudes as a result of engaging in mental training. The golfers in her study did not attribute their more balanced attitudes to specific mental training techniques, but felt that their attitudes had changed because they were better able to forget about mistakes and focus on positive things, put the negative aspects of golf in perspective, and be more *carpe diem*. Moreover, some had developed the belief they could overcome lapses in performance. Consequently, when their performance declined they did not get as upset because they had faith it would return soon enough. For one participant, developing an awareness of how his attitude was negatively affecting his performance was enough to elicit change. Perhaps it was the general philosophy of the training, or the awareness it provoked, that brought about the participant's change in

attitude. These findings highlight the value of encouraging athletes to reflect on how their thoughts and attitudes affect their performance and enjoyment.

Athletes must be aware that their attitude is their choice and it is only they who can change it. If an athlete is predisposed to negative thinking and has the tendency to always look for the negative in everything they do, it is critical they learn to turn this pattern around. Looking for something positive, however small, can be the first step to make a change (Orlick, 2000). Orlick also suggested getting more rest, reducing life stress, keeping track of the good things that happen to you each day, doing something for yourself every day, opening yourself to experiencing your own successes, and remaining open to the positive emotions of those around you will foster a positive perspective.

## Conclusions

Enjoyment is an important construct to study within the realm of sport. Not only is it a key motive for sport participation (Ebbeck et al., 1995; Frederick et al., 1996; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002; Weiss et al., 2001), but enjoyment is also important for quality of life and is a factor in peak performance (Cohn, 1991). Consequently, it seems appropriate to divert effort and attention towards understanding, and subsequently maximizing, enjoyment. However, the role mental training could play in increasing enjoyment has received minimal attention in the literature.

Much of the research that has focused on the study of enjoyment to date has examined the sources and predictors of enjoyment. Diverse sources of enjoyment have consistently been found in the literature (Bakker et al., 1993; Gould et al., 2001; Pinel et al., 1999; Scanlan et al., 1989; Yoo & Kim,

2002). This inquiry supports the belief that enjoyment can be derived from many sources, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and provides a unique contribution to the literature by extending this line of research to a golfing population and older individuals engaging in sport at a recreational level.

Based on the participants' meanings of golf enjoyment, a number of recommendations for how mental training may be used to enhance enjoyment were presented. In sum, practitioners should help athletes develop mental skills that enhance performance and allow the athletes to develop a sense of con-

trol over their performance; encourage athletes to reflect on their performances and record their highlights; guide athletes in the setting of realistic goals that focus on learning and improvement rather than on how well they are doing in comparison to others; help athletes evaluate their performances and then plan for improvement and recognize areas in which they have improved; strengthen task involvement; teach athletes to focus on non-performance sources of enjoyment when appropriate; and lastly, enable athletes to develop more balanced and accepting attitudes towards the negative aspects of their sport.

Table 1

Demographic profiles of the participants

Participant	Sex	D.O.B (age)	Golf experience (years played)	Handicap	Rounds played/week	Practice time/week
Phil	M	13/1/30 (69)	30	19	3	negligible
Tom	M	10/5/26 (73)	25	25.2	3	2 hours
Lee	M	22/5/35 (64)	3	28	3	1.5 hours
Nancy	F	5/10/41 (58)	4	36	2	0
Annika	F	21/1/40 (59)	2	36	3-4	1-2 hours
Sam	M	2/3/38 (61)	2.5	28	2	55 minutes
Laura	F	(>45)	16	21	3	negligible

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## Maintaining Perspective: Recommendations for Elite Performers

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### Abstract

In 2001, an article was published documenting the process of *perspective* (Brown, Cairns, & Botterill). A grounded theory approach was employed to capture the manner in which 11 elite Canadian athletes maintained healthy conceptions of self, healthy relationships, and healthy perceptions of the events and experiences that coloured their lives. The first article described a model of *perspective*, and illustrated it through rich qualitative data provided by the participants. This paper articulates the *recommendations for performers* that were drawn from that same study. The recommendations are divided into the three main components of the model, namely defining the self, living authentically, and experiencing fully.

In 2001, we published an article in this journal about the concept of perspective (Brown, Cairns, & Botterill, 2001). A grounded theory approach was employed to draw key insights from elite athletes who, by all accounts, were able to remain grounded in spite of the demands of the elite sport environment. The first article described the methodology, the model, and the data that

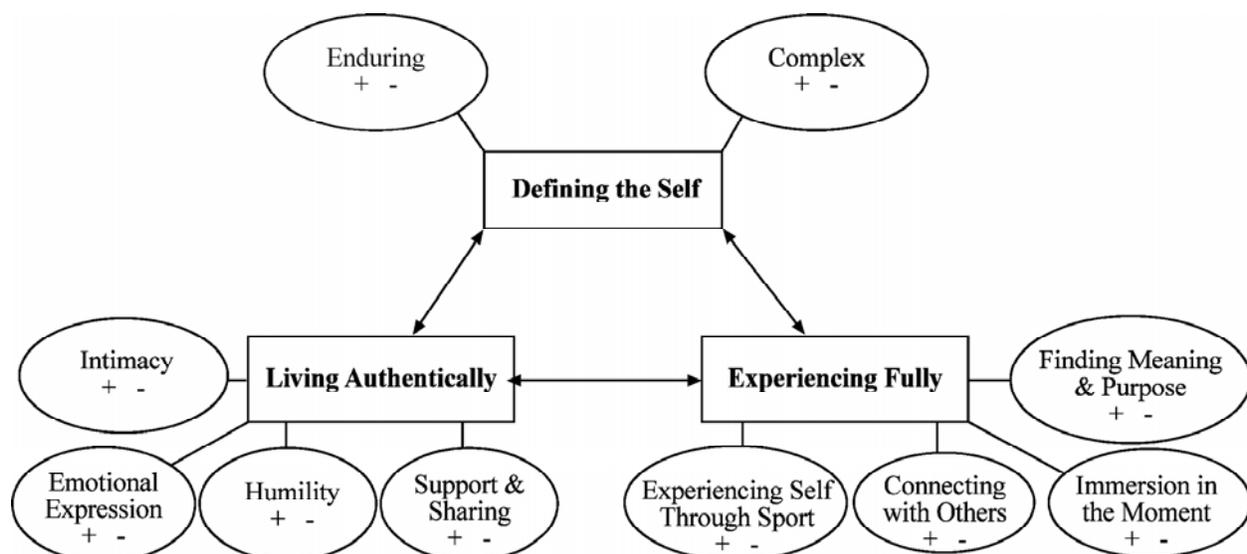
illustrated the elements of the model. Due to the depth of the data involved, the article did not touch on the recommendations that arose from the interviews. Although these insights are drawn from the experience of a few, the strength of the source and the consensus of their lessons warrant the sharing of these ideas in a larger forum. In addition, there has been growing validation of these ideas, de-

rived from documented professional contact and studies (MacDonald & Orlick, 2004; Botterill & Patrick, 2003; Orlick, 1998, 2000; Amirault & Orlick, 1999).

In short, the recommendations in this article represent an experientially-grounded guide for others to maintain perspective in their own lives. But before presenting these, let us return briefly to the concept of perspective.

### The Model

Figure 1. The process of perspective



The model of perspective included three main pieces: Defining the self, Living authentically, and Experiencing fully. The relationship of these components with the challenges of the environment is perhaps best characterized in the following way:

Ideally we all want to connect meaningfully with our environments: the things we choose to do, the people we're with, and the places where we spend our time. In this connection is a vividness, a brilliance that is intensely stimulating and rewarding. And our best chance of connecting is to focus on the experience in and of itself (experiencing fully), and to have cues for returning to it when we

are distracted from it. However, there are certain environmental 'hazards' that frequently disconnect us from the purity of experience.

One of these is the illusion that success will separate us from ongoing fears of inadequacy, fears of being less worthy of love and belonging. We can easily come to believe that success will eradicate these fears, thus becoming fixated on the 'implications' of our experiences as they unfold, and subsequently contaminating the experience itself. Recognizing that success procures nothing more than a shallow and very fickle experience of acceptance and belonging can serve

a protective function. This can help us to overcome the distraction of the dirty 'promise' that success has to offer, allowing us to refocus on the experience itself AND relationships with significant figures whose acceptance is not success-dependent.

Further, while immersed in any environment, things can grow much larger than appropriate scale, thus eliciting emotional responses and appraisals that far exceed the scale of the events unfolding. This can cause us to distort and discolour our experiences in order to protect ourselves from them. It prevents us from facing our experiences and their implications head on. Herein lies yet another experiential contaminant. If one has mechanisms for stepping back from a given environment or seeing it in relation to other aspects of self or a bigger picture, then things can return to scale, reducing the tendency to distort or even repress experiences in their complete form. Further, if emotions are accepted and allowed to run their course, rather than being dammed until they overflow, this can make the affective component of experience very powerful and meaningful, rather than completely overwhelming and requiring alteration. As a whole, we would say that this state represents 'perspective'.

Essentially, there are certain conditions and ways of looking at oneself (that we've lumped under the umbrella of perspective) that serve a protective function for our ability to experience fully. At the core is a view of the self that is enduring and multi-faceted, and resistant to the pressures and allure of the athletic environment. The presence of unconditional support and means of recovery and expression can reinforce this, as can a focus on the value of experience for its own sake. Maintaining perspective is an ongoing, dynamic process as you will no doubt appreciate as you make your way

through the insights below. For an in-depth description of the perspective model, see Brown, Cairns, & Botterill (2001).

The recommendations are divided into the three sections of the model. You will notice that the recommendations are laid out prescriptively. I acknowledge that these results are based on the ideas and experiences of a small group of individuals and that I should be cautious in taking a prescriptive tone. However, the word 'recommendations' carries the implication of suggested action, rather than an imperative tone.

## **Recommendations for Performers**

### **Defining the Self**

- *Separate your value as a person from your success and failure as an athlete. If you start each day believing in the fundamental value in each of us then the rest of your day can be about living, not proving your worth.*
- *Think of your sport as a way of experiencing your body and your qualities, not as something that defines you. This will help you to enjoy the experience more fully. It will also allow you to make a smoother transition out of sport. It's easy to say "I'm a dancer" or "I'm a hockey player". But you have certain qualities that made that activity a good match for you. The qualities that make you up are enduring and are difficult to take away. Competitive, physical, introverted, extroverted, gentle, aggressive, artistic, inquisitive, easy-going, driven. If you pinpoint the qualities that make you up, you'll find numerous ways to connect to them, rather than being defined by an activity or affiliation.*
- *Protect times when you can be a 'non-athlete'. This will help to re-*

*plenish your energy and keep you from getting too caught up in your sport-life. This way the highs and lows are less apt to become unmanageable.* Some athletes may protect time with people outside their sport. Others may take a hobby with them on road trips: sketch pads, books, fishing kits, an instrument, you name it.

- *Remember that you are constantly evolving as a person and as an athlete. Pay attention to the ways that you're changing so that you can keep those changes consistent with your values and who you want to become.* The sports writers may lament an athlete 'losing their fire', but sometimes it's because it's time to move on. Your strengths as an athlete may change. Adapt. Don't fight too hard to be static.
- *Accept yourself for all the good and the bad, the weak and the strong. By seeing yourself for who and what you really are, this will make it possible to share this 'real self' with others. This will help to reduce the tension that is created when there is a discrepancy between who you are and who you're trying to convince yourself and others that you are.* You're not perfect. When the media, your friends, or your fans put you on a pedestal, climb down. Show them a vulnerable side, a human side. Share an embarrassing failure or a weaker moment. It will help people to identify with you, and alleviate the pressure to live up to 'God status'.

### **Living Authentically**

- *Cultivate your relationships with close friends and significant others. These relationships can provide you with a different kind of fulfillment that the world of elite sport probably will not.* Make those calls, even if they have to be short. Invest time with family and friends. Go to your niece's soccer game. Go to your spouse's staff BBQ. It's a welcome break and a message that those people are important.
- *Letting your guard down and being completely open and honest with those people closest to you can be a liberating experience. You may be surprised at how understanding and accepting they can be. They can be great sounding boards, allowing you to express emotions fully and to come to terms with the events in your life.* Share your feelings or even cry if it feels right. Let them console you. Indulge yourself with a 'smaller moment'; admit when you're jealous of a teammate or a competitor; share how close you were to quitting after your injury. Let them into your world: the good, bad, and ugly of it.
- *Remember that the support, acceptance, and understanding that you receive from those around you is also valuable for each of them to receive. Try not to receive more than you give. Find ways to add value to the experiences of those around you.* This balance is critical in any relationship. The key people in your life have their own challenges, heartbreaks, performances, and triumphs. Be to them what they are to you. It will balance the scales and ease your feeling of indebtedness.

- *Embrace the rich relationships that can grow through shared experiences in sport. Beware of the influence of envy and comparisons with teammates and competitors, for these can diminish the positive relationships that might otherwise develop. You'll miss the camaraderie of sport when you leave it, perhaps more than anything else. Look around the locker or dressing or waiting room. Soak it in. It's great stuff. Look across at your competitors, pitted against you but sharing the same passion; that's a fascinating relationship in its own right.*
- *Try to avoid comparisons between your relationships in sport and those outside of it. They're different. Both contribute to a richness of your experience. Both can help you to cope at different times. Struggling together towards a common goal, through pain and injury, successes and failures, exhaustion and breakdowns strips away a lot of posturing. You really see people for who they are. And that's pretty special. But other experiences will have similar effects : A coaching role. Parenting. Death of a friend or family member. Counselling a friend in need. They'll all reveal the real issues in life and real feelings of people involved. Real emotion. It's not gone when you hang up your cleats.*
- *Share your experiences **with** those closest to you, rather than trying to attain achievements and accolades **for** them. Ask yourself this: Do you let those people console you and be there for you when things go wrong, the same way you share your successes with them? Do you still call when you lose or perform poorly or*  
do you hide away in shame? They love you. Let them. Their love for you is not performance-contingent.
- *Be humble in success and keep your chin up in failure. If you believe that outcomes don't determine your worth as a person, then neither success nor failure can alter who you are. Don't crow in victory. Arrogance is isolating. Don't disappear from sight when you lose, unless it's the bit of time you need to grieve.*
- *Humility will help to keep you connected to the people around you. When you're humble, you can interact with others on a more intimate and meaningful level. Who are the real icons of sport, the ones that really leave a legacy? Gretzky, Jordan, Lemay-Doan. They all share this quality.*
- *Be gracious in success. Acknowledge the collective efforts that were necessary for you to have a chance at success. This again will help you to stay connected to the people around you and will enhance their motivation and enthusiasm for your sport. The coaches, support staff, volunteers, the equipment manager, the fans, the peewee coach, family members. They all played a role. You can give them such a thrill by sharing the credit.*
- *Your emotions can be your best window into who you are and what you value most. Pay attention to them. Accept them as your own. Find adaptive ways of expressing them. This will help you to feel less burdened and allow you to live in the moment. Cry it out, talk it out, write it out, run it out. Whatever works for*

you. But don't suppress it; it'll eat you like cancer.

- *Use your emotions to help you identify and construct the kind of lifestyle that will give you the greatest sense of passion and purpose.* How often do you hear people say "I wish I hadn't gone with my heart"? It's a rarity. When to retire, when to take a break, when to take a stand, when to turn it up a notch. All these things can be crystal clear when you listen to what you're feeling.

### Experiencing Fully

- *Allow yourself to be lost in the experience of your sport. When you become focused on outcomes and their significance, always return to the focus and feeling that you wish to create when you train and compete. This will help you to create that feeling more consistently, rather than accidentally.* Performance in the 'zone' is ego-suspending. It's a 'judgment-free experience'. The moment you indulge yourself with thoughts of what victory would mean or the rewards of success, you contaminate it.
- *Take time to appreciate the breadth of experiences and relationships that your sport life has allowed you to enjoy: the people, the travel, the stories that you'll look back on and smile, laugh, and cry (sometimes all at once).* The richness of these things would take volumes to document... for each athlete has his or her own. The six-hour card-athon in Frankfurt Airport, those crazy, fanatical, wonderful Dutch fans, the post-Olympic bash that 'no one's ever allowed to mention again'. Great stuff.
- *Schedule in time away from your sport. This will help to avoid burnout and can rekindle your passion for your sport when it loses its 'luster'.* Elite athletes walk a fine line between optimal and over-training. A well-placed weekend off may be the difference between replenished and prematurely retired.
- *Be willing to ask yourself whether your sport still holds the passion and meaning that you want it to. This will help you to reconnect with the aspects of your sport that are most fulfilling, and will allow you to identify the right time to move on to something else.* Insightfully put by one respondent: "I don't think my love for my sport will ever burn out, but I anticipate a time when other things will start to burn a little brighter."
- *Accept that you will invariably face setbacks at times in your life and sport career. Allow the emotions to play out. Use these times to be introspective and learn lessons from your experiences. These times can also help you to reconnect with your priorities and the people of greatest significance to you.* If you think of your career as a painting, the darker times add complexity and bring vibrancy to the lighter strokes. They allow a complete story to be told. One that is real. One that is yours.
- *Take a moment to step away from your environment and see the events, both good and bad, in relation to a broader context. This will help you to keep setbacks in perspective and keep you humble in success.* A trip to the mountains, your childhood stomping grounds, a community rink, the ocean, the country, all great

perspective tools. One athlete went with his National teammates to a special needs school; talk about a perspective check!

- *Respect the effect that perspective can have on your performance. It can leave you unburdened and focused, even at the times of greatest pressure. If all that is at stake is the performance itself, then all you're left with is your love of the sport and your competitive fire. Anxiety can become exhilaration. Noisy minds can quiet. Worries can lift like fog. Trust in the power of focusing on the right things, the peace of mind that comes from knowing that all you need to do is connect to yourself in your purest form.*
- *Accept your successes and failures in sport for what they are. Enjoy the feeling of achievement. Allow yourself to be disappointed in defeat. But never fail to learn the lesson from each experience. If you're one of the ones that risks pain for a chance at the thrill of victory, then you're vulnerable, but you're also **alive**. But don't make the highs and lows bigger in your head than they actually are. It's intense enough without blowing them up into something bigger than they really are.*
- *Perspective is a process that we become better at as we mature. Pay attention to it. Recognize when you're losing it and why that happens. Pay attention to the process so that you can be empowered to move towards perspective more consistently. The great athletes in this study could pinpoint the times when they lost their perspective. But they also viewed those moments as critical*

teaching points in figuring this stuff out.

### **Debunking a Myth**

Reading through the recommendations above, you may be struck with the common sense nature of the contents. These ideas are not particularly new. But where these insights come from is important to note. We would argue that there is an unwritten rule that many people in elite sport (and 'non-elite' sport for that matter) subscribe to: "Nice guys finish last". There is a notion that many of the rules that apply to ordinary life do not apply to those who are serious about success in sport.

But the participants in this study live by the principles of perspective and swear by their congruence with optimal performance. Take note that we use the term 'optimal performance', not winning. We believe it is fair to suggest that perspective can influence the people around you. People with perspective are responded to differently than those without it. They make people feel more comfortable with themselves and feel better about being involved in their sport. They inspire the people around them. Obviously some of those people around them will be in direct competition with them. So the performances on a whole will be enhanced. You may inspire someone to perform their best but you will also be inspired to be and perform your best.

This raises the bar even further. We talk about the power of positive rivalry: "If you're at your best, then I'll have to be that much better to beat you, and that makes both of us better!". In this way, perspective is about high performance, not outcomes, a distinction rarely made in popular culture. Put succinctly by Newburg, "If winning is all you care about, just make sure you al-

ways play against people that aren't as good as you" (Personal communication, 2000).

The age-old notion that winning is all that counts is challenged by some of Canada's top performers in their respective sports and disciplines. "Personal excellence in your performance domain and personal excellence in living your life is the real goal" (Orlick, Personal communication,

2004). Perspective works for anyone, not just in a kindergarten classroom. This discovery (although many have known this for years) could help shape the way we coach and teach aspiring young athletes. It's not necessary for athletes to forfeit themselves or their values in order to perform well. These pieces can compliment each other.

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## **Building on the Positives: Two Tennis Players' Experiences with Sport Psychology**

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### **Abstract**

There are a limited number of qualitative studies examining athletes' experiences with sport psychology and mental training. The current study was an attempt to shed more light on athletes' personal experiences with mental training and sport psychology consulting. Two elite tennis players were interviewed to gain valuable insight into their experiences with sport psychology. Several themes that highlight these tennis players' experiences were identified. They included having a present focus, happiness, building on positives, burnout, sport psychology techniques, and relationship with the sport psychology consultant. Developing a present focus was very important to both of these athletes. A present focus allowed them to perform at a very high level during competition. Both athletes were seeking joy within their sport and performed their best when they were happy and comfortable on the court. These players' experiences with sport psychology were characterized by a focus on the positives rather than negatives and both felt it was important to have a positive, personal relationship with a sport psychology consultant.

### **Introduction**

In Issue 9 of the *Journal of Excellence*, Gentner (2004) conducted an interview with former professional tennis player Chris Woodruff. That interview was part of a larger study investigating two elite tennis players' experiences with sport psychology. This article presents the background, findings, and discussion of the larger project.

As of 1999, there were over 200 published studies examining the relationship between certain components of mental training and sport performance (Martin, Moritz, & Hall, 1999). Almost all of these studies have been quantitative in nature, basically looking at numbers and not individual experiences behind the numbers. For example, while

there are studies showing the positive effects of imagery, (see Daw & Burton, 1994; Hall & Erffmeyer, 1983; Lee & Hewitt, 1987; Ming & Martin, 1996; Mumford & Hall, 1985; Noel, 1980; Wrisberg & Anshel, 1989 for a review), little qualitative work has been done investigating athletes' experiences with imagery and how each individual athlete responds to it.

Sport psychology consultants have the incredible opportunity to help athletes reach their full potential in sport and in life. However, in order to do this, consultants must first understand that each athlete will respond differently to a variety of interventions. Therefore, it is critical for sport psychology professionals to begin to focus

on understanding individual athletes and how they can best be served. To do this they must gain a better understanding of what athletes want from a sport psychology consultant through investigations of athletes' experiences with sport psychology. There is currently a need for more carefully conducted applied research, qualitative research, exploring athletes' personal experiences with sport psychology.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Client Expectations**

While the field of sport psychology has grown tremendously in recent years, it has not lost its connection to another profession: counseling. Despite many differences, professionals in these two fields share a connection. That is, they both serve clients in an attempt to improve some aspect of their lives. Sport psychology consultants generally focus on performance enhancement and some (the better ones) also focus on life enhancement. Counselors often focus on interpersonal relationships or helping clients deal with other problems or disorders. When exploring athletes' expectations for consulting it is important to identify expectations of clients as is often done when clients enter traditional counseling.

### **Counseling Expectations**

“Both theoreticians and practicing counselors have long been in agreement that clients bring expectations and beliefs to counseling situations. It is believed that these expectancies can influence both the counseling process and its outcome” (Tinsley & Harris, 1976, p. 175). This statement lends credence to the belief that clients' expectations should be explored in order to provide optimal services. When discussing clients' expectations one should consider both the expectations and their effect on the outcome of counseling. Understanding both of these components can be an essential part of effective

counseling. As Subich and Coursol (1985) posit, “it is important to know about expectancies for counseling, even if one does not intend to fulfill those expectancies.” (p. 245)

According to Tinsley and Harris (1976) clients hold the strongest expectancies about their own attitudes and behaviors, the counselor's attitudes and behaviors, and the counselor's ability and effectiveness. With regards to clients' expectations about their counselor's attitudes and behaviors, previous research has shown that clients expect their counselors to have a genuine interest in their clients, to be properly trained, to possess useful knowledge, and to be confident in their helping abilities (Tinsley & Harris). In addition, clients expect their counselors to be problem-centered, extremely prepared for sessions, comfortable with their client and the presenting problem, and to abide by the ethics of confidentiality (Tinsley & Harris). It is clear that clients hold several expectations regarding the counselors upon entering treatment (Subich & Coursol, 1985; Tinsley, Brown, & de St. Aubin, 1984).

Many clients also have expectations about their counselor's ability and the effectiveness of counseling. These expectations are extremely important because they may affect the clients' decision to seek counseling as well as client retention. In fact, expectations about counseling can affect clients' decisions about where to go for help (Snyder, Hill, & Derksen, 1972), their desire to continue counseling after the initial session (Heilbrun, 1970), and the overall effectiveness of counseling (Goldstein, 1962). The effect that client expectations have on counseling may be seen most dramatically in Tinsley and Harris' (1976) study of college students in which they found that most students believe that counseling can be helpful to others but not for them thus, raising the belief that many students refuse to seek

counseling because they do not believe it will be helpful to them.

Often clients who do seek counseling base their counselor selection upon their perceptions of counselor abilities (Tinsley, Brown, & de St. Aubin, 1984). In fact, Tinsley et al. (1984) suggest that the type of problem a student is facing may have an impact on their counselor selection. Students experiencing personal problems are more likely to seek out counselors than are students experiencing career difficulties (Tinsley et al.). Thus, it appears that clients attempt to select counselors who have an expertise in dealing with the problem the client is experiencing. However, if these expectations about competency are not met, it can have detrimental effects on the counseling process.

One of the mitigating factors in the relationship between expectations and effectiveness is clients' belief that they will meet with an experienced counselor and not a counselor in training or a graduate student (Tinsley & Harris, 1976). Unfortunately much of the counseling work done (particularly on college campuses) is conducted by interns and practicum students. Therefore, as suggested by Tinsley and Harris, many clients have one of their strongest expectations violated very early in the counseling process. Such a violation may lead to clients' desire to discontinue services or to complications with further treatment. While this information does not seem fortuitous for counselors in training, further investigations by Tinsley and Harris revealed that as college students become older their expectations about meeting with an experienced counselor decrease.

Upon entering counseling, clients hold many expectations regarding their counselor and the counseling process. These expectations seem to play a role in clients' selection of a

counselor, their desire to remain with that counselor, and the effectiveness of treatment. This correlation in the counseling literature, points to a need to investigate athletes' expectations regarding sport psychology consultation.

Prior to looking at athletes' expectations regarding sport psychology, it is important to undergo an initial examination of any differences between athletes and nonathletes expectations about counseling. As the previous review suggest, nonathletes have a considerable amount of expectations regarding counseling and according to Miller and Moore (1993) athletes have similar expectations about counseling. However, these findings are contradictory to several previous studies which found differences in athletes and nonathletes expectations (see Behrman, 1967; Coakley, 1978; Wittmer et al., 1981). Taken together, the results of these studies seem equivocal. In addition, Miller and Moore suggest that their results may be limited by a small sample size ( $N = 50$ ) that was chosen from one university. Despite these contradictions and limitations, one can still presuppose that athletes harbor expectations regarding counseling. However, such suppositions should be cautiously suggested until further investigations regarding athletes' expectations regarding counseling are undertaken.

### **Expectations About Sport Psychology Consultation**

While the previous discussion of athletes' expectations about counseling provides a valuable groundwork, the present study is more concerned with their expectations regarding sport psychology. The first factor that may influence athletes' expectations of sport psychology consultants is the identifying term used by the consultant. Sport psychology consultant, sport psychologist, mental training consultant, and performance

consultant are just a few of the terms used to describe sport psychology practitioners. While professionals working under these titles may provide the same services, the identifying term used can lead to differences in athletes' expectations. As outlined by Van Raalte, Brewer, Linder, and DeLange (1990) the title used by sport psychology practitioners can have a marked effect on athletes' expectations regarding services.

According to Van Raalte et al. (1990) professionals using the title "sport psychologist" are viewed by college students in a similar fashion to mental health professionals. In fact, despite the word "sport" in their title, sport psychologists are seen as experts in mental and nonsport issues. In a similar study Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, and DeLange (1991) found similar results. In the Linder et al. study sport psychologists were seen as experts in mental issues, however contradictory to Van Raalte et al.'s results, they were seen as effective for both sport and nonsport issues. As suggested by Van Raalte et al. this view may be in stark contrast to the views that sport psychologists hold about themselves which may fall more along the lines of an expertise in mental training and sport issues. As for practitioners who work under the title "performance consultant," Van Raalte et al. found that those professionals are viewed as experts in physical and sport issues. Linder et al. suggested that performance consultants are viewed as experts in both physical and mental, sport issues. Despite some minor differences both of these studies show that practitioners working under the title "sport psychologist" are seen in a different light than those who use the term "performance consultant". Thus, it appears that the title that one chooses plays an important role in client expectations. Consequently, practitioners should be careful to choose a title that is not

only ethically responsible but also one that aptly describes the services they will offer.

According to Ravizza (1988) misunderstandings and negative connotations regarding the term sport psychology present two of the major problems for consultants who are attempting to work with a team or individuals. "Like it or not, the average athlete views a sport psychologist with a degree of apprehension due to the perception that psychology is associated with problems" (p. 244). In order to combat these negative connotations, Ravizza suggests using the terms "mental training" or "mental toughness" instead of "sport psychology". Furthermore, he suggests clarifying the services one will provide in order to clear up any misunderstandings and eliminate some of the stigma related to the term sport psychology.

In addition to the practitioner's title there are several other important factors that can influence clients' expectations and subsequent treatment. The most often cited factors include client characteristics, consultant characteristics, the presenting problem, the intervention used, and the relationship between the counselor and client (Dorfman, 1990; Gentner, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2004; Hanks, 1996; Sexton & Whitson, 1994; Smith, 1989; Strong & Dixon, 1971). Each of these factors can affect a client's decision to seek treatment and the likelihood of termination of treatment (Martin et al., 2001). Martin et al. found further evidence supporting the notion that perceptions of the sport psychology consulting process or the type of intervention used can have an effect on athletes' expectations about consulting.

Uncertainty about the field of sport psychology can also play a role in client expectations and consulting outcomes. As Bull (1995) suggests many athletes are unsure about the effectiveness of sport psychology

and therefore, often chose not to seek this service. Such perceptions of sport psychology cannot only affect athletes' decision to seek therapy (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997) but also the likelihood that they will continue to employ mental skills in the future (Bull). Moreover, Ravizza (1988) has suggested that many athletes are apprehensive about seeing a sport psychology consultant because they view them as counselors for people with psychological problems instead of performance issues. Thus, it appears important to understand athletes' expectations regarding sport psychology and the services a consultant may provide prior to consulting in order to offer the most beneficial services to athletes.

### **Influential Others' Expectations**

While it is clear that athletes have expectations about sport psychology that may affect their decision to seek consulting, there are many other people who have expectations that may influence the decision. Martin et al. (2001) suggest that those close to the athlete may have expectations or ideas about consulting which may have a significant affect on the athlete's decisions about consulting. Linder et al. (1989) suggest that athletes who work with a sport psychologist may be alienated by others. Further support for this idea was found by Linder et al. who surveyed 139 college students asking them to rate how strongly they would recommend drafting various fictitious football players. The players were all given similar performance descriptions in addition to a statement regarding their use of a sport psychology consultant. As a whole, the students issued lower draft ratings for players who had worked with a sport psychologist (Linder et al.). In a more recent study, Linder et al. used a similar procedure by surveying 207 college students and asking them to rate fictitious football, basketball, and baseball

players. Again, each player's performance accomplishments were similar with the only difference being their choice to meet with a sport psychologist or not. Consistent with previous findings Linder et al. (1991) found that players who had met with a sport psychologist received lower draft ratings than others. In a second study Linder et al. found that players who worked solely with their coaches received higher draft ratings than athletes who met with a sport psychologist. Such negative treatment may lead athletes to think twice about seeking mental training from a sport psychologist. According to Linder et al. much of this negativity is due to a belief that athletes who work with a consultant are deviating from the norm. Essentially, there is a belief that athletes who seek help from a consultant are less likely to relate well to other players and will have difficulty fitting in with management (Linder et al.).

Fortunately when we move beyond college students perceptions of athletes who work with a sport psychology consultant the findings are not all negative. In a study similar to Linder et al. (1989) and Linder et al. (1991), Van Raalte et al. (1992) asked 111 college football players to rate the draft possibilities for two quarterbacks with identical descriptions save for one statement disclosing whether or not the quarterback was working with a sport psychologist. Contrary to previous findings Van Raalte et al. found no differences in draft ratings for athletes who had worked with a sport psychologist. Furthermore, it has been suggested that for many athletes a sport psychologist is seen as a valuable asset for improved performance (Van Raalte et al.). Thus, for certain types of people (like athletes) and in certain situations it seems that people hold positive expectations regarding consultants. It is interesting that Van Raalte et al. surveyed athletes while Linder et al.

(1989) and Linder et al. (1991) surveyed nonathletes. Looking at the contradictory results of these studies one can posit that athletes may have more knowledge and higher expectations of sport psychologists and have less negative feelings about athletes who work with a consultant than nonathletes.

While it is unclear whether athletes are aware of the negative connotations that non athlete college students associate with meeting with a sport psychologist (Linder et al., 1991), Ravizza (1988) has clearly mentioned the practitioners' awareness of such negativity, at least as it existed in the late 1980's. In an effort to eliminate problems, Ravizza and Dorfman (1990) both suggested working very hard at gaining credibility prior to service provision. Ravizza recommends spending considerable time with the team prior to consultation. Furthermore, he suggests gathering as much information about the sport as possible, in order to increase sport-specific knowledge.

### **Conclusions on working with or through client expectations**

Examining literature in both counseling and sport psychology provides valuable insight into clients' expectations about counseling and sport psychology consulting and the effects those expectations can have on the counseling or consulting process. The practitioner's title and level of experience may play a role in a person's decision to seek counseling and to adhere to counseling techniques in the future. Clients may also be affected by other significant individuals' perceptions and expectations regarding counseling. In summary, counselors and consultants should be aware of the fact that clients enter into counseling with presuppositions and these expectations can have a major effect on the effectiveness of counseling. In order to provide optimal services

one must be aware of the expectations and work to debunk any falsely negative connotations regarding counseling or consulting; in doing this counselors and consultants can increase their effectiveness and ability to work with clients.

### **Data Collection**

There were two co-researchers in the current study (Dale, 1996). Both co-researchers were elite male tennis players. One (Chris) was thirty years old, Caucasian, and had been playing tennis for twenty-two years, mostly as a professional. He was recently retired from the professional circuit and had been using sport psychology services for six years (see Gentner, 2004, for a complete transcript of the interview with Chris). The second co-researcher (Brian) was twenty-two years old, Hispanic, and had been playing tennis for fifteen years. He was an NCAA Division I All-American who recently exhausted his eligibility. He had been using sport psychology services for 3 years.

Phenomenological interviews were the data collection method of choice for the study. Phenomenological interviews allow the researcher to "reveal the real essence of human experience" (Hatch, 2002 p. 30). All interviews began with demographic questions before the central phenomenological question was asked. The phenomenological question used was: "When you think about your experience with sport psychology, tell me what stands out for you?"

### **Data Analysis**

At the completion of the interviews, data were transcribed by the researcher. Data were analyzed through interpretive analysis. According to Hatch (2002), "Interpretation is about giving meaning to the data" (p. 180). Throughout the analysis the steps of interpretive analysis as outlined by Hatch

were followed. Each transcript was treated as its own case study and described in detail the lived experience of that individual. Steps of interpretive analysis were conducted on each individual transcript. The researcher then compared each co-researcher's experience attempting to find commonalities (Dale, 1996). After reviewing the memos and summaries, themes or "meaning units" were developed from significant entries (Coté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993). These formulated meanings were then put into clusters of themes or categories. It is believed that presenting major themes is a more reader-friendly method of reporting results. Therefore, themes are used as the major method of reporting the results of the current study.

## Results

### Introduction

The two elite tennis players' experiences with sport psychology seemed to be characterized by several main themes. These included having a present focus, happiness, building on positives, burnout, sport psychology techniques, and relationship with sport psychology consultant. Within the "present focus" theme, a sub-theme of dealing with distractions emerged. Another sub-theme, confidence, appeared under the major theme of "building on positives". A final sub-theme was identified under the major theme of "sport psychology techniques"; that sub-theme was visualization.

### Present Focus

It appears that both players were consistently working toward achieving a present focus during matches. Both players spoke to the importance of focusing on the time or task at hand and playing the match one point at a time.

*Once I was able to meet with Dr. W. and we were able to talk about it a*

*little more, I think I was able to focus on the time at hand, focus on closing out the match, I think that was the most important thing for me (Brian).*

Chris echoed these sentiments regarding the need for a present focus while abating all thoughts about outcomes or winning and losing.

*The idea for me was trying to become not result oriented, it was always staying in the now, the present, it wasn't focusing on the winning and losing (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 73).*

*In tennis, I tried not to focus on, "If you lose this match," I tried to focus on playing one point at a time and not if you lose this match it's the end of the world (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 77).*

One of the most important aspects of maintaining this present focus seemed to be the need to eliminate distractions on the court. Eliminating distractions appeared to be a key component to establishing a present focus.

*I think it's those people who can play the points one at a time, block out all, ultimately I guess in a nutshell it's your ability to be able to block out all the distractions. That's what makes the great ones good. They have this innate ability to block out what is important and what isn't important and I think that's ultimately how you succeed in life, you have the ability to focus (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 78).*

There also seemed to be a need to ignore any distractions related to an opponent's

ranking or record. Eliminating such thoughts proved to be another way to increase their focus on the present.

*One thing that I was able to learn was not focusing on the player but mainly focusing on their weaknesses and what I can do to, take their weaknesses and try to use them as my strengths. That's mainly just playing at that time, you know, playing at that time at hand and trying to do things where I can exploit their weaknesses more than everything else and not think about ranking or not think about how good they are (Brian).*

In summary, the ability to develop a present focus appeared to be quite salient to the players' experiences. Such focus allowed them to play their matches one point at a time, thus increasing their effectiveness. In order to maintain this present focus the players needed to eliminate distractions. These distractions included thoughts about winning and losing as well as thoughts about the ranking or record of the opponent. Overall, implementing a present focus into their competition seemed to be very important for both athletes.

### **Happiness**

Happiness was another theme that emerged from the players' experiences of sport psychology. Both players sought out the services of sport psychology consultants in some hope of becoming happier with their sport and their performance. They realized that in order to be effective they needed to really enjoy their sport.

*So we just tried to work on looking at it on a more positive outlook rather than, it's something, no so much it's something I have to do but it's*

*something I want to do and I think it's a big distinction between the two and it showed me that when you have a job you need to make sure you enjoy it cause if you have a job you don't enjoy you can run into those mental barriers (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 74).*

One of the methods used to improve satisfaction was the use of happy thoughts.

*One thing I was able to learn was how to use that positive energy and try to be a little more happy or think about something where I'm in a happier place (Brian).*

An additional method was focusing on the positive aspects of sport participation. To accomplish this, Chris focused on the positives of being a professional athlete.

*It was much more positive way of thinking, you know, a lot of people would crave to be in your position rather than be sitting behind a desk. And just try to really relish the fact that I was a professional athlete and I was making good money, you know you would never make this money shy of being a CEO or bigshot in a company. And just tried to really relish the fact that what I do for a living is unique, it's a great opportunity, and it's fun (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 74).*

In conclusion, the search for happiness within sport was a major theme of the athletes' experience. One purpose of seeking out a sport psychology consultant appeared to be an effort to discover, or rediscover, happiness within the sport of tennis. Enjoying the sport was an important element of effective performance for both athletes. Sev-

eral methods were employed to increase satisfaction. These included thinking about happy things and focusing on the positive aspects of being a professional athlete.

### **Building on Positives**

The process of building on positives seemed to play an important role in both players' experience. Positive performances were built upon to provide the framework for future performances.

*We could take that how you felt, and what positive things did you do to serve out the match. We could take that, those experiences, and apply them. We could take those positives and use them as a model for the whole match and use those same up-beat emotions that, staying in the present, one point at a time, we could use that as the standard model (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 76).*

Positive experiences and feelings were also used to build confidence. As previous successes were used to gain confidence for future competitions.

*The first time that I was able to do that, it was at NCAA's when I won probably one of the biggest matches that I could have ever won but, once you win those matches, or when you win a match like that, you know, the confidence is gonna be there, its' always gonna be there no matter what. You tell yourself, "I've won a big match you know I can do it again." And I think that's the most important thing for me just getting over that hump, I was able to get a lot more confidence (Brian).*

Positive performances were also used to help the players get through tough matches.

Identifying the positive feelings that led to effective performances allowed the athletes to recreate those feelings during tough matches.

*And build on the positives and kind of forget about the negative things, and we tried to focus on what I was feeling when I won this or what I was, how were my emotions when I served out the match. And we could take those positives and in turn use those as guides for when I got into a tough situation on the court (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 76).*

Positive experiences were extremely important for both players. Throughout their experiences with sport psychology they focused on positive experiences and built on them to aid future performances. In addition, positive experiences in the past were used to develop confidence and to help the players get through tough matches. In summary, a positive focus was an extremely salient part of their experience of sport psychology. This positive focus helped them prepare for future events as well as build confidence for future matches.

### **Burnout**

Both players mentioned burnout as a major component of their experience. Being highly competitive, they were under extreme pressure to practice and perform at a high level. This seemed to be one reason for burnout.

*It got to a point where I just hit a wall, I was training hard, you know, I was playing six hours a day. I just was not feeling comfortable playing it anymore. I didn't want to have to do it, I didn't want to have to grind day in and day out, I didn't want to have to do the work ethic (Brian).*

Burnout was also characterized by a loss of interest and enjoyment in the sport.

*And ultimately, I mean, there came a time when I just lost interest. I don't blame that on sport psychology I think there is such a thing as burnout when you're playing so hard (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 77).*

The loss of enjoyment seemed to be accompanied by a feeling of discomfort with the sport and with oneself.

*I didn't feel comfortable with myself, I didn't feel like I was in my element and I think that was something I didn't enjoy. It was a span of about three years where I didn't really enjoy it at all. And at that time, I mainly hit a wall. I pretty much said, "Ok, I just want to stop playing tennis" (Brian).*

In summary, both athletes experienced burnout at some point in their careers. This burnout was manifested through a lack of desire to continue playing and a lack of enjoyment of the sport. Both players cited long practice hours as a major factor in the development of burnout. Finally, in Brian's experience, sport psychology appeared to help him in his recovery from burnout while Chris noted that he felt his burnout was inevitable and sport psychology played no role in his decision to discontinue his professional career.

### **Sport Psychology Techniques**

As might be predicted, both players spoke about the use of sport psychology techniques in their experiences. The use of simple, well-explained techniques was important and desired.

*We tried to use different techniques, very simple almost child-like techniques, I just remember Doc as being, they were always very simple. For example, 1997, the year I was playing some really good tennis, we used what was called a toolbox, and the analogy behind that was, you went to Sears and you bought a little plastic toolbox and you put that toolbox in your bag when you went on the court. And on the changeover you would not allow your mind to think about negative things or things that had happened in the past to influence the match. Such as well you lost a big point so the match starts getting away from you, who was in the stands-the crowd, the weather, anything that was a variable that could affect the outcome of the match. With the idea being that the answers to all your problems were within that toolbox. And you'd sit down on the changeover and that toolbox would serve as a reminder, no different than if I went out there and could have read that on my wristband, something to trigger my head (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 72).*

Visualization was one of the major sport psychology topics discussed by both players. Visualization was used to prepare for future events, travel and opponents.

*Another concept that we worked on was I would tell the psychologist where I was going to play the next tournament. We'd sit in there and we'd try to visualize and feel what that tournament was gonna be like. I had played all these tournaments before so I could elaborate to him on what the environment was gonna be like and sometimes I even knew who*

*I was gonna play so we could visualize that and get kind of, so when I showed up for the tournament I had some idea on what I was gonna try to focus on that week (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 72).*

### **Increased confidence was another benefit of visualization.**

*On thing that I was able to work on with Dr. W. was using just a lot of visualization, you know closing my eyes and thinking about a match that I finished or that I played well throughout the whole match. I think it played a big role because any time I just went off and I thought about these matches, I felt like I was completely there (Brian).*

*In conclusion, the athletes preferred simple, easily understood techniques. Visualization seemed to be a technique that was common to both players. Visualization was used to build confidence as well as to prepare for future events.*

### **Relationship with Sport Psychology Consultant**

One final theme that appeared to be very salient for Chris was having a positive and effective relationship with your sport psychology consultant. Although this was not mentioned by Brian it was extremely important for Chris' experience. Chris mentioned the importance of developing a personal relationship with a consultant, allowing both parties to become familiar with each other on a personal level.

*I think it's important for the person you're talking to to know how you feel when you have a sense of balance and how you feel when you, when you're down and so those two things are very important and I think*

*it's very important that the psychologist knows how you feel when you're up and down and then I think he can get to know you on a more personal level and get to know how your inner emotions work when things are going poorly (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 71).*

He went on to discuss the importance of knowing your sport psychology consultant and finding someone who is a good fit for your personality.

*You have to get to know their personality and whether or not it's a fit. With me I was, you know I'm type A personality, I'm very regimented, hard worker, very dedicated, very cerebral. The guy I worked with is also extremely cerebral, a good thinker, but he did a good job of never letting me see him get upset, and he was always very, he had good balance and that was something that helped me because when I came to him I needed some balance. And he was able to provide that. So it's important that you get to know your sport psychologist on a personal level (Chris) (Gentner, 2004, p. 78).*

In summary, having a positive and personal relationship with a consultant was a major part of Chris' experience of sport psychology. He stressed the importance of getting to know the consultant on a personal level as well as allowing him or her to learn about you. He suggested the need for a balance between athlete and consultant for effective consulting.

### **Conclusion**

There are several factors that seem to characterize these athletes' experience of Sport Psychology. First, developing a present fo-

cus appeared to be very important to both athletes. This present focus allowed them to perform at a very high level during competition. A present focus was also very important for their ability to limit distractions. Playing each match one point at a time helped the players maintain their focus while limiting their distractions on the court.

The athletes also seemed to be searching for happiness within their sport. In both cases, their decision to seek consulting was in some small part due to their unsuccessful search for happiness. Both players realized that they performed at their best when they were happy and comfortable on the court.

The players' experience with sport psychology also seemed to be characterized by a focus on the positives rather than negatives. Positive performances were used as the basis for future performance preparation. In addition, the players used their previous positive performances to build confidence and help them get through tough matches.

One of the negative components of their experience was the concept of burnout. Both players acknowledged experiencing burnout at some point in their careers. This burnout was generally characterized by a lack of desire to put in the work needed to excel and a loss of comfort on the tennis court. For one competitor, Brian, sport psychology was

able to help him deal with his burnout in a positive manner. Chris, on the other hand, was unable to eliminate his burnout and retired from competitive tennis.

The use of sport psychology techniques was another salient concept that related to the players' experience of sport psychology. Simple, well-explained techniques were the most desirable. Chris, offered the example of a toolbox as a simple, easily-understood technique which he employed. Visualization seemed to be the most common technique used by the athletes. Visualization was used for, tournament, travel, opponent, and match preparation as well as to build confidence and comfort on the court.

The final theme that seemed to characterize the players' experience was having a positive, personal relationship with a consultant. In order to work most effectively, the athlete and consultant must become very familiar with each other's personalities. Personal knowledge of the other person is very important for both athlete and consultant. In addition, the athlete's and consultant's personalities must complement each other if the consultation process is to be effective. In summary, these tennis players' experiences with sport psychology were characterized by several main themes. Each of these played an important role in their experiences

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## Bringing out the Best in the Whole Child in a Day Care Setting

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### Abstract

My mission was to create a place for children and parents and teachers where everybody has a good feeling in their stomach when they arrived at the day care center and when they left for the day. After one year of hard, fun work I was nearly there. In this article I share a mental training program which I successfully introduced to children aged 3-6 at a children's daycare center in Sweden. I was free to do and create whatever I felt would be of most value for these children. For the first time in my life I had an opportunity to take all my thoughts about what children really need to learn in preschool, what they need to practice so they can manage well in life, and turn them into reality. An overview of the journey I followed is the focus of this paper.

The first time I came to “Barnens Dagis”, a children's daycare center, there was chaos, a sort of calm chaos, but still chaos. All the full time staff had quit at that time because of some disagreements with the parent group. The year was 1995. I had been working with children in my community since 1981 and I was really tired and frustrated with it. I rarely felt that my work made the difference I had hoped to make for the children. It just wasn't enough, no matter how hard I worked. Early in 1995 I had started an education program to become a Mental Trainer at the Scandinavian school of leadership. This was the step that was going to forever change my life and my attitude towards my profession as a teacher

(pedagogue), though I didn't know it yet. This educational experience made me reflect on what I had been doing in my work situation, what I really wanted to do and led me to applying for a new job as a preschool manager. I started on my 35th birthday, the 13th of November 1995.

The challenge with this job was to build a totally new concept. My workmates and I were free to do and create whatever we wanted for these children. I now had an opportunity to take all my thoughts about what children really need to learn in preschool, what they need to practice so they can manage well in life, and turn them into reality! I was in heaven. It was exactly what I was

longing for. I felt happy as an architect who just got an assignment to create his/hers dream house and a promise that the house would be built exactly like the plan (right from the blueprint).

There were three different parts that I wanted to build into the concept. There was the social skills - how I work together with myself and others. The Mental skills – how I think about myself and others and how I think about my possibilities. And the learning skills – what is my best way of learning and remembering and acting on the new acquisition of skills.

I was convinced that all three parts were necessary to create a childcare centered on the “whole child” perspective.

The tradition I had been working in had put a lot of effort in working with the social skills but almost nothing on the mental skills.

During my education in mental training it had become clear to me how important it is to understand the power of thoughts, and to recognize how thoughts influence in our well being. I felt like I had discovered the last piece of the puzzle, the one that had been lost for many years, that was necessary to make the puzzle complete. The importance of teaching the children about self-esteem, goal setting, attitude and self-control had become so obvious to me.

We decided to start from the beginning with Mental Training by systematically teaching the children physical and mental relaxation. The first goal was to teach them to lower their own body tension and in that way take the first step towards our bigger goal of making the children feel good and function well with themselves and with others. We designed a room at the preschool with a very high a level of coziness. A cozy corner with

the help of soft pillows, little mats or mattresses, soft blankets, a disco globe and a CD player and music for relaxation, classic music and exercises from my course in Mental training adapted to make appropriate for 3-6 year old children. Every day we had relaxation, massage and a nice rest in the afternoon. Very quickly The children very quickly began to long for this moment, especially those kids who where very physically active and very restless. This became their most cherished moment in the day!

The next natural step was to start training the kids in positive thinking about themselves. The goal was systematic training of self-esteem in a playful and fun way. Some of this was centered around reinforcing the solid ground each of us is standing on - the picture I have of myself and whom I am. We added positive thoughts during the relaxation, positive thoughts about themselves and about the rest of the day. The children left the relaxation sessions with a smile on their faces and with a good feeling inside. We could actually feel the positive atmosphere and knew that we were on the right path towards our long-term goal.

The first step with the children was in its place. The first change we focused on with ourselves (as educators) was to change our own attitude towards each other, the children and the parents. We worked a lot with developing a common language for what was Ok to say and do in front of the children in order to strengthen there self esteem. It was easy to take away a lot of things we used to say and do, that we noticed were not very good for the children to hear and see. We started to train ourselves to appreciate and praise ourselves, each other, and the children out loud, and as often as we could. It resulted in an immediate positive effect.!

We were surprised by the quick response this “little” change led to. The children started to behave differently and much positively towards each other. We were surprised, even though we worked with children, how fast they learned and accepted new and positive ideas.

We started a friendship theme that influenced everything we did with the children. They made their own friendship posters and decided together how they wanted to behave towards each other. They talked about what skills a really good friend had and what he or she did that made them such a good friend. The children really enjoyed the project. We talked, drew, and wrote down everything we talked about and actually filled the walls with the children’s words and pictures of good friendship.

The pictures worked as reminder of how we wanted to act towards each other. After a while the kids started to live their proclamation in an amazing way. They began to remind each other, and us as well, about what we had agreed on. They were discussing and arguing about the best way to be a friend. I remind you these children ranged in age from three to six. Even the youngest children enjoyed our cooperative work in shaping a positive environment that was growing in front of our eyes. At this moment we realized that we were building a new culture, a culture to grow in and to feel good in.

The next step was to start working with the children’s emotions in a more conscious way. Our goal was for the children to know about:

**MY OWN FEELINGS** – my different feelings and how they feel in me.

**OTHERS FEELINGS** – what feelings do others have and how do they feel.

**RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENCES**- when I do this - this happens. Do I want that to happen?

**ATTITUDE AND COMMUNICATION** – What do I want or think and how can I communicate to get it across or express it ?

**DIFFERENT TOOLS FOR SOLUTIONS IN A CONFLICT OR PROBLEM** – how to replace a negative behavior with a more positive one and creating more positive strategies.

As the start of this part of our work all our staff went to an educational workshop on Emotional intelligence. We wanted to be at the same level or on the same page when we started our work in this area with the children. As a result of this educational session we became very motivated and eager to start working in this area with the children.

The first step to work with my own feelings, we solved this by creating cards with symbols of all the feelings on it. Very simple symbol cards, with one card in one color, for each feeling expressed by a face. Not unlike the SMILEY faces. The children started their day with picking a card that best expressed how they felt at that moment. If they wanted to they could talk about the feeling and why they had it, but it was totally voluntarily. During the day they could get another feeling and change their card if they liked to. We had all the cards in a basket and the children could put them beside their own names on a big white board. That way they become aware of how they felt during the day and even practiced expressing their feelings in words. The children could see all the other children’s different feelings during the day and they talked a lot about it with each other. This automatically led us into the second step - others feelings.

Through using the cards the children learned to listen to each other and understand how different we could feel in the same situation. They learned that different things woke up different feelings within different persons. They discovered that we didn't get angry over same things, or happy, calm or sad for the same reasons. We were all different. This was the biggest insight in the group since we started our work. They started to get curious, and wanted to find out more about each other. This led to a new kind of respect for the individual within the group. It was amazing to see! We didn't have to say anything, it just happened.

One morning one child said to a little boy, who just got to the day care center, "John is in a bad mood right now so you better not disturb him". The other children already knew about John, but this new boy had not yet heard. Sometimes it was child himself/herself who said to his/ her friends: please leave me alone, I am not very happy right now and need a moment for myself. There is a very strong power in these words coming from a 4-year-old. We could see how the children enjoyed their own power to gain respect for who they were or what they were experiencing at that moment. To be able to tell the world people around them, this is me right now and this is what I need from you at this moment, was a totally new experience for most of them.

At this point in our day care center, I could really notice that the group started to function really well together, with less conflicts and definitely a lot more fun! They also began to feel more satisfied with themselves.

Every day, they were told by us and by their friends about good things they did and the nice skills they had developed. Every day we had a moment of touch through massage and they had learned how to relax their body

and their thoughts. They quickly learned to enjoy this moment.

They had learned to say good things to themselves about who they were and what their day was going to be like. They also knew a lot about their own feelings and their friends feelings, and knew what to do with them. At this time they also started to use their new skills at home, which led to a request from the parents to learn more about our work at the center.

The children who often got themselves into trouble with their friends had lots of opportunities to make good use of what they learned. We taught them to start thinking in a new way and to consider - what will happen if I do this? Do I want this to happen? What are the consequences? Can I handle the consequences?

The children listened to each other when they shared how they felt and reacted and in different conflict situations. They learned which child was sad because of certain things and who was angry for other reasons. The children who acted on impulse didn't really seem to understand why everybody gets so upset over it, or why a friend hits back. Sometimes they got very offended and they didn't really connect their own act with the result. When they started to understand the connection between their action and another person's reaction, it made a very big change for several children in our group. Suddenly they understood how things were connected. When I do this-that will probably happened-do I really want that? If not? What do I do then? And here we enter the last step in social-emotional development- I need to find and use some new good solutions for my old problems and conflicts to change my results in my relationships.

We started to create a number of new strategies for each child and we did it together with the group. It was really exciting to hear all good solutions that the children helped each other with. They had simple and smart ideas. I laughed at all hours we had been sitting in meetings, talking about certain special children and their problems, never thinking of the brilliant idea of simply asking the children what they thought about it. The children now very often find the best way for them or their friends to solve a problem.

The children in our group learned very quickly how to help each other move to successful solutions. It has been really gratifying to see this group of children use the simple tools we created together.

We let the children try many different things, and helped them to succeed in what they did and learn from every experience.

Our daily message to every child was: You can do it!

You are great just by being you! We really like you the way you are!

This is fun!

My mission was to create a place for children and parents and teachers where everybody has a good feeling in their stomach when they arrived at the day care center and

when they left for the day. After one year of hard, fun work I was nearly there.

Of course there were still problems and conflicts, they are a natural part of life, but we handled them much better now and did find win-win solutions. Through our positive efforts a very strong feeling of trust was created. No one was afraid to speak out and no one needed to defend their opinion. It was ok to think differently, we all different.

After two years of running our program, our first group of children left for school. Quite soon we got feedback from the teachers who wondered what we had done with these children. They were different from other children in some special ways. They were very good friends, they were natural and very positive leaders and they always had a lots of good solutions to suggest when there were any problems or conflicts in their new classes.

This was our reward! And our proof of success! The work at this preschool ended for me when my family moved to Spain for a year in June 2002 but the work I did there together with my workmates, the children and their parents, is still alive through my book “ZAPP,” which I wrote to document what we did and make it available to anyone interested.

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## Comprehensive Sports Psychological Services for the Junior “A” Hockey Leagues in Canada

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### ABSTRACT

The Canadian Junior “A” Hockey League includes ten leagues that span across Canada. Junior hockey players face challenges during the developmental years that can have far-reaching implications. Most of these teams do not have access to sport psychologists, or high school, college or university counselors. There is a need for junior “A” hockey players to have access to positive and informed psychological services to enhance performance and their overall well-being. Currently there is no comprehensive sport psychology program in place for developing young athletes in hockey or any other sport that we know of. In this article, a brief literature review is provided with regard to sport psychology and sport counselling. Recommendations for increasing sport psychological services—for enhancing performance as well as overall well-being for individual athletes, teams, and the league—within junior “A” hockey, and the evaluation of services are also discussed.

Hockey is seen as a major part of the definition of “Canada” at home and abroad. Canadians are proud of our national sport and this pride was seen at the 2002 Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, with the gold medals being brought home by the men’s and women’s hockey teams. While National Hockey League teams struggle financially to survive in Canada, junior “A” leagues are plentiful and still produce some of our best

hockey players. This article briefly describes the junior “A” population. A brief literature review is provided with regard to sport psychology and counselling available for this population as well as the need to have access to psychological services during a critical period. Recommendations for increasing sport psychological services within junior “A” hockey, cost issues, and the evaluation of services are also discussed. Finally, the

need for further research is presented to increase the effectiveness of sport psychology service delivery.

### **Canadian Junior “A” Hockey League**

Whereas research has shown that elite hockey players (National Hockey League, Western Hockey League, and Canadian Interuniversity Sport) have benefited from the services of sport psychology consultants (Botterill, 1990; Halliwell, 1990; Drinnan, 2002; Dunn & Holt, 2003), psychological services available to junior hockey players are notable absent. The Alberta Junior Hockey League (“AJHL”) is a junior “A” league that is a member of the Canadian Junior A Hockey League, which had 10 member leagues encompassing 137 teams in 2003-04 (CJAHL, 2003). The AJHL consisted of 15 teams for the 2002-2003 season and 16 teams for the 2003-2004 season located in communities throughout the province of Alberta. The players ranged from 14 to 21 years of age, with the majority being from 17 to 20 years old.

### **Players' challenges at a critical developmental age**

Many challenges and potential problems faced by athletes have been described by researchers as well as the media. The potential issues that junior hockey players may face include leaving the family, hometown, and friends at school during their developmental years (Clark, 1980; Oliver, 1990); facing athletic injuries and its psychological consequences (Amato, 1995; Elkin, 1981; Pollock, 1956; Danish, 1986; Larson, Starkey, & Zaichkowsky, 1996; Rotella, 1984; Lewis-Griffith, 1982; Pelham & Holt, 1999; Rotella, 1984; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998; Williams, Rotella, & Heyman, 1998); abusing alcohol (Desjardins, 1991; Leichliter, Meilman, Presley, & Cashin, 1998; Samples, 1989); coping with the death

of a teammate, friend, or family member (Heil, 1993; Henschen & Heil, 1992; Karofsky, 1990; Vernaccia, Reardon, & Templin, 1997); not realizing the dream of making the National Hockey League (Desjardins, 1991; Martens & Cox, 2000); being in the public spotlight (Benedict & Klein, 1997); experiencing violent and aggressive behaviour off the ice (Bloom & Smith, 1996; Peters, 1999; Robinson, 1998; Tyler & Duthie, 1980; Seagrave, Moreau, & Hastad, 1985); and having suicidal thoughts (Owens, 2002).

In his study, Robinson (2003) looked at the Alberta Junior Hockey League head coaches' (n = 13) perceptions of the current referral and collaboration system with sports psychologists as well as ways of improving and thus increasing the referral and collaboration between these two fields. Robinson's study focused on the developmental ages of junior “A” hockey players and found that playing junior hockey adds new stress to the psyche (e.g., being cut from the team, reaching the final year of eligibility or retirement, having addictions, facing performance pressure, etc.) during a critical developmental process (Cockerill, 1995; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Remer, Tongate, & Watson, 1978). Hockey players heading towards the junior “A” level are likely dominant players at the minor hockey level, which reinforces them to apply themselves to hockey skills and tasks which go beyond those required to play the game for fun or enjoyment (Erikson, 1963). This additional motivation may also cause players to be extremely vulnerable, sometimes tolerating very negative situations (e.g. Sheldon Kennedy' sexual abuse).

At this age, junior hockey players are going through a developmental stage of identity versus role confusion, in which individuals are preoccupied with how others perceive them as compared with how they feel about

themselves. For instance, many hockey players identify themselves as “John the hockey player” versus “John who plays hockey”; this narrowed identity can have devastating consequences when the player has to deal with injuries, team cuts, or transition out of the sport. Unfortunately, many athletes resist making the distinction because they feel that identifying themselves with their sport is required to keep motivations high, and that using fear of failure is needed to train rigorously and achieve success.

Robinson (2003) found that coaches are in favor of increasing the involvement of psychologists for the support of these players. Indeed, all coaches indicated they felt that a player's performance was significantly affected by his psychological health and that healthy individuals improve team chemistry. Moreover, 85% of the coaches agreed that psychologists are needed to address serious psychological issues and reported wanting to see more collaboration with sport psychologists. The coaches also felt a need for increased education with respect to sport psychology in junior “A” hockey to address the negative stigma attached to psychology and to encourage the acceptance of admitting problems in the world of hockey. This is consistent with previous research on college student athletes (Broughton, 2001; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Dwyer & Cummings, 2001; Ferrante & Etzel, 1991; Hinkle, 1990, 1994; Martens & Cox, 2000; Miller & Wooten, 1995; Petitpas, Bundtrock, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 1995). Junior “A” hockey players would therefore benefit from learning healthy coping strategies for dealing with the added pressure of playing junior hockey, going to school, leaving home, and going through developmental changes at this critical age. Counseling can 1) help players learn skills during their hockey career and transfer them to all

areas of their lives (Desjardins, 1991; Robinson, 2003), and 2) assist with the emergence of females into junior hockey by dealing with gender issues, communication styles, or sexual issues.

### **Sport psychology and clinical counselling**

We would like to discuss some distinctions between sport psychology and clinical counselling. North American sport psychologists typically have physical education or human kinetics training, with graduate degrees in area of sport psychology and performance enhancement. Some may not be qualified or prepared to work with an individual's psycho-emotional difficulties, personality problems, or traumatic experiences (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). In contrast, the majority of European sport psychologists have advanced training in clinical psychology or psychiatry and have little or no training in the psychology of personal excellence. Sweden stands as an exception to this and has a very active and applied performance and enjoyment based model of mental training. In North America, sport psychology has been developed within physical education, kinesiology, and leisure studies departments. Botterill, a sport psychologist who worked with professional hockey players, described the features and characteristics of consulting a professional hockey team: “... the role of the sportpsych consultant was that of a ‘stretch coach’—to help identify, develop, and apply mental skills that might enhance performance and help people come closer to their potential” (1990, p. 359). Botterill stated that it is critical to refer the hockey player to a clinical/counselling psychologist whenever the player's needs begin to exceed the consultant's qualifications. This is also echoed by Halliwell (1990) who views the sport psychologist's role as a mental skills coaches who focuses mainly on enhancing

performance and enjoyment, as opposed to focusing on off-ice problems.

Counselling or clinical psychology coursework and training has been increasingly encouraged for students interested in sport psychology (Petrie & Watkins, 1994). Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1992) suggested that “Training in counselling strategies could enable a coach, counsellor, teacher, or sport psychologist to better understand the specific life event experienced by the athlete and implement an appropriate strategy or make an appropriate referral” (p. 407). The optimal situation for a counselling psychologist is to also have basic knowledge of the sport sciences, the psychology of excellence, as well as experience in sport and working with athletes in a sporting environment (Hinkle, 1994; Miller & Wooten, 1995; Nejedlo, Arrendondo, & Benjamin, 1985; Petrie et al.; Poczwardowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998).

Research has been conducted in universities with regard to counselling athletes. There is a need for counselling professionals who can address the psycho-emotional needs of student-athletes by understanding and being sensitive to the problems of this population, as well as for interventions that are appropriate for student-athletes (Balague, 1999; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Danish & Hale, 1981; Hinkle, 1994; Ward, 1998). Indeed, Botterill (1990) reinforces the fact that “... what is happening away from the rink can be every bit as important as what is happening in training, preparation, and competition” (p. 359).

If a “sport psychologist” or a professional service provider is expected to help with enhancing the performance of individual athletes, coaches and the team, and to intervene with troubled athletes, he or she needs appropriate knowledge, training and experi-

ence in performance enhancement, sport and sport sciences, as well as appropriate clinical and/or counselling training. Another obvious option is for qualified professionals in each of these areas to be ready and available to provide quality services to athletes and coaches in the area of their primary training. The overall service objectives incorporate holistic qualities that may fall under categories such as enhancing performance, teamwork and personal joy, as well as attending to personal needs or problems that are affecting people and performance. This approach may allow a professional to assist athletes through a better understanding of their personality, their motivational and philosophical foundations, as well as their psychological skills and adversity coping strategies (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996).

### **Recommendations for Increasing Sport Psychological Services Within Junior “A” Hockey**

In Calgary, Alberta, the National Sport Academy focuses on elite hockey players specifically to, “Inspire passion for the game of hockey while developing character for the game of life” (National Sport Academy, 2003). The program provides a unique learning environment for students in grades 7 to 12 in which academics, hockey skills, life skills, and hockey specific high performance training are focused on and encouraged. However, 14 teams in the AJHL are located outside of Calgary, many of which are in rural communities. There are also many players who do not have access to high school counselors or teachers who are knowledgeable in sport psychology. The holistic development of the individual athlete during these developmental years is a real concern for the coach, athletic support staff, and family.

The AJHL coaches have provided valuable suggestions regarding the current level of referral and collaboration with psychologists and how this process could be improved (Robinson, 2003). The results suggest that there is a significant need for meaningful psychological services to players. Providing these services would be consistent with the AJHL's statement,

The Alberta Junior Hockey League is dedicated to furnishing its athletes with the best available opportunities for future development and growth. Our League supports its players through assistance in their academic, athletic and personal lives throughout their pursuit of individual goals. (AJHL, 2003)

The AJHL and the game of hockey are changing. Sport psychology is becoming a normal and expected aspect of elite levels of sport, as shown by the Kamloops Blazers (Western Hockey League) having hired a full-time sport psychologist to work with the players (Drinnan, 2002). Players and parents will soon expect that there will be opportunities in the AJHL for mental training with increased attention on the holistic development of the player.

### **A comprehensive program**

Hiebert, Collins, and Robinson (2001) described how the comprehensive guidance and counselling ("CGC") movement began as a way of addressing the whole-person needs of students in the school population. This model rides the cutting edge in school programming with the emphasis on defining health and well-being positively and holistically. Collins and Hiebert (1999) suggested how academic success is affected by emotional, physical, and social well-being and proposed that more needs to be done to address the student's academic and personal needs from a proactive, comprehensive, systemic perspective. Hiebert (2002) further

described how schools can assist students to deal with change, focus on the journey of career development, find meaning and passion in their pursuits, effectively manage educational opportunities, learn networking skills, and learn how to manage their self-talk so that they can be more self-supporting and positive to themselves.

A comprehensive model can apply to junior "A" players where performance is inevitably affected by many factors. Additionally, the AJHL population includes many players who are still attending high school and fall into the developmental population included in the comprehensive guidance and counselling movement. A comprehensive program for the AJHL would mean that the program would be an integral part of the league's total commitment to players' academic, athletic, and personal lives. The proactive and preventative services that could be offered to teams or with individual players include mental training that enhances performance (e.g., distraction control, confidence building, etc.), psycho-education that involves learning skills for academic success and career development (e.g., time management, study skills, etc.), career counselling/life planning and transitional adjustment for players leaving junior hockey (e.g., transferring strengths learned in hockey to other occupations, etc.), dealing with emotional, social, and personal issues (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse, performance anxiety, etc.), as well as counselling to deal with crisis situations that do arise (e.g., deaths, suicidal thoughts, bus accidents, etc.). Other services that can be offered to coaches include: team building activities (Salminen, & Luhtanen, 1998), communication skills, getting the best from players, goal setting, learning from setbacks, understanding the developmental ages of these players, as well as many other issues.

The Developmental-Educational Intervention model of sport psychology is similarly based on a framework that can be used to enhance athletes' performance both inside and outside sports (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1992). The Life Development Intervention ("LDI") emphasizes continuous growth and change, across biological, social, and psychological domains and requires a multidisciplinary study of behaviour, development, and change. Danish, Petitpas, and Hale described how change results from life situations or a *critical life event* that athletes may experience such as adjusting to higher levels of competition, injuries, being traded, retirement, etc.: "The intervention agent, or the provider of LDI services, is called a life development intervention specialist. The training necessary to become an LDI specialist is multidisciplinary, with roots in counselling, psychology, and the sport sciences" (p. 407). Similar to the CGC model that has been shown to work in Alberta schools, the LDI specialist "...teaches others, individually or in groups, to set goals, identify and overcome roadblocks, and reach for their goals by developing new skills, acquiring new knowledge, learning to take risks, and developing effective social supports" (p. 409). Several individuals trained in the different disciplines may work together to provide a comprehensive program across junior "A" hockey leagues.

The implementation of a program for the league requires a comprehensive needs assessment early in the program development that results in forming the basis of program planning. Robinson's (2003) study sought out to identify high-priority needs, available resources, what is working and what is not in the current referral and collaboration process, and what needs to be improved. The dynamic process of designing a com-

prehensive sport psychology program that can apply to the AJHL involves assessing needs, determining resources, defining expectations, stating expected player competencies, defining strategies to address needs, preparing a Sport Psychology Program Plan ("SPPP"), communicating the SPPP to all members of the junior community, assessing the SPPP, and establishing a collaborative committee (e.g., involving representatives from the league, counselling professionals, etc.) (Alberta Education, 1995).

The findings of Robinson's (2003) study contribute to understanding the importance of providing services that can be tailored to each individual team. The service provider must be familiar with junior "A" hockey as well as meet the team's needs. This may require a collaborative agreement that may include having the sport psychologist involved on retainer for the team, continual involvement, weekly involvement, or monthly involvement. Partnerships may be developed by sports psychologists providing information and marketing the availability to work with athletes, providing information to the league and sport bodies such as Hockey Alberta, and solving the time and cost problem.

### **Cost Issues**

A comprehensive program is needed to inform coaches about psychologists with a sport background that are available in their area, as well as what financial coverage players are eligible for through the league, team, or their parents. This information should be gathered at training camps at the beginning of the year. A comprehensive program will attend to the needs that are identified within each individual team; however, cost effectiveness is a concern that must be addressed. A collaborative agreement between the AJHL and service providers can be reached in regards to financial

compensation for sport psychological services. Indirect payment situations are where parents may have plans that include psychological/counselling services that cover their children up to 21 years of age (A. Freeson, Alberta Blue Cross, personal communication, August 12, 2002).

Direct payment is an option where organizations such as the Alberta Blue Cross can provide supplementary health coverage for services not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. Alberta Blue Cross could potentially cover AJHL players with psychological services that are marketed in conjunction with a standard health plan costing around \$2.00/month per player (A. Freeson, Alberta Blue Cross, personal communication, August 12, 2002). Thus, the league could possibly provide coverage for the players. This may be more proactive and cheaper than paying for crisis situations after they have already occurred. Having a proactive psycho-educational approach may even prevent these problems from happening.

Neff (1990) discussed a model of providing a specialized employee assistance program and offered three areas of service (the athlete's sport performance, personal counselling, and psychological services to address the organization) to a professional sport organization. Neff found that personal counselling was the most used service and the most effective. Psychological services were also beneficial for team meetings and group work by enhancing cohesion and communication between players, coaches and players, and by keeping the team focused on team goals. Neff also suggested that drug and alcohol education must be ongoing to prevent this problem.

### **Evaluation**

A comprehensive sports psychology program requires having a staff of professionals

who are trained to meet the needs of this specific population. The comprehensive services would demand there be particular psychologists who have specialized training such as the LDI specialists described by Danish, Petitpas, and Hale, (1992). For example, the service may have different psychologists to provide crisis, educational, mental training, and personal counselling. The services could be evaluated through an input-process-outcome framework (Ernst & Hiebert, 1998; Ernst & Hiebert, 2002; Gabor & Grinnel, 1994; Hiebert, 1994). This business paradigm is suited to human services and thus defines these services as products. The components of system requirements, inputs, processes, and outcomes can apply to the junior "A" population.

System requirements refer to things such as: office ambiance, service boundaries, service modality, complexity and intensity of service, innovation of service delivery, program structure, and staffing models (Ernst & Hiebert, 2002). A program that meets the needs of the AJHL requires information on the availability of psychologists with a sport background who are willing and able to provide services to coaches and players. Where there is a lack of available sport psychologists, such as in rural communities, telephone consultations or Internet communication may assist coaches/players and psychologists to discuss concerns and set up meetings. This information may be provided for each team at the beginning of the year. The answers of who, what, where, when, and how these services are used may need to be tailored based on the individual needs of each team.

Program inputs refer to the resources, client characteristics, design features, program objectives, and client goals (Ernst & Hiebert, 2002). The program inputs would require a collaborative agreement with the

AJHL and the sports psychology program initiative that provides a guiding mission statement as well as the list of services that will be offered.

Communication and a good relationship appear to be vital in successful collaboration between professional service providers and coaches. A comprehensive service can provide coaches with information on the availability of psychologists/mental trainers/counselors in the area with an opportunity for partnerships that center on a clear understanding with each other that involves trust and respect. The ethical guidelines and procedures of signed consent and what information coaches want to receive as well as preferences of how that information is communicated can be worked out with respect to respecting individual preferences for confidentiality.

Services could include mental training, personal counselling, crisis counselling, educational and career counselling, as well as psycho-educational services that are proactive and comprehensive to meet the needs of coaches, players, and teams.

These types of services will allow players to develop healthier self-images and learn skills in identifying, using, and transferring the life skills they already possess to future endeavors (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1992). There is a need for systematic evaluation of mental skills training programs and of the well-being of junior hockey players. This is another aspect of program development that can be collaboratively agreed upon with each individual team.

In order to meet most effectively the needs of individual teams in the AJHL it is recommended that sport psychologists find out what each team needs, design a product that will meet that need, address that need,

measure the degree to which needs have been met, and inform stakeholders of these results. This definition follows the program development approach of most comprehensive guidance and counselling programs (Ernst & Hiebert, 2002).

Hiebert (2002) provided an extensive list of research that shows how schools that adopt a mandate of fostering student development in a comprehensive and collaborative manner experience greater student academic achievement, reduced drop-out rates, lower absenteeism, reduced student alienation, reduced incidence of smoking and drinking, a more positive school climate and greater satisfaction with school, greater student participation in school programs, increased student participation in activities that enhance psychological and social health, increased aspirations for postsecondary education, stronger feelings of safety and belonging, perceive their peers as better behaved, report their school experiences as more relevant and useful, and indicate that the quality of their education is better.

Our personal experience in hockey leads us to believe that this type of comprehensive program, one which allows for flexibility to meet the team and individual needs, is needed. Our experience of being coached by six different coaches at the junior “A” level as well as the coaches’ responses in Robinson’s (2003) study clearly indicate that services must be comprehensive due to the variation of what the coaches feel is needed and what services will work best for their team.

The outcomes of a successful program will not only contribute to enhanced performance of players, teams, and the league, but will also lead to monetary benefits for some players and coaches, as well as preventative measures which decrease costs of reacting to

crisis situations that occur. The AJHL can also enhance its reputation by showing parents, fans, scouts, and the rest of the hockey community their true commitment to the players.

### **Need for Further Research**

The AJHL service recipients will be primarily players; however, coaches indicated that they would use consultation with sport psychologists as well (Robinson, 2003). Sport psychology programs must have the support of the coaches (Andersen, Densen, Brewer, & Van Raalte, 1994; Brewer, 2000; Van Raalte, 1998). Further research must look at the perceptions of the players and coaches and what they need from these services.

Parents, owners, and management should also be considered for further research. Hiebert et al. (2001) suggested that if an initiative such as a comprehensive guidance and counselling program is committed to a collaborative, bottom-up, comprehensive approach, all stakeholders have a part in deciding on program priorities. “Marketing within a comprehensive guidance and counselling context means involving stakeholder groups in the strategic planning processes and communicating results to all stakeholder groups” (Ernst & Hiebert, 2002, p. 80).

Further research is also needed to evaluate program effectiveness in order to identify areas for refinement, as well as new areas of service that can benefit players, coaches, and teams in junior hockey. These recommendations have focused on the AJHL; however, others leagues across Canada in other coun-

tries may also benefit from research and the implementation of programs that will benefit those playing the game of hockey during these developmental years. There are also many other sports that involve elite athletes who are developing through these years such as gymnastics, track and field, baseball which could benefit from some of these services. By gathering information from all stakeholders involved (i.e., parents, players, coaches, management, league representatives, etc.), they will likely take on a more active interest or role in the program development, program implementation and evaluation. (Hiebert et al., 2001).

### **Conclusion**

There is a need for junior “A” hockey players to have access to positive and informed psychological services to enhance performance and their overall well-being. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive program in place at the present time for an entire league of developing hockey players or league of developing athletes in any other sport, that we are aware of. A comprehensive sport psychology program would provide the league, coaches, players, and parents with a valuable much-needed service. This broad service would provide sport psychology information and consulting to improve performance, a proactive and preventative psycho-education for coaches and players, and individual counselling and crisis intervention. There are many good reasons to collectively begin moving in this direction.

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## **The Coach as an Asset in the Business Setting: No Brain No Gain**

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### **Abstract**

Managers with a coaching approach to leadership or management reach higher goals than other leaders. My research with companies in the business context show that companies that use a communicative coaching approach have increases in productivity and sales of 20 % and at the same time a reduction in sick leaves and turnovers of employees. Observers and employees also report improvements in work climate, team cohesion, team work and personal growth. This article outlines an effective coaching approach to leadership and research findings related to this approach. This research was done over a period of 5 years of action research and through interviews in eight organizations

### **What makes companies excellent?**

Going in to my research in the business setting, I had some questions I wanted to answer about what makes successful companies successful.

Is it possible to identify one or more reasons for the success (success in form of improvements, innovation or productivity) of the studied companies?

Is communicative action based on a coaching approach part of the studied organizations way of planning and acting?

If communicative action based on a coaching approach is part of the organizations

way of planning and acting, is it possible to identify pre-requisites for that occurrence?

If communicative action based on a coaching approach is part of the organizations way of planning and acting, what are the effects of that on the organization?

### **Method**

This research was done over a period of 5 years of action research and through interviews in eight organizations. At the end of that period, fifteen individuals from the “more successful” companies were interviewed more thoroughly. These interviews were open-ended and based on a simple interview guide to help the researcher keep

asking questions that were related to the research questions.

### Theory

Habermas (1984, 1987) presented a theory of communicative action which is the only action theory I discovered where people are not seen as instruments or machines. In communicative action, openness and dialogue are ways of reaching understanding, planning and striving for consensus with the purpose of coordinating action. This theory is interesting because if it “holds up” it can explain a coaching approach in the view of managers as well as in the view of teams.

### Business Coaching

A coaching approach to management aims to support and, challenge, stimulate, encourage and help people to reach insights and take responsibility for their own performance and development, and through dialogue, understanding and participation reach agreements, formulate, coordinate and execute action plans.

Coaching is based on conversations or dialogues between coach and coachee or teams in a result oriented environment. The coach tries to help the coachee to reach insights (about self or tasks) mainly by asking questions. But also by listening, reflecting or giving feedback, information, instructions or advice that helps the coachee to develop knowledge or skills.

Goal setting is also an important part of the cooperation between coach and coachee to help the coachee optimize and develop performance.

*Dialogue is here defined as a conversation distinguished by openness and where all opinions and proposals are considered. All participating members (of team or organization)*

*are involved, preferably actively, seeing each other as equals, even though everyone has different competencies and some relevant experience or ability to take relevant knowledge into or out of the dialogue (Gustavsen, 1990).*

*Openness also means that all team roles can be questioned, even leaders roles, to give space to develop these roles. Disunity is allowed, which means that the participants can agree that they can't reach an agreement and that the disunity can be bridged through compromises to reach agreements that can lead to action.*

A coaching approach to leadership also involves coaching individuals and teams.

*Coaching is based on a dialogue between coach and coachee (or team) in a productivity oriented setting. The coach aims to assist, support and encourage the coachee or team through various techniques and methods, to do the following (Jones, 2000; Skiffington, 2000).*

- Reach an increased self awareness mentally, socially and regarding the task
- Learn and develop knowledge and skills
- Optimise and develop performance

### Results

In the studied organizations the respondents pointed out the change in leadership, from a traditional leadership style to coaching, as one of the most important reasons for their success. Other reasons, such as production principles, new tools were also mentioned. But the main “secret” that the respondents,

both managers and employees, saw as paving their way to success was the coaching approach in leadership. Not only did we find that communicative action and a coaching approach to leadership was present, but it was the main secret for the success according to the respondents.

### **Points of departure for a coaching approach to leadership**

- Respect for the individual “Go and see” – be present
- Approach the person that the “situation” concerns – ask questions
- Talk with people not to them – have a dialogue
- Involvement in planning and decision making (takes you farther than you think)
- Equality – no prestige
- Cooperation
- Create resources
- Support individuals and teams in discussions, decision making and daily tasks
- Follow up, show interest and help
- Develop your own and coachees social competencies
- Support responsibility taking
- Manage new and strange situations

### **Coaching as leadership**

In the studied organizations respondents said:

*“Going away from a traditional leadership, where we gave directions and the position was important, was hard. Coaching demands a management style and leadership that is very*

*important. It is different from traditional leadership, it is more difficult and demands another role from today’s managers and leaders”.*

What makes the “new” leadership – coaching – harder is partly that managers no longer can do as they have been used to doing. It takes a lot of learning, reflection and energy to develop and improve as a coaching manager. To let go of prestige, to let go of tasks that are better handled by the teams, to let go of an instrumental view of employees. Together it can take its toll on the traditional manager.

The interesting part is that when managers have learned and grown in to a coaching approach, leadership becomes easier. The coach does not have to make all decisions by him or herself. It is not as lonely, decisions taken are usually better in both quality and acceptance. Of course, since those affected by the decision have been involved in the decision making.

The coaching manager gets more time to do the “stuff” that management team members complain about not having time to do, like strategic planning and hopefully coaching their co-workers.

In one of the studied organizations an upside down pyramid symbolizes the total change in attitude toward the role of the managers. This paradigm shift has meant a real change in better in daily life for both managers and employees.

An increase in awareness of what a coaching approach to leadership could mean to the business is needed. Managers need training and with it they can develop into better coaches. This is something through which they themselves, their coworkers and their business results, can all win.

## A coaching results and balance sheet

Costs:	Revenues:	Assets:	Symbolic capital:
<u>Time for:</u> Changes Learning (new skills and insights...) Meetings: Planning Development Quality... "Creating acceptance" Production changes (in products or services) <u>Investments in:</u> Training / Education New tools/ machines.. IT-support Localities Recruitment	<u>Soft values:</u> <i>Increase in team spirit</i> <i>Increase in work climate</i> <i>"Broader acceptance"</i> <i>Increase in motivation</i> <i>Increase in work satisfaction</i> <u>"Hard" values:</u> <i>Increase in quality</i> <i>Increase in problem solving</i> <i>Increase in deliveries in time</i> <u>Results:</u> <i>Increase in productivity with 20%</i> <i>Decrease in sick leave with 50% (from 9 - 4,5%)</i> <i>Decrease in turnover from between 25 - 50% the last ten years to 6%!!</i> <i>Increase in sales 20%</i>	<u>Competence assets:</u> Personal competence Social capital Human capital Strategic competence <u>Trust assets:</u> Trust Respect Responsibility Understanding <u>Behavior assets:</u> Information Cooperation Involvement Co-decision making Influence/Initiative Planning Mastery goals Measuring goals Visualizing (processes) <u>Leadership assets:</u> Coaching - communicative action Value oriented coaching Motivating leadership	Common competence generated in the organization Routines and systems (modules and processes) Culture (positive preconceptions toward - team work, involvement etc.) Structure ( Effectiveness in Communication "roads" etc) <u>Symbolic &amp; trust debts</u> (long term): Negative preconceptions - culture Mistrust / low respect etc Traditional leadership Ineffective structures, routines & systems <u>Behavioral debts (short term):</u> Lack of information Internal competition Lack of involvement Diffuse goals/ lack of goals Lack of follow up/ measurement

The coaching result and balance sheet covers a lot of "area". In this paper I will only develop some examples from the research done.

### Assets

Assets in organizations today are not only in the form of capital, machines or products ready for delivery. Instead many companies are referring to the employees as their main asset (even though few companies act as they really see the human capital as their main asset).

### Social capital and EQ

Social capital or social competence is defined as the ability to work together toward common purposes or goals, which are dependent on a degree of trust (Fukuyama, 1995).

A basic attitude of unselfishness, openness to proposals and to solving problems together, gives better results and increases in quality for both the individual and the teams.

*"The social competence are a pre-disposition to get access to your formal competence. It is much more important..."*

*"If a team is to work well, you need to be open to each other. At the same time you have to have a focus on the task, to try to solve task oriented problems and also if necessary solve internal problems in the team."*

### Respect for the individual

The human and social capital are the starting point for building and getting respect,

something that is central to the views of respondents in the studied organizations.

*“It is like this, in the end we have come to the understanding that the people on the line that are doing the work every day are the ones that are best at it.”*

*“Everybody, regardless of where they work, have important information, important knowledge and the organization has to take care of that.”*

“You get attention, credit for what you do, you are taken seriously, others listen to what you say...”

“We have respect for each other, we know there is knowledge that maybe you don’t have yourself. And if you are always met and meet with respect... then the climate will be good.”

Trust is being built through the showing of respect, and trust is a necessity for getting from a hierarchy to a “flatter” structure (Fukuyama, 1995). It seems though that it is not the hierarchy or structure itself that is most important. It seems to be the mental attitude and respect for the individual that leads to a more equal view on planning, decision making and action that are of most importance. The views on equality, cooperation, involvement, information and coaching as an important approach to leadership can be pointed out as pre-requisites for communi-

cative action and coaching in the studied organizations.

### **No brain no gain**

One of the main reasons for taking a coaching approach to leadership is to get access to, or a better use of individuals knowledge, skills and initiative. And it is the proposals and ideas from people at all levels and all different areas that have led to the successful improvements in production, products and services of the studied organizations.

Some of the results or revenues that these organizations have reached from communicative action and positive coaching are as follows:

- Increase in productivity with 20% (Industry)
- Decrease in sick leave of 50%, from 9% to 4.5%. (Industry)
- Decrease in turnover from between 25 - 50% the last ten years to 6%! (Industry)
- Increase in sales 72% and 20% (Sales Companies)
- Increase in production of 60% with only 5% more manpower (Industry)
- Increase in work force by 15% with better health care and shorter times in hospital beds as result (Hospital)

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## What Mental Skills Ironman Triathletes Need and Want

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Karine Grand'Maison, LL.B, LL.L, is currently finishing her master's degree in Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa under the supervision of Terry Orlick. For her thesis, she examines the psychological skills and mental preparation strategies used by top Ironman triathletes. Karine is a competitive triathlete, is training for her second Ironman triathlon, and has an interest in working with elite athletes and provides mental training tips to triathletes and other endurance athletes at <http://www.imahead.com>

### Abstract

Ultra endurance triathlon is a very demanding sport that is increasingly popular among amateur athletes. With the help of an online tool, the author surveyed several triathletes in the Ottawa region, known for its large community of multi-sport athletes. This article presents the sport of Ironman triathlon and discusses what triathletes' motivations to train and to compete are, as well as the challenges, fears and needs they are facing. Although two thirds of the respondents reported that their knowledge of sport psychology was limited or inexistent, 97% of triathletes said they believed *strongly* or *very strongly* that mental skills were key to success. Moreover, the survey revealed two deep-rooted myths with respect to the use of sport psychology. Ironman triathletes' issues clearly reflect what a lot of performers want and what sport psychology consultants should be providing—practical and effective guidelines that work in the real world of performance.

Triathlon is an exciting and relatively new sport that came to life 25 years ago in Hawaii. The legend alleges that in the midst of an argument concerning who was in better shape, swimmers, runners or cyclists, John Collins had the somewhat novel idea of solving the matter by putting together the Waikiki Rough Water Swim, the Round the Island Bike race and the Honolulu Marathon, all in one single race. It was at that moment that the Ironman<sup>®</sup> triathlon (or ultra endurance triathlon), an ultimate test of human physical and mental capabilities, was born (IronmanLive, 2004).

Do you have a friend who is a triathlete? If so, chances are she is an open and sociable person, who enjoys the camaraderie experi-

enced with fellow triathletes. She likely thrives on being able to try new things, but needs discipline and structure to maximize her chances of success. Chances also are that your friend is single-minded in her approach to challenges and in her pursuit of success, and that she sets high goals for herself. It seems that "triathlon appeals to people who are passionate, obsessed, focused, compulsive and ambitious [...] and who understand that [they] can achieve anything [they] put [their] mind to with consistent determination" (LA TriClub, 2001).

Triathlon is the perfect venue to allow athletes to push their limits, physically and mentally. The Ironman triathlon, the longest form of triathlon, is a three-discipline event

consisting of a 3.8-km swim, a 180-km cycle, followed by a 42.2-km marathon run. The race preparation of ultra endurance triathletes is demanding and time consuming. Their weekly training schedule will typically include at least 12 km of swimming, 370 km of cycling and 70 km of running, totalling an average of over 20 hours of physical training alone (O'Toole, Douglas & Hiller, 1989). The race itself is an extremely intense challenge taking from 8 to 17 hours to complete. The excessive level of strenuous physical exertion required of the triathletes during races can lead to several medical problems such as dehydration and heat exhaustion, often complicated by hyponatremia (Hiller et al., 1987). This gruelling event pushes the limits of human endurance and consequently demands considerable mental toughness simply to complete the distance (Schofield, Dickson, Mummery, & Street, 2002).

A minimum of level "mental toughness" is required to complete the event and a high level of mental toughness is needed to race in demanding events of such length and duration. The mental aspect of this sport is a key to success. How can we help Ironman triathletes reach the goals they are pursuing? How can we guide them to train their minds to help their bodies perform to their capacity?

### **Survey of Ironman triathletes**

I designed a practical survey to look at triathletes' motivations to train and compete, to assess what they liked best about their sport, and to explore the issues, fears and challenges they faced while training for and competing in Ironman triathlons. I also inquired about their knowledge of the field of sport psychology and their use (or not) of mental training consulting services. The final question asked them what their view on the importance of mental training to improve their performance was, and what they would

be interested in learning if they had access to sport psychology resources.

The survey was launched in June 2004 in the Ottawa region (for our international readers, Ottawa is the capital of Canada, where the cold winters make it is nearly impossible to run outside for two months of the year, to bike outside for four months, and to swim outside for at least half the year; not your perfect temperatures for triathlon training!). I posted a link to my web-based triathlon survey in Tri-Rudy, a regional daily newsletter which has over 3000 subscribers. What came out of this survey was very informative. The background information on the Ironman participants who responded is the following: forty Ironman triathletes, 55% male and 45% female, completed the survey; 42% have been training for triathlons for three to five years, whereas 28% seasoned athletes had done so for more than a decade; about two thirds (70%) had participated in one to three Ironman, the other third having completed four or more of these harsh competitions. Now, what is it exactly that brought them to be Ironman triathletes?

### **Motivations to train and compete**

What motivates these individuals to train for and compete in triathlon in spite of claims that it is "not a safe leisurely activity to promote good health, rather it is a test of human endurance which pushes the mind and body to dangerous extremes of exhaustion" (Hosch, 1994)? Ironman triathletes need to be highly motivated in order to train for 10 to 25 hours each week despite an already busy schedule. I asked them what their MAIN motivation to train was; most (27%) answered it was to **push their limits and continually improve both their physical and mental conditions**. They said they train "to see what this body of mine can do!", "to challenge my body always more", "to prove to myself that I have the determination". A

close second reason for training (22%) was to **enjoy an active lifestyle**. The lifestyle they feel they live is one of being "fit", "healthy", "balanced" and one that can involve training with other members of a group. Some athletes mentioned that training for triathlon allowed them to "keep focused in other aspects of life" (other than just work). Connected to the idea of lifestyle, the third main reason for training (16%) of the Ironman triathletes, was to **achieve fitness and physical and mental well-being**. Additional noteworthy reasons for training included the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment they derive from their training, the goal of racing well at an Ironman triathlon, the fun they have to do the training, and the desire to "delay old age".

Ironman triathletes need to be highly motivated in order to compete in Ironman triathlons and push their bodies to the limit continuously for several hours. What motivates them to do so? Three main themes emerged from an analysis of their answers. Not surprisingly, the number one reason given by Ironman triathletes is that they **thrive on the challenge** the sport offers them (38%). This *challenge* existed on different personal levels, ranging from "seeing if I could finish one" to "seeing how my body deals with racing and speed". Here are four answers that represent different facets of challenge: "To be as good as I can be", "it's a huge physical and emotional challenge", "motivation to see how I perform under pressure", and "a chance to prove that I can go beyond my limits".

The number two reason triathletes identified as their main motivation to compete in races was to **achieve goals and witness progress** (30%), shown by quotes such as "self-improvement" and "achievement of a difficult goal". The number three reason to race was **feeling a sense of accomplishment** (19%), ranging from "Seeing the benefits of train-

ing" to the "satisfaction of completing [an Ironman]".

To broaden the picture of the reasons to train and compete, respondents were then asked what they liked best about training and racing. Interestingly enough, the answers to this question are fairly different from the main motivations mentioned above. On one hand, Ironman triathletes enjoy their training mostly because it is **fun**, they get to meet with like-minded **friends**, it keeps them **fit**, and because they spend time **outdoors**. On the other hand, what they like best about racing is the excitement of the day and of finishing something big, the sense of community among the participants, and the volunteers and family support. Only three athletes mentioned they enjoyed pushing their limits in racing; is it possible that when race day actually comes, the "immensity of the challenge" suddenly loses its motivational purpose? What, then, does it transform into? The one thing we know for sure is that whatever the level of motivation Ironman triathletes have towards accomplishing their objectives, several things can get in the way of their reaching their goals on race day.

### Issues and challenges

If you had to guess what the single most important issue triathletes are struggling with when *training* for an Ironman, what would you say it is? It's too tough? Nah... It's too expensive? Nah! Here's a little hint: the amount of training that people, who have other normal life demands, put in to be a competitive (yet amateur) triathlete is extensive. It has been documented that most short-course triathletes (who competed in triathlons whose length is about four times shorter than the Ironman) trained at least five days a week for about two hours a day—not counting commuting to the training venue, weight training, maintenance of

equipment, reading about triathlon, etc. (Hosch, 1994).

**Time management** was mentioned by half the respondents as being their major challenge. For many, balancing work, family life, time with friends and training represents an incredible challenge. They work full-time, and then have to find a way to plan their training, schedule baby sitting, spend time with their spouse and get adequate rest in-between. This often results in what one triathlete termed the "social cost of Ironman training", and sometimes makes it hard to maintain perspective. Here are two quotes that illustrate the issue of time crunch faced by Ironman triathletes: the biggest challenge is "being balanced and prepared – this means you have to put an effort in your preparation of all areas – swimming, biking, running, flexibility, strength, mental preparation, nutrition – and then still fit in a job and a family"; the most difficult thing is to find "time to balance the training with other commitments especially spending time with friends and family (and be awake ;)".

Many other factors were repeatedly mentioned by triathletes as preventing them from training at a consistently high level. The three most commonly cited included, **getting injured, having difficulty determining the adequate amount and intensity of training, and sustaining the initially high motivation throughout the several long training sessions**. A final interesting challenge was to deal with the physical and mental **fatigue**: "there were times when it seemed overwhelming".

All this preparation, hard work, dedication, and commitment are supposed to pay at some point later down the road, but there seems to be additional obstacles one has to overcome before she can 'have the best race ever'. The most prevalent concern for Iron-

man triathletes on race day is commonly referred to as "**not having a good day**" (30%) and therefore not performing like they have in training or like they are capable of doing. Whether it's "not feeling good on race day", "not being able to finish" or "not doing well", these worries often surface before competitions. The second stressful concern for many triathletes is **the swimming leg and its mass start** (22%). Indeed, this moment can be pretty hectic with close to 2000 triathletes hitting the water at the same time, often in choppy conditions, and trying to establish their own space to complete the 3.8-km swim. Ironman triathletes were rather blunt in their description of their swim-related fears: "drowning...", "surviving the swim ;" or "too many overzealous competitors that will knock you silly in the swim to gain a meter".

The third concern triathletes worry a lot about is the issue of **proper nutrition and hydration** (19%). Obviously, in an ultra-endurance event lasting of a minimum of ten hours for the majority of competitors, having adequate hydration and taking in enough calories to sustain the hard and long-lasting efforts are key but difficult. Indeed, one's body cannot handle and digest more than a limited amount of calories in a given time but not taking enough fuel in will lead to the dreaded point where one "hits the wall", i.e. when the glycogen reserves are completely depleted and the triathlete just cannot sustain the pace any longer (and usually must walk the rest of the distance).

Finally, not far behind, the fourth most cited fear about Ironman racing is having **mechanical problems on the bike** (16%), which includes "mechanical failures which could put you out of the race" and "worrying about things going wrong such as a flat tire". Triathletes mentioned mechanical breakdown as a huge concern they have about

race day; yet, it seems that only so much can be done in terms of maintenance to prevent this kind of problems. In every race, many things can happen that are out of one's control and that can prevent one from performing to her potential. On this topic, it is interesting to note that in addition to being very committed individuals, triathletes generally have a high *need for control*. According to Hilliard (1988), triathlon can provide this sense of control because athletes feel that the outcome of their race is almost entirely contingent on their own performance.

Ironman triathletes could move a long way in the direction of feeling more relaxed and confident about an upcoming race if they learned to simply put worries of this kind aside and rather focus on more positive aspects of the process. This links nicely with the comments of one triathlete who discussed why she was satisfied of the sport psychology services she had received: Finally, "I could let go of things I cannot control". This is a crucial skill for anyone who wants to go into a challenging event with confidence and focus.

### **Knowledge, use, and perceived importance of sport psychology**

Triathletes were asked seven questions about their level of knowledge and use of sport psychology skills. Many of these triathletes said that they were not very familiar with sport psychology (i.e. what it is, what it's for, who uses it). 26% percent said their knowledge in this area was *poor*, 43% said it was *fair* and only 29% said it was good. Only one triathlete said her knowledge of sport psychology was excellent. Very similar percentages were obtained when asked about their knowledge of the various mental skills one can use in a race. However, when asked the question "How important do you believe that mental skills are in Ironman training and racing?", 97% said they

believed *strongly* or *very strongly* that they were key to success! Obviously, these triathletes believe they would benefit from receiving more education on this topic. Thus, the challenge faced by the sport psychology profession is to make applied and relevant mental training skills easily accessible to amateur athletes.

When triathletes were asked to list the mental skills they were familiar with or knew about, only 33 athletes out of 40 answered this question (7 athletes could not list one mental skill). Out of the 33 who responded, 26 named visualization as the most known form of mental training. Next was positive self-talk, with 11 responses, and relaxation techniques mentioned by 8 respondents. Four athletes answered that they knew of no mental skill, or that they had no idea what I was referring to.

This limited knowledge of the mental skills contradicts triathletes' strong belief that mental training is an essential part of achieving excellence. The positive side of the story is that those triathletes who *did* know about mental skills were applying them. 26% of these triathletes said they practiced some form of sport psychology **often for races**, and 37% practiced it **often in training**. Only 22% said they never or rarely practice any form of sport psychology, and 14% said they used it **all the time!** This is at least a very encouraging start.

As for sport psychology consulting services, it comes as no surprise that 88% of the triathletes surveyed had never used them. Those who had worked with sport psychologists or mental skills trainers were generally satisfied with the services they received. Ironman triathletes who had never use mental training consulting services cited three main reasons refraining them to do so. The most commonly cited reason identified by 37% was that they **just didn't have the opportunity to do so** (for example, they had

never thought of it, or they didn't know that this was a service available to them, or they were unsure of what it was). 33% cited a lack of **money and time** for not engaging in a mental training program, and the last 30% held the **view that the emphasis should be put on physical training**.

Two long-standing myths, which surfaced when reviewing answers to the survey, need to be addressed by the sport psychology profession: 1) mental training takes time, which I don't have in surplus; and 2) I don't really need it because I'm not at a high level. Hopefully, as more and more athletes become aware of the immense benefits of sport psychology at a young age, it will become a normal part of an athlete's training.

Once athletes make the necessary effort to invest mental energy in deciding how to channel it wisely and effectively, it will begin to pay dividends. It is like hiring a financial consultant to advise us on how to spend wisely; this will save lots of money in the long term. Triathletes who engage in effective mental training programs will discover that practicing mental skills doesn't take much additional time; on the contrary, it will help one save time—and eventually perform better—through a more focused concentration and the use of distraction control skills.

### **What Ironman triathletes want (or need)?**

This brings us to perhaps the two most important questions in the survey: what is it that Ironman triathletes really want to know or learn about with respect to sport psychology/ their mental preparation? The first open-ended question was, "Please tell me which TOPICS you would like to be discussed in articles for triathletes", and the second question was, "If you had the chance to ask any question to a sport psychology consultant, what would you REALLY want

to know?". Answers on these two questions recouped in many respects, so they will be discussed together in the following section.

What Ironman triathletes wanted to know can be categorized in three main themes: 1) improve race performance and consistency; 2) improve training; and 3) sustain a high level of motivation. Firstly, athletes want to learn or improve methods/techniques that will help them **improve their racing performance and consistency** (including race visualization, pre-race routines, pre-race anxiety control, and learning how to 'dig deep' in the later stages of the triathlon when the body starts to fall apart. The main thing they were interested in was how to improve their racing skills.

Focus was repeatedly mentioned under various forms: "how to stay focused during a long event... I day dream a lot" ; "how to push while running when the body says 'No' and the mind says 'Just a little bit further'"; "What to do when things aren't going well"; "Mentally, what to do during the race when your head is saying 'STOP this foolishness!'". Very typical of committed performers, triathletes want success *now*: "I want to know tips I can implement rapidly to improve my performance without having to practice them for five years before they're effective." This last quote reflects what a lot of performers want and what sport psychology consultants should be providing—practical, effective guidelines that work in the real world of performance (Orlick, 2000).

The second main theme which triathletes want to learn more about is **improving their training** (including "how to stay focused during the long training grind up to race day" or "what makes someone passionate one day, and apathetic the next, and how do you regulate this?"). It seems that two sepa-

rate areas would be particularly helpful for triathletes in regards of the training they have to do. The first refers to **sustaining motivation to train for such a high volume over extended periods of time**.

Triathletes want to know how to "keep yourself motivated during the off-season", "things to use in training on hard days to keep motivation", or simply put, "How do I stay focused in my training when all I really want to do is sit on the couch and relax?" Another important training-related area is **coping with and overcoming injuries**: "How do I re-adjust plans when injuries strike?" or "How do you handle the 'blues' when you get injured?" Overuse injuries are common among Ironman triathletes (O'Toole, Douglas & Hiller, 1989), and getting sick or injured is sometimes more of a challenge for the mind than it is for the body.

The third main theme triathletes want to learn more about is **staying positive for both training and races**. References were made to top Ironman triathletes who emphasized the importance of having a positive outlook on the training and during race day, and this message seems to have reached many triathletes. Being positive is a crucial ingredient for successful training and performance, and athletes are keen to learn more on this topic: "positive self-talk", "staying positive", "problem solving", as well as "a few good jokes for a good laugh".

Other topics raised by the respondents included issues of *confidence* ("I have a lot of self doubts"), *goal-setting* ("setting goals and sticking to them—Ironman preparation is long"), and *constructive evaluations* ("how to narrow down race problems when reflecting on a performance"). Many triathletes also want to "see a synopsis of the techniques used by *Top Elite level Ironman*

*competitors*". In summary, what triathletes want know is 1) how to keep motivated and focused during their long training sessions; 2) how to focus better during races to improve the level and consistency of their performances; and 3) how to become more positive and confident in their sport pursuit.

Interestingly, while almost all triathletes mentioned that the number one challenge in training for Ironman triathlon was **balancing sport with life**, only one quick mention of this issue was found in over 150 answers. Perhaps this was an oversight, perhaps not. As the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink...

### **Providing the right resources**

Even though few Ironman triathletes had sufficient knowledge about sport psychology, most were thirsty for more information. When asked if they would visit a website giving information on Mental Training for triathlon, 86% said were clearly interested. Triathletes are generally competitive people, and "they're willing to go to extremes to gain an edge in the competition", spending an average of \$3,200 (U.S.) per year on multi-sport purchases (LA TriClub, 2001; The Sacramento Bee, 2004). But after buying the most expensive swimming and biking equipment, and training as much as their schedule, or body, will handle, where will they *get that extra edge*? An obvious answer is mental training. It seems that mental training is becoming the new place to turn to for further improvement of one's performances.

Athletes need relevant and applied resources. With spare time and money being two of the most sacred assets of Ironman triathletes, sport psychology resources need to be very easy to access and tailored to their specific needs in order to reach large numbers of athletes. To help Ironman triathletes

push their limits even further, we have to provide them with access to quality mental training adapted to their individual aspirations, needs, and challenges.

The Ironman Triathletes' Website on Mental

Training I recently developed is therefore my own challenge. You are welcome to visit the website and offer your comments. <http://www.imahead.com>

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## The Magic Circle: A Mental Tool for Creating Quality Concentration

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### Abstract

Golf is a sport that provides a plethora of mental challenges due to its self-paced nature, the length of a typical round, and the various hazards found on the course. The ability to remain focused for 18 holes, especially towards the end of a round, after a bad shot (or a string of bad shots), and during slow play, is a particular challenge for many golfers – professionals and “weekend warriors” alike. This article presents a tool designed to help golfers achieve and maintain an appropriate focus throughout a round of golf. In addition to being an aid to performance, this tool can also facilitate more enjoyable golf.

There is no mystery about the origin of the phrase ‘golf is a game played on a 5-inch course – the space between your ears’. The mental challenges that golf provides seem to far surpass those presented by other sports. That, indisputably, is a large part of the allure of the game for many of us. We all love a good challenge. All too often however, the mental challenges golf breeds and golfers create, often unknowingly, cause the golfer’s mind to become his or her worst enemy on the course. How often have you backed out of a shot mid-swing and topped the ball 20 yards down the fairway because you suddenly doubted your club selection? What about chickening out on a putt when that voice ‘up there’ reminds you that you missed a similar putt a few holes back? How many times have you pulled out your driver to ‘go for it’ against your better judgment? Recognizing the power the mind has to make or break a round, many tour players

have turned to mental training consultants to help them strengthen their mental game and turn their mind into a powerful weapon. Mental training is beginning to be seen as the logical complement to the time spent on the driving range and practice green. However, mental training should not be seen as something that only the pros ‘do’; the positive effects of mental training are as great for the recreational golfer.

No doubt, many of the mental challenges inherent in golf arise due to the self-paced nature of the sport. Not having to play your shot until you are ready to do so provides ample opportunity to become distracted. Inconsistencies in your game, and the frustrations that accompany them, are frequently the result of lapses in concentration – it is not that your technique suddenly deserted you on the walk between the 12th and 13th holes! By learning to improve your concen-

tration and become fully engaged in each shot, you will be more likely to play your best game more often and consequently enjoy your golf more – which, don't forget, is why you're out there in the first place.

Many recreational golfers report that the toughest times to maintain concentration are towards the end of a round, after a bad shot (or a string of bad shots), and during slow play. Many golfers complain of not being able to concentrate for the full 18 holes. Actually, it is quite unrealistic to expect that you *can* concentrate for the 4 (or more) hours of a round of golf. If you try to concentrate on your game for the duration of the round you are likely to become mentally fatigued. You find it difficult to concentrate towards the end of the round because you have 'exhausted' your concentration. You start to make stupid mistakes, become frustrated that you spoiled your 'great' round, and retire to the 19th hole feeling cheated and disgruntled.

Instead of trying to concentrate all the time, try to 'switch' your concentration on and off between shots, therefore 'conserving' your concentration. In order to help you do this, imagine that there is a large circle (about 15-20 feet in diameter) around your ball. As you approach your ball and enter this imaginary circle, switch your attention on. Once in your circle you should be completely focused on the shot you are about to play. This is your time to prepare for the shot – fully engage. "Easier said than done" I hear you sigh. We all know that the golf course is a haven for distractions – a chattering partner, your chattering mind, dreams of winning, thoughts of your last poor performance on this hole, people watching (and you think judging), the image of your ball sailing OB... How many times have you tried to ignore distractions such as these – and failed, however hard you have tried to block

them out? Rather than fighting to ignore these distractions, give your mind something constructive to focus on. Develop a simple pre-shot routine and use it before EVERY shot. By doing this, you are providing your mind with direction. This makes it harder for your mind to wander and be distracted by negative thoughts. Typically, a pre-shot routine should commence as you enter your circle and 'switch on' your concentration. Although routines are highly personal, most include shot and club selection, alignment, visualisation of the shot you want to play, a practice swing, positive confident thinking, a glance at the target, a deep breath, and a last swing thought. However, a word of warning - KISS! (Keep It Simple - Smart!)

After you have played your shot, get out of your circle and turn your concentration off. As you leave your circle and walk up the fairway or to the next hole, take your confidence and a positive attitude with you but leave your emotions (good and bad) about the previous shot behind. Between circles totally switch off from your game – don't start planning or thinking about the upcoming shot until you reach your next circle. Instead, enjoy the scenery and the company of those you are with. Do not let it be a good walk spoiled.

By constantly switching your concentration on and off as required, you will be able to concentrate on the last putt on the 18th as well as you did when you teed off on the 1st. Using the circle will also help you take one shot at a time and therefore help you forget about your bad shots. This technique can also be used to prevent slow play affecting your game. While waiting for your target area to clear, avoid stepping up to the ball. Stay outside your circle. Don't get ahead of yourself. When your target area clears, step into your circle, switch on your concentration, and start your pre-shot routine. If you

become distracted during your routine, step out of your circle, take a deep breath then step back in and recommence your routine.

Many tour pros consider their routine to be as much part of the stroke as their swing is. Hopefully you will too. Happy Golfing!

## Editorial Statement

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The focus of the Journal of Excellence is the sharing of knowledge and wisdom that is relevant to the lived experience of excellence in any domain (including sports, the performing arts, health and well being, business/workplace, education, leadership, children and youth and joyful living). Research of an applied nature, including case studies, interventions, interviews and narrative studies, and personal experiences with the pursuit of excellence are welcomed. The Journal of Excellence also publishes personal accounts, short commentaries, individual interviews, poems or stories that offer insights into the nature of high level challenges, remaining positive under adversity and the mental links to excellence. Reviews of books, videos/CD's, films, conference highlights and new initiatives in an applied setting are also considered.

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## **About the International Society for Mental Training and Excellence (ISMTE)**

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### **Introduction**

Founded in 1989, the focus of the ISMTE is excellence in performance and excellence in living. The founding President, Lars Eric Unestahl, organized the First World Congress in Örebro, Sweden, in 1991. Terry Orlick became the second President in 1991, hosted the 1995 World Congress in Ottawa, Canada and initiated the Journal of Excellence. Keith Henschen became the third President in 1998. Keith Henschen and Rich Gordin hosted the 1999 World Congress on Mental Training and Excellence, in Salt Lake City, USA. The 2003 World Congress on Mental Training and Excellence was hosted by Pavel Bundzen in St.Petersburg, Russia.

### **Vision**

Education and Training for better people, better performers and a better world.

### **Mission**

- Promote Excellence in Sport, The Performing Arts, Education, Work, Health and Life.
- Create, collect, produce and share valuable, practical resources and educational opportunities for those in pursuit of excellence, and those assisting others in pursuit of excellence.
- Serve as a vehicle for the on-going advancement of knowledge, education, interventions and consulting in Mental Training and Excellence.

### **Focus**

- Excellence within multiple pursuits: Sport, Performing Arts, Workplace, Health, Education and Joyful Living.
- Committed to a truly applied orientation with practical research and experiential knowledge as a base.
- Focused on what is relevant in the real world of application to Quality Performance and Quality Living.
- International in orientation and scope, open to learning from people in different fields and different cultures who are committed to excellence and the value of shared wisdom.

### **Mental Training**

Mental Training is centered on the systematic training and nurturing of mental skills, focusing skills, positive perspectives and positive life skills that are linked to performance excellence and quality living.

Mental Training embraces teaching, coaching and nurturing positive perspectives, positive planning, positive communication, focusing skills, refocusing skills, imagery skills, goal setting skills, teamwork, collaboration, commitment, confidence, mental and emotional preparation, distraction control skills, stress control skills, positive mind-body connections, balanced excellence, positive living skills and ongoing learning.