INTRODUCTION

Sport Psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are specifically applied in a sporting environment. The major aim of the sport psychologist is to help sports participants reach their sporting potential. Indeed, according to the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) “sport psychology is (a) the study of the psychological and mental factors that influence and are influenced by participation and performance in sport, exercise and physical activity, and (b) the application of knowledge gained through this study to everyday settings”. An understanding of psychological principles is not only essential to sport psychologists, but is also invaluable to athletes, coaches, teachers, managers, support service providers and parents. In the United Kingdom the recognised body regulating and accrediting exercise and sports psychologists in the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) http://www.bases.org.uk.

Sport Psychologists are qualified professionals within the discipline of sport psychology who essentially engage in three interrelated tasks: research, education and application.

- **Research Function** – conducting various kinds of research in order to find answers to questions related to sport. Research also provides the underpinning for the applied interventions used with sports teams and individuals. It is usually, but not exclusively, conducted within a higher education setting.

- **Education Function** – teaching students and informing coaches, athletes, parents and others about the discipline of sport psychology.

- **Application function** – assessing personality-performance relationships; using a range of intervention techniques to improve performance; often working on a one-to-one basis with sports teams and individual sports performers.
Within the discipline of sport psychology there are a range of specific areas which focus on different aspects of sports performance. These areas have been grouped around four major headings:

- Motor learning and performance
- Psychological preparation for sport
- Social issues in sports behaviour
- Professional issues in sport psychology

There are numerous books and journals, which specialise in or contain information on sport psychology, only some of which have been presented in this guide. For a more comprehensive summary of book chapters, journal articles and correspondences please consult either the Sports Discus or Medline searchable databases (subscription required).

**Sports Discus**

**Medline**
http://research.bmn.com/medline
MOTOR LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

A prominent feature of human existence is the capability to perform a range of skills. Without this capability it would be impossible for us to produce skilled performance such as writing, typing and reading. In a sporting context, the execution of a range of sport specific skills is critical to produce high levels of performance. Due to the wide and varied nature of skills in sport it is essential to understand how we perform, and how we learn to be able to develop motor performance. Everyone is born with a range of skills some we master very quickly, others require far more practice. Central to our understanding in this environment is to understand what a skill and motor skill are, and their importance in sports performance. A grasp of how we learn and develop and store information is also essential. Understanding the different types of feedback and the roles they play in developing skilled performance is of particular interest to coaches and sports practitioners.

Key areas include:
- Classification of skills and motor abilities
- Skill acquisition
- Measurement of motor skills
- Theories of motor control
- Performing complex skills
- Proprioception and vision’s role in motor movement
- Preparing for action
- Information processing
- Resources / capacity / allocation of attention
- Memory structure and its components
- Progression of learning and its various stages
- Retention and transfer of learning
- Skill presentation and performance
- Benefits and hindrances of feedback
- Degrees of freedom
- Pattern formation, stability and multi-stability
- Motor development
- Dynamical systems perspective
- Biological basis of human behaviour

Key Texts Include:


Psychological preparation for sport is an essential aspect of successful sports performance at all levels. Elite sports performers make great use of psychological techniques before, during and after sports performance, both consciously and unconsciously. The higher the level of competition, the greater the psychological demands on the performer(s). Indeed many sport psychologists would argue that psychological preparation for sports performance is the most important part of sports performance. To effectively prescribe strategies to improve the performer’s psychological mindset an in-depth understanding of the theories and models underpinning psychological strategies is essential. Psychological preparation for sport is dependent on a wide range of factors, which differ for each individual sports performer. Therefore, understanding the underlying psychological principles and models will enable strategies to be adapted for a wide range of specific situations.

Key areas include:
- Relaxation
- Motivation, commitment and goal setting
- Self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Arousal and activation
- Stress and anxiety
- Coping with injuries and self-healing
- Focusing and improving concentration
- Attention
- Distraction control
- Mental practice
- Psychological preparation for peak performance
- Integration of skills

Key Texts Include:


SOCIAL ISSUES IN SPORTS BEHAVIOUR

The sociology of sport focuses upon social relations, group interactions and sport-related social phenomena. Due to the nature of groups, which are essentially composed of individuals, it is sometimes difficult to determine where psychology ends and sociology begins. The main focus of social issues in sports behaviour is exploring the social psychological issues relating to sports performance. Both internal and external factors are prevalent here including, group cohesion, social loafing, leadership, audience effects on sports performance and the impacts of the mass media on the individual.

Key areas include:
- Gender issues in sport and exercise
- Socialisation and group dynamics in sports
- Group cohesion in sports
- Leadership in sports
- Communication
- Adherence in sport and exercise
- Social loafing
- Sport and social deviance
- Audience effects on sports performance
- Aggression and violence sports
- Sport and the mass media
- The impact of sport on children’s development
- Withdrawal, dropout and burnout
- Personality and individual differences
- Team building

Key Texts Include:


Professional Issues in Sport Psychology

Sport psychology as a profession is continually evolving in the UK. With the changes in social and ethical values in society the role of the sport psychologist continues to change. Legal and ethical issues have been pushed to the forefront with professional practice, accreditation, insurance and ethical issues, including abuse and child protection, being viewed with utmost importance. An understanding of sport psychology in the modern world needs to be viewed in conjunction with all of these contemporary and professional issues. The three major organisations involved in the regulation, development and professionalism of sports psychologists in the UK are:

- British Association for Sport & Exercise Science (BASES) [http://www.bases.org.uk](http://www.bases.org.uk)
- British Psychological Society (BPS) [http://www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)
- British Olympic Association (BOA) [http://www.boa.org.uk](http://www.boa.org.uk)

Key areas include:
- Professional accreditation
- Professional practice
- Legal issues
- Codes of conduct
- Working as a sport psychologist.
- Ethical issues
- Counselling

Key Texts include:


KEY TEXTS IN SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

There is an extensive range of literature addressing aspects of sport psychology. Further historical and contemporary texts in the discipline of sport psychology include:

**Introductory / Intermediate** (undergraduate Certificate / Intermediate level)


**Intermediate / Advanced** (undergraduate Higher level / postgraduate)

SPORT-SPECIFIC TEXTS

Athletics

Baseball


Basketball


Cricket

Cycling

Extreme Sports

Fencing

Football

Golf

Gymnastics
Hockey


Horse Riding

Martial Arts


MotorSport

Rugby

Sailing

Skiing

Surfing

Swimming

Tennis

Journals and Periodicals in Sport Psychology

Sport Psychologists have tended to publish research in a wide range of sport and psychology specific journals. More recently there has been the development of a range of Sport Psychology specific journals. These journals cover a range of research and applied based issues, along with reporting recent advances in the discipline along with carrying ongoing debate regarding the major issues in Sport Psychology.

The major journals specifically addressing Sport Psychology include:

**Peer reviewed journals**

**Human Movement Science**

*Human Movement Science* provides a forum for bringing together psychological, (neuro) physiological and biophysical research on human movement. Published six times annually by Elsevier Science.

http://www.elsevier.com/locate/inca/505584

**International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology**

*International Journal of Sport Psychology* publishes empirical and theoretical contributions in the science of physical activity, human movement, exercise, and sport. It is aimed at enhancing the knowledge (theoretical and practical) in these fields. The journal is published by Meyer & Meyer Sport Publishing Group.

http://www.issponline.org/isspjournal.tpl

**Journal of Applied Sport Psychology**

The *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* is designed to advance thought, theory and research on applied aspects of sport psychology. The journal is a quarterly journal which is published by Taylor & Francis Ltd.

http://www.aaasponline.org/journal.html

**Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology**

Publishes research articles that explore the interactions between psychology and exercise and sport performance, editorials about contemporary issues in the field, abstracts of current research on sport and exercise psychology, and book reviews. JSEP is an official publication of the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA). The journal is produces quarterly and published by Human Kinetics.

http://www.humankinetics.com/products/journals/index.cfm

**Journal of Sport Sciences**

The *Journal of Sports Sciences* publishes articles on various aspects of the sports sciences covering a number of disciplinary bases, including anatomy, biochemistry, biomechanics, psychology, sociology, as well as ergonomics, kinaesthetic information acquisition and...
other interdisciplinary perspectives. The journal is produced monthly and is published by Taylor & Francis Ltd.
http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/02640414.html

Motor Control
Motor Control provides a multidisciplinary examination of human movement across the life span. Produced quarterly and published by Human Kinetics.
http://www.humankinetics.com/products/journals/journal.cfm?id=MC

Psychology of Sport and Exercise
This is the official journal of the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC). The journal is produced quarterly and is published by Elsevier Science.
http://www.elsevier.com/inca/publications/store/6/2/0/7/9/2/index.htm

Research Quarterly in Exercise and Sport
This comprehensive professional journal features articles and research notes encompassing such topic areas as biomechanics, epidemiology, growth and motor development, motor control and learning, measurement and evaluation, physiology, pedagogy, psychology, history and philosophy, and sociology / cultural anthropology. Produced quarterly.
http://www.aahperd.org/aahperd/rges_main.html

The Sport Psychologist
The Sport Psychologist (TSP) focuses on applied research and its application in providing psychological services to coaches and athletes. The journal is produces quarterly and is published by Human Kinetics.
http://www.humankinetics.com/products/journals/index.cfm

Non peer reviewed journals

Athletic Insight
Athletic Insight - The Online Journal of Sport Psychology is a non-proprietary journal that is intended to provide a forum for discussion of topics that are relevant to the field of sport psychology through quarterly online publications.
http://www.athleticinsight.com

Sport Psych Unpublished
Is an electronic form of information dissemination. It is primarily designed for students who are studying sport and exercise psychology units, modules, courses or degrees that wish for a simple and efficient method of sharing with others the 'fruits' of their hard work. These include the results of empirical investigations and 'first attempts' at constructing research papers.
http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/5686/journal.html
Generic Journals

As well as publishing in journals specific to sport psychology, sport psychologists also publish articles in a range of mainstream psychology journals. These include:

- **Anxiety, Stress and Coping**
  [http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10615806.html](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10615806.html)

- **Journal of Personality and Social Psychology**

- **Memory & Cognition**

- **Journal of Experimental Psychology**
  [http://www.apa.org/journals/xge.html](http://www.apa.org/journals/xge.html)

- **Cognitive Therapy and Research**

- **Psychological Review**

- **Psychological Bulletin**
WEB-BASED RESOURCES IN SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Organisations

American Psychological Association (APA) Division 47
http://www.apa.org/about/division/div47.html
The APA brings together psychologists, as well as exercise and sport scientists, interested in research, teaching, and service in the area.

Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)
http://www.aaasponline.org/index2.html
The aim of the AAASP is the development of psychological theory, research and intervention strategies in Sport Psychology.

British Association for Sport & Exercise Sciences (BASES)
http://www.bases.org.uk
BASES has a specific section dedicated to Exercise and Sport Psychology. Formal accreditation in the UK for Sport Psychologists is provided through this organisation.

British Olympic Association (BOA)
http://www.boa.org.uk
A multi-sport organisation which oversees Olympic interest in the United Kingdom.

British Psychological Society (BPS) Sport & Exercise Psychology Section
http://www.bps.org
The BPS is the major psychological society within the UK. Within the society is the Sport and Exercise Psychology Section, which specifically addresses psychological issues related to sport.

European Federation of Sport Psychology.
http://www.psychology.lu.se/FEPSAC/
FEPSAC is a European organisation who bring together sport psychologists from across Europe to further develop the discipline across the region.

German Association of Sport Psychology
http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~asp/english/index.html
The official German Sport Psychology Association have a range of online information sources on the English version of their site.

International Society of Sport Psychology
http://www.issponline.org/
The ISSP is committed to continually initiating and upgrading standards related to sport psychology research, information, services, programmes, and guidelines.
North American Society for the Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity (NASPSPA)
http://www.naspspa.org
NASPSPA is a multidisciplinary association of scholars from the behavioural sciences and related professions.

Additional Resources

Some of the major centres and institutions for advanced research and study into sport psychology Include:

Australian Institute for Sport – Sports Science and Sports Medicine

Australian Association for Exercise and Sport Science

University of Birmingham, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences
http://www.sportex.bham.ac.uk/

Bangor University, School of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences
http://www.shes.bangor.ac.uk/home.html

University College Chichester, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences
http://www.ucc.ac.uk/

University of Edinburgh, Department of Physical Education, Sport & Leisure Studies
http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/pesls/index.html

European College of Sport Science
http://www.ecss.de/

Leeds Metropolitan University, School of Health and Human Sciences
http://www.lmu.ac.uk/hen/hs/index.htm

Liverpool John Moores University, School of Sport and Exercise Science
http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/sps/

Loughborough University, Sport Science Department
http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sses/

Manchester Metropolitan University, Department of Exercise and Sport Science
http://www.mmu.ac.uk/c-a/exspsci/welcome.html
Sport Science New Zealand
http://www.sportscience.org.nz/

University of Portsmouth, Department of Sport and Exercise Science
http://www.sci.port.ac.uk/~sportwww/index.html

Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Sport and Exercise Science
http://www.thecentreforsport.com/

UK Sports Institute
http://www. uksport.gov.uk/generic_template.asp?id=11764

Victoria University (Australia) School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC), School of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation
http://www.uwic.ac.uk/new/sport/index.asp

General

Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC)
http://www.sirc.ca/

Mental Skills
http://mentalskills.co.uk/index.php

The Mental Edge
http://users.rcn.com/dupcak/mntledge.html

Mind Tools
http://www.mindtools.com/page11.html

American Board of Sport Psychology
http://www.americanboardofsportpsychology.org/

Psych Watch Sport Psychology Resources
http://www.psychwatch.com/sport_psychology.htm
Sport Psychology Information Gateway

Sport Psych
http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/5686/

Sport Psychology Over Site
http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bing/oversite/sportpsych.html

Video and CD-Rom

Sports Discus

Medline
http://research.bmn.com/medline

The Sport Psychology Movie Database
http://www.geocities.com/sportsmovies/

About the Author

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