

## **Association of Applied Sport Psychology Celebrates 25 Years Serving a Growing Profession**

### ***Sport and Exercise Psychology Expands Beyond the Elite Athlete***

Madison, WI—May 2010—A prima ballerina, a fitness-minded woman with diabetes, members of a military bomb detonation unit, and a world-record-setting rower: What do they have in common? Each has benefitted from the services of a sport and exercise psychology consultant.

“In growing numbers of cases, professionals are applying the principles of traditional sport and exercise psychology to nontraditional areas, including entertainment, business, and the military,” said Amanda J. Visek, Ph.D., assistant professor with the Department of Exercise Science at The George Washington University. Dr. Visek also is Division Head for Public Relations and Outreach with the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), which marks its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

“We are all in performance mode at some time in our lives, whether you’re a professional athlete, a middle-aged marathon runner, a student making a class presentation, or a PTA member giving a talk to her peers,” said Jack J. Lesyk, Ph.D., director of the Ohio Center for Sport Psychology.

Increasingly, sport and exercise psychology consultants address issues that include, but are not limited to:

- Performance challenges, such as anxiety and concentration problems
- Relationships with coaches, team members, and other support systems
- Sustaining motivation
- Injuries
- Substance abuse and eating disorders
- Goal-setting
- Career transitions

Consider the sport and exercise consultants behind the examples above. Dr. Sharon Chirban consults with the Boston Ballet. Carrie Cheadle runs a mental skills training program and camp for active adults with diabetes. Dr. Nate Zinsser is director, Performance Enhancement Program, at the U.S. Military Academy. And Dr. Lesyk coached rower Katie Spatz in techniques for coping with the psychological challenges she faced on her recent 70-day, 2,817-mile Atlantic crossing.

### **Today’s Goals Go Beyond Winning**

American sport and exercise psychology traces its roots to the 1920s, when Coleman Griffith, an assistant professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois, published two seminal books: *The Psychology of Coaching* and *The Psychology of Athletics*. In 1965, the first World Congress of Sport Psychology was held in Rome. The U.S. Olympic Committee developed a Sport Psychology Advisory Board in 1980 and later held its first Conference on Sport Psychology. The Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) was founded in 1986.

In the early years, sport and exercise psychology focused on outcomes. By the 1980s, practitioners began to recognize that personal skill-building deserved equal attention. “Sport and exercise psychology consultants are dedicated to helping individuals make the most of sport, exercise, and physical activity to enhance their personal development and wellbeing,” said Dr. Lesyk, who leads workshops for professionals seeking to enter the field.

**-continued-**

Recent AASP-member research supports this assertion. “We found that NCAA collegiate athletes and coaches are highly receptive to the addition of mental skills training and performance consulting,” said Dr. Craig Wrisberg, professor of sport psychology at the University of Tennessee. “The field is headed toward a level of acceptance that will be evidenced by the addition of sport and exercise psychology consultants to public and private organizations that seek to provide sport and exercise participants with the highest-quality experiences.”

### **Societal Trends Spur Growth**

As sport and exercise psychology moves beyond the realm of the elite athlete, more practitioners are entering the field. According to Dr. Visek, membership in the AASP has grown from 138 charter members to 1,200 members in 2010, and current members represent 28 countries.

“We are seeing the growth of our profession and of the AASP,” said Dr. Visek. “Increasingly youth sports organizations are turning to the AASP and to AASP Certified Consultants to provide insight and applied services to enhance the experiences of younger sport participants, their parents, and their coaches.”

Visek alluded to another societal trend fueling the profession’s growth. “Positive sport experiences help keep our youth active, which is essential to addressing the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, such as overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other cardiometabolic consequences of inactivity,” she said. “Sport and exercise psychology has greatly contributed to understanding not only how to achieve maximal performance through mental preparation, but also how to sustain motivation in sport and exercise. These are considerable contributions to public health.”

*The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org)*

###

