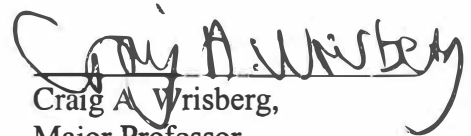


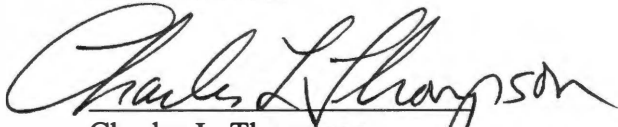
To the Graduate Council:

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Craig A. Wrisberg,
Major Professor

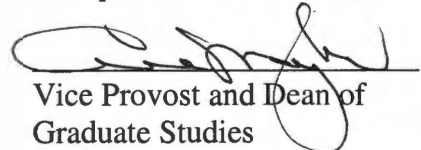
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The Experience of Providing Expert Sport Psychology Consultation:
An Existential Phenomenological Investigation

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Andrew Justin Ploszay

May 2003

Thesis
2003b
P56

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Kelly Patricia McGurkin. Kelly, I would never have completed this dissertation in such a timely manner without your constant “encouragement.” I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life trying to repay you for all the happiness you have already given me. If I were a poet I could not find the words to express how beautiful you are and how much I love you.

Acknowledgements

There is no doubt in my mind that this dissertation would not have been completed without my beautiful bride-to-be, Kelly McGurkin. You are the reason I smile. You are the reason I strive. You are the reason I walk closer to God everyday since I have met you. You make me a better person in every aspect of my life and for that I am eternally grateful. Kelly, I love you.

I would like to thank my family. Mom and Dad, you are the reason my faith in God is unwavering. Only Jesus could have blessed this earth and my life with the two finest people I will ever have the privilege of knowing. I am old enough now to realize that you are the reason I will earn my doctorate. Your ability to love and support me unconditionally was only succeeded by your skills at parenting. I am HONORED to be called your son. Thanks to my sister Stephanie and her family, Bill, Emily, and Ashley. You will never know how much I respect you two and how that admiration has grown since seeing you become parents. I love you all very much. Thanks to my brother Jim and his family, Mead and Will. You have filled my life with laughter and showered me with love. I hope to do the same for you until the day I die. I love you both...Mead a little bit more.

I would like to thank my committee, the "Dream Team." Dr. Wrisberg (Doc), thank you for being my "rock." Your work ethic, professionalism, guidance, and genuine care for me as a person did not go unnoticed. You are everything a mentor should be and I am a better student, researcher, consultant, and person for having learned from you. Thanks for always being in your office. You may never know how much that means to a graduate student. Dr. Fisher, thank you for making me think. I have never met someone

who challenged me more to think “outside the box.” I want to thank you for the opportunities you gave me to grow and learn in your classes as both student and teacher; I will be a better professional for those experiences. Dr. Thompson, your passion is contagious. I hope to one day be as enthusiastic a teacher and mentor as you are. You make learning fun and I want to thank you for sharing that gift. Go Tribe! Dr. Hector, you’re a genius. You’ve got it all figured out...it’s their experience that matters.

I would like to thank the following graduate students for their help with this dissertation: Karen Appleby, Melinda Frey, Aimee Kimball, and Vanessa Shannon. I would like to thank the following graduate students for making my years here at Tennessee so memorable: The Doog, The Pony, The Jew, The Serb, The Insane Barry Cain (freakishly strong), Agent Clowers, Evans, Big G, Gigs, Maarooohhnn, Masooooooooochi, Moooch, Grindstaff Productions, Doctor Von Spechtenstein, Teddy Ballgame, Kei Money, Air Renner, Czech, and “The Russian Experiment” Chuck Kohstall.

I would also like to thank all the athletes I have had the privilege to work with during my time at UT. Your quest for excellence never stopped inspiring me. Thank you for letting me share in your lives.

Last, I would like to single out and thank my father. We got OUR doctorate. I hope to one day be half the man I think you are. Dad, you are my hero...and a shoe.

Abstract

The field of sport psychology has expert performance consultants, but like Statler (2001) pointed out, little has been done to tap into their wealth of knowledge. In fact, most of the research in applied sport psychology has examined the effectiveness of techniques and interventions used in service delivery (e.g., Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Streat & Roberts, 1992; Vealey, 1988, 1994), behavior, training, and the ethics of sport psychology consultants (e.g., Partington & Orlick, 1991; Sachs, 1993). Relatively little attention has been given to the actual experiences of expert consultants practicing in the field. The goal of this study was to put forth a rich description of expert sport psychology consultants' experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. To obtain a meaningful description of the phenomenon, an existential-phenomenological dialogue was used. The phenomenological interview utilizes a single question directing the co-participant to describe his or her experience. All subsequent questions stem from the discussion started by this one original question. Eleven expert sport psychology consultants were interviewed and asked to describe their experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. After the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and analyzed using three hermeneutic approaches: group interpretation, idiographic interpretation, and nomothetic interpretation. The results revealed six themes that seemed to characterize these consultants' experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes: (1) Enjoyment, (2) Learning, (3) Challenges, (4) Collaboration, (5) Knowledge, and (6) Relationship. The present findings support and broaden previous research suggesting that the interaction of certain techniques, interventions, and characteristics along with certain elements of an individual consultant's style, application,

and experience comprise expert performance consultation. The paper concludes with implications and recommendations for athletes, coaches, sport psychology consultants, and researchers in sport psychology as well as researchers interested in phenomenological methodology.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

With the exception of the work of Coleman Griffith, applied consulting became a distinct practice within the field of sport psychology only over the last 30 to 40 years (Simons & Andersen, 1995). Yet, in all of the research on applied sport psychology, most of the literature has examined the effectiveness of techniques and interventions used in service delivery (e.g., Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Strean & Roberts, 1992; Vealey, 1988, 1994) and the behavior, training, and ethics of sport psychology consultants (e.g., Partington & Orlick, 1991; Sachs, 1993). Relatively little attention has been given to the actual experiences of professionals practicing in the field and no studies to date have employed a phenomenological form of inquiry to examine successful practitioners' experiences.

Over the years, several investigators have pointed out the need to examine the effectiveness and excellence of applied consultants based on their experiences (Heyman, 1982; Nideffer, 1982; Schell, Hunt, & Lloyd, 1984; Simons & Andersen, 1995; Strean & Roberts, 1992; Suinn, 1985). Some researchers have questioned athletes, coaches, and other sport psychology practitioners in order to determine these individuals' perceptions of the characteristics of an effective sport psychology consultation and an effective sport psychology consultant (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Partington & Orlick, 1987, 1991; Simons & Andersen, 1995; Straub, Ermolaeva, & Rodionov, 1995; Straub & Hinman, 1992).

While research abounds citing effective consultant characteristics (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Gould, Murphy, Tammen, & May, 1991;

Gould, Tammen, Murphy, & May, 1989; Suinn, 1985) certain individuals continue to excel, as practitioners, while others do not. Obviously, there is more to being an expert sport psychology consultant than simply identifying the characteristics of those who do it well. The question then becomes, how do we understand the expert sport psychology consultant? Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to address this question by examining expert applied sport psychology consultants' experience of providing sport performance consultation. In order to achieve this purpose, phenomenological interviews were conducted with a selected group of expert sport psychology consultants.

Problem Statement

Despite the abundance of literature amassed on the topic of applied sport psychology consulting over the past 30 to 40 years, little is known about the actual experience of practicing sport psychology. There are a few studies that have identified applied sport psychology consultants' perspectives on specific issues that relate to the field or specific techniques or strategies they use in consultation (Partington & Orlick, 1991; Simons & Andersen, 1995; Straub et al., 1995; Straub & Hinman, 1992), but experts' experience of practicing sport psychology has remained unexamined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine expert sport psychology consultants' experience of the provision of sport psychology services from an existential phenomenological perspective. This was accomplished in two ways: (1) by allowing the applied sport psychology consultant to speak in his or her own language, and (2) by attempting to understand the applied sport psychology consulting experience as free as possible from bias, influence, and preconceived notions.

Research Question

The primary research question for this study was: What is expert sport psychology consultants' experience of providing sport psychology services to athletes?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were employed in this study:

Bracketing – A method in which an attempt is made to suspend theoretical beliefs, preconceptions, and presuppositions in an effort to confront the subject matter, as much as is possible, on its own (Patton, 1990; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997).

Co-Participants – The participants in this study will be referred to by the term “co-participant,” sometimes used in phenomenological research, because they were not chosen at random, but were selected because they have experienced the phenomena being studied and are willing to discuss it (Colaizzi, 1978).

Existential Phenomenology – A philosophical discipline that seeks to understand the events of human existence in a way that is as free as possible from the presuppositions of our cultural heritage, philosophical dualism, technologism, and other similar background considerations (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). Existential phenomenology advocates a return to the things themselves with the central focus being embodied consciousness or a return to awareness of embodied being (Husserl, 1962).

Goal of Phenomenology – The goal of phenomenology is to identify the meaningful structure of the phenomenon of interest. According to Ihde (1986), phenomenology does not attempt to coerce a phenomenon to present itself; instead, it attempts to allow the phenomenon to emerge. The phenomenologist focuses on the unity of the individual in

his or her world and the individual is thought to have no existence apart from his or her world.

Hermeneutic Concepts – At a basic level, “they are all concerned with meaning and interpretation” (Valle et al., 1989, p. 15). They can be defined as “the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts” (Palmer, 1969, p. 9).

Hermeneutic Circle – A procedure that overcomes the seemingly linear interpretation of texts by having the researcher understand earlier portions of some text in relation to later portions, and conversely, to understand later portions of the text by understanding previous portions (Palmer, 1969; Pollio et al., 1997). In other words, this “circular” process enables the researcher to move from a part of the text to the whole, back to a part of the text, and so forth.

Idiographic Interpretation – This qualitative analysis procedure involves treating each transcript as its own case study and describing in detail the experience of that particular individual. Thus, each interview has a summary of interpretations, relations, and patterns unique to that co-participant’s own experience (Dale, 1996).

Nomothetic Description – This process requires the investigator to recognize ways in which each co-participant’s experience resembles or deviates from that of all other co-participants. It should be noted it is not the intention to achieve generalizability. The goal is to recognize ways in which one interview is similar to the others. In this study, a thematic description was formulated to capture what the experience of practicing sport psychology meant for each expert sport psychology consultant and render that meaning in terms of those of the other co-participants (Dale, 1996).

Meaning – Meaning is the background from which the person's participation in life arises (Fahlberg, Fahlberg, & Gates, 1992). Meaning for the person cannot simply be described by observing his/her behavior; rather, it depends upon the individual's first-person account of and perspective on his or her own behavior and/or experience.

Phenomenological Interview – This is a type of interview that attempts to capture the perceived experience of the person in his or her own words. The aim of a phenomenological interview is to arrive at a first-person account of a specific domain of experience (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

Qualitative Data – These are direct quotations that capture people's perspectives and experiences. Qualitative data include detailed thick description and are the result of in-depth inquiry (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative Inquiry – Qualitative inquiry seeks to produce data, obtained through inductive analysis, that yields detailed and nuanced descriptions of people's perspectives and experiences (Patton, 1990)

Subject Experience – Subject experience postulates that there is no objective reality. There is only what people know about their experience and what it means to them (Patton, 1990). Experience is viewed as a co-creation between the person and the world in which they live.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions applied to this investigation:

1. The consultants in this study were able to accurately and effectively articulate their experiences of providing sport psychology consultation to

athletes and communicate their ideas, emotions, and behaviors as directly and candidly as possible.

2. The consultants identified and nominated to participate in this study accurately reflect “expert” sport psychology consultants in the field of applied sport psychology today as perceived by AAASP and USOC recognized consultants.
3. Existential phenomenology is a valid methodology for acquiring an accurate description of a consultant’s experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes.

Limitations of the Study

There were several possible limitations to the current investigation. First, it is possible that some consultants had difficulty accurately recalling specific experiences of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes because the experience may have occurred many years prior to the study. Second, the results are limited to the honesty of the consultants’ responses to the interview questions. Third, the results of the study may not be generalizable from this group of consultants to any other individual consultants or groups. Fourth, the participants were individuals nominated by a sample of their peers who were assumed to be familiar with expert consultants in North America currently providing sport psychology consultation to athletes or performers. Fifth, all of the co-participants in this investigation were Caucasian and ten of the eleven co-participants were male. Thus, it is possible that the experiences of females and consultants of varying ethnicities could be quite different than those of the co-participants selected for this study.

Significance of the Study

As past researchers in the field of sport psychology have discovered (Dale, 1994; Hanson & Newburg, 1992), qualitative research procedures have the potential to bring a fresh perspective to research in sport. The present study represents the first existential phenomenological investigation to examine the experience of expert sport psychology consultants. The ultimate goal of this study was to provide a better understanding of what expert sport psychology consultants' feel are the salient aspects of their experiences of providing sport psychology services to athletes.

The implications of this investigation are widespread. First, it is possible that a better understanding of expert consultants' unique perceptions of their experiences may enable fellow and future sport psychology consultants to better assist the athletes they work with during performances or consultations by shedding light on the behaviors, philosophies, and protocol of experts. Secondly, participation in the process of the qualitative interview could be useful to co-participants and researchers alike (Wertz, 1989). The new insights and understandings that emerge during the interviews may help the expert consultants achieve a greater awareness of their own experiences and possibly enhance aspects of their own consulting. Third, my own participation in the research process may influence my consulting practice, education, and experience.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The focus of the present study was to identify themes associated with the consulting experience of expert sport psychology consultants. In this chapter, literature dealing with the following topics is reviewed and summarized: (a) physical expertise in sport, (b) expertise in sport instruction, (c) characteristics of expert athletes, and (d) the characteristics, strategies, and techniques of expert sport psychology consultation.

Over the history of sport psychology research, there has been a natural progression in the examination of topics pertaining to excellence in sport. Sport psychology, a field that grew out of physical education, exercise science, and motor control, naturally began by investigating physical excellence in athletes. This early research led investigators to examine the psychological characteristics of sport excellence in athletes and coaches. Eventually, sport psychology researchers turned the microscope around and began investigating the possible characteristics of excellent sport psychology consultants.

Over the last 30 to 40 years, applied performance consulting has become a distinct and more researched practice within the field of sport psychology (Simons & Andersen, 1995). Yet, most of the literature has addressed the effectiveness of techniques and interventions used in practice (e.g., Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Streat & Roberts, 1992; Vealey, 1988, 1994) and the behavior, training, and ethics of sport psychologists (e.g., Partington & Orlick, 1991; Sachs, 1993). Relatively little attention has been given to the actual experiences of professionals practicing in the field. And, few studies have attempted to determine what makes certain practitioners more successful than others.

Over the years, several investigators have pointed out this shortcoming and suggested the need to examine the effectiveness and excellence of applied consultants based on their own experiences (Heyman, 1982; Nideffer, 1982; Schell, Hunt, & Lloyd, 1984; Simons & Andersen, 1995; Streat & Roberts, 1992; Suinn, 1985). What appears to be lacking in the current sport psychology literature is a systematic examination of the experiences of expert sport psychology consultants.

Physical Expertise in Sport

In the beginning, researchers in sport psychology did not address expertise in athletes, coaches, or sport psychology consultants. The inability or lack of interest in the study of expertise, both physical and mental, was possibly due to the fact that sport expertise was caught between disciplines. It was almost as if the study of sport expertise was too cognitive for sport researchers to study and too physical for psychology researchers to explore. An exception to this impasse was the work of researchers from the areas of motor behavior and sport psychology (Antonelli, 1970; Armstrong & Hoffman, 1979; Delyte-Morris, 1975; Highlen & Bennett, 1979; Kroll, Loy, Hosek, & Vanek, 1973; Morgan & Johnson, 1978; Sanderson & Whiting, 1974, 1978) who recognized the cognitive nature of sport and acknowledged the role of expert performance in physical and cognitive pursuits.

Prior to the aforementioned studies, the majority of research dealt with the effects of expertise on various physical aspects of sport performance. Researchers attempted to understand expertise by examining the process (or “software”) characteristics or the more permanent (or “hardware”) characteristics of performance.

Software characteristics were presumed to be developed as a result of domain specific learning (Starkes, Helsen, & Jack, 2001). Examples included error detection, recall, recognition, and verbal reports. Hardware characteristics included innate abilities, such as visual acuity, depth perception, and visual reaction time (Starkes et al., 2001). Table 1 depicts a summary of the research that has examined the software characteristics of expertise in sport and Table 2 contains a list of studies that have employed hardware characteristics of expert sport performers.

The relatively recent emergence of expertise as a focal point for sport psychology research can be traced to a number of factors, most particularly the dominance of laboratory-based studies in motor control and experimental psychology (Abernethy, 1988). The recent emphasis on the role of cognitive processes in determining expert sport performance has led to an increased interest in the psychological characteristics and mental states of expert athletes, coaches, and sport psychology consultants.

Expertise in Sport Instruction

The most obvious task of an instructor in sport is to help athletes perform to their full potential. To reach that goal, coaches must be able to execute a wide range of tasks, including teaching skills during training sessions and providing technical and tactical guidance during competition (Woodman, 1993). The research on sport expertise has attempted to identify psychosocial or psychological characteristics that differentiate successful instructors from their less successful counterparts. In this section literature in applied sport psychology is reviewed that addresses “psychological expertise” in sport instruction and education.

Table 1. Studies of “Software” Characteristics of Experts in Individual and Team Sports

Sport	Verbal Reports	Error Detection	Recall	Recognition	Visual Strategies
Badminton					Abernethy (1988) Abernethy & Russell (1987)
Ballet	Starkes, Deakin, Lindley, & Crisp (1987)		Starkes, Deakin, Lindley, & Crisp (1987) Smyth & Pendleton (1994)		
Baseball	McPherson (1993) French, Nevett, Spurgeon, Graham, Rink, & McPherson (1996)		Spilich, Vesonder, Chiesi, & Voss (1979)		Hubbard (1955) Hubbard & Seng (1954)
Basketball	Cleary & Zimmerman (2001)	Allard, Graham, & Paarsalu (1980)	Allard, Graham, & Paarsalu (1980)		Bard & Fleury (1976)
Canoeing	White & Hardy (1998)				
Dance			Starkes, Caicco, Boutilier, & Sevsek (1990)		
Field Hockey			Starkes (1987)	Doody, Huddleston, Beavers, & Austin (1987) Vickers (1986)	Starkes (1987)
Gymnastics	White & Hardy (1998)				
Ice Hockey	Armstrong & Hoffman (1979)				Salmela & Fiorito (1979)
Rifle					Janelle, Hillman, Apparies, Murray, Meili, Fallon, & Hatfield (2000)
Soccer			Williams & Davids (1995)	Williams & Davids (1995)	Patrick & Spurgeon (1978) Williams & Davids (1998)
Tennis	Leavitt (1979) McPherson (2000)	Haskins (1965)		Jones & Miles (1978)	Petrakis (1986)
Volleyball	Kitsantas & Zimmerman (2002)	Allard & Starkes (1980)	Borgeaud & Abernethy (1987)	Allard & Starkes (1980)	

Table 2. Studies of “Hardware” Characteristics of Experts in Individual and Team Sports

Sport	Visual Acuity	Depth Perception	Peripheral Visual Acuity	Visual Reaction Time
Athletics		Graybiel, Jokl, & Trapp (1955)	Williams & Thirer (1975)	Burley (1944) Burpee & Stroll (1936) Youngen (1959)
Ballgames	Sanderson & Whiting (1974, 1978)	Banister & Blackburn (1931)		Burke (1972)
Baseball	Winograd (1942)	Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968)	Ridini (1968)	Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968) Winograd (1942)
Basketball	Morris & Kreighbaum (1977) Tussing (1940)	Beals, Mayyasi, Templeton & Johnston (1971) Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968)	Ridini (1968) Stroup (1957)	Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968) Starkes, Allard, Lindley, & O'Reilly (1994)
Fencing				Pierson (1956) Singer (1968)
Field Hockey	Starkes (1987)	Olsen (1956)		Starkes (1987)
Football		Deshaies & Pargman (1976)	Deshaies & Pargman (1976)	
Golf				Beise & Peaseley (1937)
Ice Hockey				Olsen (1956)
Soccer		Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968)	Ridini (1968)	Helsen & Starkes (1999) Olsen (1956) Ridini (1968)
Softball				Miller & Shay (1964) Nessler (1973)
Tennis				Beise & Peaseley (1937)
Track			Westerlund & Tuttle (1931)	
Volleyball		Ridini (1968)	Ridini (1968)	Ridini (1968)
Wrestling				Rasch, Pierson, O'Connell, & Hunt (1961) Rasch & Pierson (1963)

Armstrong and Hoffman (1979) were among the first researchers to examine mental and/or psychological characteristics of instructors/coaches. Specifically, they attempted to determine whether differences existed in the knowledge of performance competence, performance outcome, and performance error identification of two groups of tennis instructors differing in levels of expertise. Eighty subjects participated in the study. The expert group consisted of 40 professional tennis teachers with an average of 7.2 years of teaching experience. The non-expert group was comprised of 40 undergraduate physical education majors with no instructional experience in tennis. Participants viewed 12 common errors in right-handed tennis players performing a forehand groundstroke. Each participant was instructed to identify what was wrong with each of the taped forehands by noting the errors on a checklist. The results revealed that expert tennis instructors detected more common performance errors than did non-experts. Further, the observed differences appeared to be due to observational and analytical experience gained through teaching rather than from actual practice of the skill.

Gould, Hodge, Peterson, and Giambi (1989) performed two studies in order to determine the strategies elite coaches use to enhance self-efficacy in athletes. In Study 1, intercollegiate wrestling coaches (n=101) were surveyed on the frequency of their use of 13 different efficacy strategies. The results indicated that coaches most often used instruction-drilling, modeling confidence oneself, encouraging positive self-talk, and employing hard physical conditioning drills. In Study 2, 124 national team coaches representing 30 Olympic sports were interviewed. The efficacy strategies the coaches most often used were instruction-drilling, modeling confidence oneself, encouraging positive self-talk, and emphasizing technique improvements while downplaying outcome.

In 1995, Coté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, and Russell attempted to identify and conceptualize the knowledge and behavioral characteristics of 17 Canadian expert high-performance gymnastic coaches. Open-ended interview questions were used to gain insight into the coaches' knowledge. Inductive analysis of coaches' responses revealed several categories of knowledge components pertaining to (a) competition, (b) training, (c) organization, (d) coach's personal characteristics, (e) gymnast's personal characteristics and level of development, and (f) contextual factors. The researchers concluded that coaches' knowledge was instrumental to athlete's development in a variety of settings (e.g., organizational, competition, and training settings).

In a second study examining the behaviors of the same expert coaches, Coté, Salmela, and Russell (1995) discovered that coaches were minimally involved with gymnasts during competition as compared to training. During training, coaches adopted a style consisting of being supportive, giving responsibilities to the gymnast, providing instruction, and offering positive feedback. Coaches also devoted training to the teaching of mental skills, such as controlling anxiety, creating awareness, developing athlete motivation, developing self-sufficiency, developing aggressiveness/intensity, and helping athletes to deal with pain. In addition, expert coaches reported the extensive use of simulation during training.

In 1996, Coté and Salmela published a final article from their data set of expert Canadian high-performance gymnastic coaches. The emphasis of the paper was on the organizational behavior of elite coaches. Such behaviors included a variety of dynamic social interactions with gymnasts, parents, and assistant coaches, such as dealing with athletes' personal concerns and communicating with parents. The authors pointed out

that while such activities are not part of the structure of most coaches' training they represent crucial tasks that are handled successfully by expert coaches.

Saury and Durand (1998) analyzed the practical knowledge of expert sailing coaches of the French Olympic team during preparation for the 1996 Olympic games. Because the goal of the study was to examine the situated knowledge of coaches, data were collected on site during actual training sessions. In-depth interviews revealed that coaches viewed many of their tasks as a set of interacting constraints around which they had to work. As a result, operational strategies centered on organizational routines, cognitive anticipation and creation of flexible plans, flexible on-site adaptation, joint control of training with athletes, and level of involvement in the training situation based on the extent of one's past experiences. Overall, the results suggested that coaching expertise is largely a function of experience. The authors concluded that while not all experienced coaches are experts, all experts are experienced coaches.

Characteristics of Expert Athletes

Sport psychologists have also demonstrated an intense interest in the cognitive behavioral strategies utilized by highly successful athletes. Research on this topic has attempted to determine the behaviors, thoughts, and characteristics that differentiate experts from their lesser skilled counterparts and to identify common features of experts across sports or domains (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). To date, a significant amount of literature has been devoted to the topic of expert performance in sport. In the current section, literature in applied sport psychology that addresses "expertise" in athletes is discussed.

In 1975, Delyte-Morris conducted a benchmark study of expertise that attempted to understand the biographical and psychological make-up of athletes, specifically, highly skilled, female field hockey players. Participants were 20 women chosen to represent their provincial field hockey team in the Canadian National Tournament. Psychological dimensions of these athletes were assessed by means of the Athletic Motivation Inventory (AMI). The purpose of the study was to determine whether athletes who were later selected to the National team (expert) were significantly different on selected biological and psychological factors from those who were not selected. Results of the AMI and the demographic information that was obtained revealed that, compared to lesser skilled athletes, highly skilled (expert) field hockey players were more independent thinking and acting women, more capable of commitment and self-discipline, and more aggressive and tough-minded.

Morgan and his colleagues (e.g., Morgan, 1968, 1980; Morgan & Costill, 1972; Morgan & Johnson, 1978) conducted several of the earliest investigations of the personality characteristics of national and Olympic rowers, runners and wrestlers using the Profile of Mood States. They found support for an “iceberg” personality profile of positive mental health that characterized more successful athletes as higher in vigor, but lower in tension, depression, fatigue, and confusion compared to less successful athletes.

Highlen and Bennett (1979) sought to identify situational rather than personality trait differences in successful and unsuccessful athletes in an effort to identify strategies that might be effective in the training of athletes. Thirty-nine elite wrestlers from Canada who were attempting to qualify for the National Team completed a questionnaire that was adapted from an inventory used in an earlier study by Mahoney and Avenier (1977) with

gymnasts. The results revealed that compared to non-qualifiers, qualifiers were more confident, had fewer self-doubts, performed closer to their maximal potential, had less stress prior to and during competition, exhibited greater concentration on specific moves, and paid less attention to the audience.

In 1981, Gould, Weiss, and Weinberg assessed the psychological characteristics of successful and non-successful wrestlers at the Big Ten Conference Championships. The night before the championship, 49 wrestlers completed a psychological skills inventory (adapted from a questionnaire developed earlier by Highlen & Bennett, 1979) designed to assess many of the cognitive states important to wrestling. The relationship between each of these cognitive states and two performance measures (tournament placement and seasonal won-loss record) was then determined. It was hypothesized that wrestlers who placed in the tournament and had better win-loss records would be more self-confident, perform closer to their maximal potential, be less anxious, and exhibit a more effective coping response to anxiety than would the less successful wrestlers. The results revealed that successful (expert) wrestlers were more self-confident, performed closer to their maximum potential, and used a greater amount of attentional focusing to concentrate on only wrestling-related thoughts prior to competition than did unsuccessful wrestlers. Unlike the results of previous research (Highlen & Bennett, 1979), few differences in anxiety level or coping responses and no difference in the use of imagery were found between successful and unsuccessful wrestlers. The latter result suggested support for the notion that the utility of imagery in distinguishing the performance of successful and less successful athletes may be sport specific.

In 1985, Miller and Miller examined the psychological correlates of success in elite sportswomen. Five self-report inventories were administered to 20 elite net ballers preparing for the World Tournament. The 12 members who made the team comprised the successful group and the 8 members who did not make the team comprised the unsuccessful group. All participants completed the Sport Anxiety Test, both forms of the State-Trait Anxiety Questionnaire, the Profile of Mood States, and the short version of the Activation-Deactivation Adjective Checklist. No significant differences were found between the two groups on any psychological factors as measured by these questionnaires. Possible explanations for these results included an insufficient difference in ability level of the two groups and the use of non-sport specific personality tests.

In 1987, Mahoney, Gabriel, and Perkins attempted to identify psychological skills or clusters of skills that reliably differentiated elite athletes from their less exceptional peers. Based on the earlier work of Mahoney and colleagues with collegiate and Olympic athletes (Mahoney, 1986; Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Shelton & Mahoney, 1978) a questionnaire comprising 51 items was developed. This instrument, called the Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports (PSIS), assessed five broad themes: anxiety measurement, concentration, self-confidence, mental preparation, and team emphasis. Three categories of performers were examined. Elite athletes (n=126) were identified by the national governing bodies of 17 sports with “elite” being defined as having finished fourth or higher in a national championship. Pre-elite athletes (n=141) from 11 sports were also determined by the national governing bodies of those sports. The majority were attending special training or were competing at junior national competitions for their country. The third and largest group of athletes (n=446) were participants in 21

collegiate sports at five major universities in the United States. Relative to their less accomplished peers, elite athletes reported that they experienced less anxiety, were able to concentrate better, were more self-confident, relied more on internal references, were more focused on their own performance, and were more highly motivated.

In a subsequent study, McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) attempted to determine the mental factors that contributed to performance excellence among top professional golfers. More specifically, the purpose of their study was to explore mental readiness strategies utilized by elite, professional golfers, determine whether common elements of excellence were evident among top professional golfers (i.e., touring pros), and, determine whether top professional golfers differed from club professionals with respect to mental readiness strategies. Individual open-ended interviews were conducted with 23 professional golfers, 14 of whom were top touring professionals from the P.G.A. and L.P.G.A. tours. All had won professional tournaments. A comparison group was composed of 9 teaching professionals. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. The results revealed that, compared to teaching pros, touring pros spoke of higher levels of commitment, quality training, daily goal setting, more extensive use of mental imagery, a practice plan, a pre-tournament plan, a tournament focus plan, systematic ongoing tournament evaluation, the ability to refocus in the face of distractions, and a clear understanding of the underlying differences between good and bad performances.

Gould, Eklund, and Jackson (1992a) performed a qualitative study involving extensive interviews with all 20 members of the 1988 U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team. Specifically, mental preparation strategies, and pre-competitive cognition and affect were examined by having the wrestlers respond to a series of questions about their all-time best

match, worst Olympic match, and most crucial Olympic match. Prior to all-time best performances, wrestlers described optimal pre-match mental states characterized by positive expectancies, optimal arousal states, and a sensation of heightened effort and commitment. In contrast, before their worst Olympic performances, wrestlers described negative feeling states and negative, irrelevant, or irregular patterns of thought. They also mentioned mental preparation deficiencies such as non-adherence to preparation routines. Another important finding of this study was that, compared to non-medallists, medallists consistently adhered to systematic pre-performance routines throughout the Olympics. Medal winning wrestlers also said that prior to their best matches they were emotionally intense and even nervous. At the same time they reported feelings of high confidence. Overall, these results suggest that pre-competitive mental states and routines play a critical role in elite competitive performance.

Gould, Eklund, and Jackson (1992b) also examined the competitive cognition and affect of 1988 United States Olympic wrestlers' during their best all-time match, worst Olympic match, and most crucial Olympic match. During their best matches, wrestlers reported being extremely confident, totally focused, optimally aroused, and focused on clear strategies. During their worst matches, wrestlers said they were not confident, had inappropriate feeling states, experienced many task-irrelevant and negative thoughts, and either deviated from their performance plans or made poor strategy choices. Taken together, the results of this large, two-part investigation suggest that very different strategies, cognition, and feeling states characterize the best and worst performances of elite wrestlers.

In 1996, Cox, Liu, and Qui conducted two investigations to test the hypotheses that elite Chinese athletes participating in different sports (i.e., track and field, fencing, and gymnastics) would exhibit different psychological profiles and that elite Chinese athletes participating in track and field would exhibit superior psychological skill profiles compared to collegiate level Chinese track and field athletes. Participants were 83 elite Chinese athletes competing at the international level in track and field, fencing, and gymnastics and 94 collegiate Chinese athletes competing in track and field. All athletes' psychological skills were assessed using the Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports (PSIS R-5). The results revealed that elite Chinese track and field athletes exhibited higher anxiety control and confidence scores than their collegiate counterparts; however, no differences were exhibited in the psychological profiles of elite athletes from different sports.

Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, and Templin (2000) conducted interviews with 15 United States Olympic track and field athletes in an effort to explain the following general themes: dreams, developmental influences, performance, developmental obstacles, mental preparation, salient mental and physical qualities, and advice to young athletes. The results revealed that these expert athletes had strong mental skills and attitudes, dreams and/or goals that they deemed important, a strong support system (coaches, parents, and role models), religious or spiritual beliefs that they felt were instrumental to their success, a heavy emphasis on fun and enjoyment, the view that injury was a key obstacle that had to be overcome, and a sound work ethic.

Summary. Taken together, the results of the aforementioned studies suggest that expert or elite athletes demonstrate a number of behaviors, psychological characteristics, techniques, and strategies that are different from those of non-expert sport performers. However, less is known about the characteristics that differentiate successful and less successful instructors and educators in sport, particularly sport psychology consultants. In the following section, a summary of this research is presented.

Characteristics, Strategies, and Techniques of Expert Sport Psychology Consultation

The relatively recent emergence of research on applied sport psychology practice has produced literature that has generally followed two tracks: (a) the identification of techniques and interventions used in effective service delivery (e.g., Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Streat & Roberts, 1992; Vealey, 1988, 1994), and, (b) the behavior, training, and ethics of sport psychology consultants (e.g., Partington & Orlick, 1991; Sachs, 1993). Very little research has been done that attempts to examine expert sport psychology consultants' vast experience in hopes of learning more about the dynamics of applied practice. The literature to date has attempted to identify and understand expertise in sport psychology consultation by determining the characteristics, consulting strategies, techniques, and training of expert sport psychology consultants.

The notion that practitioners can benefit from the example of successful or expert individuals is rooted in previous work in psychology. Maslow was among the first to study exceptional people in order to understand self-actualization, or the ways some people are able to achieve what they set out to do (1970a). Further, Maslow contended that the capacity for expertise, noted in exceptional people, could also be brought within reach of ordinary people (1970b). Presumably, by gaining a better understanding of who

experts are and what they do, others would be more likely to understand how they (the ordinary) could become more like them (the experts).

Given the proliferation of applied sport psychology consultants now providing services to athletes around the world, athletes, coaches, and fellow sport psychology consultants are becoming more and more concerned about the quality of sport psychology consultation services being delivered. Therefore, a few attempts have been made to determine the characteristics necessary for effective consulting in the field of sport psychology. Suinn (1985) conducted the first of this type of investigation.

In 1985, Suinn examined the techniques most often used by sport psychology consultants. He conducted open-ended interviews with 11 sport psychology consultants involved in mental training for U.S. athletes competing in the 1984 Olympics. He asked consultants to identify the intervention techniques they most often employed with athletes. The results revealed that the following interventions were used most frequently: concentration, relaxation, self-regulation, visualization, coach/athlete communication, goal setting, self-talk, stress management, thought management, biofeedback, and crisis interventions. Suinn (1985) however failed to gather any information on the quality of the sport psychology consultants and/or the services they provided. Thus, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and/or the sport psychology consultants in this study.

Orlick and Partington (1987) extended this line of research and assessed the consultants and sport psychology services available to Canadian Olympic teams leading up to the 1984 Los Angeles and Sarajevo Olympic games. Intensive interviews were conducted with each of 75 Canadian Olympic athletes representing 19 different sports.

Athletes from 12 of the sports indicated that they had worked with at least one of eleven sport psychology consultants on the Canadian Olympic support staff in preparation for the 1984 Olympic games. Each athlete responded to a series of questions from four general areas. Those areas pertinent to this review included: (1) the effectiveness of the sport psychology consultant (How did the consultant fit with you, your team, and the coaches? How effective was the consultant?), (2) recommendations for using the sport psychology consultant in the future (Would you recommend using this consultant again next year?), and (3) the personal characteristics of the consultant (What were some of the personal characteristics of the sport psychology consultant you met with?).

Predictably, some athletes reported being highly satisfied with their consultant and his or her mental training program, while others were highly dissatisfied. Athlete input helped the authors create two profiles, one of highly successful (expert) sport psychology consultants and one of unsuccessful consultants. An expert consultant was characterized as (1) likable and perceived as having something applied and concrete to offer, (2) flexible and knowledgeable enough to provide person-specific input, (3) accessible enough to build rapport and caring, (4) having worked with a team at least 9 months prior to the Olympics, (5) having made multiple contacts with individual athletes, and (6) having conducted several follow-up sessions with individual athletes before and during the competitive season. An unsuccessful consultant was characterized as (1) having poor interpersonal skills, (2) offering little application of psychology to sport, (3) lacking sensitivity or flexibility to individual needs of athletes, (4) having limited one-on-one contact with athletes, (5) having demonstrated inappropriate application of consulting

skills on site at a competition, (6) having bad timing, and (7) not providing enough input or feedback.

Partington and Orlick conducted a follow-up study in 1987. In this study, the authors developed and utilized the Consultant Evaluation Form (CEF) as a tool to aid consultants in monitoring and improving their services. Included in the CEF are questions pertaining to the amount and type of athlete-consultant contact, as well as, items regarding consultant characteristics (Partington & Orlick, 1987). The purpose of this study was to determine Olympic *coaches'* assessments of sport psychology consultants and services offered prior to the 1984 Olympics. Individual interviews were conducted with 17 expert Canadian Olympic coaches representing 15 different sports. In all, the coaches discussed the characteristics and services of 21 consultants and outlined their personal criteria for assessing the effectiveness of a sport psychology consultant and his or her mental training program. Coaches responded to each of the following questions pertinent to this review of literature: (1) How effective was your work and/or that of the consultant with the athlete in the area of mental training and psychological preparation? (2) What were the consultant's strength and weaknesses? (3) In what ways, if any, did the consultant help or hinder your athletes? (4) In what way, if any, did the consultant help or hinder you? (5) In what ways could the consultant help more? (6) Why would you decide to keep a sport psychology consultant working with the team? and (7) Why would you decide to fire a consultant? In order of importance, the three main criteria coaches used for evaluating the effectiveness and expertise of the consultant were (1) whether the consultant's personality and style of working fit in well with the team and the program, (2) whether the consultant's advice to athletes and the coaching staff was

congruent with what the coach thought, (3) whether having the consultant around seemed to make a difference in team harmony, positive motivation, and problem-solving, and (4) whether there was evidence of improvement in the overall standing of the entire team over the long term. The personal characteristics of sport psychology consultants most valued by coaches included being a good listener, relating quickly and easily with athletes and staff, being energetic and hard-working, being flexible, open, creative, and well-trained, having useful and relevant skills, and being willing to accept low fees. Two problematic consultant profiles were identified. One consultant was characterized as the “shrink” who thought every problem was personality related. The other was labeled the “ivory tower” researcher and characterized as a person who imposed tests, gave little or no feedback, and came across as a “know-it-all.”

Gould, Tammen, Murphy, and May (1989) examined U.S. Olympic sport psychology consultants and the services they offered to U.S. amateur athletes through the USOC. Sport psychology consultants were asked to fill out questionnaires assessing demographic and background information, the nature of their services, their own evaluation of those services, and the problems they encounter as well as any recommendations for improving consulting. The 44 consultants interviewed represented 20 sports and were well trained in sport psychology. Almost all of the consultants (95.5%) had doctoral degrees in physical education (sport psychology) or clinical/counseling psychology. Further, consultants had 11 years of consulting experience on average. Consultants were most frequently involved in group seminars, individual athlete consultations, and individual group consultations. Results revealed that consultants rated themselves highly on their own effectiveness. The most frequent topics

for group seminars included goal setting, relaxation training, arousal regulation, imagery/visualization, and self-talk. Least frequent topics included hypnosis, pedagogy, biofeedback, and other stress management techniques. Individual athlete/coach consultation topics most frequently included goal setting, relaxation training, arousal regulation, imagery/visualization, self-talk, and concentration/attention training. Least frequent included biofeedback, pedagogy, and hypnosis. Consultants also indicated some of their most frequently experienced problems included non-interaction with other sport psychology professionals, lack of cooperation from coaches, coaches being non-supportive, and lack of access to athletes. While the consultants' self-evaluations were encouraging, the study failed to assess other parties (i.e., athletes, coaches, and fellow consultants) evaluations of consultants and their services.

In 1991, Partington and Orlick examined the best-ever consulting experiences of 19 of Canada's most active, expert consultants. Each participant had worked with Canadian athletes in preparation for the 1988 Olympic games. The consultants attended a workshop funded by Sport Canada and organized and conducted by the authors. Best-ever experiences were characterized by the openness of the athlete and coach, the way the consultation was initiated, the time the consultant was allowed to work with the athletes and the fit of the consultant to the situation. The consensus was that best-ever sport psychology consultations started with an individualized, athlete-centered approach to identify the needs of the athlete and special demands of the sport. In addition, consultants said the best-ever consultations utilized a common core of services and skills that included goal setting, focusing and refocusing of attention control, activation and anxiety control, imagery, pre-competition and competition planning, good

communication, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Consultants also made the following recommendations for novice practitioners who desired to achieve successful consultations: (1) determine whether there is a committed coaching staff, (2) develop a mutual understanding between athletes and coaches concerning expectations about mental training, (3) work out a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, (4) guard against the use of personality tests and other standardized inventories, and (5) don't give the athlete too many things to work on at first.

Gould, Murphy, Tammen, and May (1991) used the CEF to evaluate U.S. Olympic sport psychology consultants and the services they provided. The study was unlike previous research because this investigation assessed athletes', coaches', and administrators' evaluations of sport psychology consultants. The information gathered in this study identified characteristics or traits perceived as valuable. The investigation was designed to evaluate U.S. Olympic sport psychology consultants, the services they provide, the CEF was used to examine effective consultant characteristics, and future sport psychology consultant needs were examined. Results revealed that consultants were rated favorably by coaches, athletes, administrators, and consultants. The consultants also received high ratings on all 10 CEF consultant characteristics. Consultants received the highest ratings for "trustworthiness," "being positive and constructive," "has useful knowledge," "helps athlete overcome problems," and "provides clear, practical, and concrete strategies." Overall, the consultants revealed the lowest ratings for "fit in with team." In terms of the coaches' ratings, "fitting in" and "the ability to draw on athlete's strengths" were perceived to be the most important characteristics for effective consulting. The athletes' ratings showed that "the ability to

draw on athlete's strengths" and "being positive and constructive" were the most important factors. "Fitting in" with the team was the most important factor for team consulting. Each of the topics rated by athletes and coaches as most important were among those identified as performance enhancement topics by Gould et al. (1991). Therefore, it seems that athletes and coaches prefer to focus on performance issues when working with a sport psychology consultant.

Other researchers have attempted to tap the personal knowledge and experience of leading sport psychology consultants in a more direct fashion. Straub and Hinman (1992) identified 10 leading sport psychology consultants in North America during the 1980s and then solicited these individuals' perspectives on various issues in the field of sport psychology. However, virtually none of the information that was obtained dealt with the issues of applied sport psychology consultation, consulting expertise, or experience.

In 1995, Straub, Ermolaeva, and Rodionov published a study dealing with the professional perspectives of 10 leading sport psychology consultants from the former Soviet Union. However, once again, very little information dealing with the characteristics, strategies, or experiences of these expert sport psychology consultants was obtained.

Two recent studies have provided the most insight into the characteristics, strategies, and techniques of expert sport psychology consultants. In fact, the clear delineation between these two studies and previous research in the field is that both studies attempted to investigate and learn from the experiences of applied sport psychology consultants. In the first, Simons and Andersen (1995) interviewed 11 sport psychology consultants who had been practicing in the field for a period of 20 to 40

years. These participants were chosen by the authors to represent what they thought would be a diverse cross section of consultants from the applied field. Questions were asked regarding how the participants got started in the field, how their practices developed, how they viewed past developments and the future of the field, what experiences most influenced them, and what were some of the important lessons they had learned. The results were consistent with much of the previous research in sport psychology that has attempted to understand the characteristics, training, and techniques of sport psychology consultants. However, when discussing their own personal consulting experiences, all participants agreed that successful consultants must have a strong sense of self-awareness, know their own limitations, and focus on the needs of the performer. While their findings represented useful information the authors were careful to point out that their approach did not represent “in depth interviewing” (p. 450). More specifically they stated that:

We hope we have offered the readers of TSP a glimpse into the world of sport psychology consultation as seen from the eyes of those who have “been around.” As the authors of this paper, we know that we have learned more about the practice of sport psychology consulting from these interviews than we have ever learned from a text. Without doubt, there is a great need for practitioner knowledge to be recorded for the benefit of the field. We encourage others to document the practice of consulting in the applied sport psychology literature (Simons & Andersen, 1995, p. 467).

Statler (2001) was the first to follow their recommendation. The goal of her study was to provide an in-depth description of what “truly outstanding consultants are doing differently in their work” (p. iv). To achieve this purpose Statler conducted open-ended interviews with 12 exceptional sport psychology consultants in North America. These individuals were chosen by means of a snowball sample of professionals in the field who

were asked simply to identify who they felt were the best applied consultants. Using a semi-structured qualitative interview approach and grounded theory design, Statler (2001) employed a 27-question interview guide containing items that pertained to the primary interview question, “What do you do as an applied sport psychology consultant” (p. 38)? Once the participants had exhausted their description of what they did as an applied sport psychology consultant, they were asked, “to reflect on what they believed their colleagues did, and how was that similar to or different from their own practice” (p. 39). Lastly, a discussion of sport psychology consulting as an art form was initiated by asking participants if they felt that what they did as a consultant could be construed as an “art.”

All interviews were inductively content analyzed and six major themes emerged: (a) sense of self, (b) athlete-centered approach to consulting, (c) experience (dealing with the critical components of personal and professional development), (d) sense of fulfillment, (e) external support and (f) elusive factors.

The first category, labeled “sense of self” addressed the participants’ discussions of who they perceived themselves to be, as well as any personality characteristics they felt they embodied. The next category, athlete-centered approach, concentrated on the consultants; underlying their epistemology combined with their use of counseling psychology skills to create an effective consulting dynamic. The value of experience and the impact it has on one’s level of expertise were the basis for the third category. Each of the consultants indicated high levels of career satisfaction in category four. The fifth category dealt with how people outside the consulting dyad contributed to the participant’s effectiveness. The final theme concerned the notion that in addition to the

other factors, there exist additional components of expertise that were hard to conceptualize.

Statler's (2001) study represents the most comprehensive examination of expertise in sport psychology consulting to date. However, like previous studies, her research once again outlined the characteristics, strategies, and techniques used by expert practitioners in their applied consulting. Second, the themes she obtained did not "emerge" from the data but rather represented participants responses to specific questions she asked them. Third, Statler's ultimate conclusion was that each expert consultant arrived at his or her consulting practice in his or her own unique way, suggesting that there was little in the way of common themes associated with expert consultants experiences. Fourth, her conclusion that consultants provided expert sport psychology consulting through "elusive factors" offers little in the way of concrete characteristics of expert consulting.

Statler (2001) recommended that further research and investigation of the artistic components including those elusive factors of applied sport psychology be conducted. The present study represented an attempt to remedy that situation and shed further light on these "elusive factors."

Summary. Athletes and athlete behavior will always be the focus of research in applied sport psychology (Simons & Andersen, 1995). Of additional importance is the need to discover as much as possible about the characteristics and techniques of successful consultants. The majority of the research on that topic to date has attempted to determine the characteristics, strategies, and techniques used by expert consultants. To use a metaphor, researchers have attempted to identify the ingredients that make a great

cake (i.e., the techniques and methods expert consultants use). What remains unknown is the experience, knowledge, and touch of an expert chef. Therefore, the current investigation sought to examine the experience of expert practitioners providing sport psychology consultation, which might be likened to the experience of an expert chef making a great cake.

Existential Phenomenology

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to discuss the foundational philosophical aspects of existential phenomenology. This includes reference to its paradigmatic view of the world, its goal, and its focus on meaning and experience. Next, the development of a specific methodology and procedures unique to phenomenological research are discussed. Finally, the recent shift in the sport psychology literature from quantitative research methods to qualitative research methods is explored and specific phenomenological studies in sport psychology are discussed.

Foundational Concepts. The purpose of this section is to discuss the basic philosophical aspects of phenomenology. Discussion will address the topics of nature, origins, goal, meaning, subject experience, form of inquiry, and procedures. Phenomenology is both an abstract philosophy and a methodology of qualitative research that deals primarily with the practical aspects of living in the world (Czech, 2001). Basically, phenomenological researchers attempt to describe the lived experience.

Nature. The nature of the existential phenomenological paradigm holds the view that humans are not objects in nature (Valle & King, 1978). They are seen as inseparable from the world in which they live. By “world” this means not simply the physical world, but the “experience” of the world from one’s perception. The human and his or her

world are assumed to exist in a figure-ground (Gestalt) relationship since the human being and his or her world cannot be isolated and described independently of each other nor can they be fully comprehended within such dualism (Kvale & Grenness, 1967).

When researchers and practitioners seek to determine what there is to know about a person, they often conclude that there are two quite different aspects: (a) the outward, observable side of others, otherwise referred to as their physical behavior, and (b) the inward unobservable side that might include emotions, otherwise referred to as the personal side of experience (Valle et al., 1989). Valle et al. (1989) point out that this pattern of thought derives from the Cartesian dualism of subjective mind and objective body. The subjective was conceptualized as experienced solely by the individual having the experience and was incapable of being quantified, thereby, making it unavailable to traditional scientific study (Dale, 1996).

The adherence then to traditional scientific method requires adherence to three criteria: (a) the phenomenon must be observable, (b) the phenomenon must be measurable, and (c) the phenomenon must lend itself to verification by others (Valle et al., 1989). Those interested in studying human phenomena might find the traditional view too restrictive because it asks only “why” something happens, not “what” it is like or “what” is the nature of a certain phenomenon (Valle et al., 1989). Because some researchers saw the traditional method to be an insufficient way of describing human experience they turned to qualitative approaches including that of phenomenology.

Origins. Existential phenomenology is a result of the blending of two interrelated philosophical perspectives – existentialism and phenomenology (Valle et al., 1989). Both philosophies are a result of a common interest in human experience in the world of

everyday human life, and both seek to arrive at a rigorous description of human life as it is lived and reflected upon in the first-person (Pollio et al., 1997).

Phenomenology provides existentialism with a method that is meant to allow it to describe experience effectively (Dale, 1996). It was developed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and was combined with the philosophy of existence (existentialism) proposed by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegard (1813-1855). Another German philosopher and student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), is essentially responsible for combining the two philosophies with the methodology of phenomenological interviewing to describe experience in everyday human life (Valle et al., 1989). This combination embraces a holistic psychology that seeks to gain a first-person description of the experience (Giorgi, 1970).

Goal. The goal of phenomenology is to identify the meaningful structure of the phenomenon of interest. According to Ihde (1986), phenomenology does not attempt to coerce a phenomenon to present itself; instead, it attempts to allow the phenomenon to emerge. In phenomenology what is “present to mind” is taken as genuine data, the phenomenon; and, the phenomenological world seeks the essence of some experience without any type of theoretical interpretation or analysis.

Existential phenomenology is a “philosophical discipline that seeks to understand the events of human existence in a way that is as free as possible from the presuppositions of our cultural heritage, philosophical orientation, technological value, and other similar background considerations” (Valle & Halling, 1989, p. 6). The phenomenologist focuses on the unity of the individual in his or her world. In essence, individuals are thought to have no existence apart from their world. For this reason,

phenomenology attempts to go to the things (i.e., individuals) themselves in an effort to understand the meaning of the phenomenon.

Meaning. In an attempt to understand a phenomenon – as experienced – the goal is to try to understand the meaning of the phenomenon in and for human existence. Meaning is the background from which the person's participation in life arises (Fahlberg, Fahlberg, & Gates, 1992). Meaning for the person cannot simply be described by observing their behavior; rather, it depends upon the person's first-person account and perspective on his or her own behavior and/or experience. The meaning of things for the perceiver distinguishes the realities of life (Lawrence, 2001).

Subject Experience. The difference between subjective experience and subject experience is a key point to be understood in phenomenology. Phenomenology does not attempt to understand subjective experiences, rather subject experiences. As Patton (1990, p. 69) states, "There is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is and means." Experience incorporates the objective and the person's reality. It is, in essence, a co-creation between person and world.

Form of Inquiry. Qualitative inquiry, like existential phenomenology, "seeks to produce data that will yield detailed and nuanced descriptions of people's perspectives and experiences" (Patton, 1990, p. 40). Further, in qualitative inquiry an inductive approach is used to understand the phenomenon of interest without imposing preexisting expectations on its meaning or mode of operation (Patton, 1990).

Pollio et al. (1997) describes the phenomenological interview as the major procedure for attaining a significant and rigorous description of the lived experience. "The method that seems natural to attain a proper description of human experience is that

of a dialogue in which one member, the investigator, assumes a respectful position vis-à-vis the real expert, the subject” (Pollio et al., 1997, p. 29). “An exploration of the phenomenon starts by asking open questions rather than by testing theoretically derived hypotheses” (Patton, 1990, p. 40).

Phenomenological inquiry concentrates on the description of the lived experience. Researchers, from a phenomenological perspective, attend to what is present in awareness, not the existence and character of the object or experience. In other words, the focus is on the participants’ experienced meaning rather than on actions or behaviors (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Procedures. Pollio et al. (1997) offer a schematic summary of phenomenological investigation. The summary includes “the following seven steps: (1) Choose topic, (2) Perform bracketing interview, (3) Interview participants, (4) Transcribe interviews, (5) Develop thematic structures in a research group, 6) Report findings to participants, and 7) Prepare final report” (Pollio et al., 1997, p. 60).

1. Choose topic. The initial focus is on the researcher. The researcher seeks to find those reasons that interest him or her about the phenomenon to be studied. The researcher is then asked to reflect upon the possible reasons why he or she may have been drawn to the particular phenomenon.
2. Perform bracketing interview. A unique aspect of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher is the data collection instrument. Thus, the researcher attempts to suspend their own theoretical beliefs, preconceptions, and presuppositions (Pollio et al., 1997). It should be noted that bracketing will not remove an individual’s presuppositions, as it is impossible to achieve total

reduction of preconceived knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Rather, as Kvale (1983) states this procedure involves becoming “critically conscious” of preconceptions, theories, and hypotheses to reduce potential for distorting the experience to be gathered as the “data” of analysis. Another member of the phenomenological research group conducts the interview and the goal is to create awareness of the primary researchers’ personal meanings of the phenomenon being researched.

3. Interview participants. The interview is the method by which the researcher attains an in-depth understanding of another person’s experiences (Kvale, 1983). The interview usually begins with a broad, general question that invites the participant to describe his or her experience. The aim of this question and the phenomenological interview, in general, is to gain a first-person account of some specific domain of a person’s experience (Thompson et al., 1989). Further questions are used only to facilitate further description, clarify specific details, or ascertain how the participant felt at the time (Pollio et al., 1997). Thompson et al. (1989) advise the researcher to create an environment where the participant is allowed to share the things he or she wants to share. Kvale (1983) offers the following ways to promote this: 1) focus on the experience of the respondent, the phenomenon, 2) be “them-oriented” rather than person-oriented, 3) keep the interview centered on a description and understanding of the experience, 4) encourage precise descriptions, 5) seek clarification if needed, 6) be aware that later portions of the interview may be richer than the earlier parts. It is important to use open-

ended questions that relate directly to what the participant is now saying or has said earlier. Thompson et al. (1989) even suggest that using the same words the participant uses can help the researcher avoid imposing his or her predilections.

4. Transcribe interviews. Audiotaped interviews are transcribed into a written text for data analysis. The researcher or someone else can conduct this process, but it is suggested that the researcher transcribe the interviews because it gives him or her an additional opportunity to become familiar with the participant's comments.
5. Developing thematic structures. Perhaps the most crucial step in the process involves reading each transcript in order to discover meaning and to gain a sense of the data as a whole. Initially, clusters of thematic meaning units are derived. Often, members of a research group perform this task in unison. This group process of thematization takes place on the basis of hermeneutical principles. Hermeneutics is "the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts (Palmer, 1969, p. 9). The process involves moving from the whole of the text to a part of the text, back to the whole text, back to another part of the text, and so on (Johnson, 1998). After reading each transcript to get a sense of the "whole" and to identify smaller meanings unique to each text, transcripts are related to each other and common patterns are identified. Themes should be readily accessible in each transcript and be properly supported. In other words, the researcher should be able to locate

specific examples of text in each transcript that reflect a clear statement of a theme (Thompson et al., 1989).

6. Report findings to participants. A follow-up interview should be scheduled with each participant in order to ascertain the accuracy of the themes from the participant's perspective. The purpose of this interview is to ask for clarification and to offer the participant an opportunity to add or revise information if necessary (Lawrence, 2001).
7. Prepare final report. The audience for whom the researcher is presenting his or her work should determine the format of the final report. The major themes that are identified across interviews are presented as the results of the investigation. Goetz and Le Compte (1984) maintain that direct quotes from the interviews should be included with the discussion of each theme since they allow readers to develop their own interpretations of what the participants discussed.

Moving from Quantitative to Qualitative Research in Sport Psychology

Historically, research in sport psychology has tended to take a behavioristic/mechanistic perspective. This perspective attempts to explain the cause of behavior. Within the past twenty years however, researchers in sport psychology have begun to question the limits of this method of research (Dewar & Horn, 1992; Fahlberg et al., 1992; Streaan & Roberts, 1992; Martens, 1979, 1987). Quantitative methods have the limitation of not being able to fully capture the experience of the participant.

Martens (1979) published the first article in the sport psychology literature that voiced dissatisfaction with the existing scientific paradigm (quantitative) and called for a

significant change in the methodologies, paradigms, and theories accepted and used in sport psychology research. Specifically, Martens called for greater acceptance of the participants in studies as human beings, capable not only of reacting to, but also interacting with and at times, even changing the environment. To this end, Martens (1979) called for greater acceptance of self-report information.

In 1987, Martens published another article that addressed what he perceived to be a divergence in the field of sport psychology. Martens argued that academic and practicing sport psychology were on diverging courses because of an unjustified belief among academic sport psychology consultants in orthodox science as the primary source of knowledge. As a result, Martens (1987) called for a new philosophy of knowledge; one that would provide sport psychology with a philosophical basis that is much more appropriate for the study of human behavior. He challenged sport psychology researchers to consider an idiographic approach, one that asks participants to participate in the research process. Further, Martens (1987) suggested the use of a heuristic paradigm, which would give the “knower” a central place in the process of knowing, and would elevate experiential knowledge to prominence. To this end, Martens also called for the use of introspection as a viable research method.

In recent years, some researchers in sport psychology have begun using qualitative methods to examine sport behavior. In general, there are two types of qualitative approaches being employed in sport psychology: qualitative inquiry and phenomenology. Qualitative inquiry focuses on the “things” that create an experience (Johnson, 1998). Phenomenological research, on the other hand, focuses on the “lived”

experience of the participant. This approach considers the phenomenon not a “not a thing in the world” but rather the way an individual experiences his or her world.

This shift in the use of qualitative approaches has resulted in a steady increase in the number of investigations examining experiences (e.g., Cohn, 1991; Conroy, Poczwadowski, & Henschen, 2001; Coté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995; Coté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Eklund, 1994; Eklund, Gould, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992a, 1992b; Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1992; Hanson, 1992; Hemery, 1986; Jackson, 1992; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Newman, 1992; Orlick & Partington, 1988; Scanlon, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989; Striegel, 1994; Weiss, Barber, Sisley, & Ebbeck, 1991). However, the aforementioned research presents some inadequacies. Specifically, all of these studies represent investigations that utilized a structured or semi-structured interview format. Thus, participants were not given complete freedom to express their experience, in their own way, in their own words.

Phenomenological Research in Sport Psychology

To date, there are only a few existential phenomenological investigations that have been published in the sport psychology literature. However, recently the number of studies and dissertations utilizing phenomenological methods appear to be on the rise.

Fahlberg et al., (1992) were the first researchers in sport psychology to explicitly use the existential phenomenology research methodology to study and understand sport. Their article included a summary of existential phenomenology as a research method and an example of existential phenomenological research in the area of exercise behavior.

The first published study that employed existential phenomenology in sport psychology was that of Dale (1994). The purpose of this study was to describe and

understand the experience of seven NCAA champion decathletes during their most memorable or meaningful performance. Four themes emerged from Dale's (1994) study: (a) the "1500", (b) imagery, (c) narrowing focus of attention, and (d) awareness of others. The 1500-meter run was experienced as continually in the background of the decathlete's competitive experience, and the other three themes emerged during competition. Overall, decathletes said they felt they were able to perform better because they effectively utilized imagery and narrowed their focus of attention before and during competition. Also, decathletes reported being keenly aware of family members, coaches, the crowd, and their opponents during competition, although their awareness of others was experienced as an asset rather than a liability to their performance.

Parker (1994) explored the experience of seven former NCAA Division-I collegiate football players after they had finished their athletic eligibility. Participants were asked the question, "Tell me what your life has been like since you played your last collegiate football game" (Parker, 1994, p. 289). The findings of this study centered around five themes: the transition from high school to elite-college football; changes in relationships between participants and coaches; the learning of behavior not positively transferable to the "real world;" the power and control issues surrounding major college football and the manner in which participants responded to being controlled; and, the ways participants were experiencing post-eligibility life.

In 1996, Dale published a tutorial on existential phenomenological methodology and the phenomenological interview in The Sport Psychologist. In this paper Dale (1996) contended that with its open-ended format and similarities to the athlete-sport psychology consultant interaction in a performance enhancement setting, existential phenomenology

represented a method that had the potential to offer valuable insights into sport participants' experiences.

In 2000, Dale published another study examining the distractions seven elite, decathletes experienced during their "most memorable performance" and the strategies they used to cope with them. The participants were individuals who had competed at the national and international level and had scored 8,000 points or more (the standard for excellence in the decathlon) in at least one competition. Each participant in this study talked about a competition in which he had demonstrated the capability to overcome various problems and/or distractions and perform well. When they encountered distractions these decathletes said they became aware of level of talent, lack of confidence, fatigue, pain, fear, weather, other competitors, the 1500, and camaraderie. The coping strategies these athletes reported using to combat these distractions included: imaging/visualizing, being aware of keys, competing only against one self, having confidence in their training, achieving consistency, and enjoying camaraderie. Dale's (2000) results revealed that the general thematic structure of the dialogues of all the athletes were similar. The competitions they discussed as memorable were not necessarily their best performances, but were competitions that were highlighted by significant distractions. Yet, in each case, the distraction was overcome and a memorable performance was the result.

In addition to articles published in refereed journals there have been a number of unpublished dissertations conducted in the past five years that have utilized an existential phenomenological approach. These include Johnson's (1998) dissertation examining the athlete's experience of being coached, Czech's (2001) dissertation on Christian athlete's

experience of prayer in sport, Lawrence's (2001) dissertation examining male and female African-American athletes' experiences of race during their athletic careers, and Molnar's (2002) dissertation investigating Division I athletes' experience of a coaching change.

Summary. Existential phenomenology is a philosophy and methodology that seeks to understand and describe the lived experiences of others. Based on the available research suggesting that there is a dearth of knowledge that examines the experience of applied sport psychology consulting, it appears that existential phenomenology represents a potentially useful research tool for examining the nature of expert consultants' experience of sport psychology consulting.

General Summary

Despite all the research that has examined expertise in all facets of sport, there is still a void in the literature concerning expert sport psychology consultants and consultation. The majority of the research on that topic to date has attempted determine how or what expert consultants do or say in applied practice. No one has yet to ask the expert practitioner to describe his or her own lived experience from the consultant's perspective. That was the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to provide a description of the experience of the provision of sport psychology services by some of the top applied sport psychology consultants in North America as perceived by a sample of colleagues and certified consultants in the field. The methodology chosen for this study was existential phenomenological interviewing. This method represents a process by which the experience of each co-participant is obtained through open-ended interviews that focus on the co-participants' lived experience of the phenomenon. In this section, the foundations of the existential phenomenological method that were used in the present study to describe the experience of providing sport psychology consultation are presented. These include: (a) researcher as instrument, (b) bias exploration, bracketing interview, and bias statement, (c) pilot study, (d) co-participants, (e) procedure, (f) interview protocol, (g) data analysis, (h) validity concerns, and (i) summary.

Researcher as Instrument

The focus of the first stage of a phenomenological research study is the choice of a topic of human experience that is interesting to the researcher (Dale, 1996). This is paramount, in terms of importance, because the researcher is the major instrument in any phenomenological research study. As such, it was important for me to gain a better understanding of my own personal history and biases as they relate to the phenomenon of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. The following paragraphs contain a description of my past experiences and interest in the provision of applied sport psychology services by expert practitioners.

Sports have always been a part of my life. In fact, from the ages of five until thirteen I participated on one or more sports teams literally every day of the year, non-stop, in a myriad of sports – football, basketball, baseball, soccer, tennis, and golf. Often, the seasons would overlap or I would be playing for more than one team at a time in the same sport. As I got older, my interest in some sports waned and my passion for other sports – especially golf – began to grow. I stopped participating in the other sports because it took time away from my obsession – golf. Eventually, my practice and hard work enabled me to play collegiate golf at the University of Richmond. While attending Richmond, I was fortunate enough to take an introductory course in sport psychology taught by Dr. Bob McGowan [a registered sport psychology consultant with the United States Olympic Committee].

Dr. McGowan and I eventually started working together on my own golf game. He gave me books by Dr. Bob Rotella to read. He steered me towards an undergraduate degree in psychology. He instructed me in numerous sport psychology classes. He allowed me to sit in on individual and team sessions with athletes and varsity sport teams at Richmond, and he introduced me to his fellow sport psychology colleagues (Dr. Bob Rotella, Dr. Maureen Weiss, Dr. Steve Danish, Dr. Al Petitpas, and Dr. Ken Ravizza). I read books and talked (or worked) with everybody I could about the practice of applied sport psychology.

The last influential decision Dr. McGowan helped me with was my decision on a master's program to attend. I eventually chose the University of Tennessee for its strong research and applied program. I earned a master's degree in sport psychology at

Tennessee and decided to stay at the school to finish my doctorate mainly because of the strength of the applied program. Currently, I am a third-year doctoral student.

Over the past three years I have gone from observing sport psychology consultants to becoming a graduate assistant in applied sport psychology. This has allowed me to consult with both male and female varsity athletes in sports like golf, track and field, and cross-country. Through my education in the classroom and my personal education working one-on-one with athletes every day, I have grown more and more inquisitive about other consultants' experiences in working with athletes. Sport psychology consultation is so unique to the individual consultant and the athlete with whom she or he is working that I have found myself growing more and more interested in the experiences of expert sport psychology practitioners. My interest led me to ask numerous questions, such as: What is the expert consultant's experience of working with an athlete or team? What can I learn from that experience?

Bias Exploration, Bracketing Interview, and Bias Statement

Simply put, bracketing one's assumptions is a vital aspect of qualitative research. Bracketing is the suspension of theoretical beliefs, preconceptions, and presuppositions (Pollio et al., 1997). The bracketing interview is an attempt to uncover any personal biases the researcher may have that could influence him or her or, more likely, hinder the process of data collection and analysis. One of the best ways for researchers to explore their biases is through a bracketing interview.

The bracketing interview allows the researcher to engage in self-reflection of the phenomenon under investigation and of his/her involvement, knowledge, and presuppositions concerning the phenomenon. This is designed to allow the meaning of

the phenomenon from the co-participant's perspective to emerge untainted or untouched by potential biases of the researcher.

A form B (Appendix A) was prepared and presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to initiation of the study. Upon completion of this process, another qualified colleague educated and experienced in qualitative interviewing conducted my bracketing interview. The interviewer asked me questions regarding my experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes in a similar way that the co-participants would be interviewed. The interview was then transcribed and analyzed to determine any biases or presuppositions I might have concerning the phenomenon. What follows, or is the end product of such an interview, is a bias statement that summarizes my own biases concerning the phenomenon. I remained cognizant of these presuppositions throughout the research process. Because of my personal experience as a sport psychology consultant, the bracketing interview helped to clarify my own experiences and reflections on providing sport psychology consultation to athletes.

Several themes emerged from my bracketing interview. The first major theme that emerged was fun. I found that my experience of providing sport psychology consultation was one that I thoroughly enjoyed for a number of reasons. A second theme was the notion of learning or growth. I feel as if I have learned a lot about consulting over the last three years. The third theme was a feeling of confidence or comfort in my role as the consultant. I realized how "at home" I am in that role and that my belief in my knowledge and instincts are strong.

In addition, the bracketing interview served to enhance my awareness of the phenomenological research method and identify biases that might influence any of the co-participants if I allowed them to. During the research process, I continually returned to the transcript of my bracketing interview. Hopefully, this allowed me to maintain my focus during the interview process and allowed me to capture the authentic life experiences' of my co-participants.

Pilot Study

The goal of the pilot study is to ensure that all the questions asked during the interview process allow the issues that are pertinent to the co-participant to emerge in regards to the lived experience, in this case, the experience of practicing sport psychology for an expert sport psychology consultant. An initial pilot study was performed with a male professional in applied sport psychology with eight years of consulting experience. The individual was chosen because of his experience working as an applied sport psychology consultant with a number of different sports and populations. In addition, he was chosen because he lives a good distance from me and this allowed me to test the audio equipment I would use to record subsequent phone interviews with my co-participants.

The purpose of the pilot study was to allow me to improve my interviewing skills. My aim was to invite conversation rather than to hinder it (Parker, 1994). The interview lasted approximately one hour and was subsequently transcribed and analyzed. Overall, the pilot study allowed me to practice interviewing, listening, transcribing, reading, re-reading, analyzing transcripts, and developing and refining the major question of the study (Dale, 1994). I learned that I am quite adept at adhering to the methodology

prescribed for use in a phenomenological interview. Each and every question I asked the individual being interviewed used their language in an effort to get them to explain or provide greater depth on a certain point or topic.

Co-Participants

The co-participants in this study consisted of expert performance consultants working in the field of sport psychology in North America. The participants in this study are hereafter referred to by the term “co-participant,” because they were not chosen at random, but were selected because of their extensive experience of the phenomenon being studied and were willing to discuss it (Colaizzi, 1978). Moreover, Polkinghorne (1989) describes an appropriate co-participant as any person who is able to provide a rich description of the experience under investigation. The term also suggests that I would learn as much about myself from the co-participants as I hoped they would learn about themselves.

The co-participants in this study were initially nominated by members of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) who are certified consultants as well as by sport psychology consultants listed on the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) Consultant Registry. An email (Appendix B) was sent to all 153 consultants, recognized at the time of the study, asking them to reply to the following question: Whom do you believe are some expert APPLIED sport psychology consultants practicing in North America today? Respondents were instructed to list as many nominees as they wished.

After the initial email, a follow-up email was sent one week later in hopes of obtaining more responses. More responses were obtained. Finally, a third email was sent

out two weeks after the first in order to achieve the same result. Again, more responses were obtained; however, fewer after the third mailing. A simple frequency count was performed of the emails that were returned and the 11 individuals receiving the most nominations were invited to participate in the study.

A total of 59 out of 153 recognized consultants responded (39% response rate) to the emails and provided their nominations of the consultants they believed to be expert practitioners in North America. Of the 59 respondents 36 were male and 23 were female (61% male, 39% female). These individuals nominated 113 different sport psychology consultants (84 males, 29 females).

Ultimately, 11 individuals (10 males and 1 female) were selected since two nominees tied for tenth. The co-participants had an average of 26 years of consulting experience. All 11 were asked to participate through phone contact or through email contact and all agreed to do so.

Procedure

All co-participants were briefly informed of the proposed study and of their selection by recognized consultants of AAASP and the USOC as one of the top, expert applied sport psychology consultants practicing in North America today. As soon as they agreed to participate, an Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) was emailed to co-participants and a more detailed overview of the study was given via a phone conversation or through e-mail. Consent forms were faxed back to the investigator.

Participation in the interviews was voluntary and the co-participants in this study were specifically advised that: (a) the interviews would be audio-taped, (b) they could stop the interview at any time, (c) copies of the transcripts would be provided to them, (d)

the transcripts would be reviewed by me and other researchers for identification of themes, and (e) their identity and the transcripts of their interview may be made public in the dissertation or in a subsequent publication.

Once I received confirmation of their willingness to participate in the study, I made arrangements to schedule a time to conduct the interview that was convenient for them. I conducted each of the 11 interviews over the telephone and recorded them on an audio tape. Several studies have revealed that self-disclosure and interview responses do not vary between telephone and face-to-face procedures (Bermack, 1989; Herzog & Rodgers, 1988; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000).

Research team members who also read the transcripts assisted me in identifying themes. Prior to doing this, these team members signed a pledge of confidentiality (See Appendix D). The phenomenological group consisted of five graduate students. All members of the group had knowledge of qualitative research and previous experience with phenomenological methods. Follow-up interviews were conducted either by telephone or by email with co-participants after they had received and read their transcribed interview. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to improve the accuracy of the description of their experiences. In each case, the co-participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcribed interview and agreed that all data obtained could be included within the dissertation.

Interview Protocol

The primary interview question for this study was open-ended and designed to facilitate the co-participant's exploration of their experience as it related to the practice of sport psychology. The phenomenological dialogues were unstructured in nature and last

approximately 60 to 75 minutes. As such, each dialogue began with the following question, “Can you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?” Any subsequent questions flowed from the general dialogue that occurred with each co-participant and were intended only to obtain clarification.

Every effort was made to avoid leading the co-participant in any way during the dialogue. Following Thompson et al.’s (1989) recommendation, I attempted to use the same words the co-participants used when asking the follow-up questions in order to avoid imposing my own predilections.

After all of the interviews were conducted, I transcribed the audio tapes verbatim. Notes were added regarding those elements (e.g., volume of voice, emotion) of the interview that were not captured by the tape. Once all the interviews were transcribed, each co-participant was e-mailed a transcribed version of their interview to check for accuracy. The finalized transcripts and additional notes were then used for data analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

The aim of phenomenological analysis is to find structure and relationships between varying descriptions of the same phenomenon. Polkinghorne (1989) contends that the analysis provides a rich description and a structural relationship that combines the elements of varied interviews into a unified experience.

Once the interview process is completed, the focus of the research shifts to the text of the interviews. Steps similar to those described by Tesch (1990), Coté et al. (1993), and Dale (1996) were used in the interpretation of the phenomenological interview data in this study. The analysis proceeded in an inductive manner (i.e.,

working from pieces of that data in each interview up into larger categories or themes) (Dale, 1996).

The first step in the data analysis process was to read through each transcript several times to gain a sense of the experience as a whole entity. After completing this initial step, significant statements that I felt directly related to the phenomenon being studied were extracted. At this time, “meaning units” (Coté et al., 1993) emerged from significant statements. These formulated meanings were then put into clusters of themes or categories (Tesch, 1990).

Dale (1996) contends that during this time it is essential that the researcher refer to the original data to see whether, based on the clusters of themes that have been created, anything has been deleted from or added to the original text. If contradictory themes have emerged, based on a review of the text pertaining to each theme, Dale (1996) maintains that these erroneous themes should be considered because they might indicate another theme that did not emerge during previous analysis. Next, the results of the analysis are taken and a detailed description of the phenomenon and a statement of the basic structure of the data are formed (Polkinghorne, 1989).

To make sense of qualitative data, it is essential that the researcher apply an interpretive framework to the data. Pollio et al. (1997) stated that the framework chosen would dictate the methodology, goals, and evaluative criteria for the study. Several researchers (Dale, 1996; Pollio et al., 1997) have maintained that there are two principal interpretive procedures that should be used when attempting to interpret a lived experience: (a) bracketing with a research group and (b) the hermeneutic procedure.

Bracketing with a Research Group. Conducting an interpretation of the data in a group setting is a procedure of data analysis that is rather unique to the phenomenological interview method. Ideally, as Thompson et al. (1989) and Dale (1994) point out, a research group is composed of the researcher(s) and other individuals familiar with phenomenological methodology. The analysis of the data is facilitated, and the researcher is enabled to remain at the level of the experience of the co-participant, because of the research group. The group can bracket out the researcher's own assumptions by offering a broader perspective and noticing emerging patterns the single researcher would not have recognized.

Group members are encouraged to simultaneously go over and discuss the transcribed interviews. Dale (1996) recommends that a member of the group read aloud the questions asked by the researcher. The researcher may then read aloud the responses to the group to gain a better understanding of the nature of the data (i.e., changes in voice tones or mannerisms the primary researcher might display while reading responses that might not be noticed by simply reading the text).

Once the reading of the transcripts has begun, Dale (1996) encourages frequent pauses where the group is provided time to discuss the possible meanings and interrelationships among the texts. Group members are further encouraged to question interpretations of the text and look for supporting evidence of potential themes. The group process does not have to be used for interpretations of all transcripts, but the researcher should go back to the group periodically with tentative interpretations. The group is then able to provide the researcher with feedback as to the accuracy of the themes s/he has determined and the consistency with the co-participants' experiences.

Hermeneutic Concepts. In addition to bracketing, a more accurate interpretation of the data and the lived experience of practicing sport psychology, in this case, can be achieved in the group process by using certain hermeneutic concepts (Bleicher, 1980). The “hermeneutic circle” (Palmer, 1969) overcomes the seemingly linear interpretation of texts by having the researcher understand earlier portions of some text in relation to later portions, and conversely, to understand later portions of the text by understanding previous portions (Pollio et al., 1997). In other words, this “circular” process enables the researcher to move from a part of the text to the whole, back to a part of the text, and so on. This provides the researcher with a greater understanding of any one piece of text in terms of its relation to the whole transcription or lived experience.

In the present study, I used two additional hermeneutic concepts to help me interpret the data: idiographic interpretation and nomothetic interpretation (Dale, 1996). Idiographic interpretation involves treating each transcript as its own case study and describing in detail the lived experience of that individual. Thus, each interview included a summary of interpretations, relations, and patterns unique to that co-participant’s own experience.

The second hermeneutic concept I utilized involved the development of nomothetic descriptions of the phenomenon of practicing sport psychology by expert sport psychology consultants. The goal of this process is to recognize ways in which each individual’s experience resembles that of another. Most importantly, a thematic description is formulated to capture what the experience of practicing sport psychology means for each expert sport psychology consultant and render his or her meaning in terms of the other co-participants (Dale, 1996).

Validity Concerns

According to Polkinghorne (1989), phenomenological research has a general perspective on validity issues. The degree of a study's validity does not depend on absolute certainty; in fact, Pollio et al. (1997) question the ability of an existential phenomenological investigation to ever be just that...certain. According to Polkinghorne (1989), the degree of a study's validity depends upon whether a person reading the presented description of the first-person experience views it as accurate, revealing, and is able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation.

To ensure the validity of this study, I completed a bracketing interview and a pilot study. To further validate the findings of the study, I asked myself the following five questions (Polkinghorne, 1989) throughout the research process:

1. Did I influence the contents of the co-participant's descriptions of their actual experience?
2. Is the transcript accurate and does it convey the meaning of the co-participant's oral dialogue?
3. In the analysis of the transcript are there alternative conclusions or themes that emerged that I did not consider?
4. Does the specific content in the transcriptions provide evidence for the general structural descriptions?
5. Is the structural description unique to the situation, or can it be used to describe other situations (p. 57)?

Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to explain the specific methodology I used in this dissertation. The goal of this investigation and the subsequent use of the methodology chosen for this study were done in order to allow myself to gather and provide the most accurate description of the experience of practicing sport psychology by expert sport psychology consultants.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The current investigation was designed to explore the following research question asked of expert performance consultants: “What is the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?” In this chapter, the thematic structure of the eleven co-participants’ experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes is presented. Quotes from co-participants are used to illustrate the experience of providing consultation as it emerged from their descriptions.

A brief biographical description of each co-participant is provided in Appendix E. The co-participants in the current study were eleven experienced practitioners. Seven of the co-participants are from and practice in the United States. Two co-participants are from and practice in Canada. Two co-participants currently practice in the United States, but one is from Australia while the other was born and raised in Spain. Each of these two consultants has lived and practiced sport psychology in the United States for over 15 years. All of the consultants have extensive experience working with a wide variety of athletes and performers in a wide variety of sports or other performance settings.

The thematic structure that emerged from the eleven individual phenomenological dialogues suggested relatively uniform experiences for the co-participants. After thorough analysis of the transcripts, the co-participants interviews revealed six major themes: (1) Enjoyment, (2) Learning, (3) Challenges, (4) Collaboration, (5) Knowledge, and (6) Relationship. These six themes form the structure of the consulting experience for these expert sport psychology practitioners.

Each of these themes was comprised of two or more sub-themes. For the first theme, Enjoyment, the sub-themes were (a) Improving performance, (b) Being challenged, and (c) Consulting the highly committed. For the theme of Learning, sub-themes addressed (a) Consultant learning, (b) Learning through observation and (c) Athlete learning. For the theme of Challenges, the sub-themes consisted of (a) Hard work, (b) Paying your dues, (c) Failure/unsuccessful, and (d) Results orientation of sport. Being part of the team, Not being part of the team, and Being invited in, defined the sub-themes for Collaboration. The next theme, Knowledge, consisted of two sub-themes, (a) Know yourself and (b) Know what you don't know. The sixth theme was described as Relationship and included the sub-themes of (a) Caring, (b) Genuine, and (c) Treat the whole person.

A model illustrating the major themes, the attendant sub-themes, and their constant interrelationship is provided in Figure 1 and Table 3. Each of these themes was not independent of any other; rather, they interacted to create the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes for these expert practitioners. At times one, two, three, or all six of these themes emerged as the figural aspect of a co-participant's experience. At other times, one or more of the aforementioned themes faded into the background, and were not figural for the co-participant. From enjoying the challenge of improving performance, to learning as a consultant, to putting in the hard work to overcome a new challenge, to working with coaches and athletes to improve performance, to admitting what you don't know to the athlete, to treating the performer as more than just an athlete – each component of the model contributed to the experiences of the consultants in this study.

Consulting Experience

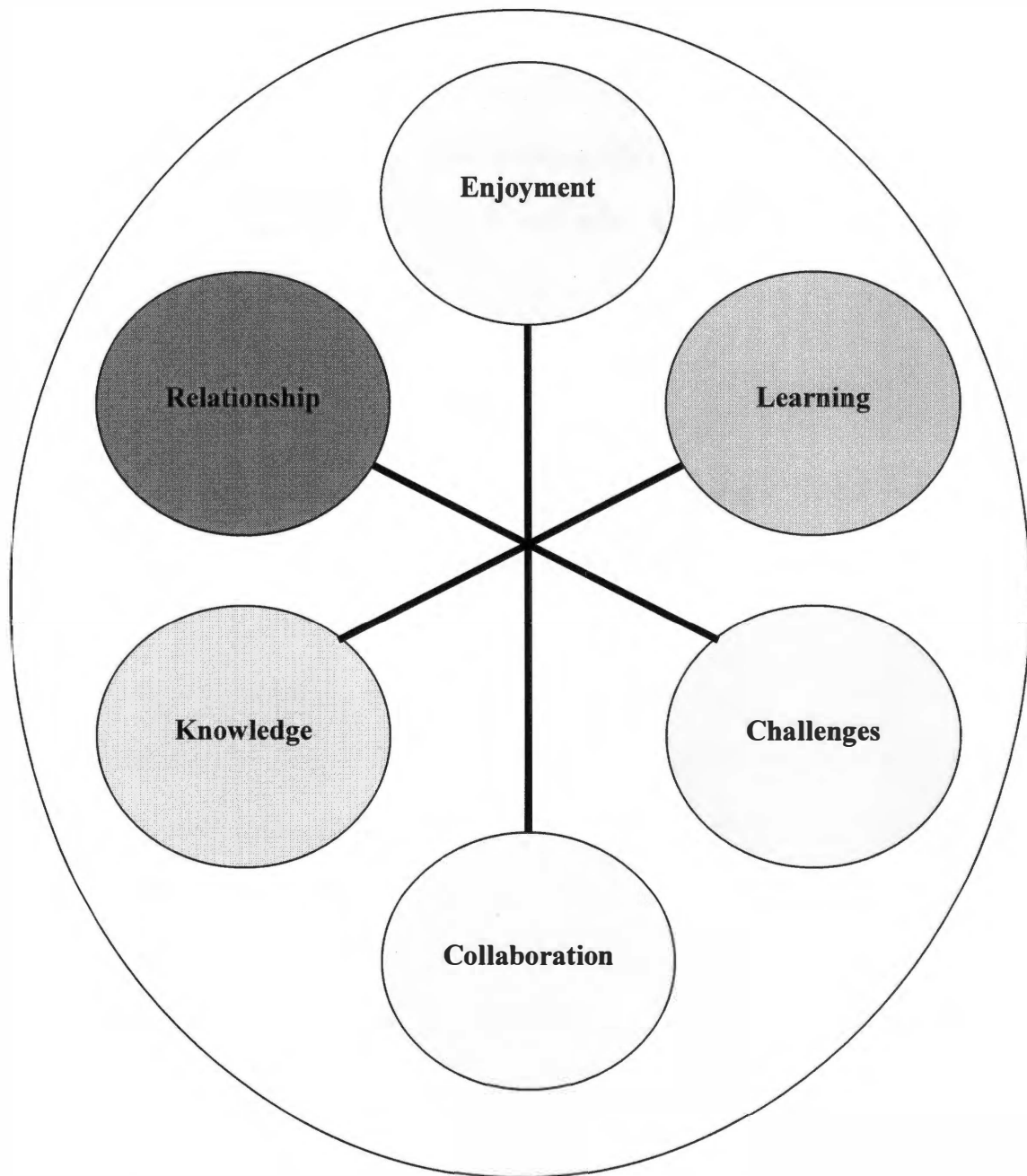


Figure 1. Interrelationship of Figural Themes Characterizing Expert Consultants' Experience of Providing Sport Psychology Consultation to Athletes

Table 3. Description of Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Enjoyment	Improving performance Being challenged Consulting the highly committed
2. Learning -	Consultant learning Learning through observation Athlete learning
3. Challenges -	Hard work Paying your dues Failure/unsuccessful Results orientation of sport
4. Collaboration -	Being part of the team Not being part of the team Being invited in
5. Knowledge -	Know yourself Know what you don't know
6. Relationship -	Caring Genuine Treat the whole person

In the following sections a summary of each theme, including its attendant sub-themes, is provided. In addition, verbatim responses by the consultants are presented that support each theme. Complete transcripts of all co-participant interviews can be found in Appendix F.

Theme One: Enjoyment

The first theme that emerged from the interview data indicated that a critical component of each co-participant's experience was their enjoyment of providing sport psychology consultation. The reasons for experiencing enjoyment varied from co-participant to co-participant and were manifested in a number of sub-themes, including Improving performance, Being challenged, and Consulting the highly committed. The consultants' description of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes as enjoyable was a constant theme in most of the interviews. In fact, the following representative comments of the co-participants were some of first statements made by each co-participant following the phenomenological question that began each interview:

"One thing is that it is a lot of fun, a lot of good times (SMU)."

"It has really been a joy being involved in this field (TO)."

"It has been a terrific experience. It's great. I really enjoy it. It's fun (GB)."

"I guess for me it's been real good, you know, I like it. I enjoy it (DG)."

One co-participant elaborated a bit more on the experience of enjoyment.

I certainly enjoyed it [consulting] and thought it was a very interesting area. It clearly was a lot of fun doing that work. And that's continued to be the main thing when I describe this job, is that it is really fun. I can't imagine doing anything that would be more fun than the work that I do now. (SMC)

Another consultant commented on how providing sport psychology services had not only been fun for him, but for his family as well: “Well, it’s been fun. I guess what I feel is that I’ve had a lot of fun. My wife’s had a lot of fun. My daughters have had a lot of fun. You know it’s beyond what we ever imagined it would be (BR).” Another remarked that the enjoyment has been long lasting. “It’s something I have never gotten tired of doing. It’s been something I have really loved. I guess that’s why I have stayed intimately involved for this long (TO).”

Improving performance. In regards to the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes as being one that is enjoyable, co-participants indicated that derived enjoyment from helping athletes and performers improve their performance. The following quote details the enjoyment one co-participant derived from enhancing athletes’ performance:

Success for me is the success of the client. And, sometimes that maybe the best of all possible situations means success on the playing field. And you see them make progress in all areas and you see them being more successful. That’s wonderful. I mean I don’t think any sport psychologist could deny that when working with an athlete and they start winning more that there’s a certain...wow! That’s a great feeling for you the consultant. (SMU)

Another co-participant expressed a similar sentiment.

Really seeing how good they can be. Really, really taking the risk to do that. Really going through the introspection, going through the dark depths of the soul, going through, staying on task and sticking with the process even though you’re not getting your end result and then to see them get a little of that end result. Oh God! That’s incredible, you know! (KR)

One co-participant talked about why enhancing performance is enjoyable or rewarding:

It’s rewarding in the sense that again, I have made a difference. Again, whether it be in the classroom or whether it be with an athlete, when you know that they are

growing, that should make you feel good – not the paycheck. That is a secondary benefit, probably a good one, but it is a secondary one. But more the idea that they have come to you to learn something and you have given them something that has helped them turn on the light in their own head and now they can incorporate it. How does that make me feel? That makes me feel like I have accomplished something and I have served somebody. (KH)

One co-participant added that it was enjoyable to provide sport psychology consultation to performers because when their performance improved the consultant got to watch the athlete fulfill his or her potential:

I feel good, because I know it went in. I know they got it. It's like anyone who is coaching and you see them get it and they perform it. That's why we coach. That's tremendously rewarding to you as a teacher. Just like teaching one of your students at the university. When they perform well on an exam, it's gratifying because you see that they have fulfilled their talents that they have. (RG)

One co-participant added that providing sport psychology consultation to athletes was enjoyable because the consultant got to see improvements in performance rather quickly: "Often an athlete comes in and they have a performance block or they're ready to burn out. The situation can be totally different three months later. That is nice to be a part of (SMU)." Another co-participant recognized that not only is it enjoyable to see athletes' performance improve, but that it is enjoyable on many more levels:

To be able to be doing sport psychology work for a living is amazing. You hear all the time, athletes saying, 'You know I can't believe I am actually getting paid to play basketball.' Well, I am getting paid to do sport psychology, which is just a blast. It is fun on so many different levels; from laughing with the people you work with, to being around and seeing great athletes perform amazing things. The fun of an intense experience and getting through that, it is just fun on many different levels. (SMC)

Being challenged. Several of the co-participants experienced enjoyment when a new challenge was presented to them. One focused on this, indicating that not only he, but also other consultants enjoy being challenged. "We are doing it because we enjoy the

challenge, we enjoy what we are doing, and we enjoy helping people grow and develop

(KH).” Another co-participant described his love for a challenge in the following way:

It [applied sport psychology] is a challenge. I have very challenging cases. And I love a challenge. And it gives me a buzz. I mean I am a former athlete, or I should say, I am still an athlete. I get a buzz from it, it’s a challenge and I am not competing. I am out of eligibility. (RG)

Another co-participant mentioned that she loved the field because it constantly presented new problem-solving challenges. She said:

It’s definitely a field that I love because it is challenging to me because there are so many different elements. I think in a sense it is hardly ever the same. And, I like that, I like that. I guess I need that as a matter of fact. It’s been something that has allowed me to do a number of different things of which there has been no clear guidelines. At least I didn’t know them. What’s the role of a psychologist traveling with the team? So what am I supposed to do, particularly what am I supposed to not do? And at the same time that is what I loved about the situation. Let’s go figure it out. (GB)

She went on to share the following story:

In between US Track and Gymnastics, after Atlanta, I got invited to work with a national team sport, one I had not worked with before...US National Field Hockey. And I agreed out of curiosity. Again that “challenge” word seems to come up when I talk about my work. One of the reasons why I work with, or why I was interested in at least meeting with the field hockey team was, one, it was a team sport. I realized I did not have much experience with that. (GB)

Others agreed with this sentiment. In fact, one consultant stated that he loved the challenge of coming across issues and problems that he did not have training for and then figuring them out:

You run into issues, you run into situations that are not often talked about in the literature or, at the time, weren’t being discussed at conferences and so on. I found it a really challenging field from that perspective. I always enjoyed that aspect of the field. I always thought it was challenging from that perspective. I think that is one of the first things I think of when I think about what’s it like to do sport psychology consulting. It’s very challenging. (SMU)

These consultants found it very challenging to work with sports in which they were not knowledgeable:

It is challenging and exciting when you move into a new sport, especially if you like that sport. That part is fun and then learning it. I've had to learn field hockey, which I knew nothing about. I had to learn water polo, which I knew nothing about and it was exciting. (KR)

Again, I didn't know baseball and I didn't really know men's teams. A team sport with men, I don't know much about that. So, again I had something to learn I think is interesting and I agreed to give it a try. I've loved it! I've learned to love baseball! I love the players. It is a lotta fun. (GB)

Consulting the highly committed. Another sub-theme that emerged from the co-participants interviews was the enjoyment derived from working with highly committed people. A prime example of this was one co-participant's description of working with a highly motivated athlete:

I think the key thing for me is that, no matter what the sport is, if you are working with someone who is really committed and has passion for what they are doing...wow! It's stimulating. It's fascinating because you see the way they go about it with such passion. The way they are willing to take such risk and they way they are willing to fail and learn from their failures. The openness and their willing to be scared at times. And, to just have the privilege to be involved in that and to give them some tools and resources to help them deal with that in some little way. (KR)

Another co-participant expressed how inspirational it was to work with highly committed athletes and how much it made him want to work harder:

You see how hard they work. You identify very strongly with your clients in that setting. I think back to working with the US Canoe/Kayak Team standing on the banks of the Potomac River in the middle of January and he [the athlete] is chipping chunks of ice from his beard and I'm blowing on my hands wondering whether I'm ever gonna get feeling back in my fingers. And, there is a part of me wondering what the hell are we all doing out here. This is insane! You realize they have got an incredible commitment to be doing that and it is inspirational. Wow! I've got to hang in with these guys cause if they're prepared to do this then the very least I can do is what they are asking me to do. (SMU)

Another consultant echoed this sentiment:

It's been impressive to see what human beings are capable of doing when they really commit to do something. The other part – great part – of working with performers, not just athletes, but any performer that is really committed, who is really committed to being what they can be is that they are so committed. It's kind of an inspiration because a lot of people aren't committed to anything. They kind of blindly walk through the day. They have no mission. They are not interested in quality in anything. So, that's a nice kind of group to be around. (TO)

One consultant mentioned how energized he was by working with such a highly committed population:

My experience working here [USOC Training Center] is that I typically have more energy at the end of the day than when I get here. This is because I have been around folks whose issues are intense and for them quite serious, but generally they are not life or death issues and always these folks here are motivated to do the work. Especially at this level, here. You are working with people who want to work with you. They haven't been forced into work with you, for the most part. So coming into a room with a group of athletes or one coach or one athlete who are just trying to be their very best. It is hard not to get energized by that. You have to be sort of dead not to pull some of that energy and let it bathe you. (SMC)

He later expanded upon this idea by stating how lucky he was to work with such a population:

You know to be honest, I'm...[pause]. As lucky as I am, I am especially lucky on the front of pretty much my whole sport psychology career has been working with highly motivated athletes who have already been pre-selected. You know the athletes who maybe – like myself – who didn't quite have the motivation that they needed to make it to the elite level...I don't see those people. I don't work with them very much. For the most part I am working with people who are motivated and focused and really know what they want. So I know even in the world of sport psych I am really lucky to work with that kind of population. You know, it's sort of the experience of giving someone a homework assignment. I give homework assignments quite a bit and I give them a 10-minute exercise and they ask, "Can I do 20 minutes?" That sort of thing is a real, rare pleasure. (SMC)

One consultant mentioned how unique the elite-athlete population was and how enjoyable it is to work with highly committed performers. She commented that they

were “unbelievably motivated! Strong! I had a ball. It was so much fun (GB)!”

Another co-participant commented on how he thought the key to being a great consultant was getting to work with highly motivated athletes:

I often say to young consultants that the key to being great consultants is to select the right groups. It was a great group of kids that became a real team who really supported one another, focused, and won this World Student Games. They just played so collectively and so focused and some of the ideas the captain and I worked on seemed to have a huge impact on helping them keep their momentum. (CB)

Theme Two: Learning

This second major theme, Learning, emerged from the co-participants’ descriptions of their experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. Co-participants described learning in terms of it being a continual process. The sub-themes that supported this theme were Consultant learning, Learning through observation, and Athlete learning.

Consultant learning. Many of the co-participants commented that they learned a lot from their experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. It seemed quite prevalent among the consultants to describe their experience as one in which they have learned and continue to learn every time they provide consultation. One co-participant stated:

My experience itself has been a learning process and I continue to learn even today because no two human beings are exactly the same. They are all unique and I think as you have more and more people you have worked with throughout the years, maybe you have more and more skills to continue your work with them. So it has been a learning process from day one. (KH)

Another co-participant echoed these comments:

“I am still evolving. I’ll never stop evolving until the day that I stop working with coaches and athletes. I think if you say you’ve evolved, then you missed the boat.

I think that you become more confident in what you are doing, but you still never know it all. I use the Wooden quote, 'It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.' (RG)

One consultant provided a very thorough description of the same idea:

Even though I have been doing this for so long now I always learn something from each person I meet with. It doesn't matter if it is a six-year-old or a ten-year-old or a great professional athlete or an Olympic champion or someone who is struggling and thinking of quitting. I mean it doesn't matter what age they are, what level of performance. There is always something to learn and even though a lot of the same things come up, there's always uniqueness in how people apply things, what works for them, how committed they are, their specific discipline, how they see things. So, in my own life I try to learn from every experience and take the lesson and have that lesson as a part of me. Remember it and keep that in my repertoire. Everyone I worked with I can think of things I learned from them about what they do, what they needed, how they got through certain things. (TO)

One consultant commented that expert practitioners in any field are continually motivated to learn:

The good ones are always about learning something new everyday. It's a, it's a big factor why the last eight years have been so rewarding. Not only have I been learning, but I have seen learning happening all around me at a phenomenal pace. I've seen people just go straight up and in the end that's the ultimate satisfaction. So, I think learning is not only important for people themselves, but being around learning is phenomenally rewarding. (CB)

He went on further to add:

I think in the end, I found anyone that is my student that says they are not motivated to learn. I mean what is the alternative. I mean learning is the ultimate privilege of being a human being. I mean if you don't like this course I have no problem with that, but if you tell me that you don't like learning, I think you are heading to a really disappointing, unfortunate life. Even if you want to go split wood in the corner for the rest of your life, I would think you are gonna want to learn how to do it better. Look, all of the top performers my students interview that are real top performers, these students come back and say these people are real students for life. (CB)

A few co-participants commented on the skills or keys they have learned from their experience of working with athletes over the years. One consultant stated, "I guess

the other thing I mean is that I have learned how to present information that I want them to learn in a manner that they can comprehend and figure out how to apply (BR)."

Another consultant added, "The other thing that is key is I think you've got to learn the specifics of the sport – and learning from coaches. A lot of my mentors have been coaches (KR)." One consultant added that his drive for learning has helped him a lot:

Like when I go work with a NASCAR pit crew...you just learn a bunch of stuff. So, I once described it to a friend, I did some personal evaluations of myself. I think sometimes a real good attribute of mine is I'm kinda like a knowledge suck vacuum cleaner that is on all the time. And, I'll just suck knowledge. Like I'll go to the skating nationals and I'll come back with like 5 research ideas, 2 ideas about consulting, so I think those things help me a lot. (DG)

Another consultant commented that the amount of experience he had providing consultation has enabled him to become a better consultant:

I guess as you get more experience you are able to cut through some of the things that are really important and some things that are not and provide them with examples so they can identify with what they are going through and work on the actual issues behind the issues. I think that's the process that learning really gives you is maybe more insight or intuition into what really the problems are. (KH)

One consultant commented that the learning process for a consultant is a blend of education and experience:

There is the whole sort of knowledge-based technique kind of mental skill knowledge. To really understand that I think you have to get out and really work with people. You can learn a certain amount of that sitting in a classroom, but you don't really learn until you either use it in your own life – which I do – or you work with people and you work through their challenges and their struggles. And they try this and try that. Um, refine those things, so eventually you end up – know I have like thousands of those experiences in my head so if I am meeting with someone there is so many good things that I have learned from so many great athletes. (TO)

Learning through observation. This sub-theme emerged from the comments of several co-participants who utilize observation as a tool through which they learn about

the athlete, performer, or sport. Some of the consultants talked about observation as an aid in the learning process. One consultant described her use of observation by saying:

I really do love observing. I think that of all tests observation is the best one. So, that is part of all the things I learn by going to watch. One, what is the sport like? What are the conditions of training? What are the conditions of competition? How does this particular coach run practice? How do the athletes relate to each other at practice? I watch at so many different levels and I look at so many different things and that is one of the things I really like. Another thing I realize is that with new sports to me, I need to be there. I never charge for watching practice cause that was my need for it. But, at the same time it adds another dimension. (GB)

She went on further to add that some forms of observation enable her to learn more than others:

Traveling with the team is really more an opportunity to observe the team from inside for an extended period of time. The richness of information that I have gotten from a weekend with the team is so much more than what I would have gotten anywhere. (GB)

Another consultant commented on the usefulness of observation as a learning tool:

Watching in terms of sitting there and being around it and feeling the energy and watching the interactions and watching the athletes' body language and facial expressions. And, also with the observations asking them questions to see if any of my hunches were what they were experiencing. So when I say observing, a lot of it is blending into the woodwork. That is a term I use with a lot with my graduate students, you have to learn how to blend into the woodwork. You learn how to take it in and see what's going on...I spent a lot of time in the gym just watching and observing...that's where I had the privilege to learn from these coaches and athletes. (KR)

He further added:

The issue was one of being able to understand, what's their world like? To use your phenomenological term, what's it like to walk in their shoes? And, when you look at their world, what are the sources of joy? What are the things that turn them on? And, what are the stressors? And, then when you start looking at stresses they have to contend with, you start looking at what do they have control of and what do they not have control over? And, then you have to start tailoring

your program around them. So this is what goes on, I'm seeing this, I'm seeing this. (KR)

Finally, one co-participant explained how observation helped him over time. He said, "At some point with a lot of experience you get a pretty good handle on what you need to be able to do. The more you watch them the more you learn. I guess that is another thing you figure out over time (BR)."

Athlete learning. The final sub-theme within the major theme of Learning was witnessing athlete(s)' or performer(s)' learning of new skills or strategies to improve their performance. In fact, many of the consultants commented that their goal was for the athlete to learn and improve to the extent that the co-participant's assistance was no longer needed. One consultant explained what he meant by this:

Well, let me just open that and say that I work to lose my job. What I am trying to do is give a person a new set of skills that they can incorporate in their repertoire so that they are not dependent upon me any longer. And, they feel that they are now capable of dealing with whatever the issue might be and it may be in a different way, but at least they have some tools to go ahead and fix the issues. That is the learning process. I feel very good when people no longer need me. (KH)

Another consultant added,

At some point, I'm going to say look we've done everything we can do. We can stay in contact, you call me back for the consultations, but it's not like we need to meet every week for a year to make this happen. I really like that about the sport psychology field. It usually is a very time-limited intervention. I usually see a good deal of change in a very short time period. So it's...a very rewarding field to be in. (SMU)

One consultant reiterated the importance of this concept when he shared the following story:

As a matter of fact, the reason I got a start in Philadelphia with the Flyers at the NHL level was the coach there, Mike Keenan, felt that there was a dependency developing with the other person that worked there previously and rather than

getting the players more independent with the ideas they were getting more dependent on the person. And my model totally was the opposite and he knew it. And that was that! I am coming in for a few days as an educator and a listener. Trying to help people improve the effects of the climate that they are operating in...And when I come back in three weeks I will reinforce the success and challenge them on some things that need work. So the pattern was very much about developing the capabilities and the skills in the players to handle those effects better...We are trying to give people a base to be successful for a lifetime, not just for a couple of days for a competition.” (CB)

Theme Three: Challenges

The third major theme that emerged from the protocols was that providing sport psychology consultation to athletes was challenging. The four sub-themes that comprised this theme were (1) Hard work, (2) Paying your dues, (3) Failure/unsuccessful, and (4) the Results orientation of sport.

Hard work. This sub-theme concerned the notion that in providing sport psychology consultation to athletes the experience is challenging due to the fact that consulting is hard work. The comments of one consultant represent a prime example of how this group of co-participants found applied sport psychology consultation to be hard work:

It feels like you are trying to balance a bunch of different things and any sudden movement makes it tumble. Somebody says you are doing too much here or too little there. I find it difficult. It is a difficult job and I am always concerned that I don't want to put the athlete in the middle and have them carry that burden. Weighing all of this...that makes the task really hard. (GB)

Another consultant discussed the sub-theme of hard work in the sense that he works very hard himself to be a good consultant and to provide the athlete with the best sport psychology consultation he is capable of.

What it means for me is I will work as hard as I can to give them everything that I can that I know so that they can use what is useful to them. And that I will be

there, when I need to be, and when they need me to be, and that they know that I am into it... seriously. It is a commitment. (RG)

Another co-participant echoed this consultant's thoughts:

It means to me that I am very into it when I'm into it. You know if I got an athlete I'm with, that's where I'm at. I'm not thinking about something else. Usually, after I'm done I'm quite drained because I have put a lot of energy into it. (BR)

That same consultant went on to say that one of the things he thought made him more successful than other consultants was that he out works them...and he has a great spouse:

I guess what it means to me as a competitive person...people that don't put the time and energy that I put into it don't have a prayer. [Laughter] That's in its simplest way. I have a lot of people in the field ask me about it and I just say that I put a lot more into it than you do. I spend a lot more time on the telephone. I spend a lot more of my waking hours doing it. That's what I do. It's my life. [Pause] I got a wife that's a saint. Yeah, that's probably the number one thing I would tell somebody, 'You want to be in sport psychology you better have a spouse that's a saint too.' (BR)

One co-participant perhaps summed up the sub-theme of hard work best when he said:

This is the other thing that people find out in the field of sport psychology that I found out, as a coach, is BST (Blood, Sweat, and Tears). You gotta go the distance. In for a penny, in for a pound. You can't parachute in there to work with a team or work with an athlete. It is an issue of on-going service providing and doing that. (RV)

Paying your dues. Paying your dues as a sub-theme represented the notion that one of the things that makes providing sport psychology consultation to athletes challenging is that one has to start at the bottom. An aspiring consultant has to put in a lot of hard work and often receives very little in return in the beginning. One co-participant used the example of apprenticeship to explain what he meant:

Apprenticeship. You've got to learn your craft or trade. You've got to serve your apprenticeship and work long hours and do what it takes so that you learn from

that individual or from experiences that go along with that sport. An apprentice would go into a blacksmith shop and sweep the floor. Then they became a journeyman. Then they became a craftsman. You worked your way up. And that is what people do not want to do. They all want to start at the top. Well hey, if you want to get to the top of the ladder start at the bottom rung. You got to pay your dues and go through that process. (RV)

Other consultants shared very similar stories:

You know in the world of athletics, every coach that works his way up the ranks starts as like a 5th assistant...and makes like no pay for a salary or maybe as a volunteer and they do it for a sustained time period early in their career. They're not making much money. They are not getting any publicity. They are not getting any credit, but you're learning. And, if you demonstrate that kind of loyalty to a head coach and a team long enough eventually you will move up into a position where they will pay you for it. And, eventually they'll help you. I think it's pretty much the same way in sport psychology. (BR)

Why do you think you are entitled to get money just because you have a Ph.D.? What work have you done? Have you really put in the work? And, I don't mean internships with intramural teams. I mean have you really paid the dues? The one thing about athletics, and you really see this with coaches, it is a lot like the old serf system. You know you're a serf, then a craftsman, then a journeyman. You know you go through all these things – different stages. But, it's very hands on and when you are doing applied work it has to follow this process that has to take place. (KR)

Failure/unsuccessful. The experience of failure or not being successful with an athlete in a consulting situation was a sub-theme that emerged as part of the challenges of providing sport psychology consultation. For example, one co-participant talked about a very personal consultation relationship that was unsuccessful and he described how challenging that experience is for a sport psychology consultant.

There are times when you perceive you have failed the client or you wish you had gone another direction and it's too late. I'm just thinking about one athlete. The greatest young kayaker I ever worked with and she didn't make the Olympic Team and she just hung up her paddle and never went back to it. Probably for a year and I still think back to it, what could we have done differently together cause it just seems that it was in her reach? You work so hard for these people and everybody doesn't see behind the scenes. For every one or two successful athletes that make it, there are so many that are right there underneath. That can

be so challenging. It's a really hard experience for a sport psychology consultant. (SMU)

Another co-participant described the frustration he experienced when he felt he had been unsuccessful at helping the athlete reach his or her goal.

Frustrating, agonizing, in the sense that I know there has to be a way to reach that individual, yet I have not found the key to unlock that. I think that it's probably like anybody else, it's not a failure, but it's sure not a success. And you don't want to leave the person hanging because you feel that they can do these things. And the thing that bothers me most is that I pride myself on being fairly creative on how I approach lots of things and doing some things that are out of the ordinary to make points and get them to try certain things. And, when that doesn't work I feel that I have not done my job. That is the frustrating part about it. (KH)

The same consultant went on to describe failure in the following way:

Failure to me is not being able to reach a person and help them get to where THEY want to go. You do agonize over them – for them – because you do want them to get this information and I am not capable of giving it to them so that they can actually master it. That is what failure is to me. When they are still not capable of giving the performance – the on demand performance that they have to have – I don't feel I have accomplished what I want to accomplish. (KH)

Another consultant talked about her experience of being unsuccessful with an athlete and postulated why that may have occurred.

When I started my private consulting then it was like a total change in populations and that was disconcerting for me. I realized that I am not equally good with everybody. I don't think I am very good at working with people who are not good athletes. It's not so much an age issue. I can work with a 12-year-old who is a good athlete, but I have a hard time working with a 16-year-old recreational athlete. We don't have the same language. I don't know what questions to ask. I'm not sure what my goal is." (GB)

Finally, one co-participant stated that the experience of failure in sport psychology consultation existed and he thought it should be discussed more.

There is a lot of hurt and rejection that goes with the field. Like I mentioned at Cal State Fullerton, I've been there so long. I know a lot of the coaches and all that. With the Angels I survived for 14 years, but there is rejection when you

open yourself up and fail. There is a lot of hurt that goes on that we never talk about. (KR)

Results orientation of sport. The Results orientation of sport represented another sub-theme of challenges that co-participants used when explaining the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. This sub-theme represents the overall ideology in sport and further, casts a shadow over the world in which sport psychology consultants work. More importantly consultants are judged and evaluated based on the performance and results of the athletes they consult with. Many co-participants commented on the challenges inherent in such a relationship. For example, one consultant shared a very interesting story illustrating that fact.

You have to try to do a good job. In our profession, if you don't do a good job, then you are not invited back. It is a pretty bottom line type of thing. We are like coaches in that regard. We are called sport psychology consultants, but we are like coaches in the sense that we are evaluated based on our performance. Although, I promise nothing to my coaches and athletes, I just tell them I am going to work hard, but I don't tie it into results...but you are evaluated on results. An example being, one of the guys that I work with right now, Mike Weir, he just won [on the PGA Tour]. Now, I got a call just before you called from a guy up in Canada who hosts a talk show that has 80,000 listeners and he wants me to be on the talk show to talk about what I do with Mike Weir. Now all of a sudden I am a genius because Mike won a tournament. They didn't call me last year when he didn't win a tournament, but they called me the year before when he won a tournament. Every time he wins a tournament, I become a genius again. And so, that is how we are evaluated by people – by the public – and I think to some extent by the athletes and coaches. Because the athletes that are hesitant to even talk to someone who does what we do, if we help somebody and the athlete tells them that we helped them, then they are going to come talk to us maybe because they see a result. It's the same as a coach. (RG)

Another consultant shared his experience of the challenge of providing sport psychology consultation amid the pressure to achieve successful results:

When you are in a field where the outcomes are so public, so decided, so finite, I don't think you can help but feel pressure. The one-time thing like the Olympic trials or the World Series, that just puts you through the ringer. I mean I always

tell people this, I never felt pressure as a sport psychologist working with athletes like I did at the various Olympics that I went to. I mean the pressure on the athletes at the Olympics – it's just mind-boggling and then for you to be there as a sport psychologist. I was fortunate enough to go to two Olympics as the team sport psychologist for the US Team and boy, you get caught up in that too cause you're like, "God, my ass is on the line here too." (SMU)

That same consultant went on to discuss the influence of the athletes' results on the evaluation of his consulting.

Part of me realizes that I've got to do a good job here for my field and for the people that are going to come along behind me. And, I can't help but think about that. That was definitely on my mind. That was definitely on my mind the whole time I was with the USOC, but definitely when you are at the Olympics. So that's where I felt pressure. I had to realize at what levels was I being evaluated. It was kinda like being an athlete. How is my performance going to be judged? And, let's make sure I do a good job out here. And, I had triumphs and heart breaks in those areas. I think some things I did very good at and there were other areas uh, I think I made the right decision, but other people would evaluate it poorly. So again, as a sport psychology consultant, again I am experiencing what the athlete goes through. So at times you can really empathize with the athlete you are working with because you are at the same event and the fact that it is such a big thing and the whole world is watching is why I feel the pressure as much as they do. And, I remember Lew Hardy telling me the first World Championships he went to with the US Gymnastics team. And, he walked into the building and out onto the floor with the coaches and he had the track suit on and there was 20,000 people screaming, waving flags, and he was like, 'God my knees nearly buckled and I fell to the floor.' And I said, 'Hey man I know what you're talking about.' (SMU)

Two consultants talked about the challenge of providing sport psychology consultation in an area where the results of performances are so often public.

I was working with the women's alpine team. And, talk about living and dying with a performance, and I died with the performance. We had some horrible luck, we had some bad performances, we had some crazy equipment performances where skis fell off. You name it and it happened. We had one athlete who was called a "mental wreck" on national television after falling three times. So, that was really a challenge personally where for the first time I really understood what it was like to be a coach at an elite level. When you know, you know, that people are watching your performance. And, when a commentator for NBC says that an athlete is a mental wreck, clearly they are making reference to the mental game.

So someone may argue, well, maybe the sport psychologist had something to do with that. So, that was a real good example of experiencing that. (SMC)

It's really pretty hard work in terms of...there is that performance issue to it. This is what people in psychology cannot understand. They may be in clinical psychology, but there is an office and no one knows what is going on. But, when you work in sport psychology everyone knows. The athletic department knows and they know that that kid is a kid you have seen and they know x, y, and z. There is no...you are on the spot. Do you have the wherewithal for that? I've been in some situations where it has been pretty tough. (RV)

One co-participant talked about how the Results orientation of sport influenced not only the perception of others about his effectiveness or expertise, but also how that influences the number of athletes he consults.

Well, if someone wanted to define being successful at it [sport psychology consultation] you better pay attention to your results. I mean you better pay attention to results because if you are not getting results you are probably doing something wrong. I mean if you think you are good at what you do and no one wants to listen to you and none of your athletes are playing better or none of them are sticking with you or coming back for more...you got problems. I mean athletes don't come to me because they want to talk to me all day. They come to me because they want me to teach them what I know. The bottom line is they know the players I'm working with win a lot and the teams I am working with win a lot. That's why they listen. (BR)

Finally, one co-participant suggested that if you want to be a sport psychology consultant you have to understand and accept the results orientation of sport and how that will influence your work.

What they [aspiring sport psychology consultants] have to accept is if I'm going to be in sport psychology, I have got to understand that sport psychology is performance oriented – even if you're the sport psychology person. You get up in front of a group; those coaches will [laughter]. You better know what you are talking about before you get up in front of them. (RV)

Theme Four: Collaboration

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews in this investigation was Collaboration. The consultants described the experience of providing sport psychology

consultation to athletes in terms of collaboration, not just between the sport psychology consultant and the athlete, but between the sport psychology consultant, the athlete, coaches, managers, parents, and other staff. Three sub-themes that supported the theme of Collaboration were (1) Being part of the team, (2) Not being part of the team, and (3) Being invited in. The following quotes describe several consultants' depictions of these concepts.

Being part of the team. The sub-theme of being a part of the team refers to the fact that when a sport psychology consultant provides consultation to athletes they are part of a team of people that influence or work with that athlete on his or her performance. For example, many co-participants mentioned the importance of working with the other members of the "team" to enhance the performance of the athlete to the best of each of their abilities. One consultant commented on being a "piece of that pie".

Well, there are so many factors that go into it. And, we are one piece of that pie. I personally think a very important piece of that pie, but I think coaches and athletes realize one small piece. And I think this is something for young consultants when they start working with teams, they think they got this big thing. Look, it's just one piece. And, I think that as a sport psych person, if you are taking credit, you are making a big mistake because, cause there are so many factors that play into it. (KR)

Several co-participants mentioned how influential the coaching staff was in helping an athlete through sport psychology consultation.

My preferred approach is to work with the coaching staff first and foremost, even before I see the athlete, because they are the key people. They are the ones the athlete looks up to and anything I do with the athlete is not going to work unless the coaching staff is reinforcing that generally. And, even to the point over the years, there will be a lot of situations where my intervention is just with the coaches. And, I don't do a lot with the athletes individually because I want the coaches to be the ones to be able to take over the program and run with it when I'm not there. So, I like working with coaches. (SMU)

The other thing I would say that I have tried to tell people a lot over the years is when I work with teams I don't care if the athletic director likes me or wants me there or the general manager or the owner of the team. I always make decisions about whether or not I will work with the team based on whether or not the head coach wants me. If the head coach doesn't want me it's useless as far as I am concerned. I mean I am amazed that people would even want to do it. And, some people just want to have a job, but if you want to have an impact...If I can't have an impact on the team's success then I don't want to waste my time with it. And, that is certainly what I have found is the key. Is the coach really into it? I mean does the coach really trust me? I mean is the coach gonna trust me to go talk to each of their athletes and get the athletes to tell me the truth? I mean there is some finesse involved in that. You have to get everybody there to think you are looking out for everybody's best interests. You know sometimes, you know some coaches think you are supposed to look out for their best interest. Some players think you are supposed to look out for theirs and I gotta get them to em' to understand they aren't mutually exclusive. That's the tricky part. And, sometimes they'll say are you here for the university, or the pro team's best interests, or Dr. Rotella's best interests? Are you here for the coaches? Are you here for the players? Are you here for the stars? Are you here for the subs? Well, we are all the same. If I am looking out for my best interests I am going to help this team. In order to help this team I gotta look out for the players best interests. To look out for the players' best interests I gotta look out for the coaches' best interests. So that's interesting, but a lot of people don't understand that until you explain it all to them. (BR)

I have always been aware that most of the psychological impact on the athlete is through the coach and for me it seems a very natural thing for me to work through the coach. And, so I've done a lot of work with coaches and I love doing that. (GB)

This co-participant went on to share a story about working with the coaching staff of one particular team:

I had worked with women's basketball at one point because at one time the women's coach was very interested, but I was very much meeting with her. I didn't do a lot with the team itself. I did it through her. I met with the coaching staff. We all met. I am considered part of the staff and we meet once a week. That has been a lot of fun working through the coaches, working with the players. (GB)

In addition, one co-participant found that in his or her experience it was prudent to work with as many people that are a part of that “team” surrounding that athlete as possible.

If you want to have maximum effects, the more people on the board that you got on your side the higher the probability that you are gonna be successful. So I’ve kind of recognized that, so when I have a preference, my preference is to work with the athlete and work with their coach and who ever else is involved with them. It’s pretty egotistical to think that some athlete comes in, and even if I am doing a great job, they see me like once every week or two weeks, and they see the coach every day in practice. So the more I can work with significant others in that athlete’s life, the more I load the dice in my favor by working with a lot of people in the system...that is ideal. (DG)

Not being part of the team. The sub-theme of not being a part of the team dealt with two concepts. The first was the experience of being excluded or shunned by certain members of the team surrounding the athlete. One co-participant described this experience as follows:

Frustrating. Frustrating. Because then you wonder why are you there? But, sometimes the dynamics of the program are the head coach wants you there, but the assistant isn’t into it, or you got a trainer that’s sabotaging you on the side. Or, you got a general manager who thinks this is important and a manager that’s just doing it cause he has to. And, those are all important factors and it is hard to deal with. (KR)

Two other consultants described their experience of not being a part of the team and the effect that had on their effectiveness as a consultant.

Say the club president brought you in and the coach is not really on board with it, I will usually terminate that situation very soon because I don’t think that situation is going to be very successful because the coach isn’t on board. A lot of the times those are really unhappy situations. Like if you are brought in by a management team and it turns out the coach is not really on board. You know sometimes you try to hang in there and make the most of a bad situation. I have had my failure experiences in those situations and I think, man this is not going to change. I just don’t see how we are going to do this here because the people I’m really supposed to help are just not open to change. (SMU)

Other times an athlete comes in and the coach might not buy into sport psych or the coach is a jackass. It could be a whole number of things. Or, they don't want anybody to know about it and I still work with them, but I kinda realized, and you can help those people, it might be harder sometimes. (DG)

The second concept related to the sub-theme of Not Being Part of the Team was the experience of loneliness that stemmed from being the only sport psychology consultant for an athlete or team. Several consultants described their experience of working on their own as the sole sport psychology consultant for an athlete or team.

To really be honest I think there are times when being a sport psychologist working with athletes and coaches can be a lonely experience. There is just no one you can go to. There are just some things you have to keep to yourself. (SMU)

This was a problem for me in Spain and I found a way around it here and I think it would be a problem if I did not take care of it and that is sometimes you work in isolation. And, you work with the coaches, the athletes, the parents, but you do not belong to any of those groups. And, in Spain, I didn't have a peer group. And, when I got here to the States I promised myself I would never work this way again. (GB)

One co-participant described the struggle of being a part of the team, but not actually being a part of the team.

This came up with a group of us who had worked with Olympic athletes. You are part of the team, but you're not part of the team. Young professionals better be ready for that part. You are not going to be in there holding the gold medal with the team – that's their thing, that's the coaches' thing. You gotta be sensitive to that, cause I know for me, I wanna be in the middle of it, but you can't. You're not there day in and day out, because that's what they are doing. Unless you are there every day, then you are a part of it. Most of us don't get that opportunity. We don't become part of that inner circle. That's the nature of the work, that part I'm used to. Lots of times when you do this work, you feel awkward. (KR)

Being invited in. Several consultants described their experience of being “invited in” to work with an athlete or team as improving over time due to the field's growing acceptance in sport and society. “Today, people are more receptive, I'm not saying that

they are totally receptive, I'm saying that they are more receptive (KR)." Another consultant added, "It's evolved as sport psychology becomes more trusted. It's become normalized as something to enhance performance; again, kind of like strength and conditioning, it's just part of the program for serious teams (SMC)." One consultant echoed this sentiment:

Well, to be honest, sport psychology now at the USOC is seen in a very positive light – in a light similar to strength and conditioning. Maybe it's not for everyone, but for many teams it's an essential service that is an extension of the coaching staff. (SMC)

In addition, several co-participants said they thought their ability to be invited in to work with an athlete or team had improved over the years due to positive referrals and good reputations.

I guess once you get credibility you know everything gets a lot easier. I just tell people you have to start somewhere and usually you have to do a lot of work for nothing, you know to get credibility, but more importantly to learn how to do what you are doing. (BR)

Probably it got a little easier along the way because, because at a certain point I would go in and people already respected me because they had read my books or they knew something. They had talked with someone who had talked with someone. So, it kind of opened doors a little more easily. Initially when you walk in you know people are kind of checking you out like, 'What does this guy have to offer?' or, 'What is this stuff?' especially at the professional level. It was later in my career that people came to me. I wasn't looking to do it, but they came to me...I got a call. I didn't go out banging on doors...they called me. (TO)

Furthermore, several co-participants stated they provided assistance when they were only invited in. They never went out and sought consulting work.

I don't do any advertising. I haven't ever in my entire career ever asked to work with anybody. I don't mean that in being egotistical. The best way to be "invited in" is for them to ask you. I found that if you do good work, then the athletes will talk to athletes, and the coaches will talk to coaches, and then they'll ask you to come into the locker room to be a part of the process and the team. Then go into that unique setting and that unique situation and help them the best way you can.

That is what I mean by it. It is a very strong word; to be invited in means you are a guest and you are providing them with some hopefully useful material and information as a consultant and that's it. Young people that are coming up now, they say, 'Well, how do I get in?' Well, it's difficult, because you get in through referral, through word of mouth. You don't get in through a web-site or a registry. That is my opinion. I might be making people upset with that one right there. I don't know of one referral I ever got off of a registry. I am on the AAASP Registry and I am on the USOC Registry – since its inception – and I don't remember any referrals coming from that. Perhaps they did, but no one said that. The referrals I get that contact me contact me because they have talked to somebody. (RG)

I guess people are always asking me about coaches and athletes that have resisted or are too macho for it. I just don't find a lot of resistance to it. I don't find a lot of people fighting it or being afraid of it. I'm like, jeez, I've been busy for seven days a week with people all over the world to come and spend two days with me. I mean coaches just call...I don't have resistance. If someone is having resistance they need to really look at what they are doing. They must be doing something wrong. I think you have to look and say, "What am I doing wrong if people aren't listening? You know I see all these people coming out and they ask me, 'How did you market yourself?' And I say, 'I didn't. I got people to win.' If you get people to win, it will take care of itself. (BR)

People ask me this all the time, 'Do you have a web page or a brochure? I can barely use a computer! I said, 'No, I just answer the phone [laughter].' People call me up and I answer. There is another aspect of that; it took 25 years before the phone started to ring [laughter]. (RV)

Theme Five: Knowledge

The fifth major theme that emerged in this investigation was Knowledge. The consultants described Knowledge in terms of what they knew about themselves and what they did not know. Thus, there were two sub-themes that comprised the knowledge theme: (1) Know yourself and (2) Know what you don't know.

Know yourself. The sub-theme of Know Yourself represented that portion of the experience of providing sport psychology consultation consultants described in terms of things they had come to realize about themselves through the experience. A number of co-participants knew a great deal about themselves as a result of providing sport

psychology consultation to athletes. One consultant even commented on the importance of knowing yourself when consulting.

I spent a lot of time working on myself trying to figure out who the hell I was and I attended a lot of seminars, I attended a lot of workshops and did these types of things and that was most helpful. One thing that I can feel good about was there are very few things that I have done with an athlete that I haven't done myself. I think that is one thing that is real critical in this field is that you better work on yourself some because you have to get your own stuff in order and understand that. You have to look at yourself, before you can help someone else. (KR)

Several consultants described what they knew about themselves that they believed led to their success and effectiveness as applied sport psychology consultants.

I think I am very educational, very kind of one-on-one, tutor-mentor oriented. I believe that you really need to know your sport psych, although you don't have to tell the person you know it, but that system needs to be running in the back of your head... I think I present real well. I think one of my biggest strengths is, I don't think like a psych person. I think like an athlete that wants to use psychology. And so when I'm talking I'm thinking, why does this person want to hear this psycho babble? I think I make things real concrete. I think I put it in a form that the consumer can buy. So, I think I'm good at that. I think I am pretty passionate, pretty hard working. I think that athletes kind of appreciate that. I've spent a long time doing this, so I think I know a lot. That's different from thinking you are really smart. I just think I've been doing it for 25 years for 70 hours a week, so duh. But, I also think there is a lot that I don't know, but compared to the average person I know a tremendous amount about how to help them mentally. I'm not the sharpest. I feel good about my intelligence... Then I went to really good mentors so I got good training... And, I think I have some gifts like emotional intelligence, you know, good logical thinking. I think I have a skill set that is pretty good and I think I have some real strong skills in some areas I really don't even know how to describe them. Maybe it's the emotional intelligence. I think that part of being emotionally intelligent, as I read more about it, is to know. Part of it is knowing myself. You need to know yourself. On one hand I've got this spectacular confidence and on the other hand I am an insecure person. I want people to like me. So I think that ends up helping me in some things. (DG)

I think one reason that I have been able to be effective is... I understand the breathing mechanism of sport. I lived it. You know I rode the bus. I worked with athletes. I have seen the ups and downs. I've been a coach. I have gone through the process for many years prior to getting to the position where I would actually work in the field of sport psychology. I also know people. I know the

activities they are involved in and place them in situations that are appropriate to meet their needs. (RV)

I guess a lot of people like to ask me, 'What is my strength?' I think it is real simple. I have a wonderful ability to see talent in people that they don't see themselves and get it out of people. I guess I am fairly direct. Someone might say that I am blunt. I just think I am very honest with people cause I can't help them if I am not honest with them. (BR)

This co-participant also talked about the importance of having confidence in what you know about yourself and the field of sport psychology:

I just think you have to have a lot of confidence in yourself. You have to believe you know what you are doing. And, how can I put this? You see people make mistakes at either end. You see some people who have confidence and you watch them and you say, 'I don't know if they are competent.' So they got more confidence than competence. So, they got more confidence than they deserve to have and they want to jump in with high-level athletes and what they don't understand is if they jump in with high-level athletes you are gonna get found out if you don't know what you are doing. And, if you mess up it will probably destroy your career. So I am always telling people don't jump in until you are both competent and confident in what you are doing. On the other hand, once you know what you are doing you better make sure you believe in what you are doing cause that will show through. It will certainly show through when an athlete you are working with is struggling a little. And that is when they are gonna find out if you believe what it is you are teaching them. (BR)

Know what you don't know. The sub-theme of Know what you don't know represented a facet of the applied sport psychology consultation experience where these consultants admitted they didn't know the answer or know how to handle a particular situation that arose during a consultation. Several co-participants talked about this type of experience and the importance of admitting, "you don't know."

It was a great experience [working with a baseball team], very humbling. I realized how much I didn't know about team sports. I didn't know what would be effective interventions, particularly on the spot. I mean in general I can say what would be good, but when you notice the team is slack and there is nothing you can do right now and I didn't know. All of those things happen in an instant and it would be great if we could at least figure out what could be known. (GB)

I have worked with some teams where I did not have time to do that [observation]. So you have to be up front and honest with them and tell them, I don't have time right now. I'll make an effort, but I don't know your language. I've found for me you can't bullshit them, I just tell them where I'm at. (KR)

I go in and say, 'I don't know anything about what you do, but I know about excellence. I know about what it takes mentally to get to where you want to go. I know about working as a team. I know about stress. I know about connecting with what you do.' It's a totally different approach. I don't come in like I know everything. I come in like I know certain things and they are the experts in what they do. So, part of that maybe just respecting people and what they have already accomplished. I think that's appreciated. (TO)

I was just talking to the young ladies in softball here [Western Washington University] and said, 'You know what? I don't know anything about softball.' I tell them flat out. You can tell me I'm full of you know what. You let me know when I am off base. You're not gonna hurt my feelings. I need your help, just like we need each others help if we are gonna get where we want to go. (RV)

One co-participant believed that the best consultants in the field of sport

psychology consultation were the first to admit it when they didn't know something:

When you meet some really good people they will be the first to tell you that there is a lot more that we don't know. But, it's interesting because while you really know you know your stuff and you're confident, you still make mistakes. You know the books never talk enough about the mistakes; you know there is a lot you don't know. (DG)

Theme Six: Relationship

The last major theme that emerged from this investigation was Relationship. The consultants described the importance of the Relationship, as it applied to sport psychology consultation, as an approach that focused on more than just the performance of the athlete. Relationship placed the emphasis in the consulting relationship on the athlete as a person and a performer. The treatment of the athlete by the consultants also reflected that distinction. There were three sub-themes that comprised the Relationship theme: (1) Caring, (2) Genuine, and (3) Treat the whole person.

Caring. The sub-theme of Caring characterized the approach to consultation taken by several co-participants in this investigation. One of the consultants stated that a caring approach made him a good consultant and improved his ability to get through to athletes and help them improve their performance.

Somebody said this about athletes, “They have to know that you care, before they care what you know.” I mean you could know a million things, but if the person isn’t open to what you have to offer it’s nothing. They’ll be in the room, but their heads will be somewhere else. You have no chance. It’s like I said earlier about focus. If you are not focused on what somebody is saying you are gonna learn nothing. But, the caring – I’m not saying faking – I mean the genuine caring about people and their performance and those people achieving their goals and showing that you care. I am only there to help those people be what they want to be, or become what they want to become. If they know that you care and you are really there for them and not for your ego or whatever. If they know that, they are gonna be more receptive to what you have to say. And then when you have something to offer, they listen. (TO)

Many consultants went on to describe how the provision of sport psychology consultation required a caring approach because of the nature of the consulting.

We don’t have office hours in the sense that you can call me between 8 and 2 and then I will work you in 3 months later. When you need us we are there. That is what people do who care about other people. We all are familiar with when we have something that is important to us and the receptionist says, ‘Well, the doctor is booked until 2008.’ And you’re thinking I could be dead by 2008 [laughter]. If I can make an analogy here that popped into my head. We are like pediatricians. Babies don’t just get sick at 9 in the morning. They get sick at 1am at night, and that mother or father needs you at that time, not at another time. And, the most important thing in their world is what is happening to their son or daughter and good pediatricians are there. That is what we have to be. Time is not the important thing. It is whether you are there or not. That’s hard cause I don’t know how pediatricians live. When it happens like that you have to be available you can’t put them off. (KH)

You get to know the athlete and get to know the coaches, but teams don’t plan their crises for when you are there. They happen all the time and if you are not around enough you are cut out of the loop because they don’t pull you in if they can’t count on you. (SMC)

You see when you are a coach you have to love all the athletes that you coach. You may not like them and what they do, but you have to love them. And so, you've got to know that individual in order to establish a caring relationship. I think that goes a long way in terms of building a bond between coach and athlete. You need to know the cultural differences of the athletes you are coaching or providing sport psychology services for. I mean you have to know the person before you know the athlete. That is what we do in sport psychology is get to know the person. I think it's a little tougher for coaches. We are in a world of specialization. So there are a lot of things between coaches and athletes. You don't get to know them as well anymore. You don't get to demonstrate that you care about them as a person. So, they know that you may challenge them. I think one of the things you have to do in sport psychology is mentally challenge people. I think you have to be able to establish a relationship and be able to talk to people on topics not related to their sport. Caring is very important. (RV)

The approach that I take is a caring approach, but that's just what I use. I'm not sure everyone does. I think that for other people another approach may help protect them from that rejection. Do I take it personally at times, do I tell athletes not to? Yes. Do I? Yes, I take it personally at times. It's easier said than done. You really get invested into the athlete. You have to care about students and care about the individual. I mean I have been to prison to visit ex-athletes and ex-students who took the wrong path. You're there and that hurts. It's also an approach that I have had as an instructor and I have been criticized for that. I'm more into the students than I am course content because the students drive my class, not the content. I want to come across here that I am not the only caring person in sport. I don't mean to say that. I'm just talking about my approach. (KR)

Another consultant shared similar thoughts on the topic of caring:

I think it means you are there for them through thick and thin. I think it means you realize that you are there for them more when they are struggling, then when they are doing great. I think it means you care about them and are committed to them. It means you would do pretty much anything humanly possible to be there for them when they need you rather than when it's convenient for you. I mean those are all the things it means. It probably means that they call and want to come to my home for dinner or to stay the night, they can. Those are all the things it means. It means most of the time I am talking about performance, but there's another 10% of the time we may get into issues about life. (BR)

You have to care about the people you are working with as people as well as performers. And, maybe even more the people-side is what...when people feel you care about them as human beings they probably respect you more and listen to you more. (TO)

One consultant even discussed how the sports world, in which sport psychology consultation is provided, breeds a caring atmosphere:

Well, its weird I was telling other psychologists, you know I was with the men's snowboarding team out at Park City, Utah and we are all sleeping in the same house. And they are like, 'What, do you mean? You sleep with your clients?' No, I don't sleep with my clients! They can't seem to get their heads around that level of intimacy and closeness. You eat breakfast and travel with them. Those sort of experiences lead to bonding that is sort of hard to put into words. It's unique. There aren't too many other fields like that where psychologists get that close to their clients. But, then again when you are at the bottom of the hill at a World Cup event, you are more than happy for them. You really feel for them. (SMU)

Genuine. Another sub-theme that supported the theme of Relationship was Genuine. Many of the consultants talked about their experience of providing sport psychology consultation in terms of being genuine with those that they consult.

One thing that I think that has always kept me on the straight and narrow is that I have been true to myself. I have always tried to be genuine. If you can do that you are going to be able to work with a lot of types of people. When people recognize that you are you and you are genuine, and not playing a role, the fences come down many times. But, it takes a while for some people to realize and some people intuitively seem to understand that, but if you are going to go into this profession you do have to be genuine. (KH)

You better understand that the world of sports is very into loyalty. I think that's a big part of it. I think all the players I work with know that if they spend time with me I'll be committed to them forever. I'll never give up on them, even if they give up on me. If at some later point they are ready to get back into it, I'll be there. I think they all know they can call me or talk to me anytime they want. They are like a part of my family. (BR)

I have learned that in this field if you are good at what you do you can make real differences – meaningful differences – in people's lives and people's performances. Many of the athletes that I have worked with over the years I still have contact with. Some are very good friends. Some I do things with now. There are certain friendships that have developed. Kind of like an extended family for me in a way because when I was working with them I really cared about them. You're kind of invested in helping them do what it is they want to do – whatever that is. And, I have developed some really close ties with some people. But, I still have contact with some of these people. So, I learned a lot

from them. I think they learned a lot from me. And they were always very respectful relationships. (TO)

The other entry point I have found with caring – and this would be at a lot of levels – but even more so at the professional level because people are probably a little less trusting. I found a great entry point was in the training room. When people are injured and now nobody seems to care about them, if you can care, and you really do care, and you're helping them through the injury with some strategies. Or, you are just talking to them about stuff outside of sport they light up cause somebody is talking to them about things in their life that are important or count. That doesn't mean you spend all of your time doing that, you do some of that and that kind of opens the door to trust and realizing that you honestly care about them as a human being, not just a commodity. (TO)

Treat the whole person. This sub-theme emerged as many of the consultants in this study stated the enjoyment they derived from helping the athlete or performer improve their performance, but also grow, learn, and improve as a person. One co-participant stated:

That is the way I want it to be with the performers I work with. I don't want them just to come to me in the sense that it is in this limited area of performance enhancement. I want them to come to me as a total person and I want to respond to them as a total person. I have found the more you work with people, as total people, not just their performance side, the easier it is to break down their resistance. I think they have to realize that you care about them as people and not just their physical being. And, I make points to talk to them about their families, their kids, and how they are doing. When you do that they realize that you are interested in them as a person and not how many goals they score. (KH)

That same consultant went on to add:

I think that what we are doing in consulting and counseling and so forth is trying to make a difference in their total life. Not in just one small aspect, because in performance, all the aspects, whether it be family, coach, team, relationships, conflicts, all of those make a difference in terms of performance. We really can't limit ourselves into just giving them things that will make them a better performer, because you have to touch many parts of their lives. And when you do that and you do it well I think that is very rewarding (KH).

Two consultants described how wonderful it was to help athlete(s), not just with their sport performance, but by giving them skills that would serve them throughout their

life. One co-participant stated, “I really think that is what we do. We have so much good information in performance psychology that we can touch their lives and make a difference for them. And it shouldn’t be just temporary it should be long lasting (KH).”

Another consultant added:

This field can add so much not just to sport performance, but to all performance. And, the thing that really turned me on about our field is that the skills that we have the opportunity to teach people are life skills and they are skills that they can take long after their playing days are over and continue to use them their entire life. I have had athletes come back to me and tell me, you know I am still doing this thing that we worked on and I am still using it today. And, that is really gratifying to me. (RG)

Summary

The thematic structure of the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes was relatively uniform for this group of expert consultants. Their experience emerged in the form of six themes: (1) Enjoyment, (2) Learning, (3) Challenges, (4) Collaboration, (5) Knowledge, and (6) Relationship. These themes and their attendant sub-themes represented distinct aspects of the experience, but aspects that interacted to form the total consulting experience for these expert practitioners.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The objective of this study was to provide a detailed description of expert practitioners' experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. Analysis of the data obtained through phenomenological interviews yielded six major themes: (1) Enjoyment, (2) Learning, (3) Challenges, (4) Collaboration, (5) Knowledge, and (6) Relationship. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the current findings in relation to their consistency with previous research, discuss new findings that emerged as they relate to previous literature, and discuss the surprising aspects of the findings. The chapter culminates with a discussion of the limitations of the study, suggestions for how the findings might be useful or applicable to athletes, coaches, sport psychology consultants, and researchers. Finally, several conclusions are stated.

Consistency with Previous Literature

One of the major themes that emerged from the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes was Knowledge. Knowledge manifested itself in two very distinct ways in the dialogues of the co-participants. The first was knowledge of self. The co-participants indicated that an applied sport psychology consultant needed to have a great understanding of who he or she is. The second way knowledge manifested itself was in knowing one's own boundaries or competencies. In other words, as Statler (2001) put it, "know what you don't know" (p. 103).

The importance co-participants placed on knowledge about themselves is similar to the results of earlier research that indicated consultants felt they had to first become an expert on themselves before they could ever become expert practitioners (Gould et al.,

1991; Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999; Partington & Orlick, 1987, 1991; Simons & Anderson, 1995; Statler, 2001).

Simons and Andersen (1995) found that the consultants they interviewed emphasized the theme, “know thyself.” The consultants in their study recommended that their fellow practitioners have a strong sense of self-awareness. They also recommended that consultants ask themselves who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, why they are in the field, what their needs are, and what they are getting out of working with athletes. All of the consultants in that study advocated a continual and rigorous process of self-examination as well as the appraisal of other helping professionals.

Several consultants in the current study talked about the importance of knowing one’s limitations and competencies. Specifically, consultants stressed the importance of knowing what you don’t know as well as what you do know. Gould et al. (1991) found that consultants working with U.S. Olympic athletes were rated high on “has useful knowledge” while several co-participants in the Simons and Andersen (1995) and Statler (2001) investigations mentioned the importance of knowing one’s limitations. Further, consultants in the present study as well as in the Statler (2001) study postulated that an admission of what one does not know to an athlete or a coaching staff may actually serve to establish, rather than diminish, the consultant’s credibility with athletes and coaches.

Another finding that was consistent with previous literature was the theme of Enjoyment that characterized consultants’ experience of working with highly committed athletes or coaches (c.f., Simons & Andersen, 1995). The consultants in the present study also commented on their need to work with highly committed people, both for the immediate effectiveness of their consulting and for the long-term promotion of the field

of sport psychology. Partington and Orlick (1991) found a similar finding in their interviews with 19 Canadian sport psychology consultants who indicated that the best-ever consulting experiences involved working with a highly committed coaching staff.

Learning was another major theme that emerged from the present interviews. As one consultant stated, “I use the Wooden quote, ‘It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts’ (RG).” This theme was consistent with the results of Simons and Andersen (1995), Statler (2001), and Halliwell et al. (1999), all of whom found that learning was a central theme associated with expert consultants’ experience of providing performance consultation.

One of the ways consultants in the present study experienced learning was by learning about themselves and their own practice. As one co-participant indicated, learning was such a core element of his experience of consulting that he continually learned no matter whom he was consulting with. He specifically stated, “It doesn’t matter if it is a six-year-old or a ten-year-old or a great professional athlete or an Olympic champion, or someone who is struggling and thinking of quitting. There is always something to learn (TO).”

Simons and Andersen (1995) found that many of the consultants in their study emphasized the theme of continual learning. This theme was supported by quotes like “continue to learn and learn from your clientele as well; learn as much as you can, you’re no different than an athlete” (Simons & Andersen, 1995, p. 467). Partington and Orlick (1991) also found that coaches valued the characteristic of “openness” to new learning in sport psychology consultants. Halliwell et al. (1999), in summarizing the best-ever consulting experiences of 19 sport psychology consultants, indicated the most effective

consultants maintained a capacity to remain open to learning about all aspects of consulting, from learning about athletes, to learning about sports, to learning from different situations that presented themselves.

Another theme that emerged from the current investigation that was consistent with previous research with consultants was the importance of the Relationship. Co-participants who advocated this approach viewed the athlete as a person as well as a performer and their treatment of athletes reflected this dual emphasis. One co-participant reiterated the often-heard comment; “They have to know that you care, before they care what you know (TO)”. A large part of the experience of sport psychology consultation for the co-participants in the current investigation was the personal and powerful relationships they formed with coaches and athletes over the years. To that end, several maintained that a large part of fostering a solid consulting relationship with any athlete or team was demonstrating a concern for the well being of individuals. Simons and Andersen (1995) also found that consultants felt that just being there for the athlete was an important way of bridging communication barriers. As one consultant stated, “Going to practices, letting them know that you care, talking to them, being available” (p. 465). Orlick and Partington (1987) also found that expert consultants were characterized as being accessible enough to build rapport and caring. Similarly Statler (2001) reported that “a large part of maintaining relationships with consulting clients depends on the consultant’s capacity to care about those they work with” (p. 64).

Several co-participants in the current study mentioned that they felt they had the most positive influence, both from a performance standpoint and personally, when they

were able to convey genuineness and sincerity. One consultant summed it up best when he said:

One thing that I think that has always kept me on the straight and narrow is that I have been true to myself. I have always tried to be genuine. If you can do that you are going to be able to work with a lot of types of people. When people recognize that you are you and you are genuine, the fences come down many times. But, it takes a while for some people to realize and some people intuitively seem to understand that, but if you are going to go into this profession you do have to be genuine. (KH)

Statler (2001), in her interviews with exceptional consultants, found that the same concept emerged – the idea that an outstanding consultant is genuine.

Consultants, in the present study, stated that their consulting experience could be summed up by helping athletes play better or win more, and by assisting athletes in growing, learning, and improving as people. Several co-participants described their experience as treating the whole person. One consultant added, “I want them to come to me as a total person and I want to respond to them as a total person (KH).”

The theme of Collaboration that emerged from the interviews of the current study is consistent with the notion of “fitting in with the team” reported in earlier research with or about consultants (Gentner, 2001; Gould et al., 1991; Partington & Orlick, 1987, 1991). Collaboration is a term co-participants used to describe the relationship between the consultant and the athlete, as well as between the sport psychology consultant, the athlete, coaches, managers, parents, and other staff.

Several co-participants said they thought their ability to be invited in to work with an athlete or team had improved over the years due to positive referrals and good reputations. In a similar vein, Partington and Orlick (1987) found that one of the main criteria coaches used to evaluate the effectiveness and expertise of Olympic consultants

was whether the consultant's personality and style of working fit in well with the team or program. These researchers also found that best-ever consulting experiences were characterized by a good fit between the consultant and the situation. Gould et al. (1991) found that coaches rated "fitting in" with the team as one of the most important characteristics of effective consulting and Gentner (2001) reported that athletes and coaches perceived "fitting in with team" and "easy to relate to" as two of the three most important characteristics of effective consultants. Collectively, these findings suggest that expert consultants are all successful in "fitting in" with different populations, with various sports, and with athletes, coaches, parents, and support staff alike.

One of the themes that emerged in the current investigation was the Results Orientation of Sport. Almost all of the co-participants agreed that if they are able to help people perform better they would have plenty of consulting opportunities. Partington and Orlick (1987) also found that one of the main criteria coaches and athletes used to evaluate consultants was evidence of performance improvements. One consultant put it best when he said, "I'm absolutely convinced people who help athletes perform better will have plenty of work, and if you don't help athletes perform better, well you won't have a lot of work" (Simons & Andersen, 1995, p. 466).

Similar to the results of the present study, Partington and Orlick (1987) found that one of the personal characteristics of sport psychology consultants most valued by coaches was hard working. Statler (2001) also found that hard working was a personality characteristic of the exceptional sport psychology consultants she interviewed. Several co-participants stressed the importance of "paying your dues" and used the example of

apprenticeship to explain what they meant. In other words, one has to start at the bottom and work his or her way up the ladder.

Similarly, Simons and Andersen (1995) discovered that the themes of “putting in your time,” “paying your dues,” and “doing the work” surfaced again and again in a variety of forms during their interviews. Clearly, the present co-participants as well as the expert consultants in other studies felt that becoming a part of the sport environment involved being at early or late practices, being there at difficult times, and putting in the work.

New Findings

Several findings of the present study represented somewhat new additions to the literature in sport psychology. Most significantly, co-participants in the current investigation shared a very similar experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. This finding contrasted with Statler’s (2001) suggestion that the work and experience of expert practitioners is quite individual. She concluded that each expert consultant arrived at his or her outstanding consulting practice in his or her own unique way, suggesting that ultimately there was little in the way of a shared experience among outstanding consultants. In fact, Statler (2001) labeled her sixth major theme “elusive factors” in an effort to communicate her conviction that the components of exceptional sport psychology consulting were “abstract” or “hard to conceptualize” (Statler, 2001, p. 138).

Another finding of the current investigation that extended the results of earlier work was co-participant’s description of their experience of being part of the team. Some consultants mentioned this literally, as being an actual member of the support staff of an

actual team. Other consultants talked about being part of the support team that surrounded an individual athlete, and included the athlete's parents and the like. Of note, however, was the co-participants' emphasis on the importance of working with other members of the "team" in order to enhance the performance of the athlete. Several co-participants mentioned that it was prudent to work with as many people surrounding the athlete as possible. Several stated that they would only work with a team or athlete on the team if the coaches supported the consultant being there. These findings are even more poignant in light of the Gould et al. (1989) finding that consultants frequently experienced problems due to a lack of cooperation from coaches, coaches being non-supportive, and coaches prohibiting access to athletes. It is likely that the co-participants in the present study experienced such high levels of consulting success because they strived to cultivate relationships with the people surrounding the athlete as well as the athlete themselves.

Another revealing finding of the present study was that these consultants experienced being excluded or shunned by certain members of the team surrounding the athlete. Several talked about the frustration that came from being the only sport psychology consultant for an athlete or team. Several described the loneliness of working on their own, perhaps summed up best by the following comment: "You are part of the team, but you're not part of the team. [You] better be ready for that part. Lots of times when you do this work, you feel awkward" (KR). Such feelings were suggested to a lesser extent in the research of Gould et al. (1989) who found that one of the more frequently experienced problems consultants faced was the non-interaction they had with other sport psychology professionals.

The experience of enjoyment for the co-participants in this study was somewhat different than that expressed by consultants in other studies (e.g., Statler, 2001). Almost all of the co-participants in the current study described the enjoyment they derived from the experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes, in terms of being challenged and overcoming challenges. One expressed this feeling by saying, “We are doing it because we enjoy the challenge, we enjoy what we are doing, and we enjoy helping people grow and develop (KH).” Co-participants used a myriad of descriptions to characterize this feeling. They said they enjoyed new challenges that came from consulting a new sport or team, applying their knowledge and skills to new tasks and demands, and confronting issues they had not dealt with before. In short, these consultants enjoyed the fact that the consulting experience was never the same and that new challenges always presented themselves.

Surprising Findings

One of the more surprising findings of the current study was the consultants’ discussion of the experience of failure or being unsuccessful in providing sport psychology consultation. One might think that “expert” practitioners would experience little in the way of failure, but several of these consultants talked about the challenge of failing or of being unsuccessful in a consulting experience. This experience appeared to be much more germane to the co-participants than some led on. However, a few were candid enough to talk about how challenging failure was in their consulting experience. Two individuals said that their consulting experience was difficult because they were so invested in the people they consulted with. Thus, if the athlete failed, consultants felt they shared some of the blame for the failure. In addition, several of the consultants

commented that since the nature of consulting was to enhance performance and because sports are so results oriented, dealing with failure was a big part of the consulting experience.

Another surprising finding of the present study was that these consultants de-emphasized the importance of marketing their services or soliciting clients. As mentioned previously, not one consultant stated s/he had ever solicited consulting work and was quite adamant in that assertion. Interestingly, several co-participants felt that their workload or number of consultations had increased over time due to the effectiveness of their work with previous athletes or coaches. These consultants' disdain for marketing strategies contrasted significantly with some of the literature in sport psychology that outlines ways in which sport psychologists might market themselves in an effort to improve their client base and gain business (e.g., DeFrancesco & Cronin, 1988). The expert co-participants in this study felt that sport psychology consultants should devote more energy to improving their consulting performance and the success rates of the athletes they work with than with marketing their services.

Limitations of the Study

The principal limitation of the present study was that female consultants and consultants of various ethnicities were grossly underrepresented. This problem is a reflection of the current predominance of white, male professionals currently occupying the field of Sport Psychology. In addition, it should be noted that the nominators of the co-participants in this study were largely male (61%). Had more female consultants nominated expert practitioners, there may have been a better gender balance in the co-participant population.

Another limitation unique to the present study was the use of phone interviews. Research (Bermack, 1989; Herzog & Rodgers, 1988; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000) has shown that self-disclosure and interview responses do not vary between telephone and face-to-face procedures. However, it is the opinion of the primary investigator that co-participants may not have been as forthcoming in their responses as they may have been if the interviews took place in person. Certainly, the current researcher was at a disadvantage in terms of understanding the context or meaning of the words the co-participants used because body language and non-verbal communication cues could not be observed.

Recommendations for Athletes, Coaches, Sport Psychology Consultants, and Researchers

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are offered for athletes, coaches, sport psychology consultants, and researchers:

1. Athletes and coaches should seek out sport psychology consultants that:
(a) enjoy their work, (b) value learning, (c) enjoy working with new individuals, teams, and sports, (d) believe in the importance of collaboration with the coaching staff, parents, and other support staff members, (e) have good knowledge of their competencies and limitations, and (f) consult with a holistic approach.
2. Sport psychology consultants should attempt to continually strengthen their knowledge base by staying current with applied sport psychology research, theory, and professional literature.
3. Sport psychology consultants need to “consider the costs” of a consulting career. In particular, they should consider whether they are ready, willing,

and able to make the sacrifices, pay the dues, and put in the hard work necessary to become an expert consultant.

4. Consultants need to understand the importance of cultivating and building as many relationships as possible with and around the athletes and teams they consult work with.
5. Researchers need to qualitatively examine the experience of athletes and coaches that have received sport psychology consultation, perhaps using an existential phenomenological approach, in order to gain a better understanding of the perceived benefits and drawbacks of such services.
6. Future researchers need to investigate the experience of providing or receiving sport psychology consultation from the perspective of other populations, including athletes and teams with special needs, who are elderly, adolescents, females, and minorities.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions are offered:

1. These consultants' experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes was an enjoyable, challenging, collaborative, and rather uniform in nature learning process.
2. These expert practitioners' experience of consulting was filled not only with exhilarating highs, but also with considerable lows. Several consultants described their experience in terms of failure or of being unsuccessful in a consulting relationship.

3. They talked about the importance of intuition as well as an extensive knowledge of the skills, techniques, and knowledge base in sport psychology. Thus, their experience might be characterized as both an art and a science.
4. The phenomenological dialogue represents a powerful vehicle for gaining insight into the sport experience of a wide range of participants and support persons.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Human Subjects Form B Application

IRB # _____
Date Received in ORC _____THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
Application for Review of Research

(In accordance with institutional assurance of compliance to DHHS)

Date: January 14, 2003

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

Principal Investigator
Andrew Ploszay
103 West 5th Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37917
(865) 974-0601
(aploszay@utk.edu)Faculty Advisor
Dr. Craig Wrisberg
344 Health PE/Recreation
Knoxville, TN 37920
(865) 974-1283
(caw@utk.edu)

Title of Project: The Experience of Expert Sport Psychology Consultants

Department: Sport and Leisure Studies
(Sport Psychology)

Starting Date: Upon IRB approval

Estimated Completion Date: May 2003

External Funding Agency and Identification Number: N/A

Grant Submission Deadline: N/A

II. OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT

The objective of this project is to interview the "top ten" applied sport psychology consultants in North America [determined by the membership of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)] about their experience providing sport psychology services to athletes. Research in the applied sport psychology literature has generally examined the effectiveness of techniques, interventions, and training of service delivery and consultants. However, Simons and Andersen (1995) suggest that there is a great need for

expert practitioner knowledge and experience to be recorded for the benefit of the field. Furthermore, little research has been found on sport psychology consultants' phenomenological experiences of practicing sport psychology. Therefore, in this study, the researcher will attempt to understand expert sport psychology consultants' experiences of the provision of sport psychology services using qualitative methods.

III. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

The co-participants in this study will be 10 sport psychology consultants determined to be the "top ten" practicing sport psychology consultants in North America based on a survey of the membership of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP).

IV. METHODS OR PROCEDURES

This study will use qualitative research methods. The data gathering format will consist of an initial contact of the AAASP membership, an interview, and a follow-up interview. This process is designed to familiarize the co-participants with the interviewer and the interview process, and to build trust so that experiences can be discussed. The personal interviews will be held in a private setting such as the co-participant's or principal investigator's home or office. Interviews may also be conducted over the telephone if meeting in person proves difficult. All interviews will be held at prearranged times either during business hours or personal time, at the co-participants' discretion.

The first step will be an initial contact of the AAASP membership through the sport psychology listserv (via email). An overview of the study will be provided and the membership will be asked to name those sport psychology consultants they believe are "experts" in the field. After a frequency count, the 10 sport psychology consultants nominated most often by their peers will be contacted and asked to participate in the study.

The second step will be an initial contact in which introductions will be made, the purpose of the study will be explained, an informed consent statement (Appendix B) will be discussed, read, signed and archived. In addition, the dates, places, and times for the interviews will be set.

The third step will be the interview, in which the co-participant describes his or her experiences of practicing sport psychology. These interviews will be conducted in person and audio taped or conducted over the telephone and audio taped. These interviews are expected to last approximately one hour; however, the co-participants may choose to take any amount of time they wish, not to exceed two hours.

The fourth step will be a follow-up interview. The purpose of this interview will be to ask for any clarification and to offer an opportunity to

add any additional information. This procedure involves a meeting with the co-participant or follow-up phone call and mailing in order to have them read over their own interview transcript. Co-participants will also be allowed to delete any information in the transcript they do not want reported in the study or possibly the subsequent publication of the material. Following this step, the co-participant will check for the accuracy of the content of the interview.

After the interviews, the principal investigator reads through the transcripts first, and then a team of qualitative researchers will read the transcripts to identify any common themes of information among all of the co-participants. Direct quotes of experiential stories may be used to illustrate a theme, and names will be identified with the corresponding quotes.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Procedures used in this research are non-invasive. Participation in the interviews will be strictly voluntary, and the co-participants will be advised that they may terminate the project at any time. Interviews will be conducted in a private setting either in person or over the telephone. The setting, if in person, will be a private office or residence, to be agreed upon by the co-participant and primary researcher. The co-participant will be informed that their actual name will be used and their real name will be mentioned on the audio tape. The principal researcher will prepare the transcripts. During the time when the transcripts are being prepared, the co-participant may request to review the audio tape of the interview. Each co-participant will also be allowed to delete any information in the transcript they do not want reported in the study. Once the transcript is completed, the audio tapes will be destroyed, and the co-participant can request a copy of the transcript. Other than the principal researcher and the co-participant, no one will have access to the audio tapes without permission of the principal researcher. The audio tapes, transcripts, and informed consent statements will be kept in a locked file drawer in HPER Room 350 by the principal researcher for the purpose of this study. All notes regarding contact with the co-participants will also be kept in the locked file drawer. Informed consent statements and transcripts will be retained in a locked file cabinet at the University of Tennessee for three years after the completion of the study.

The co-participants will be specifically advised: (a) that the interviews will be audio taped for accuracy, (b) that they may refuse to be interviewed or stop the interview at any time, (c) that they may inquire about the procedures at any time (d) that no royalties are due to the co-participant for any subsequent publication, (e) the copies of the transcripts will be provided for them to review, and (f) that the transcripts will be reviewed by the researcher and other researchers for identification of themes. Research team members who read the transcripts to help the principal investigator would also be allowed access to the identity of the co-participants that participate in the study.

VI. BENEFITS VS. RISKS

Participation in this study entails no unusual risks or discomforts. No emotional discomfort is anticipated. The data should provide an enhanced understanding of one group of expert sport psychology consultants' experience providing sport psychology services.

VII. METHOD OF OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT FROM SUBJECTS

Each sport psychology consultant will receive a consent form and be asked to read it and sign it if s/he is willing to participate in the study (see attached consent form). The principal investigator will collect the form and keep it in his possession thereafter. The co-participant will retain a copy of the informed consent form for his or her records.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR

The advisor has been involved with numerous qualitative research projects in the past. He has practical, theoretical, and professional experience in interviewing techniques and qualitative designs.

The principal investigator is in the third year of the doctoral program in Sport and Leisure Studies. He has had course work related to qualitative research and has consulted with several faculty members and students who are experienced in using this method.

IX. ADEQUACY OF FACILITIES TO SUPPORT RESEARCH

Interviews – in person – will be held in a private residence or office, to be mutually agreed upon by the co-participant and the interviewer. Telephone contacts will also be recorded, and notes of dates, times, and telephone numbers of the calls will be made, and will be accessible to the primary researcher and secondary researchers.

X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

By the compliance with the policies established by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Institutional Review Board, the principal investigator subscribes to the principles stated in the "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

A) Approval will be obtained for the IRB Board prior to instituting any change in the research project.

B) Development of any unexpected risks will be reported to the IRB.

C) Signed consent statements will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter.

Principal Investigator _____ (printed name)
 _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Advisor _____ (printed name)
 _____ (signature) _____ (date)

XI. DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

Department Head _____ (printed name)
 _____ (signature) _____ (date)

The application described above has been reviewed by the department committee and has been approved.

Chair, Departmental Review Committee _____ (printed name)
 _____ (signature) _____ (date)

APPROVED:

Coordinator of Compliances
 Office of Research
 _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Appendix B

Nomination E-Mail

ATTENTION: AAASP Certified Sport Psychology Consultants and Consultants listed on the USOC Sport Psychology Registry

Hello, my name is Andrew J. Ploszay and I am a doctoral candidate in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Because of your status as a certified consultant in the AAASP organization or for the USOC, you represent a purposeful sample (Hanson & Newburg, 1992) for the current study. Each of you has been recognized for your education, knowledge, experience, expertise, and awareness of the current trends in sport psychology by these organizations. In order to determine the participants for my dissertation, I would like for you to respond (via e-mail) to the following question. Who do YOU believe are some expert APPLIED sport psychology consultants practicing in North America today?

Feel free to suggest as many individuals as you wish. Your nominations will remain confidential. Again, I am looking for your informed suggestions of expert practitioners of sport psychology currently working with athletes in North America. I will use a frequency count to determine those consultants nominated most often and then invite them to participate in the study. In advance, I would like to thank you for your time, your knowledge, and your input.

PLEASE LIST YOUR AFFILIATION: AAASP CERTIFIED CONSULTANT / USOC REGISTRY of SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANTS [or both].

PLEASE E-MAIL (OFF THE LISTSERV) YOUR NOMINEES NAMES TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS

aploszay@utk.edu

Thank you.

Andrew J. Ploszay
Doctoral Candidate
University of Tennessee
aploszay@utk.edu
865-974-0601

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

I understand that the study in which I am about to participate is part of a research project entitled "The Experience of Expert Sport Psychology Consultation: An Existential Phenomenological Investigation" conducted by Andrew J. Ploszay (865) 974-0601.

I understand the researcher is asking me to participate because he believes that my unique ideas and feelings about the practice of applied sport psychology would help him better understand successful sport psychology consultation. The benefits of my participation in this study are that I might learn some new things about myself and, I might enjoy sharing my ideas about my approach/experience with applied sport psychology and how I experience it in practice. In addition, my participation in this study may help the researcher and others better understand the provision of sport psychology services performed by expert sport psychology consultants. There is, however, a risk that sometimes, for some people, talking about their experience and how they practice sport psychology can be personal.

I acknowledge that the researcher and an analysis team will know that I am participating in this study [by my actual name]. Anytime they use the information I give them, even in publication, they will identify me by name. I will, however, be allowed to delete any information in the transcript I do not want reported in the study or possibly the subsequent publication. When the researcher interviews me, I give permission to tape record the interview and also take notes to remind him of what we talked about. During the time when the transcripts are being prepared, I may request to review the audio tape of the interview. Once the transcript is completed, the audio tapes will be destroyed, and the co-participant can request a copy of the transcript. The audio tapes, transcripts, and informed consent statements will be kept in a locked file drawer in HPER Room 350 by the principal researcher for the purpose of this study.

As part of my participation in this study, the researcher will spend time with me and talk with me over the course of a number of weeks. He will talk with me for an hour or two and ask me questions about my thoughts on the practice of applied sport psychology. The most important thing for me to remember while I am participating in this study is that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions he asks me. I also understand that I can decide to not participate in this study, or stop doing it any time after I have started – this is my decision.

By signing below, I am agreeing to allow Andrew J. Ploszay to use information I provide in presentation and/or publication with the understanding that Andrew J. Ploszay will answer any inquiries I may have at any time concerning these procedures and/or the investigation.

Should I have any further questions regarding this project, I may contact A.J. Ploszay or his supervisor Dr. Craig Wrisberg at (865) 974-1283.

CO-PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____
WITNESS _____ DATE _____

Appendix D

Reviewer Confidentiality Agreement Form

The Experience of Providing Sport Psychology Consultation to Athletes:
An Existential Phenomenological Investigation

I, _____ (print name) am taking part in the Experience of Providing Sport Psychology Consultation to Athletes Project.

I understand that as a reviewer in the project, I am expected to maintain the confidentiality of the persons I review to the best of my ability. I understand that I may have access to personal and private information in the course of this project. I agree to treat this information in a way that I would want personal information about myself treated.

I will treat all information about the participants I review as confidential. I will not discuss the information given by the participants with anyone other than the project staff. I will keep the identities of the participants strictly confidential, unless they have consented to have their names used in the report.

This issue of confidentiality has been discussed with me and I agree to the terms of this agreement.

Signed _____

Date _____

Approved _____

Date _____

Appendix E

Description of Co-Participants

Co-Participant:	Gloria Balague (GB)
Gender:	Female
Employment:	University of Illinois, Chicago
Consulting Experience:	25 years
Educational Background:	Clinical/Social Psychology
Country of Origin:	Spain
Co-Participant:	Cal Botterill (CB)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	University of Winnipeg, Canada
Consulting Experience:	30 years
Educational Background:	Physical Education, Sport Psychology
Country of Origin:	Canada
Co-Participant:	Rich Gordin (RG)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	Utah State University
Consulting Experience:	25 years
Educational Background:	Physical Education, Sport Psychology
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Co-Participant:	Dan Gould (DG)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Consulting Experience:	30 years
Educational Background:	Physical Education, Sport Psychology
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Co-Participant:	Keith Henschen (KH)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	University of Utah
Consulting Experience:	32 years
Educational Background:	Physical Education, Sport Psychology
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Co-Participant:	Sean McCann (SMC)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	United States Olympic Committee
Consulting Experience:	15 years
Educational Background:	Clinical Psychology
Country of Origin:	United States of America

Co-Participant:	Shane Murphy (SMU)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	Western Connecticut State University
Consulting Experience:	17 years
Educational Background:	Clinical Psychology
Country of Origin:	Australia
Co-Participant:	Terry Orlick (TO)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	University of Ottawa, Canada
Consulting Experience:	30 years
Educational Background:	Physical Education, Sport Psychology
Country of Origin:	Canada
Co-Participant:	Ken Ravizza (KR)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	California State University, Fullerton
Consulting Experience:	25 years
Educational Background:	Sport Psychology, Physical Education
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Co-Participant:	Bob Rotella (BR)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	Private Practice
Consulting Experience:	30 years
Educational Background:	Sport Psychology, Physical Education
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Co-Participant:	Ralph Vernacchia (RV)
Gender:	Male
Employment:	Western Washington University
Consulting Experience:	30 years
Educational Background:	Sport Psychology, Physical Education
Country of Origin:	United States of America

Appendix F

Complete Transcripts of Co-Participant Interviews

Each interview begins with the initial question regarding the co-participant's experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes. Dialogue that is presented in **bold** font represents those words stated by the investigator.

Co-Participant: Gloria Balague (GB)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

[Pause] Uh, that's a major question. I can tell you in kind of a historical perspective. Uh, it is...I'll tell you in general some of the things that are constant that are present now. It's definitely a field that I love because it is challenging to me because there are so many different elements. I think in a sense it is hardly ever the same. And, I like that, I like that. I guess I need that as a matter of fact. Um, a, I like the high energy of the field. And, I also like that fact that usually working with athletes implies working with different populations. You have the coaches. You have the athletes themselves. Sometimes you have the parents or you have the medical team. And, just because of one particular person you may have to relate, you have to look at different perspectives. And, again the richness of that experience is something that I really enjoy. And, then obviously there is almost like uh, uh, a framework element that is so different from clinical work. Which is that – in principal - and again, I'm working to help people go in a positive direction from good to better. And, in principal that is so different from working with a population that you need to be providing a lot more support so that they don't drop further down. And, I think it is a population that rarely drains me. Unlike clinical work, I love it, but I need to take a lot more personal protections because it is more exhausting. That was present when I started. It is present now. I love sports also, I always have so, and I, myself, like engaging in sports. So, um, it's always been a part of my life and part of my families' life. Again, those things remain consistent and present. Now, what is the experience of working with athletes? I guess I started, and I was in Spain and I always have worked with the more elite. I started in Spain at the Olympic Training Center and uh, I was working, and they didn't have much choice. It was mandated by their governing body that they had to come to the center and do whatever. I did a lot of assessment of national teams. There was a little bit of a component of being in awe of the national team. I was young; I liked sports, having the national down hill ski team or national basketball team. It was always a little, I think I liked being associated with that as well. Um, but a, I did a lot of psych motor, speed reaction times. I did a variety of different things. Um, and it was a changing population. A group would come in and I would see them intensely for a couple of days and then they wouldn't come back until a few months later. And then, there was a group of athletes that lived at the Olympic Training Center. And with some of those I found myself relatively soon doing a lot more regular counseling work and I remember feeling very uncertain about my capacity to help or skills at the time. Not that I backed away from it, I was always very aware of not engaging on that right away. I did

a lot of work with some coaches that wanted a lot of help. And, it has been a great experience, and I really learned, they were national coaches there and they knew A LOT about those sports. No question a lot more than I did. And, I think I have always had a great deal of respect for these coaches and I have seen my role with them always as collaboration. And, uh, the fact that that is the view I take when working with a team. I have realized that that has been very helpful when I go and work with a team. A, but, that kind of came because they were excellent coaches. So, there were lots of very interesting questions and I would go and watch practice and I got very used to that because I needed it. And so, in a sense in that environment I didn't have to worry about payment. My salary was paid no matter what I was doing. So in a sense it was a great environment that allowed me to work in a way that I thought I would like to or that was what the situation required. So, going to watch practices was always a part of my sport psychology work and it has marked my work here. When, I say okay I have to go and watch practice, they would say oh, you come out of your office. And I like that. So, I also had a chance then to work with some national teams, even some team sports. And, occasionally travel with them and start to understand the difficulties of creating a national team out of people that have been on teams that have been rivals up until today. Um, it was fun, I really always enjoyed it and that was my position until I left Spain. I was the psychologist at the Olympic Training Center. When I came to the States there is a period of maybe 3 to 4 years during the time I was in graduate school that I did not do any sport psychology in the States. In Spain, they would call me to give talks and things like that, but here in the States. In a sense I missed it, but my clinical training was a great experience. As was the fact that I had chosen a health psychology emphasis that combined both the clinical and the social aspects as well. And that is why I did my internship at a hospital as well. And, it was really fascinating, I felt that I learned a lot from the patients, but uh, I always missed the sport part. And so, I started getting back into it. It had always been part of my life, but did not want to give it up. It would have been easy, I had a job at the hospital and for a moment everybody thought, oh well she's done, but I knew I wasn't.

[Pause]

So I actually started working with US Track and Field while I was at the hospital. And in a sense it always seems like I start at the top, but in a sense that's what I had the most experience with and uh, I realize. And I'm saying this in a very descriptive way that I also tend to fit a number of different roles that, for a number of other reasons are important. US Track and Field wanted a female cause they didn't have any. They wanted someone who knew sport, but also since I was a clinician and could talk with the coaches I was interesting to them. I think they really got me into the group before they really knew what I could do, but if I could not have done it I would not have lasted so long. So, they gave it to me, well they gave me the chance. But, I think it worked out fine for both Track and Field and myself. And, I have been working with Track and Field since '89. Um, so, and uh, it has been a terrific experience. I love all the things I do with track and field. One of the most, perhaps the most different role, and the most different experience has been traveling with the national team. Um, and that has been going to the Olympic Games, going to World Championships. I remember even feeling, at the moment, think this is pretty unusual and pretty special. Um, so, it's been

something that has allowed me to do a number of different things of which there has been no clear guidelines. At least I didn't know them. What's the role of a psychologist traveling with the team? So what am I supposed to do, particularly what am I supposed to not do? And at the same time that is what I loved about the situation. Let's go figure it out. And uh, that is something that US Track and Field provided that I enjoy. Um, I also did and still do coaches education. And again dealing with coaches I have always been aware that most of the psychological impact on the athlete is through the coach and for me it seems a very natural thing for me to work through the coach. And, so I've done a lot of work with coaches and I love doing that. In between, track and field I have always been present.

[Pause]

In '91, I traveled a lot with the team in preparation for '92 cause I was going to go to the Olympics with the team and after that I tried to back off of traveling so much with track and field. Then I got involved with gymnastics and went to the Atlanta Olympics with rhythmic gymnastics. And, that was very different situation and that is why I ultimately did it. It was a small group of girls, all of them younger, all of them living here in a suburb of Chicago. And, I thought oh, it is going to be so much easier. A lot of different issues, including the fact that the population. The fact that those were young girls. You really did have to deal with the parents, with the coaches, with significant others, with school. The complications... plus, then all of the other issues that are part of those sports like eating disorders, all the time disordered eating. So, the adolescent issues... just life. And uh, that ended up being one of the most draining jobs I have ever done in sport psychology, so much so that after that I withdrew from the Gymnastics Federation. And, I've gotten back doing a little bit of coaches' education. So uh, and then there has always been this kind of split between this work that takes so much time and then during the academic year I do much less of that. I follow some of the athletes. They travel or I travel to see them probably 2 or 3 other meetings that are like long weekends. And the, with some of the athletes I do have a little bit more contact.

[Pause]

And then when I started my private consulting then it was like a total change in populations and that was disconcerting for me. I realized that I am not equally good with everybody. I don't think I am very good at working people who are not good athletes. It's not so much an age issue. I can work with a 12-year-old who is a good athlete, but I have a hard time working with a 16-year-old recreational athlete. We don't have the same language I don't know what questions to ask, I'm not sure what my goal is. I guess ultimately it boils down to the fact that I think they should fix so many other things before the psychological aspect that if I don't think my role is really relevant I will tell them I think they are wasting their time, and in effect, my time. So, um, I guess I don't do a lot of private practice. I do maybe two half days a week. And, uh, that's fine with me. In between US track and gymnastics, after Atlanta, I got invited to work with a national team sport, one I had not worked with before...US National Field Hockey. And I agreed out of curiosity. Again that challenge word seems to come up when I talk about my work. I agreed to do it, I agreed to meet with them in San Diego because, and I have reflected back. One of the reasons why I work with, or why I was interested in at least meeting with the field hockey team was, one, it was a team sport. I realized I did not

have much experience with that. But the other issue was there was a number of unresolved issues from the '96 Olympics with that team. And, I had a number or unresolved issues with the '96 Olympics. I mean maybe I knew what they were and I was resolving them, but I think it resonated very much with me. And, I thought I would love to talk to the coach. And, it was one of those things that happens in sport psychology um, your entry into the team is usually not the coach it is the federation. And, later on I understood there was a huge mistrust issue between the coach and the federation. So the coach was not thrilled to have me there. At the time I did not know it, but on the phone she had called me and she was on board because of political reasons. But, when we talked we actually connected because I kinda went straight for the issues from the Atlanta Olympics and we found a common ground. And, actually it was a great experience working with that coach and with that team. I traveled with them and went to the World Cup in Holland with them.

[Pause]

And that is a very different population. They were women; the mean age was 27. It ranged from 18 to 30 something. Unbelievable motivated! Strong! I had a ball. It was so much fun and I am still I touch with some of them. After a year the coach was fired and I resigned after the World Cup. It was a great experience, very humbling. I realized uh, how much I didn't know about team sports. I didn't know what would be effective interventions, particularly on the spot. I mean in general I can say what would be good, but when you notice the team is slack and there is nothing you can do right now and I didn't know. And, issues of the team communicating with the coach or getting demoralized or all of a sudden reacting badly during a game and losing their confidence. All of those things happen in an instant and it would be great if we could at least figure out what could be known. And, I saw that as a major void in our field. So, it was great I really enjoyed it. It was fun.

[Pause]

But, with all of this, that was 1998. After that the travel part started to take a toll and I started to feel differently about it. I guess I had done it so much and to such great places that I said well, I couldn't really answer the question, 'why am I doing this?' And, no matter what I have been very clear there has got to be something for me. There has got to be something I want to do. And, uh, after awhile it was interesting, but I thought it was taking too much from me, too much from my personal and family life. And uh, I kinds made it clear that I didn't want to travel as much. And I really haven't. I travel giving talks to places, but it's not as much fun frankly. But um, that is something I decided. And, I found myself shifting more towards working with coaches. Um, and uh, that was what I started doing more of. The one piece that is separate here is that I had never really done much work here at the University [Illinois-Chicago]. I had worked with women's basketball at one point because at one time the women's coach was very interested, but I was very much meeting with her. But, I didn't do a lot with the team itself I did it through her. And, really I didn't do much with the University teams because I didn't have time and they wanted me to do it for free which I was not about to do. Um, but then, a few years ago there was a change in coaching. A new baseball coach was hired and he came to ask me to work with the team and after I listened very carefully I respectfully declined. Baseball was the most boring thing to me. I thought I cannot do

this, but the coach was very adamant that he would teach the baseball, I would teach the psychology. And, also he said I want my players to be whole people and there is piece I cannot do and I want you to do it. And, it hooked me. I thought, wow, that is a different coach! What on earth is he talking about? Again, I didn't know baseball and I didn't really know men's teams. A team sport with men, I don't know much about that. So, again I had something to learn I think is interesting and I agreed to give it a try.

[Pause]

I've loved it! I've learned to love baseball! I love the players. It is a lot of fun. I do individual work. I do team sessions with them. I go team meetings whether I have anything to say or not. Just so I know what is going on – once a week. I meet with the coaching staff. We all meet; I am considered part of the staff and we meet once a week. Um, if it were up to them I would travel with them. I only go to the first game of the season, this year it is in Arkansas; I'm leaving in 10 days. A bus trip from Chicago! That part is making me question my own sanity. And, uh, then I go to a tournament here and of course I watch them play their home games. They don't need me and I don't need to go either. That has been a lot of fun working through the coaches, working with the players. Learning to listen to these young men. What is it that they are faced with and I think what a bad wrap a lot of these male athletes are labeled with. Um, so that's been, that's the only sport that I do. I supervise.

[Pause]

I started a program last year. A sport psychology program in the Athletic Department here funded by the athletic department and they pay for my time supervising. And we had 4 students doing practicum and it was terrific. They did a great job. They athletic department was happy, so were the coaches and the teams, so it has been a very successful thing. And, uh, you know that is probably the area that I would most likely move to. So...

You often described your experience of providing sport psychology to athletes as a challenge or challenging. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

Um, I think that its. It's two things. One, it's that once I'm very familiar with something I lose a little interest. I don't want to say that I get bored but I think I don't, I think in my mind I get a little bit sloppy. I don't prepare as much. It's not as much fun for me. Um, and so uh, that's one of the things that sport seems to provide is every so often the opportunity of. You know there are so many things to know and so many things to uh, I really have not been familiar. And, all of a sudden when I have been doing the same thing for a while. If something comes up that provides this... it really calls to me. Um, and the reality is, this is not just in sport, this is something I need in life. If you look at what I do I teach and I love teaching, but I don't think I could only teach. I think I would be bored. I could not do only clinical work. I love clinical work. I could not do only clinical work. Um, and so, I like supervision, I like teaching, and I think that is present in almost areas. So part of my transitions have been looking for something different from what I am doing now. And, also the other side of it is the chance to grow. The chance to learn. If I don't think that I'm learning again, that feels stale right away.

Could you tell me more about your experience of observing sport and coaching staffs?

Um, yeah, I guess its part of how I see working in sport psychology and what I love about it. Part of it is the field is so complex and there are a lot of elements I need to understand a little bit. What are the technical demands of the activity? What are the physical demands of the activity? Or, how does this coach run practice? Do they need a lot of pain tolerance? Is it a highly controlled environment? Um, what is the situation? I really do love observing. I think that of all tests observation is the best one. Um, and so, that is part of all the things I learn by going to watch. One, what is the sport like? What are the conditions of training? What are the conditions of competition? How does this particular coach run practice? How doe the athletes relate to each other at practice. At watch at so many different levels and I look at so many different things and that is one of the things I really like. Another thing I realize is that with new sports to me, I need to be there. I never charge for watching practice cause that was my need for it. But, at the same time it adds another dimension. It is never a simple issue. Okay, this is it, you to do this. Again, that brings my interest in social psychology as an essential component of understanding the individual. So I had to see what's the group like? What's the environment? How are things handled? And, I like that. I think I like some level of complexity.

Could you tell me more about your experience of travel during your work providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

Yeah, I guess the reality is traveling is something I do because my family lives in Spain and I am here. I go at least twice a year to Europe just to see them. The travel part I just find kinda boring. Not even that so much, if I have a good book I'm fine. Traveling with the team is really more an opportunity to observe the team from inside for an extended period of time. The richness of information that I have gotten from a weekend with the team is so much more than what I would have gotten anywhere. It's really not about travel to see other cultures and I think I have always understood that. That was never a surprise for me. Um, what I like is very intense. I like watching what's happening with the team and most of the time I have to intervene with the coaches, managers, players. Um, and it's very exciting, but draining. I'm on call 24 hours a day. Um, and I like the intensity, but I think it has taken its toll. It's always a little bit different, it's always interesting, but uh, I'm not really that excited to go to Arkansas [laughter]. I already know the team so well, so I hope they just play well. And, I'll watch the new kids. I should also say that I am very comfortable traveling. It is not stressful for me. I think I am very helpful on trips, which could be one of the reasons that some teams asked me to go on trips. In part because I speak five languages and that comes in handy. Um, I don't mind interpreting. In 1995, I went to the Pan-American Games and the two head coaches, after them, the 150 people we were I was the third person with the most experience in international competitions. After all some of the staff was new, the athletes were new. So, overall I know a lot of technical things about international competitions. Travel has changed and it offers this great window and sometimes, it has gotten a little, there isn't as much learning, but we are always learning...

Could you tell me more about what your experience has been like working with the support staff that surrounds the athlete, for example parents, coaches, other staff members, etc.?

It feels like you are trying to balance a bunch of different things and any sudden movement makes it tumble. Somebody says you are doing too much here or too little there. I find it difficult. It is a difficult job and I am always concerned that I don't want to put the athlete in the middle and have them carry that burden. Weighing all of this with the issue of confidentiality, that makes the task really hard. I try to have a meeting up front where I try to put everybody I can together in the same room at the same time and clarify those are the things I can do and this is how I work. Once I do this, it doesn't mean that they have heard it. But, I know I've said it. I think it is essential. I don't think you can consult without taking into consideration all these other forces because sometimes they will work against you. Sometimes they want my time too. The percentage of parents that I have referred for therapy is huge. Adolescents don't bother me either; they make me smile inside. But, I realize that parenting an elite athlete child has got to be a hard job. And, coaching is unbelievable. You never know who is going to show up to compete.

You mentioned earlier that you thought you were not good with everybody in reference to certain athletes. Can you tell me what you meant by that comment?

Yeah, I realize that I think I am solid from a technical or theoretical standpoint, but I'm also, I have pretty good intuition and I have learned to trust that as well. I think I also connect pretty well with people, so when I don't connect well with people or I see that I am getting impatient. Or, I find myself working too hard to trying to do it all. I realize wait a minute, wait a minute, back off, what's going on? And, I have noticed that that is more consistent with athletes that don't have that internal sense of being very good in sport and having some goals that they want to achieve. There is also another sub-group of people I realize I am not very good at which are people who want to work with me because I work with elite athletes. In a sense, they are trying to associate with me because I work with the national team or whatever. And, if I get that felling I detach more and I don't do a very good job. Also, I don't work well with people who are very dependent. That's my own psychological thing. If it feels like they are hanging from my neck I don't like it and I push them away. I try not to take too many of those. They take up too much time. If they love the sport, they have an intensity, a sense of their own body, I think that is very important.

Is there anything that you have not had the opportunity to share about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation that you would like to add?

Yes, this was a problem for me in Spain and I found a way around it here and I think it would be a problem if I did not take care of it and that is sometimes you work in isolation. And, you work with the coaches, the athletes, the parents, but you do not belong to any of those groups. Um, and in Spain I didn't have a peer group. And, when I got here to the States I promised myself I would never work this way again. And, I haven't. I have found a peer group. I can call and ask them what to do. I need to be in touch with them or otherwise you can grow isolated or get a very false sense of how well

you are doing things. And, sometimes I find that I am doing the same things and when I hear my colleague say something I think, what a great idea I am going to incorporate that.

Thank you for your time.

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sports psychology consultation to athletes?

Well that covers a little ground. Well as I said, I think if we go way back in terms of doing Phys. Ed. and kind of I thought, you know, I like sports. I guess I'll do a degree in the area. Like most students I was not focused; I didn't even see a career connection for myself at that stage other than that I like sports. But, then for sure through my own experiences in sport, in junior hockey I started to get intrigued with the psychological effects that were part of the often crazy world that I was part of. And so, in my final 2 years of undergraduate, I really started to get good at what I was doing and getting excited about psychology courses and how they related to me and to life. I guess it was from there that I first began to think that there are a lot of kids that could use help in this area, a lot of people, a lot of performers. I want to learn more about it. So that probably was the kernel of intrigue that sort of guided my pursuit of and qualifying as a professional in sport psychology and pursuing the options.

You mentioned in the last two years of your undergraduate that you really started to get focused and excited about psychology. Could you tell me a little bit more about what that experience was like for you?

Well, I think I was triggered by my field experiences. I love sport. And I was playing junior hockey to help support me through college. Some of the things that were going on were kind of crazy. I mean you'd go up to a northern community and fights would break out and there were a lot of things in it that would leave me with mixed feelings. We'd get to go on the bus, after awhile, and there would be half the team and the other half of the team would have the flin flon flu and wouldn't want to go. And I started to say, "My goodness! What's going on here?" A little bit later I learned my favorite quote about sport, and that is "that the great thing about sport is that it enables us to care passionately about something that really doesn't matter." I mean really its unbelievable you get on a plane and you have doctors, politicians, scientists, and everybody is reading the sports. We need a cure for cancer, we've got poverty, and terrorism, and God knows what all and we are worried about the home team in basketball. When you really think about it, it really is absurd. But, through all that I think I realized the *raison d'être* of sports, and that is because we get so passionate about it, it is the field area where people can learn to handle their emotions manage them hopefully in a better way. What I discovered personally and I think a lot of people discovered over the last 20 or 25 years was that, that potential can be either positive or negative. I mean it can develop tremendous character people, or as Tom Tutko said, "It can just develop characters." People who have little or no values, who are hedonistic, or Machiavellian, or whatever because they have manipulated the conditions in this field to a very negative way. I think that Terry Orlick and I were among the first to write about it, we wrote a book, *Every Kid Can Win*, on our research in Alberta and both of us were kind of shocked that even though we have had pretty positive experiences in sport, there were a pretty high percentage of kids that were turned off or negatively effected and so on. Oh my goodness! This clearly needs some attention. Also, our interest in trying to communicate some of the things we learned

from kids and from insightful parents would be quite valuable to young people and that is sort of how we got into it.

You mentioned your work with Terry Orlick, could you tell me a little more about what that experience was like working with him?

Well, Terry is to me the guru of applied sports psychology. He is the best listener I think that I ever met. He can learn more from people in less time than anybody I know because he is so empathetic and so caring and such a great listener. He was ahead of me, he was doing his Ph.D. when I was doing my masters, but we just connected interest wise because I was looking at minor hockey myself and what was happening there and what could happen and it is such a big part of Canadian culture. We just kind of joined forces on discussing our dissertations and our data and learning from one another and we kind of vowed to get together and put together a book the following summer. Um, Terry is a very disciplined kind of guy, he booked a cottage in the wilderness and we did a little advanced reading and came in with a plan and basically wrote the book in three weeks. We just focused sharing and reading one another's work and getting it typed up and hammered out. It was a great exercise for us, I mean a lot of things you write feel dated fairly quickly, but I can honestly say that I pull that book out in my class still and it was published in 1975. It's 28 years old and there are a lot of communities that people should read it from cover to cover. There are still lessons there that people are struggling with, have not made much progress, the communication with their kids is poor, and there's great ideas in there on how to work at that. So it was a big step in my career, because I mean it wasn't a best seller, but it gave professional credibility and notoriety and it helped both Terry and I get started in the field and have an impact.

You said your personal interest with hockey effected one, your interest and two, working with minor hockey players to start. Could you tell me a little bit about that experience of providing sport psychology consultation to hockey players?

Well, I am trying to think. Actually it motivated my desire to study and so resulted in doing the masters and taught a bit more. Then I went back to do my Ph.D., you know thinking that there are things that we can do to help here or whatever. I had kinda slipped a little bit away from it, which I think was good. My first opportunity coming out of my Ph.D. was not in hockey it was in basketball. And this came from a guy that I admire immensely, who I think is maybe the best coach Canada has ever had, Jack Donoghue with Canada's National Basketball Team. He somehow heard about me and liked my style. The next thing you know he said, "How about joining us for the summer?" We got an important competition." And that was in the World Student Games and it was a thrill for me. I had done a little bit of work since I had gotten back here with the women's basketball team and enjoyed it. And, actually enjoyed being away from hockey because it gave me some distance from the sports particular problems. And, that went sensational. I often say to young consultants that the key to being great consultants it to select the right groups. It was a great group of kids that became a real team who really supported one another, focused, and won this World Student Games. In the semi-final they beat a team from the US that had Barkley, Dawkins, Pinkney, and other future NBA stars, and our little rag-tag gang of Canadian college kids did it. They just played so

collectively and so focused and some of the ideas the captain and I worked on seemed to have a huge impact on helping them keep their momentum. Again, like *Every Kid Can Win*, it was another magnificent step in just becoming known and whatever. I had no sooner gotten home from that and the phone was ringing from Dave King who was the coach of our national hockey team who was saying, “You know it looks like you really had things going there. Would you consider getting involved with us?” So, that was my step back into hockey and then some of the other sports. Once I was doing that, I tried as well to do some developmental work in the communities, but I really enjoyed the time with Dave King. He was a very developmentally organized coach. He was way ahead of most coaches, had this idea of technical, tactical, physical, mental down and he just had some physiologists and myself and the assistant coaches and the video guy really working on behalf of his players. He really revolutionized hockey coaching in my time. Again I was very fortunate to be around an innovator and to be with someone who promoted an inter-disciplinary approach to what we were doing. Those were huge experiences in my development.

Could you tell me a little bit about that experience of working with Dave King and the other members of the coaching staff?

It was the start of me really appreciating something that universities are classic on this. They all talk about inter-disciplinary. They all give it lip service, but nobody actually really does it or knows how to do it. We all do our little work in our area and give recommendations and hope they help. If you know anything about human beings you should realize that if you make a recommendation in psychology without understanding the nutrition and physiology... at best it is a half-truth. There are other things that could really cause you to change your mind with your advice if you knew what was really going on. I got to work with a guy name Howie Wenger who is maybe one of the best applied physiologists that we’ve ever encountered in sport. I always called him the most psychological physiologist that I know. And through working with him I became more astute in applied physiology and promoting that. So it was like a tag team. We had a great relationship with the trainers, Terry Cain who has gone on to do extensive work in pro and for the national hockey league. We had a very interactive dynamic model. King would even bring in people of perceptual development. Sean Burke is the goalie for Phoenix now; he did extra work on perceptual development with someone who was a specialist in the area. There was a lot happening that taught me things that are now being worked on in the national training centers in Canada. But, again there is still a limited number of pockets where it really happens because getting people to interact regularly and dynamically I think is really a big challenge and one thing that will help in the future is online. I think eventually you will be able to connect with your whole committee real time with web cams. And, really say “Oh you are looking tired, how about a little more rest.” I think it’s going to be a much more practical possibility to be inter-disciplinary in the future. I really benefited from the chance to work in a setting where the coach appreciated that, the athletes were very motivated to work at it that way. It made me a much more holistic, respectful consultant very early in my career.

You mentioned that you had done some previous work with the women's basketball team. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experience?

It was the start of something very special. Tom Kendall was the department chair at the time and he coached our women's basketball team and I had just come back from grad work and he said, "How about doing some work with our team." I said, "Sure, I'd love to. Let's see if we can help." Again, it was just the beginning. I was just getting started, but we had a couple of players that went on to All-Canadian Province and were really highly motivated. There was that core that liked the ideas that we were talking about and got something simple out of it. And, there probably were a few that thought it was another burden. Over all it was the start of a program really growing and becoming strong and this particular program, University of Winnipeg, went on to tie John Wooden's record of 88 consecutive wins. Which to me is an incredible accomplishment. It's so easy to let up somewhere in 88 games. They played tough opponents in the US and Canada. So it was fun to be a part of something to that degree of that proportion. I still see some of the players that are a part of it. I have been working with one of them as a grad student now. They just learned so much through all that to become professionals really at that level and to be able to have that degree of discipline and passion for their preparation was impressive. So that was a great start. It was an exposure to women's athletics, which I had not had that much exposure to. I found them great to work with, sometimes easier than men because they were more willing to share their feelings and their emotions and I thought sometimes that it was much easier to get connected and be effective. So, later after the Dave King experience, when I got the chance to do something with figure skating, I welcomed it. I enjoyed working with both male and female skaters and again that was a fascinating growth experience as well.

One of the themes that seems to be coming up throughout your years is that you have been working with highly motivated athletes and coaches that are very interested in having your services. What has that experience been like for you?

I made a proclamation when I came out to the field, I initially did all my grad work, cause I wanted coach, and then I couldn't find a coaching job. Then I looked at how hard the coaches worked and how poor the compensation was, and I said, I think I'll be a consultant. When I started consulting, for the first 10 years of my career, I went around saying that, not for other people's sake as much as my own, I said, don't waste your time where people aren't sure they want you. There are so many places that people are unbelievably appreciative of what you have learned and what you are learning and any ability to help them. I made a point of that, I said, "I'll take tough challenges here and there, but I am not here to hard sell anybody. That is part of my whole approach to motivation, even with parents. You can't push anybody anywhere. Help them identify goals that will pull them somewhere. Again, I felt very fortunate that the invitations I got were from people who were very motivated to be innovative to provide their athletes with some of the support in this area. Dave King, for example, I thought he was so ingenious. He said there were four areas: technical, tactical, physical, and mental. Most coaches go crazy trying to do that. Can you look after mental, Howie Wenger you look after physiological, and I can concentrate on the other two. That way the players knew who was in charge of what and who are the resources and together we worked on their fitness

and their prep. It gave the coach a little bit of a manageable plate. I thought it was so effective. We were very fortunate to have those kinds of things. One little story I will mention and I did not know this at all, but Jack Donoghue was asked to the conference one time, after we presented on this basketball success. Someone asked, “Well, how did you choose Cal? There are a lot of consultants out there.” He said, “Well, I looked at the candidates and there were lots of them out there that were knowledgeable in psychology and maybe could help us in some way. But if you looked real carefully, Cal had the least chance of hurting my athletes.” It was such a backhand compliment. But how many people think that way, or do a check like that. There have been more problems where consultants have tried to do too much or have been too ambitious for their clients than those who have been patient and making sure that what they did would not hurt an athlete. And Jack himself, as a coach, would say to his whole staff, “What did we do today to get in the way of these great athletes?” And, what a sensitizer to say stop waiving all the great things that you’re going to do with them, but what did you do to stay out of their way today? So, we would all get these little reminders that we should work like heck to be good for them, but we should also make sure that we don’t get in their way or we don’t complicate any more than we need to. Again, I just had great mentoring relationships in terms of coaches who really knew their way around.

Could you tell me more about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation with women’s teams?

I think one of the big areas that still is in such infant status is emotions and emotional management and emotional health. I really believe that the majority of us are severely emotionally retarded. Girls can’t get angry and guys can’t cry or whatever, and for the most part is a bunch of crap. If you are not genuine, you are into repression and you are into denial. And, a lot of studies will tell you that that is what screws a lot of former soldiers and policemen up, they are spending their lives trying to deny feelings or whatever. Due to the stereotypical difference, historically females were reinforced to be sensitive and perceptive and males assertive. Those are androgynous attributes and in healthy environments they are more equally encouraged. Historically women were more willing to share emotions than men. So if you know anything about building a real team that is fundamental. I mean if you never say anything or show any vulnerability it is impossible to get trust. Trust is based on showing your vulnerability and having your teammates not abuse that and support you through it. And working with females was often easier in that regard. If you were up front and organized and caring they would share things very quickly and very quickly getting the feelings out in the open and trying to get them towards being a real team instead of a pseudo team as I call it.

Another thing you talked about is your work with figure skating. What was that experience like for you?

It evolved out of my work with basketball and hockey and again the people in skating started to get intrigued with what I was bringing to the field and I think that the figure skaters are one of the sports that most benefit from support. There is so much pressure and it is such a demanding sport. It is an unbelievably demanding sport – it is like gymnastics or ballet on ice. And, I had not done much work with individual sports at that

stage. I want to look at it and see if I can be effective at this. And the teams especially were fun to work with because a pair really has to be synchronized and have to know one another. So I worked with them for 2 or 3 years. I went to the Sarajevo Olympics with both hockey and figure skating as a joint role. I have met people in skating that I still enjoy interaction with. Again, the closed skills sports – figure skating swimming – the ones that you can control are the first ones that can benefit from psychological skills work because in the end if you really learn to focus and follow a focus plan, you would perform better. Clearly it could make a difference where as it was confusing for open skilled sports because people would say, how could you rehearse a whole hockey game or a whole soccer games? There's all these complex parts you don't know. As a result the ideas were slower to surface in team sports for this reason. In the end they are even more important because of that complexity you need to be ready for major options so that you can handle the demands. And that's how athletes look at it now. But at that stage of my career, I enjoyed that work with skating immensely and thought I had an impact, I also found them some good resource people to follow through on. I made a conscious decision to move back to team sport because I felt there was less sophistication there and there maybe more need than there was in the individual sport. So, I gravitated back toward the team sport until I came to Calgary and started working with speed skating and bobsledding and so on

You mentioned that you thought there was more need for psychological skills training or services in team sports. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you meant by that?

Well as I said, if you look at all the early work by Terry Orlick and others, *In Pursuit of Excellence*, the first book was written by award-winning individual athletes. It was all about competition focus plans that were for me and the hill and skiing or me and the music and skating. I just develop a pre-competition routine and a focus plan and how to re-focus and for sure I am going to get more consistent. So, almost all of the literature and the work being done in applied sport psychology in the first part of this new wave development era were new wave individual sports. People for the most part didn't know how to apply it and athletes were having mixed results in team sports because here is the classic, the hockey player would be doing none of this he would just be following his nose and doing what ever the coach told him. Then someone would tell him to visualize and then he would get going and do it too much and then he would get out to the game and basically have his head up his butt and it would be all over. He would say that's the end of that, no more of that. You'd get these kind of extreme reactions, and the great athletes, the Michael Jordan's and the Wayne Gretzky's, when you talk to them and interact with them you could see very much what they were doing was doing that rehearsal and doing it well and then trusting their prep. They were finding this middle ground where they felt prepared and yet they weren't over analyzing things. In the middle of this new wave evolution of applied sport psychology a lot of people didn't have experience with how to find that mix in team sports. Most of the people were working with Brent Reshaw, who had worked primarily with cross-country skiing and swimming, both closed skill sports. Life to me is like team sports. Not only do you have your teammates changing the environment; you have your opponents changing the

environment. That is what life is like. But it is the most complex performance challenge and it took a little while for people to realize how to apply the ideas to those sports and those environments.

You mentioned that your figure skating work lead to your eventual work at University of Calgary. Could you tell me a little more about that experience?

University of Winnipeg had provided a great environment here; I had flexibility to do some professional work and national team work in the off season. It was exciting and great, but I did have an interest in trying to kinda work at a little more comprehensively in a setting where the whole support team was there. A guy named Dale Henlin, who ran the National Sports Center in Calgary, started to correspond with me on my interest and started to negotiate to get a joint position to draw me for three or four years out there. I ended up getting three years and my appointment was partly to do some teaching, but only a small amount. I taught one course each term and the rest of the time I was working full time athletes at the center. And most importantly I was working with a team of young professionals, which I found incredibly rewarding. There were five of them that have gone on to very impressive things. Three or four of them were working with teams at the Olympics in Salt Lake. It was fun to be in a place for 2 or 3 years where we had the recourses, the focus, the interns. I mean that's what they all were at this stage in their careers. They were just putting in 500 to a 1000 hours with teams under my supervision or other senior people in Calgary. We were tying it together. We were having weekly case study sort of sessions on the things that were happening in the different settings and they just learned so much from one another and I from them and so on and so forth. It was a very productive phase in my career in terms of not only having an impact but having a group grow around me that have gone on to be outstanding young consultants already.

You mentioned two words “rewarding” and “productive” in describing that experience. Could you tell me a little about what you mean by those words in terms of that experience?

Well, I think if you look at a career, and mine is probably no different than any others, when you get into and get excited and want to be good at it your first reaction is if you want it done right I am going to do it myself. So that's what I did. I just did a ton of things and I did them well and I did them primarily myself with other support teams, but not with other people in sports psychology other than at conferences or whatever. So I was very focused on delivery and execution. There comes a stage in your life when you realize that the more rewarding thing is to learn with people and to be a collaborative team in providing services and have professional development sessions on a regular basis. That was a welcome thing in my career because as much as I enjoyed it and been very productive, the time that I had now to feel the energy of young people who wanted to be good feed off of their desire to learn draw lessons from the situations that they faced as well as give them guidance. It was a very, very productive thing and I have been very fortunate that I came back here to find another group of three or four that have been just as rewarding to work with. I think that idea is huge, I don't think it is nearly as prevalent as it should be in our system. Most people are being trained in universities and their

advisors aren't applied people, they haven't got a lot of skill or haven't been working with teams or whatever. All those people we had in Calgary will tell you that the key to their experience was due to the fact that they were working with someone who has a lot of experience and was available regularly as a mentor to problem solve or to help them. We gave them a lot of responsibility very early, but we also made sure that there was mentorship access available to them. I think it is an idea that should be a bigger part of the training program of young professionals.

You mentioned that just recently since your return from Calgary, you have been working with a new group of three or four individuals and that experience has been rewarding. Could you talk a little bit about what that experience has been like for you?

Yeah, I mean Calgary was unique in that you had a great blend there. We ended developing a relationship with educational psychology. And, they have a phenomenal counseling-based program. And that is the essence of being good in this field, it is being a great counselor. The course work matched. It was phenomenal. The second thing about it was that it was a certified program when you did all the requirements of Ed Psych, masters or Ph.D., you could write your certification exams and be a certified psychologist. Which is a huge advantage in a field that now has sometimes clinical problems like eating disorders to deal with. Those students went through a great mix, where the program was counseling based. It certified them and then they were spending all their time at the National Training center with Olympic athletes. So this was a great mix. And you also had them at the top end. Matt Brown and Kimberly Lamero were doing their Ph.D.'s. When I came back to Winnipeg, I appreciated it very much as an environment because it is a small school and a teaching based institution and the classes are smaller and you get to know kids and we do more here. I would wager that we do more than any other institution in North America at the undergrad level in sport psych. We have four or five courses in the area that are related. We often do directed studies with the keen ones that look like they want to go on and do graduate work. So the kids that come out of here and go over to U of M across town or go over to Bangor Wales, the University of Wales are pretty impressively prepared to start their grad work. Much more than the others that come in from other places into the Manitoba program. But, anyway there still is this great mix of young professionals who are every bit as motivated as the ones I had in Calgary. They are not quite as far along academically yet, but they are probably not far behind in terms of professional competency and skills. So again it was refreshing to come back and find there was a core of students interested in the same idea of mentorship/internship experience, investing a lot of hours, regular professional development contact with one another. We have created something similar here in Winnipeg, we do cooperate with the University of Manitoba across town, because they have the graduate programs and that is where the kids usually need to get into to formalize some of their qualifications.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you meant when you said, "In order to be good in this field you have to be a good counselor"?

I think that it's totally the meat and potatoes of the field. You do some group sessions, and you do some teaching, but the essence of your work whether it is a pro team or individual sport or an elite amateur team is one on one. That is the meat and potatoes of your job is to be a great listener, a great empathizer. Someone who is able to put people at ease with their counseling style, someone that usually doesn't impose things, but is able to bring the best out in people. So what I look back on, I had 8 or 9 years of formal education and never got any of that. Nobody even thought to send us to counseling. They just said, take a couple of psychology classes and take physical education. Well guess what? There are a lot of gaps in that. Compared to what those kids had in Calgary, what they had was by far the best experience that I know of in North America, and something that was way ahead of anything we had in our training. Because they had the mentorship built in and they had the counseling skills sessions. Not only were they taking counseling courses and understanding the theory of existential counseling. They looked at what it involves? How do you approach it? What are the skill steps? Then you would have to go out and put 1000 hours in, in counseling. And you would be evaluating your work and someone else would be evaluating your counseling work. This was a very interactive, active, proactive process to develop the skills you need to become a skilled counselor. I was envious of them. I was watching them grow. I mean I have learned a lot of those skills, but I learned them through trial and error and here they were able to start to get a great base for things and fast track things by doing great related course work. A lot of field work and a lot of dialogue on their counseling skills. So by the time the graduated, you'd put your kid in their hands, I mean they were just so capable. I think that has been rare. I think too many of the programs have been academically based. Very few have had a counseling theory or counseling skill components to them. Let's face it most university programs don't even prepare you to teach well. Unless it is a really unique innovative program, most of the time you don't really even learn to teach. You just take courses and they hope you are going to be a decent teacher. So I think that the ideas of internship and mentorship and field experience and relating it to theory is so fundamental to having a great program or having a great experience. It's been rare being able to put those things together.

You have mentioned this term quite a few times, 'great listeners', in reference to people whom you think are great practitioners in the field. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

I mean it's really fundamental to our field, both in terms of the environment and the people in it. Take it one step at a time. When you go into a setting and someone has asked you to maybe work with them, most people go in and get so excited that they are going to work with them. Right away, you can tell right away, that they are not listening and not perceiving. The good people say, "Well, this is interesting and we'll have to see if this is going to work and if it is a good match." Your job would be to go in and just perceive, just perceive. Because with all of the professional work, I am making this point at the conference coming up, is that psychological effects is a much more important part of your job than psychological skills. Most people have no idea about that. They say I am going to go and teach all these people this and that. And you know what I say, "hold it." These are professionals, they are highly successful, and until you get the

environment right you don't even have to worry about skills most of the time. But when the trainer is upset and this player is not getting playing time and the coach is having a bad hair day. Now, what you do in terms of psychological skills in that situation is like nothing. But, if you can go in there and reframe things for the trainer, and remind him of how important he is to the dynamics of the setting and you can take that player and remind him of how to get good, regardless of how much your playing time goes. And you can diffuse some things with the coach who is upset about some politics of the management or whatever. That is the most important part of your job. If you want to be a consultant in the most dynamic settings in pro, elite, and business. You better get good at that because that's kind of a global type of listening – that is perceiving. Going in and looking for psychological effects, feeling them and seeing how other people are feeling them and from there being a catalyst, be a facilitator to improve those psychological effects. That's meat and potatoes of the job. And, when you have done that it then goes for sure to a one on one. When someone sits down with you, you don't want to be preoccupied with all the things you think you can do for them. You gotta just shut her down totally and be non-judgmental and just learn to listen and just imagine how this person feels. Again, I don't think any of us have had near enough training. It's the old story, you get a young developing athlete and you start doing active listening with them and you'll say, "So, you mean this." And they'll say, "No, I mean this." It'll take three corrections before you actually get to what they wanted to tell you and what they feel. And that's just the reality of human beings. They don't communicate accurately with their first words or their first actions. It requires patience and trust to really get at what might be bothering them or must be cleared in order for them to be a better performer. Again, any time you can put on listening skills and learning to suspend your own agenda and be comfortable just being a receiver is going to make you a way better consultant.

You mentioned that you thought psych effects were more important than psychological skills. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

I think that Terry Orlick will tell you the same thing with his experiences with teams. That you go in initially thinking, "Oh I bet some relaxation will help, or maybe I can teach imagery." And you are in there and you have been working for three days and you realize you haven't touched any of that. You have been doing what I have been describing and it's also team building. You spend all your time team building. Now you tell me how many people in North America learn how to cooperate. That is what Terry Orlick studied. He studied cooperation. He was way ahead of his time. We go to the national team, and the most favorite things we do with them are little team building games because they have never done stuff like that before. Where you have to cooperate to be successful and when you do you feel so good and you learn to empathize with other people and you problem solve. Where do we get that? We don't get it in schools? We just scream and yell at one another in class and in minor sport environments. So, we have a huge deficit in most of our population in terms of collaborative or cooperative team skills. And so psychological effects are the first things that hit me. And, I say I gotta help so and so relax on this and look at it differently to improve the effects. And it would happen, cause my intervention work with the pro teams was on a four day cycle, about

every 2 or 3 weeks I would go in for 4 days and then I would have to go back into my teaching. In four days we basically had to optimize the effects on the environment. I basically talked to every person that I could. I would work through all the things. And I would say 90% of it was effect not skills. And then the other part of it that is happening simultaneously through that work is team building. You are gradually getting them back to being a real team and not a pseudo team. So they start to uh, over time figure it out and respect where you are coming from. If you do a good job with it and are available online or on the phone once in awhile to just to keep it going, you can have quite an impact. As a matter of fact, the reason I got a start in Philadelphia with the Flyers at the NHL level was uh. The coach there, Mike Keenan, felt that there was a dependency developing with the other person that worked their previously and rather than getting the players more independent with the ideas they were getting more dependent on them. There were actually rumors of them using placebos and everything else to try to improve the frame of mind of these players. I got my chance cause that had been a problem. And my model totally was the opposite and he knew it. And that was that I am coming in for a few days as an educator and a listener. Trying to help people improve the effects of the climate that they are operating in. And, hopefully their skills with take care of it. But it is their job to work at it. And when I come back in three weeks I will reinforce the success, and challenge them on some things that need work. So the pattern was very much about developing the capabilities and the skills in the players to handle those effects better. To optimize them better and if there were skill work involved, spend some work on that. I just found out very quickly that, and I think that people still don't understand that and most of the young people are still racing in thinking it's going to be all psych skills. You are going to find out in a hurry that's often a small part of it. Our work now, here in Calgary and Winnipeg we're shifting too much more global, more fundamental concepts than skills. We are talking about perspective and we are talking about resonance. We are trying to give people a base to be successful for a lifetime, not just for a couple of days for a competition. And that work has been very rewarding and skills are part of it again, but not as important as this kind of stuff.

You stated that you thought more often than not, the sport psychology consultant often has to “diffuse” the situation. Could you tell me a little more about what you meant by that?

Well, I mean you could have a high school team and it could be just as bananas. I mean you'll walk in and this person is backbiting. This person is upset that they are not getting enough playing time. But, in pro it is escalated because it is people's livelihood and futures and welfare and families. But, for sure that is what you are doing a lot of times there are very complicated feelings that have surfaced in a setting and diffuse I think is a good word for it because if you go back to this topic of emotional management. Which I tell you most of us don't know anything or much about. I believe the most important idea is learning to accept emotions. That it is okay for you to be angry. And as soon as you accept it, it will start to disappear. You will interpret it more constructively and then you'll harness what is left and then you will do something more sensible with it. Every emotion whether its fear, anger, guilt or whatever, if you accept it, you are well on the way to processing it and getting emotionally healthy again. So that is a big part of what

you would do, you would go in and diffuse it and say, “You know I can really understand why you would be pissed.” “Or, I guess I can understand why you’d be a little scared. Or fearful of the consequences, it’s your last year, you haven’t got a contract or whatever.” Let’s talk about it and see if we can re-frame it. But being that way is just a, fear has function in our lives and it means get ready for something and this is how you get ready for something. And so, that is what you are doing. You are diffusing a bunch of feelings that maybe they haven’t learned to process in the past and need some processing. They need someone to empathize with them and help them accept them and help them to move to a better way of looking at it, and for sure a better way of functioning so that their emotional health doesn’t deteriorate.

Is there anything that maybe you have not had the opportunity to share about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that you would like to add?

I think we have covered a lot of the most important things that were, uh, part of my experience. The incidental things that a lot of people were aware of that I fully enjoyed and appreciated and became better at was my family relationships in all of this because my wife was a very successful athlete. She was a two-time Olympian in speed skating and our kids both love sport. And so, because of my work I often got opportunities to travel to settings and meet with teams and athletes and often times we got to include them. And, they, uh, they got to hang out with you know role models that impacted them. We got to travel in Europe and I think they learned and grew. So, I was very fortunate that I had a family that was very interested in what I was doing and very supportive of what we were learning. And, I know from a distance without them ever having any formal training they were learning a lot from these settings. I mean my son Jason was the stick boy for the National team in Calgary. So at nine years of age he is racing on his bike after practice to hang out. And, we are trying to get the guys to visualize on the bench and he’s the guy that is doing it. He’s got a better imagination than they do. So, that was kind of a neat payoff in terms of that fact that the got things out of that. And, I probably got a lot because it kept me motivated to learn and grow in the field because it was not draining family dynamics it was enhancing them. So I think that was a factor. And, the other thing I would say, the overall picture and I just hinted at it is, I think the most important things that have happened in my career are just happening now. I mean the idea of existential counseling. I am much more completely appreciating now, so that’s there. And secondly, I think these ideas of perspective and resonance are WAY more important than traditional psychological skills work. They can make a 90% difference in an athlete whereas a skill might be 10%, if at all. We are really finding in the last 5 or 6 years that the work is much more rewarding because you are helping people first. And, you are helping them know who they are, where their support is, and how they want to live and play and compete. And, when you have that the rest of it is pretty easy to accomplish. That fundamental work is something that I don’t think that psychology has done very well. And, I don’t think that Phys. Ed. has done it very well either. We haven’t done it very well either. The answer is, it is deep, but it’s not that complex. The bottom line of what I’m saying is that those are pretty fundamental questions you can have a good conversation with any kid in high school. Who are you?

I'm a brother so on. Well, there is quite a bit to you isn't there? Well, who do you really count on? Well, there is uncle so and so blah, blah, blah. Then the next thing you know...we can do this a lot more for each other than we do right now. In Williamsburg, about 7 or 8 years ago, I did a keynote and I challenged the field. We had all the clinical people on one side and all educators on one side and they are ready to fight over territory or whatever and I just, right at the start of the session I just ripped them all. I said, "You know what, good friends have done a better job than any of ya." [Laughter] A good friend will help you accept your feelings, realize who you are, pretty much what I said. That's what a good friend will do. And, you guys are so preoccupied with teaching and clinical problems. What most people need they aren't getting. As fields we got to, I think wake up, smell the coffee, and just help people proceed as people and as athletes. And, it's only in the last little while that we have done a better job of this. To me the best is still ahead. By far the most important thing for people is acceptance. Let's help people accept who they are, whether they are athletes, students, or whatever. And from there you stop worrying about basic needs and as Maslow says, "You can start to actualize." Maslow had the best of ideas. They are the heart and soul of what we are doing in this area. So, for us, and for me... I'm near the end. For those of us in the area I think it is going to change a lot of stuff. It's neat to be coming across stuff later in your career that has that much potential because it motivates you to carry on a little longer and to help those you know can really do something with it.

You have mentioned learning quite often describing your experience of providing sport psychology consultation. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experience of learning?

I think in the end, I hound anyone that is my student that says they are not motivated to learn. I mean what is the alternative. I mean learning is the ultimate privilege of being a human being. I mean if you don't like this course I have no problem with that, but if you tell me that you don't like learning. I think you are heading to a really a disappointing, unfortunate life. Even if you want to go split wood in the corner for the rest of your life, I would think you are gonna want to learn how to do it better. Look, all of the top performers my students interview that are real top performers. These students come back and say these people are real students for life. I mean you got guys 63 years old and he's doing this, he's starting this. So they have figured out way back, somewhere along the line, that uh, learning is the essence of life and you never have it figured out. So, I think too many people historically looked at, well you work hard, then you retire and you sit on the beach. Well it's fun for three weeks, but after three months. What the hell am I gonna do next? So, I, I think learning is fundamental to being a vibrant human being and being a top performer. And, even if you take the ideas that we talk about know, they are gonna change this week and next week. As a human being you learn something and you experience something else, it's gonna change a little bit. You look forward to it. I learned a lesson early here at U of W. I had a class with some retired students and they were my best students [laughter]. They were bugging me about this and that. They were totally the best students I had, so there is a lot to be learned about people who are students for life. There is lots to be learned from people who are students of life. I also learned that when I did the tour of gurus, you know Orlick and Ogilvie. Here's Ogilvie

in his senior years, but he cried everyday in his seminars because he was so passionate about what he felt. Even as an older gentleman he was totally into the process of sharing and helping young people grow. The good ones are always about learning something new everyday. It's a, it's a big factor why the last eight years have been so rewarding. Not only have I been learning, but I have seen learning happening all around me at a phenomenal pace. I've seen people just go straight up and in the end that's the ultimate satisfaction. So, I think learning is not only important for people themselves, but being around learning is phenomenally rewarding.

I think that's gonna wrap it up.

Well, you are pretty tolerant for listening.

Co-Participant: Rich Gordin (RG)

Could you tell me about you experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

Well, I uh, like I have mentioned earlier, I started in this field of providing service to athletes back in the late 70's while I was a doctoral student. And, it started by me being approached by the gymnastic coach at University of Utah, Greg Marsden, about me working with his athletes. At that time I had zero background in gymnastics. I didn't know anything about it other than I knew what gymnastics was and that was it. So, I sort of evolved into the providing of service at the right time. If you look at the history of the field of sport psychology, Gould and Weinberg called this time period the contemporary period. If you look in the book of *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, they do a little historical break down and as I recall the first year of the contemporary period is 1978 and then it goes to the present. So I came along at a very fortunate time, in the sense that it all that good work was done in research and the seminal work by Bruce Ogilvie and Tom Tutko and others. It started to pay off for me in the sense that I got to provide service to new coaches and athletes. So it was perfect timing so to speak. Perfect timing is half the story and then you have to try to do a good job. In our profession, if you don't do a good job, then you are not invited back, it is a pretty bottom line type of thing. We are like coaches in that regard. We are called Sports Psychology Consultants, but we are like coaches in the sense that we are evaluated based on our performance. Although, I promise nothing to my coaches and athletes, I just tell them I am going to work hard but I don't tie it into results; [pause] but you are evaluated on results. An example being, one of the guys that I work with right now, Mike Weir, he just won. Now I got a call just before you called from a guy up in Canada who hosts a talk show that has 80,000 listeners and he wants me to be on the talk show to talk about what I do with Mike Weir. Now all of a sudden I am a genius because Mike won a tournament. They didn't call me last year when he didn't win a tournament, but they called me the year before when he won a tournament. Every time he wins a tournament, I become a genius again. And so, that is how we are evaluated by people, by the public, and I think by some extent by the athletes and coaches. Because the athletes who that are hesitant to even talk to someone who does what we do, if we help somebody and the athlete tells them that we helped them, then they are going to come talk to us maybe because they see a result. It's the same as a coach. Coaches by the way, they still don't know what we do. That is a broad statement, but I'll stand behind it, I still don't think that the coaching community understands what we do. We haven't done a very good job selling our selves and what we do to the coaching profession. So, the answer to your question, I am still evolving. I'll never stop evolving until the day that I stop working with the coaches and athletes. I think if you say you've evolved, then you missed the boat. I think that you become more confident in what you are doing, but you still never know it all. I use the Wooden quote, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." That was from Coach Wooden. He won 10 national championships, he's still is in his 90's, and I believe that. So I am still evolving.

You called us, sport psychology consultants, coaches. Could you tell me a little more about what you meant by that?

I come from the orientation that we are simply coaching, and coaching is teaching. So I come from the concept that... I don't come from a clinical point of view, because my training is more in counseling and in teaching and so I have to come from the orientation that I am trained. So that is why I say, coach is a word that is revered in athletics. I'll tell you a quick story. You like stories? I know that some of my colleagues I have heard before, not mentioning any names, when they are "invited in" an athletic setting, by the way "invited in" are critical words. You are in their house; they are not in your house. I find most of my consulting is done, even if it is done in my office, I have been invited in, therefore they are not in my house, I am in their house. I am on their program and they are not on mine. You better get that right or you are gone. And some of our colleagues when they are not called Dr. something or they call them "coach" they get upset. When they call me coach, I get ecstatic, because that means that I am "in." Now, does that answer the question, or do you want me to keep going

Going back to your style, you stated that "you promise nothing and you don't promise results." Could you tell me what you mean when you say that?

To me if you promise that you are going to make them better or you promise that you can help them do anything, then you are promising something that you can't. If somebody can do that then I need to talk to them, because they know something that I don't know about the human mind. And yet, I believe that there are some people that intimate that, they promise results. But I tell athletes that have been told that to run as far away from those people as they can, as fast as they can. And they seem to understand what I am talking about. So that is what I mean by it. What I mean is that I am going to give them 100% and they are going to give me whatever they commit to do, hopefully it is 100% because if they give me 100% and they trust me and they feel like I can help them get better, then I have a chance. If not, if they give me less than 100%, or don't trust me, or don't feel like I can help them get better, then I have less of a chance. So that's it, that is what I mean by it.

You mentioned that you have often been "invited in" by athletes. Could you tell me a little bit about what you mean by that?

What I mean by that is I don't do any advertising. I haven't ever in my entire career ever asked to work with anybody. I don't mean that in being egotistical. The best way to be "invited in" is for them to ask you. I found that if you if you do good work, then the athletes will talk to athletes, and the coaches will talk to coaches, and then they'll ask you to come into the locker room to be a part of the process and the team. Then you have to be respectful of the fact that you are invited into that environment and that you are not going in to change the show. You are not going in to put your program on them, you are going to go into that unique setting and that unique situation and help them the best way you can within their own frame of reference. That is what I mean by it, and it is a very strong word, to be invited in means you are guest and you are providing them with some hopefully useful material and information as a consult and that's it.

Could you tell me a little bit about what you mean when you state that “if you give them 100% that is all you can do?” What do you mean by that?

What it means for me is I will work as hard as I can to give them everything that I can that I know so that they can use what is useful to them. And that I will be there, when I need to be, and when they need me to be, and that they know that I am into it... seriously. It is a commitment. Another story is a philosophy, I don't believe you can give 110%. I hear people say, “Give me 110%.” Well, I don't think you can. I think you can give 100%. I think you can give less than 100%, but if you give less than 100%, then you are not giving yourself. I think generally people don't understand what I just said. They think that they are totally committed and they are not, or they try to be totally committed and they are not, which is not helpful. So, that is what I mean by that is what I give them. And, early in my career I used to be so into that and I still am that I would give away sport psychology to some degree. I still do, but I am getting better at charging for it. Because I have found that it is better to charge first of all, because it is worth something. And, second of all because when you charge someone they listen harder... most of the time. Although I have had people pay me but never make use of it. But I don't give them the money back because part of the commitment is a financial commitment, especially with professional athletes.

Earlier you had said, “you'll be there for your athletes when they need you to be.”

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean when you say that?

Because sometimes people just show up physically. When I mean seriously, I mean, be there, committed 100%. To use a psychological term you know compartmentalizing. When I do what I do, I do it 100%. Now when I am talking to you, that little interruption there, that wasn't good, my door was a little open and I student knocked on it. But right now I am going to talk to you for one hour. Then I am going to hang up and I am going to forget about it. That is how I work. And it helps me do a good job. I don't do it with one eye here and one eye over here. I do it 100%. And I believe that helps me to be a better consultant. I work on that very hard. If we ask them to focus then we have to be able to focus. That is what I mean.

You mentioned, “If you do good work, things seem to take care of themselves.”

Could you tell me what you mean by that statement?

[Pause] Well, it's again, its back to I never wanted for or needed more consultations. There's got to be a reason for that, because I don't advertise. I don't go around putting things in people's lockers and I am saying this cause some people do this, yet I have calls all of the time, and it just seems to snowball. Well, there's got to be a reason for that. I would suspect that I am doing something worthwhile and that people think it is, and then they tell other people. I think that a lot of times people in our profession are concerned, and rightly so, about how they gain entry. And I am thinking of Ken Ravizza's famous article in the late 80's about gaining entry. It has been sighted a million times. I believe with almost everything Ken says in there, or what I remember anyway, about how you do it. That's all I am talking about. I would imagine that his comments will be very similar to mine about that. But getting in is an important thing. It is very difficult to get in. Young people that are coming up now, they say, “Well, how do I get in?” Well, it's

difficult, because you get in through referral, through word of mouth; you don't get in through a web-site or a registry. That is my opinion. I might be making people upset with that one right there. I don't know of one referral I ever got off of a registry. I am on the AAASP Registry, and I am on the USOC Registry since it's inception and I don't remember any referrals coming from that. Perhaps they did, but no one said that. The referrals I get that contact me because they have talked to somebody. Now I don't know how it works in the general field of psychology. I guess it is different and people put things in telephone books and there is an ethical thing about that. That is what I mean. I don't know how to explain it any better.

You said early on in your career, you gave away services and now you have started charging. Could you tell me what that experience has been like for you?

Well, in discussion with some of my colleagues about these issues of charging and so forth, it would continually come up. It is interesting topic among young people who are working for people and doing the work. And, I have found that the consensus of people that I spoke with is that you need to charge them and you need to charge them a fair price and then provide them with a service. I guess my passion for what I was doing was almost overshadowing my need for an extrinsic reward if you want to analyze it that way. Now that hasn't changed because I am firm believer that the internal driver is the reason you do it. That we as human beings are driven by intrinsic motivations for doing what we do and unless we are driven by that the extrinsic reward will work at times, but won't hold up over the long run. So I'm not doing it for the money, but I do it and get paid money for doing it. And I have found that I am getting more comfortable with that, the longer I do what I do.

One thing you just mentioned, "you really do it for the intrinsic reward." Could you tell me what you mean by that?

Yeah, sure um, I was reading something the other day, I don't recall where I heard it but they were talking about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. And they mentioned several sources of motivation for humans, and the ones that I recall are uh, status among peers, status among experts, to acquire things, to achieve something via independence, uh, to be concerned with competition, to compete, and concern for excellence. To pursue excellence in what I am doing. Of those 6 things, I thought which ones apply to me, why do I do what I do? And, the two that I thought applied to me the most were the achievement via independence, to achieve things to do whatever it takes to get better, you know continual learning, life journey, I think I already spoke about that with you. The second was concern with whatever I do, to do it in an excellent fashion, to try to do it the very best that I can. Well, I thought about that and those two are the intrinsic motivators. Now it doesn't mean that the other two don't work, but those are the drivers. And I think that if you study people, you would probably find if you are locked on to those two you are going to do what you do because you love it no matter what else is going on. That is kind of what I mean by it.

Could you tell me a little bit more about why you love it?

I love it; well I love it because of the satisfaction I get from helping others, cause I am in a helping profession. But, also I enjoy the learning aspect of it because when you get to sit down with people who are doing things really well, you can always learn something new, and then you can mull it around and decide how to use it that your consulting with others. So it is a continual give and take where you are giving and also taking from the coaches and athletes good things. I mean good things that you could use and make yourself better. It is a challenge. I have very challenging cases. And I love a challenge. And it gives me a buzz. I mean I am a former athlete, or I should say I am still an athlete. I get a buzz from it, it's uh, it's a challenge, and I am not competing. I am out of eligibility. But, I also find that I have to watch it because often times if I get too close to the sport, I can shift into my own competitive mode. You've got to be self-aware that how close are you to what is going on. It's like anything else; you have got to detach yourself so that you can do your work.

You stated that you love a challenge. Could you tell me about what “challenge” means to you?

Well, [pause] an interesting one that is fresh on my mind. Yesterday I had a musician up here from a symphony orchestra and he is very good. He is top in his instrument in his orchestra. But, he occasionally goes and applies for other auditions for other orchestras. Well, he has difficulty at times when he goes to these auditions because you don't play a full piece; you just play a few minutes of a piece and then the next guy comes in, and the next guy comes in. The challenge there is here you have someone who is excellent at what they do in one situation and has difficulty in another. And so the challenge there is how do you help someone make that big leap. That is a huge leap. They are letting the situation dominate on their performance. And, so it is an interesting case, it is one that I took on because of the interest to both of it. It is not an easy one, it is going to take some work on both my part and his part to break through this, but I believe we will. [Pause] So that is a challenge.

You mentioned that you have had to separate your own competitiveness when working with an athlete. Could you tell me what that means to you?

Well, I will give you an example again. I was working with our basketball team. This is, oh gosh, a long time ago, maybe mid 80's here at Utah State. And, the players wanted me to sit down by the bench. So I reluctantly sat down behind the bench. Then the players wanted me to come into the locker room at half time because there is that time during halftime where the coaches meet and they just let the players have 3, 4, 5 minutes while the coaches meet in another room to address the strategy and then they come in and meet with the team. Well, the players wanted me to be in there with them to kind of tend to their needs and so forth. So I did that. Well, I used to play basketball. So this went on for a while and I wasn't aware enough of it. I didn't pick up on it that I started to get to involved emotionally in the game. Until one night, we were walking back along a long ramp with one of the assistant coaches, who is a good friend of mine, and I was saying something and all I remember was he looked at me and he says “Hey, Doc, you're sounding like a coach.” And I had to say, “Yeah, Riles, you're right.” And, I realized I needed to back off a little bit. So that is what I am talking about. When you get into a

competitive arena and where you have been in it, it can sneak up on you. Especially when it is in a sport where you were a participant. I mean my main sport was football, but I played enough basketball that it affected me in that particular case. But see it was an awareness thing, and so I think we as sports psychology consultants we need to be aware of our own involvement and our own feel for the competition and what we are doing. Because you have to keep a distance to be able to observe in a way that will be helpful. I remember Burt Giges asked me once, “Do you ever get upset with your clients?” And, I know he has a reason for asking me that, because Burt is into awareness. That is what he does, that is what he is so good at. I mean he is good at a lot of things, but that is what he has taught us in our profession. And I said, “Yeah, you know sometimes I do.” No, I think he used the word, angry. He said, “Do you ever get angry with them?” And, I said, “No, I don’t think I get angry, I think I get upset.” He said oh, okay. That’s what I’m talking about, it’s the awareness.

You mentioned that your sports, or the sports that you played, it has been a different experience than with those you haven’t played. Could you tell me a little bit more about those two experiences?

Well, I think uh, I think sometimes that... a lot of knowledge about a particular sport can be harmful. Because you get too involved and you might switch over into your coaching mode. On the other hand, I think some involvement or knowledge of a sport is necessary. If you don’t start speaking the language of the athlete, they’ll cut you some slack for a little while, but then they’ll have less patience with you unless you make an effort to understand what they do. So it’s kind of a fine line, if we know too much info, you gotta watch it because you might go into coaching mode. Again, you gotta be really aware not to do that. You know, not start coaching technique, because they will try to get you to do that. They’ll want to know what you think about their golf swing. However, too little information then you don’t really understand what it is that they are really doing. Another story, a bull rider, he was a professional bull rider, so we started doing some work and he said, “Well I want you to come and see what I do.” So I said, “Ok, that is a great idea.” So the next time the rodeo was in the area, I went to the rodeo and a little boy came by and said, “Tom wants you to come back and see what he does.” And I said, “I am sitting her watching what he does.” He said, “No, he wants you to come back there and see him get on the bull.” Tom wanted me to get up on the shoot and Tom wanted me to see into the shoot and watch the bull hitting his head up against the board. And, he wants me to see him get strapped on to the bull and smell the bull. He really wanted me to see what he did. I remember in our intake interview he told me about the thousands of bones he had broken [laughter]. So, when I told him to focus, he wanted me to know what he was trying to focus on. Not trying to get killed, I think [laughter]. So there, I needed more information.

You had mentioned that the practice of sport psychology is a “life journey” and a “continual learning process.” Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean when you say that?

It just means that I am better at what I do now than I was yesterday or last week or the year before, or have I gotten away from what I am good at. It is an assessment and

awareness. For instance, I use hypnosis, and when I first started in this profession I used hypnosis a lot because I have a lot of training in hypnosis, and then I got away from it. Now I am getting back to it again, and it is really good, because I am getting back to the basics and I am getting back to what I hope I am pretty good at. So it is a continual learning, and then going back and finding out what is really effective for you and that's what I mean. I am constantly doing that. I am assessing what I am doing well and what am I not doing well. It is a constructive evaluation of what I am doing.

Now that you are starting to go back to hypnosis, what has that experience been like for you?

I find that as I assess it and I think back 25 years, I find that almost everything that I have ever done and helped somebody with has tapped into their subconscious mind. I think that most of the decisions that we make that hold up under pressure occur at the subconscious mind. There is only so much you can talk about, and it is important to do that don't get me wrong, but you have to get in and find out what is the real pattern. And so, hypnosis is a wonderful way into that. Uh, it's not for everybody. You have to have some training in it. You don't dabble with it. You have to be very well trained in it. I follow a very simple rule with hypnosis, I don't do anything in a hypnotic trance that I don't do out of it because that is a very important ethical consideration. So the only thing I do, see hypnosis has three parts, induction, utilization, and de-hypnosis. In the utilization phase, which is the middle part, I only do in there what I would do without using hypnosis.

You mentioned that one of the things you battle against is getting away from what you are good at. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Well, I think that sometimes... I hope this is a positive thing for me and I think it is. Because I am open to new ideas, sometimes I go with it, look at it, and maybe go too far with it before I really believe that I am good at it. Rather than go back to what I know that I am pretty good at. Rather than to come back to what has worked for me. It is like your go to move. You know it is going to work. I don't see it is a fault, but because I am an inquisitive. Because I am trying to get better I am vulnerable. I could go with something prematurely so to speak. But, I am getting pretty good at stopping and going back to the basics, as I say, I do a constant evaluation. I think as humans we get stuck in a routine and then we just do it and we are not really doing it fully. We don't know why we are doing it any more. But it is an art, what we do is an art, as well as a science. I mean we have science in our field, but it's uh, a tremendous amount of it is art as well – in my opinion.

You refer to the practice of sport psychology as an art. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

What I mean by art is that you have to know when to use some method and then often, I tell my classes, sometimes it is more important what you don't say than what you do say and when you say it. An example would be, I am pretty careful when I am around athletes that are just getting ready to compete. I don't ask them any questions because when you ask somebody a question it instills doubt. So if it is game day, I only make

affirmations and declarative statements. That's an art. Because you could ask a question, but you learn that over time.

One other thing you said earlier, one of the potential problems for people is that it is easy to get stuck in a routine. What has that experience been like for you?

When I get stuck? Ok, maybe saying the same thing that I said a hundred times before. It's like repeating it. So then I have to catch myself and say, "You know, he didn't get it the way you said it that way, so I have to say it a different way." The concept is correct. Create another way to say it and he might get a "ah, ha" experience. I know they get it when they laugh. When an athlete laughs when you say something, it's gone deep. And when you get that...that's awesome, because then you know it went in. And then they'll tell you, "Yeah, you know that's right." You gotta be careful because sometimes in a routine you tend to use repetition, which isn't bad, because you know repetition is the mother of all learning. Repetition is how you learn something. I don't know many things in sport where there is one-trial learning. Do you? You gotta repeat it. If you look at Andrews Erickson's stuff, 10,000 hours or 10 years of deliberate practice, that's repetition [laughter].

What is that experience like for you when the athlete laughs?

Oh, I laugh to. I feel good, because I know it went in. I know they got it. It's like anyone who is coaching and you see them get it and they perform it. That's why we coach. That's tremendously rewarding to you as a teacher. Just like teaching one of your students at the university. When they perform well on an exam, it's gratifying because you see that they have fulfilled their talents that they have. And I have a deep seeded belief when I work with people that they know the answers and I am simply trying to help them clear away things out of the path to get to the answers. This again goes back to my approach as solution rather than problem. And I have used the words many times that I am a stretch, not a shrink. I don't like coming in and saying we have this problem. Even though there may be a problem, I don't try to refer to it as a problem. Because that sets a mindset that something has to be overcome and that there is something wrong with me. I know that athletes have things going on with them, because athletes are highly talented people physically but have other things going on in their lives just like others. It's like if you come in with that orientation and start putting labels on, then I think that you can set up a barrier.

Okay, is there anything about your experience of sport psychology consultation that you haven't gotten a chance to express or add?

Well, I don't think so. I guess I could just make a couple of summary statements. I believe our field is an exciting field. I think it is an evolving field. I think that there is a place in it for all of us. I don't think that everybody can be a great researcher, I don't think that everybody can be a great consultant. I think that we all have our places and we all have our strengths and weaknesses. For me, I find that I've sort of found my niche, I feel good about it. I am an applied sport psychology consultant. I say that with all humbleness. I feel gifted to be in that position. This field can add so much not just to sport performance, but to all performance. And, the thing that really turned me on about

our field is that the skills that we have the opportunity to teach people are life skills and they are skills that they can take long after their playing days are over and continue to use them their entire life. I have had athletes come back to me and tell me, you know I am still doing this thing that we worked on and I am still using it today. And, that is really gratifying to me. The fact that we are invited into this arena to help is a wonderful thing and I have a great promise for our field. I feel our field is just barely at the tip of the iceberg and I feel that we are going to evolve more over the next few years and there will be nice opportunities for young people coming into the field to pursue this dream that we are all involved in. I don't know what else to say, it's not work to me, it's passion.

I certainly appreciate your time. I've learned a lot.

Self-reflection is a wonderful thing to do. I do it a fair bit, as I said, but when you do it in this context you really do it, because you are telling it to another. Um, I wouldn't want to do it too often. It takes a lot of energy, but I enjoy it very much.

Co-Participant: Dan Gould (DG)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

I gotta think for a minute. I guess for me it's been real good, you know, I like it. I enjoy it. I don't know if I could do it all day. I don't know how clinicians do it. I mean I've done some things where I've done camps, like I just did this thing at Figure Skating Nationals and you know I see 20 skaters in 3 days. And, actually you know I really like that even though it's a horrible schedule. I mean you get to see these kids once, but you get to see the patterns and that type of thing. Um, I like the variety of research, teaching, service and even though we are focusing on the consulting here I think that's important. I guess to me I view consulting... my framework would be more like, part of it probably reflects my training. I'm not a clinician. Uh, is teaching which I was trained to do. Kind of mental teaching, mental coaching and I probably, you end up going deep sometimes, but I don't do it on purpose. Uh, and I do much better when somebody doesn't have deep hidden issues. And, I believe there are subconscious drivers of behavior and that kind of stuff, but when an athlete comes in and says they have problems with anxiety and can help them a lot better than when they are in denial. And they are going somewhere else. So, I think I am very educational, very kind of, one on one, tutor, kinda mentor-oriented. Um, you know, believe that you really need to know your sport psych, although you don't have to tell the person you know it, but that system needs to be running in the back of your head. Like, they say something and you think intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. And, that theory goes running through your head and then you don't tell them that, but something about controlling aspects of behavior pops out. Um, over the years I have thought about this, and I think I have gotten better, part of... you do reflect your training. I'm a teacher. And, I think, I think I present real well. I think one of my biggest strengths is, I don't think like a psych person. I think like an athlete that wants to use psychology. And, so when I'm talking, I'm thinking so why does this person want to hear this psycho babble. So I'll try, I think I make things real concrete. I think I put it in a form that the consumer can buy. So, I think I'm good at that. Over the years one of the things that I have had to improve on, is I think I was better when I'm imparting the knowledge and it wasn't like I wasn't a good listener, but going back to what I said before. If you came in a saw me, here I'll give you an example. I was working with one skater one time, the guy would come and see me and pay me and then never do anything I said. And, I kinda told him once, ethically I can't see you anymore because I'm not helping you and he said, yeah, but I like coming to see ya. Yeah, but I'm not really help you; you don't do this stuff. I mean part of it, I did the right thing ethically, but I wasn't very good at figuring out, this guy made no sense. So, I'm thinking real logically and I'm wondering what's going on in this guy's head. And, I think I would handle that better now, I don't think I would figure that out right now, but I've been lucky enough to have been exposed to some good clinicians, some good counselors and you know what they do is turn the question around. So, why are you doing that? And, my, because of my training I was like I'm the teacher. You didn't come to me and pay me to ask you how you feel today. You are paying me because I am an expert. That was kind of my bias, I don't want people to ever think I rammed it down their throats, or that I talked all the

time, but over the years I learned that sometimes you have to help the person help themselves. And they need to talk themselves out of it, or you don't have to say anything, they just need to get it off their chest. So I think I have become a better listener. Listening is not the right word. Maybe sometimes the way I think of it, I, I need to work on it, but I still have ways to go because it's not my natural strength. I'm not a great mental detective. I'm not like asking you these questions to get you to reflect back on yourself. And, good counselors and clinicians do that. Now, part of that, I shouldn't be going there because I am not a counselor and I'm not a clinician. But, even with everyday stuff, to get people to reflect back I do a lot more of that now.

[Pause]

I'm trying to think of other things. I mean I like, I think, over the years I think some of the things that have helped me be effective, I think I am pretty passionate, pretty hard working. And I think the athletes kind of appreciate that. Um, I mean I spent, I've spent a long time doing this, so I think I know a lot. That's different from thinking you are really smart, I just think I've been doing it for 25 years for 70 hours a week, so duh. But, I also think there is a lot that I don't know, but compared to the average person I know a tremendous amount about how to help them mentally. Uh, but I also know to individualize with those type of things. Um, like I said before, I think I'm getting better at, at realizing people's different learning styles, people have different heads and not everybody thinks like I do. Okay, so I need to adjust to this person although sometimes that means, or this person is in a real different place from me and I'm not going to be able to help them. So I think some of those things have probably gotten a little better.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by the term mental teacher?

Yeah, um, I think that's pretty important. I kinda decided in high school that I wanted to be a teacher. I liked school even though I didn't study. I liked sports. I wanted to be around it. I really liked coaching, I mean you help people get better. So, I think that's probably a pretty accurate description of the approach that I take to sport psych. You know, and whether you go back to Plato you're a mentor, you're a teacher, you're a coach. Now, you can take that farther and you're a counselor whatever. I think that takes me almost to the positive psych type of thing. Like I've been interested in anxiety because people get nervous and then they don't perform the way they want. I think I kinda like the idea, as opposed to fixing problems all the time, starting people off right so they avoid the problems or minimize the problems. Uh, so you know, good pre-school, if the kids have good "head start" they do better in kindergarten. If they have good kindergarten they do better in middle school. You know? So, kinda my view of sport psych is that we are doing one on one teaching a lot. And, we are helping people get stronger heads. We are kinda like the strength coach of the head. A, now not naively, people do come in with problems. Sometimes I make it akin to the fix-it approach like athletic trainers. I think sometimes we are a cross between a strength coach and an athletic trainer. That we are the strength coach in that we are trying to build mental skills and resources that prevent problems and more importantly help people reach their objectives. And, we are an athletic trainer that we can help people deal with minor setbacks, normal kinda functioning, but we are not a licensed counselor or clinician who

is probably a kin the medical doctor. So I think that analogy, except we do ours in the head, is kinda a cross between a strength coach kinda preventative. The athletic trainer which is a lot preventative, is a lot more fix the minor things and make referrals when you need surgery. And, and, the counselor/clinicians have the medical license to do psychological surgery, but they can also do training and some of the other things, so I'm not saying they shouldn't be doing that.

Could you tell me more about what you meant when you said that you were not a good mental detective?

Well, um, I think if you take on one side of it the educator. The lecturer approach. You profess things to the students. Now, we know pedagogically that is not always best, but the idea that I have this expertise that I am going to impart when its appropriate. And, I think that you better have some of that in business and sport because they don't hire you to not tell them answers. And, in business and sport you have a time crunch. I gotta perform next week. I think counseling, and I think there is more variation sometimes between these then within, but counseling and clinical they are really trained to be a detective and help delve between the surface and help people figure out the roots of their problem. Again, dysfunction has been their focus over the years, at least clinical that is. And, they have to be pretty good detectives to climb under the surface and ask the right questions. You tell me, you tell me. Great counselors and clinicians are just that...great. And, I don't view that as dishonest or sneaky, but I think over the years I came out you know as a true educator, I'm going to profess. And, then over the years I learned people have different learning styles. But, you know sometimes you got to help people dig under the surface, especially in the athletic trainer kinda metaphor. Enough to help them out. I'm actually kinda pleased, I think I have improved my detective skills enough where I am not inadequate, but I would never say it would be my strength.

You just mentioned that a few days ago you had worked with a large group of figure skaters. Could you tell me more about that consulting experience?

I've done it before. US Figure Skating at their National Championships, they have different divisions like novice, junior, then what you see on TV... seniors. And the kids really work up the system and what they do is, you compete in a regional and if you place in a regional you get to go to nationals. And, then there are like eight lady single skaters and eight junior men and then if they form the top 3 to 5. They perform early in the week before you see TV. So you could become the Junior National Champion or Junior silver-medallist. If you place in the top 4 or 5 of those divisions US Figure Skating Sport Medicine and Science then has a camp. And, they do physical testing, nutrition, on ice exercise phys, a biomechanics of jumping, and then they do some psychological. And, instead of testing we kinda have a meeting with the kids. And, so you see a whole bunch of kids, there is a team of us. You know, usually we have a theme. Like this year, like if a kid comes in and everything is fine there is a book in business called *Good to Great* and it kinda deals with how some companies are good, but they're not great because to be great you have to get out of your comfort zone. And, great is a conscious decision that involves disciplined action, thought, behavior. So, if the kid came in and had no agenda. We would ask him, why are so many people good, but not great? And this fits perfectly

cause these kids are all...and then we kinda talk about it and then make some points. Um, now that is one approach and we did that. But, now a couple comes in and they had a disappointing nationals and their crushed. So, then you are doing triage. So, what went wrong? And, how are you doin'? And then a couple of them, you are doing, dance and pairs skating is like marriage counseling. And, there is this one guy, they actually placed in nationals, but he wants to be a dentist or something and she moved across the country to train with him, but they only train 15 hours a day. But, they placed which means they are incredibly talented, but they have all sorts of communication problems cause she has devoted her life and decided she will be a skating pro if she doesn't go on and make the Olympics and he wants to go on to school. And, I mean you are sitting there going this is a time bomb. So you are trying to help them out with that, and that one is kinda tricky because you don't want to open Pandora's box because you aren't exactly sure if they have someone they can see at home. So you did some of those. If somebody did really well at nationals, I will ask them why did you do well? Well, I used more imagery than I did last year. I got a new coach and he's more positive. So we kind of do lessons learned. If they did real poor and they had dealt with it, and the emotion wasn't overriding it, we would say what did you learn? Um, so we, the consults usually went a half-hour to 40 minutes, and then we just did a ton of them.

Could you tell me more about what you mean when you say describing yourself that you “know a lot, but you don’t know everything?”

Yeah, um, it's kinda like being confident. I'm not the sharpest, I feel good about my intelligence, but I was never the highest GRE guy or that type of thing, but I was always a worker. And, if you go to Erickson's stuff you do the 10,000 hours of practice and you get pretty good. Then I went to really good mentors so I got good training. And, and I think as a kid from my grandmother and my Mom and things you don't know about until later. You know I was raised as a high achiever, but work...what you do – you do it right. So, all that stuff has helped me and when you do that for 25 years. And, I think I have some gifts like emotional intelligence. Uh, you know, good logical thinking. I think I have a skill set that is pretty good and I think I have some real strong skills in some areas I really don't even know how to describe them. Maybe it's the emotional intelligence. Um, but I think that part of being emotionally intelligent, as I read more about it is to know. Or when you meet some really good people they will be the first to tell you that there is a lot more that we don't know. I mean it's like you got this base that you know you're good, and you don't flaunt it and these other things. But, you know you worked hard and you got good and your good at this and it makes you feel good and its perceived competence and all the stuff we study. At the same time, the thing that pushes ya is you know how much we don't know. And whether that is doing a research study. Or, like the figure skating or when I go work with a NASCAR pit crew...you just learn a bunch of stuff. So, I once described it to a friend, I did some personal evaluations of myself. That I think sometimes a real good attribute of mine is kinda like a knowledge suck vacuum cleaner that is on all the time. And, I'll just suck knowledge. Like I'll go to the skating nationals and I'll come back with like 5 research ideas, 2 ideas about consulting, so I think those things help me a lot. But, but, it's interesting because while you really know you know your stuff and your confident, you still make mistakes. You

know the books never talk enough about the mistakes, you know there is a lot you don't know. So, it's kinda a real healthy balance.

Could you tell me more about your consulting experience working with a NASCAR pit crew?

Well, I've done it a couple of times. I've worked with a driver a little bit, then I do these pit crews. It's, it's interesting, first, their athletes. And over the years, I've done it on and off for over 8 years and when I first got into it it's kinda like the guys in the shop and their gonna change tires. And, now since Jeff Gordon's tea has done so well over the last couple of years it has become much more a business. A mean we have a former NFL tight end doing the jack. But, what was interesting is they are kind in a transition. The better teams treat it like it's a sport. You got a coach, you lift weights, you do this. And the poorer teams they're sorta gettin' there. I worked for a guy who used to be a tennis coach who does a lot of applied sport science stuff. And he will go in and train a pit crew. And he will be kinda like a coach. Then he will hire me to come in and do some educational workshops. Like we'll do a team mission, we will talk about imagery, and then he'll kind of incorporate it like a coach. So the pit crew stuff is kind of like group, like you might do with a football team. I've only done that; I've only worked with two drivers. [Pause] Well, one really intense. And, two sorta on and off. The one driver I worked with was kinda interesting. I actually got called. It was a long time ago, but basically he got dumped by his wife and he was one of these family guys, but he owned his team at the time. And, NASCAR is big...there's a lot of money. I mean 50 people; he can't just quit and not race. And everybody was worried and they sent him to clinicians and they, they didn't get a good clinical sport psych person. They gave him Prozac or something and you know I was real hesitant to get involved. I'm not a marriage counselor. I was like have you gone to a clinician? Yeah, we went to two and it didn't work out. Finally, they were like hey, we just somebody to help him get his thoughts right in the car. I was like okay, but I can't help you with these other things. I kinda came in and worked with him for a good year and a half. And, basically we did thought stopping, centering, I mean I was scared most of the time because I was like this guy could kill himself or somebody else. So we did a lot. We talked in his office then we would have him try it out when they are testing cars. We would have him try it out during a time trial. He actually had some pretty good luck with it and then from there I kinda worked with his management team. So those have been my experiences with NASCAR, but they are just like anybody else they are just like a team. Actually, NASCAR from the management aspect, it, it makes so much sense to me that somebody like Joe Gibbs has been so successful. I mean you have about 40 to 50 people, I mean It's so much like football to me that from managing those teams, it's so much like a head coach in football.

Could you tell me more about your mentors why you thought they were one of the reasons that you see yourself as a successful or effective practitioner?

Well I was really lucky. I went to little old Brockport State in New York, I was going to be a Phys. Ed. teacher, mostly I went to wrestle. At the time they kinda had an influx of new majors and they were hiring people from all over the country and they hired some

real, young bright sport scientists like Dan Landers, uh, Bob Christina who used to be our dean here. So a lot of really good people and I got exposed to them when I was an undergrad. And, you know I hadn't studied much in high school and I don't think I was dumb, it's just if I didn't like it I didn't study. Then when I go college I was so afraid that I would flunk out, I studied all the time. Then I kinda couldn't get into Phys Ed. School, so I had to transfer in and I was so excited to be there, it wasn't rhetoric, I could study this stuff. So, the teachers liked me because I did all my readings and was on top it and I found the stuff really interesting. Then they got me involved in research projects. But, I was real lucky because there was like 4 or 5 people that had real high standards. One guy, Lefty MacIntire, was not as well known as the other, but he went to Penn State. He worked with Mutherford and Carolyn Shariff, Robbers Cave and all that. He'd roll up his sleeve and he'd jump around and I just loved it. I was going this is what you are supposed to be doing as a teacher. Landers would take me out and get me involved in studies. So, I just had wonderful mentors there and then when I was a sophomore Rainer Martens came through. And, he talked about the inverted-u, and this was way back when and I go this makes sense. Then it was weird because everybody decided that I was going to Illinois for grad school and it was hard cause I was kind of this high achiever and I wanted to go on, but everyone expected me too. But, I ended up going on and went and worked with Landers cause he had moved to the University of Washington. But, I always wanted to work with Rainer Martens so I went to the University of Illinois and worked with him. And, Martens was probably the best overall mentor. I mean I was not confident at all. I mean he taught me a lot as a person and he was very, at the time, very, very good at sport psych. And, I just picked up an awful lot from him. And, then the one I don't want to forget, I'm thinking way back to my Mom. My dad died when I was about twelve. But, my Mom ran her won business and we had a sporting goods, toys, and hobbies store. And, uh, my Mom I think was a pretty high achiever, but she never pressured me. But, in her store, I used to work there at 14, 15. She would take back stuff from the customer, you know it would be used, but she would take it back. The customer was never wrong. And Christmas Eve, she would do things...customers would lay present away and forget them and we would drive them to their house. So I really learned a tremendous amount from my Mom, but because she is you Mom you never really recognize it. Um, and even stuff now, now I look back and I think those things had a tremendous impact influence on me. And, I actually, that whole side of my family are high achievers for their time and I look at my Mom and I think she kinda did the same thing. And, even though we are talking sport psych I think my family background and my high school coaches, who, you know my Dad died, but they...sports. I wasn't very confident, but I did sports and I worked hard even though I wasn't real killed I got a lot of success and that opened up a lot of doors and somehow I think all this stuff comes back to play. And, I actually think my interest in sport psych; I played ahead of guys that were physically better, but not as motivated. So there were all these kind of experiences that led me to sport psych. I hope that babble...

Could you tell me more about your experience of working with the support staff (coaches, parents, trainers) that surround an athlete in an athletic setting?

I think I have learned over the years that, I started in coaching education, and back when Craig and I were in school nobody did sport psych even though I might have wanted to. But, I started in coaching education and I think that was pretty helpful because you learn how the coaches think. Um, and now, I kinda evolved over the years and now if you want to have maximum effects, the more people on the board that you got on your side the higher the probability that you are gonna be successful; kind of systems approach. So I've kind of recognized that, so when I have a preference, my preference is to work with the athlete and work with their coach and who ever else is involved with them. And, when you have the right people, and sometimes you get a coach and your like this isn't gonna work. You still can help a little. But, when you get the right one you are really, really effective. Um, so it's pretty egotistical to think that some athlete comes in, and even if I am doing a great job, they see me like once every week or two weeks, and they see the coach every day in practice. So the more I can work with significant others in that athletes life, the more I load the dice in my favor by working with a lot of people in the system. Now, sometimes don't do that because it is not possible, but that is ideal. Somebody at the USOC, I think it was Shane Murphy told me once; and, this goes back to knowing your own abilities. But, the PGA was going to do something in Sport Psych, or maybe it was tennis, and I flew to Jacksonville and it was all tennis guys and I was like why am I here? I couldn't figure out why I was there, so I asked the guy and he said, uh, you know whenever we talked to people your name came up and they said a lot of people will come in and work one-on-one, but you tend to go in and build systems. So when you leave there is a system and a program. I think that is kind of my coach training. So that was a real revelation for me cause I never thought of myself that way.

You mentioned that you have had experiences where you meet with the coach and instantly know that it is not going to work. Could you tell me more about what those experiences are like?

You can't always have a peak consulting experience. Like we wrote an article for a book where I described working with the freestyle ski team in Nagano and Jeff Good, the coach, was superb there and it was like the peak, you know, consulting experience. Other times an athlete comes in and the coach might not buy into sport psych or the coach is a jackass. It could be a whole number of things. Or, they don't want anybody to know about it and I still work with them, but I kinda realized, and you can help those people, it might be harder sometimes. Like one time, a good example, when I did the ski team stuff I had worked with the coach and it was going really well and then that coach was fired and they brought a new coach in. And that was really frustrating because I knew what the athletes needed, but he didn't trust me enough yet, not should he, he just met me for me to tell him things. I remember having to be real patient and just say look, they're paying me and I can't be 100% effective. I could be 60% effective because I just can't go there because I relationship just isn't ready for that blunt talk. Or, he doesn't trust me enough yet for him to believe me when I say that. So, I had to be real patient. But, I remember after the Nagano Olympics stopped my work with skiing and because I was real loyal to this coach. Professionally I really respected him, then he retired. I ended up resigning and I think I surprised everybody, but the reason I resigned is because I, I don't want to say I couldn't handle it, I could have handled it if I had to, but I wouldn't have

been as effective. For me to work with you it's a lot easier for me to work when I feel that I'm going 100%. And, I just feel that my hands would have been tied and I was a little defensive about some things said about the previous coach, so I just decided it had been a good run and I moved on.

Could you tell me more about what that experience is like to consult at, in your words, "100%"?

Well, I mean you can view it a couple of ways. First, there is like peak experience, flow. I mean it's like teaching, sometime you are on and it's great. And sometimes consulting you just click and it's a great session. You know it's like why you do this stuff cause you do it to help people, but it makes you feel worthy. And, there's other side of it that has nothing to do with your effectiveness per say, but like okay I have this information I impart onto the athlete, but do to structural constraints in the system it's just not going to be 100% effective because there is inefficiency. It's weird because sometimes you get lucky; it's kinda like statistics. There is a reason the house always wins in Las Vegas. And there are certain constraints in consulting that uh, uh, um, maximize or minimize your effectiveness. There have been times where I will not take a consult now that I am more experienced. I don't need that. I don't want to go in and fail. Now, there will be other times I will take that because I may just want to help the kid out of no-man's-land.

Could you tell me more about those experiences where you have decided not to provide sport psychology consultation?

There's not a tremendous amount; it's not like I am refusing things all the time. It's kinda like somebody comes and says, "Hey, would you like to work with our team?" And, like I work with our baseball team. And, that is a great example of they don't pay me anything, there's is no support. I really enjoy it, but I just don't have enough time. So we do great group sessions with baseball. I have done it for 10 years. The coach, Mike Gatzky, is the president of US Baseball. He's connected; he's a great coach. And, one of the reasons I like doing it is he's a great coach. But, I'm very realistic in that I would love to do individual sessions, but that has nothing to do with my university responsibilities, even though I wish it did. So I make it work, but say a coach here wants to work with us and I just don't think the coach is that put together. I'll tell them I'm too busy. Part of it is knowing myself. I am high-task and high-achievement and I like to win, I like to win. And, part of being successful in this business is being realistic, under promise-over delivery. But, pick your battles and situations right. And, the hassle factor, back when I didn't have any body asking me to do consulting I would work with anybody [laughter]. You know, like wrestling all those years with US Wrestling I got tired of not getting picked up. It was so unorganized. Then I go work with skiing and I get picked up and they paid me.

Could you tell me more about your consulting experience with US Wrestling?

You always have some of that, and Ken Ravizza talks about it. I think some of it, uh, you get more experience, like when you're traveling a lot you get, "Why don't you stay with my family?" Sometimes that can be really nice, but sometimes when you don't know the people you would much rather be in a hotel room. So some of it as you go through this

business your needs change. Like, travel sucks and I do a lot of it. But, how I am going to get taken care of. Now when I travel I have to do a lot of work. So, uh, the most valuable commodity that I have, although the university doesn't think it, is my time. I've got a lot of things that I want to do with my time and if I do something I want to do it really well. Certain principles I have. Like business consulting, I get a ton of money, but a 14, 15 year-old kid. That's a freebie, I'll do it for free. I never want not do the Bad News Bears and forget where you came from. So, I balance all this stuff out in my head.

To go back to that original question, is there anything about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that you would like to share?

Um, the only thing is I think it is real important to be realistic. You don't always have peak, sometimes you go and consult your guts out and the kid doesn't listen to ya. Sometimes you are not effective. I don't care how good you are. Sometime you blow it. If you are experienced enough you usually don't have catastrophes, but it wasn't a peak day [laughter]. Um, I think, you, it goes back to what we talked about before. You need to know yourself. On one hand I've got this spectacular confidence and on the other hand I am an insecure person. I want people to like me. So I think that ends up helping me in some things, but I want everyone to like me and get along. But, sometimes I think it would be easier to say, "screw you!" [Laughter] And, I think sometimes when we study Olympic champions, to be really good at something it is not easy. And, there's costs and there's benefits. There is a quote by Howe when he is talking about talent development. Talent development always comes with a cost. So, if you are going to get really good at this field there are some huge benefits and there is some costs. So, kinda being aware of those um, and realizing that you work with a team and they don't do good it is a dagger through your heart. I did a thing this fall for all University athletes at night and some were attentive and the basketball guys and just sitting there rolling their eyes. And, I know this sounds awful but now they are having a losing season and I'm feeling pretty good [laughter]. But, that's not the most professional thing, but it's true. So I'm still the same kid. You make some mistakes; you get better. It's real hard to describe to people because I am confident that I am good at this and I can help people. And, I usually don't blow it too much; I think very seldom. But, it's not always a peak experience. I remember being at the Olympics and Johnny Moseley wins a gold medal and he's jumping up and down and I'm like great. And, two minutes later this kid who I thought really deserved it loses, or has bad luck, and I'm crying. There's highs and lows. Somehow that sensitivity comes into that.

Co-Participant: Keith Henshen (KH)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sports psychology consultation to athletes?

Its been very rewarding and spent a long career doing that. Um, my experience itself has been a learning process and I continue to learn even today because no two human beings are exactly the same. They are all unique and I think as you have more and more people you have worked with through out the years, maybe you have more and more skills to continue your work with them. So it has been a learning process from day one.

Could you tell me a little bit about what you mean by “learning process?”

Well, I think that people give you both verbal and non-verbal types of indications of what is going on and then you, I guess as you get more experience you are able to cut through some of the things that are really important and some things that are not and provide them with examples so they can identify with what they are going through and work on the actual issues behind the issues. I think that’s the process that learning really gives you is maybe more insight or intuition into what really the problems are.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by “issues behind the issues?”

Well, many times people are referred or they come in and say I am anxious. That is a catch-all word for a lot of different areas to be frank, and there might be other issues behind that, fear types of things which is another higher form for anxiety. Most people only see the symptoms, they don’t see the real issues that must be addressed before they can actually move forward and change their behavior, so to speak.

What has that experience been like then in dealing with people that come in with symptoms as you say?

It’s a learning process for them, too. In the sense that they say, “Oh yeah, that is correct, this is what I am doing and I never thought about I might be doing this for this reason.” That is what I mean by the whole thing is a learning process for both myself and for the person that I am working with.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by the phrase “it’s a learning process” for the person you are working with?

Well let me just open that and say that uh, I work to loose my job. What I am trying to do is to give a person a new set of skills that they can incorporate in their repertoire so that they are not dependant upon me any longer and they feel that they are now capable of dealing with whatever the issue might be and it may be a different way, but at least they have some tools to go ahead and fix the issues. That is the learning process. Kind of opposite from a clinical type of situation, but not really. Because I don’t want them dependent on me, I want them to take these skills and go ahead and help themselves grow and develop a little further.

If your goal is to “work to loose your job” in your words, what has that experience been like?

Rewarding, very. That is the important thing, I feel very good about when people no longer need me. And that's from the performance issue, they have changed their behaviors and so forth and they are now doing things that they are capable of doing or have always capable of doing. I think that one of the, I guess I'll make this comparison, if I was in clinical psychology, when I would be through with a patient, I would be through with a patient. When I am in performance psychology, I am never through with someone in the sense that they probably will remain good friends and things like this which is a different type of situation. I don't necessarily look at them as clients. I guess I compare this to the learning process when you have a great teacher that teacher is always there.

You have used this term, “performance psychology,” what do you mean by that?

Well I think most of what we read in the textbook and so forth started with athletes in the physical performance area. But I think what we have to offer could be to businessmen, to surgeons, to all types of people. Anyone that performs, there are still some psychological areas that they need to be proficient in. And maybe skills that they need to have to perform consistently and well all of the time. So it is not just a physical modality it could be in other areas.

Could you tell me about the “other” areas, not just the physical as you mentioned?

Um, music to some extent if it is instrumental, would be physical, but it has a great cognitive component as well. And, I have worked with trial lawyers and surgeons. Any body that is under a great deal of pressure to perform, and I know other people in our field have worked with astronauts. People have to be in control of all of their capacities to perform well no matter what the modality of expression might be. And, uh, almost all of us probably have some physical component to it, fine motor skills, but I don't look at it as the same as physical exertion that goes along with athletics.

What has the experience been like to work with people that are “really under pressure to perform”, as you say?

Well, again, I think, again, I think that it is interesting for me in that it keeps me stimulated, but I am not so sure that performance isn't performance, no matter what arena you do it. I just think that once they see that hey, whether it be in music, dance, or opera whatever it might be - acting, once they see, “Hey, I can make myself even better by being more in control of the situation or environment, rather than the environment controlling me.” Then I think it pretty much levels out in the same skills they have to have.

What do you mean by the phrase “performance is performance?”

Well, we think of performance, what I mean, let me define that - performance is on demand demonstrations of learned skills and abilities. Now, those learned skills and abilities, could be in public speaking, they could be in athletics, they could be in music, they could be in a lot of different things, but that is what I mean by performance. You

have to be able to perform on demand the things that you have learned and bring your abilities to the forefront. And that is why I say that, “performance is performance.”

You have often mentioned that your experience of working with athletes has been rewarding. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

Um, a lot of things reward me, in the sense that I feel good about what they have garnered from our interaction. Just like when I am teaching, I teach some classes of 250 people, and that in itself is challenging because of the numbers but it is rewarding in the sense when I can leave some periods and say I had them involved. I had them in the palm of my hand and they got the message that I was trying to give to them. And I don't think that that is any different than a one on one. And it is very disconcerting when you are working with someone, and they seem to grasp the message when they are with you, but then their behavior in crucial situations, they resort back to their old bad habits. That is unrewarding.

What do you mean by the term “having people in the “palm of your hand”?”

Well they are stimulated in the sense that they want to learn more about how they can make themselves better. And isn't that why we're all here. The human animal isn't the fastest strongest, what we are really capable of doing is learning. And we do that best that we know of in the animal kingdom and when you stimulate that whether it be cognitive or physical or whatever to me that's- when you give them something like that and they want more, to me that is again rewarding.

What has your experience been like working with these individuals who “want more?”

Well, eventually, I loose my job. Eventually, they are capable of taking themselves beyond where I am capable of directing them. And in all these situations, I think you need to meet them where they are and take them where they need to be. Once they get to where they need to be, then they are beyond me. They may not be beyond themselves, but they are beyond me.

You mentioned some experiences of working with athletes have been unrewarding. Could you tell me a little bit more about that experience?

Oh, yeah, I can give you one that I am agonizing over right now. One of our university basketball players is going to go on into the NBA, and he is having a down year free throw shooting, and he will come and work with me and he will say, “Yeah, yeah, that is good.” And we will work on the things that he needs to do and in a pressure situation it looks like he has a brain lock. And I am kind of trying to figure out where else I can go with this individual. Because he has tremendous ability but he cannot bring out sometimes. And I just want to take a big bat and slug him, because it is frustrating to me that I am not being successful.

What is that experience like for you when you are not successful?

Frustrating, agonizing in the sense that I know there has to be a way to reach that individual, but yet I have not found the key to unlock that yet. It maybe my style, it may

be his style, it maybe a combination. I may have to refer him to one of my colleagues and start anew, because you don't ever want to loose these kinds of people, not because it is an ego thing, but because they can do it, but my style might not be the one to be the best for them.

Could you tell me a little more about what you mean when you say, "where else can I go with this athlete"?

Yeah, and I think that it's probably like anybody else, it's not a failure, but it's sure not a success. And you don't want to leave the person hanging because you feel that they can do these things. And the thing that bothers me most, is that I pride myself being fairly creative on how I approach lots of things and doing some things that are out of the ordinary to make points and get them to try certain things. And, when that doesn't work I feel that I have not done my job. That is the frustrating part about it.

You called yourself "creative" and said you do things that are "out of the ordinary", what do you mean by that?

I think that, as you read the literature on expertise, I think the more experience a person has, the more intuitive they do some things. And some of the times that I have, I guess the creativeness, I'll do some things that somebody will "say, geese, why did you do that, what did you see?" And you know you could have lost that person along the line there because of your directness with them, or what have you. I don't know, I guess there is... I'll frame this by saying that there is an art and there is a science in what we do, in consulting particularly. The science is in all the books. The art is in a combination or interaction between can you take that information and apply it in a meaningful fashion to the people that you're working with. I think that there is an art to teaching. We all can read the books, but can you take your personality in there and there is an art to counseling. Can you take what you can bring to the table and have meaning to the other person?

Could you tell me about that experience of when you have had to refer athletes out?

I think that comes from the experience as well. I think that most good teachers can reach to a pretty high level, 95% of their students. But there is a 5% there that you may not be able to reach. Is that failure? Well from one perspective yes, but it may not be failure in the sense that you don't just leave them cause you can't reach them, but you facilitate them going to a different style, and I think that is the important thing. And I have a hard time with certain types of people that are, how do I want to say this, they are very analytical in the sense that they force themselves to do some thing in one way. Even when I teach, computer science people are very analytical usually, and I drive them crazy cause I don't give them answers. I want them to find the answers and they want the answers and they think it is a cookbook type of thing, and it's not.

What is failure for you or what do you mean by failure in terms of your sport psychology practice?

Failure to me is not being able to reach a person and help them get to where THEY want to go. Fortunately that is not an ego type thing, although you do agonize over them, for

them because you do want them to get this information and I am not capable of giving it to them so that they can actually master it, and that is what failure is to me. When they are still not capable of giving the performance, the on demand performance that they have to have, I don't feel I have accomplished what I want to accomplish.

What has your experience been like then working with as you called them “analytical people”?

Well, it is frustrating because I don't think that way. I think there are many ways to get certain places – not just one. And that is probably a weakness of mine. Analytical people need straight types of things, a step-by-step cookbook approach many times. That to me is not fun to me whatsoever, that limits because I just don't think that way myself. Because I don't, I have trouble giving them that step-by-step process. I can't identify with it. So maybe I'll refer them to somebody that I know has been able to do that in the past.

You mentioned that “there is not just one way to get there”, what does that mean for you?

What that means is that if I am going to the state capitol from my office, there may be a straight line, but that might not be the best way, or the most exciting way, or the most stimulating way and it may not be the richest experience, but you still get there. But what you have to be able to do, or at least in my mind, is that you have to be able to help people to recognize that they can get there their own way and it is still ok.

You mentioned that in working with analytical people it limits you, what do you mean by that?

It is frustrating and stimulating as well because of the fact that I want to know why they can't see other ways to do certain things. And I want to know how they, well I actually know, that analytical mode is what our public schools teach. That is a style that is very successful in the public schools and it's very successful in education per say, but as you get to the higher levels of education such as where you are right now, that... you can't survive with just that, unless you are in exercise physiology. You really can't survive with being totally analytical in social science, there has to be many different ways, many different theories to explore, instead of just one. It intrigues me, but I think that if there is a weakness in what I do it is in that type of situation. Because I don't think that way myself, that I identify well with that.

You mentioned that working with analytical people is a weakness for you. What then is that experience like when you do work with that those types of people?

Originally it was frustrating until I decided that if you are really going to do the things you want to accomplish yourself, this should be looked at, instead of something you put off to the side, it should be something that you embrace. And I kind of look at and see what is happening with in myself and what makes me kind of turn away from things. I look at as a challenge and not something to run away from. That is something that I have tried to do and you know that is not easy to change your own experiences and add to

them, because we have been rewarded for what we do well, and that's where we would like to stay.

What has that experience been like for you when you do go after your weaknesses and try to make them better?

Well if you do have a little success in there, and you can get them to think about some of the things you are trying to talk about, then it is rewarding. Let me divert for a second, why do we do what we do? Selfishly it is for us. If we do what we do and we don't enjoy it then we change. Even though we are providing a service for everybody that comes to us, we are really doing it for ourselves in the initial stages. The outcomes are for both. But we are doing it because we enjoy the challenge, we enjoy what we are doing, and we enjoy helping people grow and develop.

If you enjoy helping people, what is that experience like for you when you feel that you have helped somebody?

That is what I work for... is that process. To know that I have made a difference in somebody's thinking patterns and behaviors and see changes that are productive and in the right direction. That is the biggest reward, not the monetary benefits. And uh, not the winning or losing either, it's watching them change.

That last part there, the phrase "watching them change", could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Well, how they approach an issue, how they handle themselves in certain situations, how they frame the challenges or the frustrations. You know you have made a difference when they are not making the same mistakes that they have made in the past.

When you know you have made a difference, like you said, what is that experience like for you?

Well, I think it's a like a peak performance. It's rewarding in the sense that again, I have made a difference. Again, whether it be in the classroom or whether it be with a performer, when you know that they are growing, that should make you feel good – not the paycheck. That is a secondary benefit, probably a good one, but it is a secondary one. But more the idea that they have come to you to learn something and you have given them something that has helped them turn on the light in their own head and now they can incorporate it. How does that make me feel? That makes me feel like I have accomplished something and I have served somebody.

You mentioned this twice, in terms of one of the benefits or rewards, but you mentioned that it is "not about the paycheck." Can you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Um, I think the way our entire society or culture is set up we have to provide some service that is valuable. And it seems like in our society the more you charge the more valuable you are. And that is always strange to me. In the first part of my career, I would literally, in order to develop a reputation, give this stuff away. In the latter stages of my career in order to limit the clientele I would charge lots of money. And I have more

business now than in the first part of my career when I was giving it away. That is what I mean by the money is not important, it is the idea that you can still give them something of value. The money is usually indicative of the value, but it is not what keeps me excited. It may keep my wife excited, but that is not what keeps me excited about what we are doing. I don't mean to downplay my wife, she just loves to shop.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what the “value” of practicing sport psychology is for you?

The value is a lasted friendship, which means that you are valued in their life as a person that they respect and want to interact with. It's, with performance, is just like a doctoral student, I don't want them just to be a valued Ph.D. in our field. I want them to be a valued associate and a valued friend. There is more social parts to this as well as intellectual parts to it. I have seen some doctoral programs where they treat the doctoral student so badly up until they get their degree and then they want this person to be a colleague. Well, they screwed that up royally because the person was a colleague the first day they walked in to the office for the first day of their Ph.D. program. That is the way I want it to be with the performers I work with. I don't want them just to come to me in the sense that it is in this limited area of performance enhancement. I want them to come to me as a total person and I want to respond to them as a total person.

Could you tell me more about what you mean by “total person?”

There are a lot of people in our lives that we go to for specialized types of things. And then when they give you those specialized types of things, they are no longer important in your life. I don't think that is what we are doing. I think that what we are doing in consulting and counseling and so forth is trying to make a difference in their total life. Not in just one small aspect, because in performance all the aspects, whether it be family, coach, team, relationships, conflicts, all of those make a difference in terms of performance. We really can't limit ourselves into just giving them things that will make them a better performer, because you have to touch many parts of their lives. And when you do that and you do it well I think that is very rewarding.

You talked about certain services are very specific and implied ours, sport psychology, is not a limiting specialization. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

People. I still get calls from people in the NBA that are on different teams. When they come in we still talk with each other and communicate with each other just because they are on a different team doesn't make that much difference. I still get contact from the Olympic athletes, high school athletes, ones who didn't have the potential to go on and compete, they still come in. To me that is important because the reward is to make a difference, that is the reward. Now, there have been people that have touched your life, maybe a coach or a teacher or somebody other than your parents, which everybody should have that experience. But, they have touched your life and made a difference. I really think that is what we do. We have so much good information in performance psychology that we can touch there lives and make a difference for them. And it shouldn't be just temporary it should be long lasting.

One of the most interesting things you have said so far is that our specialization is “people.” What do you mean by that, could you tell me more about that?

I just think that we are in a service profession and we are trying to touch lives and we are in a people profession. And, the clients are our people. They are just not performers – they are people. I think that’s a weight. They are not sick, they are not ill in any sense, yet they are not special. They are people with physical talents that need to be treated as people. I think that’s uh, many times in our profession, a handful of people, maybe 25, that work at the professional level. People say well, gee isn’t that great that you are working with all these high level athletes, and I have always been amazed at that question. My philosophy has always been well they are not special people, they are just people with special physical talents. They are still people. One of the keys to success in consulting at the highest levels is to treat people as people and not as special entities. You can’t be a fan of these people; you just have to understand that they are people.

What has your experience been working with these high profile/elite, professional level people?

It’s been fun! It’s been lucrative. It’s been rewarding because my style is not of adulation. It is one of; I’ll lose my job too. Just like they are gonna lose theirs eventually when their skills are no longer at the level. But, I lose mine and how do I say this, I don’t want to sound arrogant, but that has been a real key to my success, they are not special. And they know that I am doing it because I love what I do, and I want to help them stay there as long as I can and I don’t want part of their glory. And that means more to them, because they are surrounded many times by people who want part of them, people who aren’t genuine. And, I have had some wonderful experiences and I think that it is because of my brutal honesty sometimes.

What has your experience been like working with athletes that, as you said, are surrounded by people that want part of their glory? Could you tell me a little bit more about that?

Well, I think that most people are fans of people who are popular. Most people feel that if they associate with them that makes them somehow equal to those people and they can get into the limelight. That is just the opposite of what normally happens, and that is the opposite of what the people want. They want you to be interested in them as a whole person and not just in their ability to shoot a basketball or hit a hockey puck or whatever it might be. And they test you to see if that is what is really going on. And once they find that you are not interested in their glory but interested in them as people that puts it at a different level.

You mentioned that one of the keys to your success is your brutal honesty, could you tell me a little more about what you mean by that?

It’s been interesting, I have lost a few people because of my brutal honesty because I have offended them and I didn’t mean to. But then again, I would have to do what I do and to live with myself I still have to tell them what I think when they ask. I’ll give you an example... a professional basketball player. He called me one night at three in the

morning, he was on the plane and had just gotten in a fight with a coach and he said I want to talk to you in an about an hour when we get there at four in the morning. First, to have that kind of relationship with someone is good in the extent that they know you are there when they need you. So we go to breakfast. He says I'm quittin'. I'm done. He was really emotional. I said, you know that is good. That's what I'd do. You are making \$10 million a year. I'd go in there tomorrow and tell them, I don't want to do this anymore. And, by the way did you ask your wife. He cussed at me for a little bit. I said, now how stupid is that to let your emotions run you at this particular time. And, when we worked through and kind of mitigated his anger. I said, okay, this is what you gotta do. It is going to be hard for you and hard for the coach, but this what you gotta do. This is the way that I would approach it. Now, I could have listened and sympathized, but that is not what he needed at this particular time. He needed another kick in the butt in a different direction. Consequently, he did what we talked about and it turned out right. That's rewarding, both for the coach and for the player and probably the organization.

What is that experience like, of having a player call you in the middle of the night for help? Could you tell me more about that?

It kind of reinforces the style that I use. And I think that any of the people that you are talking to will give you the same types of stories. We don't have office hours in the sense that you can call me between 8-2 and then I will work you in 3 months. When you need us we are there. That is what people do who care about other people. We all are familiar with, when we have something that is important to us and the receptionist says, well the doctor is booked until 2008 and your thinking I could be dead by 2008 [laughter]. If I can make an analogy here that popped into my head. We are like pediatricians. Babies don't just get sick at 9 in the morning. They get sick at 1am at night, and that mother or father needs you at that time, not at another time. And, the most important thing in their world is what is happening to their son or daughter, and good pediatricians are there. And that is what we have to be. Time is not the important thing, it is whether you are there or not. That's hard cause I don't know how pediatricians live. When it happens like that you have to be available you can't put them off.

Is there anything, doc, in going back to that initial question that you feel you would like to add about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

My experience has been great. I have had ups and downs and there have been times that I have not been satisfied with what I have done. But one thing that I think that has always kept me on the straight and narrow is that I have been true to myself. I have always tried to be genuine. If you can do that you are going to not be able to work with some types of people, but you also will be able to work with a lot of types of people. When people recognize that you are you, and you are genuine and not playing a role, the fences come down many times. But it takes a while for some people to realize, and some people intuitively seem to understand that, but if you are going to go into this profession you do have to be genuine.

What has your experience been like in terms of working with people that are resistant to sports psychology?

Well, I have found the more you work with people, as total people, not just their performance side, the easier it is to break down their resistance. And uh, we are working in an area that in our society you can do anything to their body but you can't mess with their head – particularly true in sports. You have to get around that, most successfully, I think they have to realize that you care about them as people and not just their physical being. And, I make points to talk to them about their families, their kids, and how they are doing. When you do that they realize that you are interested in them as a person and not how many goals they score. And, I fully expect to have interaction with them when I am 80 and they are 60, not that when they get traded from a team that I am working with they are no longer important.

What do you mean by the phrase "you can't mess with their head?"

I think culturally when you use the term psychology in most people's minds they think you are talking about a shrink. They are going to psychoanalyze you, you know find out all the inner machinations that make you an idiot or whatever. I just think that our entire society, uh, when it is a physical injury we have no qualms about going to see a physician, but when it is something that has to do with the brain or the mind, we have some real hesitancy in getting help. I think that is because we are identified in sport psychology with that word psychology; we share in that kind of view from many people. I think it is wrong, but that is the cultural aspect. That there is something wrong with my mind and that is the worst that can happen to me.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

No, I hope I have given you what you wanted.

Co-Participant: Sean McCann (SMC)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sports psychology consultation to athletes?

No [laughter].

Ok, say it again.

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sports psychology consultation to athletes?

I don't know if I should do sort of a chronological approach or....

Well, I guess I'll start that way, just to frame it a little bit. I learned about sports psychology before I went to grad school, but I didn't really know how it worked. I didn't have any role models or mentors or knowledge of anybody who actually did sports psychology I had just heard the term before. During grad school I continued doing sports, I was a pretty serious bike racer. I had a professor at college that let me do an independent study on sports psychology. And, I basically just read a lot of journals and developed a couple of studies looking at factors in cycling. Mostly pain management and also impact of anxiety on performance. And just developed a couple of independent research studies. And, uh, also about this same time, I learned about the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, through reading... actually mentioned in a cycling magazine. They mentioned these sports scientists and talking about physiology and biomechanics, they mentioned also sports psychology. So, I wrote to find out that they actually didn't about it. I found out that they hadn't actually had research assistants in sports psychology because it was the last sports science discipline added here. So I kept pestering the person who was here at the time, which was Shane Murphy, and Shane eventually relented and let me be the first research assistant. So after I did that I went back to grad school and redid my dissertation to focus on sport area, and basically kept an interest in it, but didn't really see any career in it. But was able to get a job here after my post-doc year and have been here ever since. So that is sort of the chronology of how I got into it.

You mentioned going back to redo your dissertation, could you tell me a little bit about what that experience was like for you?

Well, essentially, when I was in here in Colorado Springs as a research assistant, I became real interested in uh, being more specific about pain management in endurance athletes and was able to do a couple of pretty quick studies with a couple of pretty elite cyclist. It was obvious and flowed right out of my interest in sport, as well as, my interest in psychology. When I went back to grad school, before I was doing the sport psychology stuff I was in a pretty niche field of clinical psych -- cross cultural psych and pathology. Which would have prepared me for being a professor in a clinical psych program and little else. Um, I was also doing a lot of work with kids and families in Hawaii. Uh, I went back, in terms of the research I was really interested in this idea of the mind/body connection. The way I sort of sold it to my professors was to emphasize health psychology as a bridge. So I ended up doing some work with diabetes and behavior management. Sticking with medication regimens and stuff like that. I found a

professor with interests in that area and she was willing to sponsor my dissertation research on pain issues in elite athletes. Then I had to go to the medical school and find people who could be the experts on physiology and that sort of thing.

You mentioned the first thing that you did at the Olympic Center was to work with elite cyclists, and I was wondering if you could tell me a little more about what that experience was like?

Uh [pause], it was interesting because I didn't realize it at the time, but it was a unique opportunity to be able to work with pretty serious athletes right before they competed or just before they were being measured in a test. That would soon determine if they would be traveling internationally or not. I was able to get access to some pretty intense thoughts and feelings that I have since discovered is pretty unusual in sport psychology. It is hard to get access to elite athletes just before they compete. Usually they don't let you do that. I was naïve; I didn't realize that was a unique thing. I certainly enjoyed it and thought it was a very interesting area. And, the more I read the more I realized we didn't know. And so it was one of those things where Joseph Camel thing – follow your bliss. It clearly was a lot of fun doing that work. And that's continued to be the main thing when I describe this job, is that it is really fun. I can't imagine doing anything that would be more fun than the work that I do now. But, that was really the first experience of that and how energizing and how much fun I have doing this work.

You used the two terms “fun” and “energizing.” Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean when you use those two words in reference to your work providing sport psychology consultation?

Well, I'll start with energizing. You know, having done work in um, clinical psychology with some pretty serious psychopathology, you are often times in that work you feel proud of the work you do and you feel very proud of helping peoples lives, but it also can be really draining. You come back from a day of working with an adolescent with a very abusive family, just feeling very down and drained and need to recharge your batteries. But, my experience working here is that I typically have more energy at the end of the day than when I get here. This is because uh, I have been around folks whose issues are intense and for them quite serious, but generally they are not life or death issues, and uh, but always these folks here are motivated to do the work. Especially at this level, here. You are working with people who want to work with you. They haven't been forced into work with you, for the most part. So coming into a room with a group of athletes or one coach or one athlete who are just trying to be their very best. It is hard not to get energized by that. You have to be sort of dead, not to pull some of that energy and let it bathe you. In terms of the fun part, I am somebody who likes to have fun. I don't take myself too seriously. Uh, I take my job pretty seriously, but I think in this world it never hurts to have a good sense of humor and recognize this for what it is. To be able to be doing sport psychology work for a living is amazing. You hear all the time, athletes saying, “You know I can't believe I am actually getting paid to play basketball.” Well, I am getting paid to do sport psychology, which is just a blast. It is fun on so many different levels from a laughing with the people you work with to being around and

seeing great athletes perform amazing things. The fun of an intense experience and getting through that, it is just fun on many different levels.

One of the key things that you said is that it has been really fun to work with athletes that want to work with you. What has that experience been like for you?

You know to be honest, I'm um, as lucky as I am, I am especially lucky on the front of pretty much my whole sport psychology career has been working with highly motivated athletes who have already been pre-selected. You know, the athletes who maybe like myself who didn't quite have the motivation that they needed to make it to the elite level, I don't see those people. I don't work with them very much. For the most part I am working with people who are motivated and focused and really know what they want. So I know even in the world of sports psych I am really lucky to work with that kind of population. You know, it's sort of the experience of giving someone a homework assignment. I give homework assignments, quite a bit, and I give them a 10-minute exercise and they ask can I do 20 minutes. That sort of thing is a real, rare pleasure.

You stated, based on some of your research assistant experiences, you now realize it is hard to get access to elite athletes before they compete. Could you tell me what you meant by that?

The field has changed dramatically from 1998 to 2003. One of the differences was when I was first here at the training center, a lot of people were doing research and uh, that was the primary focus of USOC's sport psych program – which was sort of to increase the knowledge base. Now it is more from a diet of 60% research and 40% service, it is now about 95% service. That is part of it here, I think it is probably, we have the connections and relationships that we could do that kind of work, but we are a little bit weary about having a negative impact on the service relationship by focusing a lot on the research. And so that's sort of our institutional issue, but I think it is an issue for the field. You either, typically you are in a college setting where you can get access to people, but they are not elite athletes. Or, you can work with elite athletes but in a way that is very unobtrusive and doesn't interfere with their performance. It's rare when you get the combination of those two things.

What do you mean when you say you are “weary of having a negative impact on the athletes?”

Well, to be honest um, sport psychology now is – at the USOC – is seen in a very positive light, in a light similar to strength and conditioning. Maybe not for everyone, but for many teams an essential service, that is an extension of the coaching staff. Clearly, one of the reasons that is in a positive light, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the only people's agenda that really matters are the coaches and athletes. So as soon as you start doing research, it's not so clear whose needs are really being met. Most of the studies that you do um, well many of the studies that you do have a great potential to greatly impact the researchers career, but frequently have no impact on the athlete who is filling out a form or taking an hour of their time to do something. [Pause] So that becomes quickly apparent. Back in the 80's, I would hear so many times from athletes that, “I worked with a sport psychologist and I gave him all these tests and I never heard

back, I signed up to get the feedback on what the results were, but I never heard back.” Over and over and over I heard that same story. So it’s not that we are anti- knowledge; we are supportive of the scientist-practitioner model. We shifted our focus from being the primary researchers to disseminating the research of others and finding the way to translate research into simple ideas for coaches and athletes.

You mentioned that as a sport psychology consultant at the USOC you are seen as an “extension of the coaching staff.” What do you mean by that phrase?

Yeah, and that’s one we’ve had a conscious philosophical decision to focus on is higher quality services and less teams. To the point of really creating a mission statement for ourselves in terms of what we can really do here. The USOC is a crazy organization. In the news right now, one of the issues we have here is that we have so many athletes and so few staff in sport psychology that we have to decide who we want to be. What we are moving towards is that we will do high quality work with a limited numbers of teams and we will do stuff for all teams. But, where we get into trouble is when we try to do decent quality work with a great number of teams. We founder a little bit, but as we become more focused on a smaller number of teams, you start traveling with, before Salt Lake in 2001, 2002, I spent 65 days on the road with the team. You really are around a lot. You see what is going on and the coaches come to see you as a normal part of meetings. As resources for them, so you become part of the coaching staff in a way. Um, there are all sorts of philosophical issues there but bottom line, like the coaches, there is some accountability focused on a small number of athletes. Some opportunity for things that you couldn’t do if you were trying to do other kinds of work. There’s potential costs associated with being part of the coaching staff too.

You mentioned before the Salt Lake Games you traveled with one particular team. What was that experience like for you?

I loved it! Loved it. Because you are focused and anyone who has been a coach for a serious team knows how consuming it can be. You know it feels like a real luxury to be able to focus on just one group. And when you are on the road with the team you really are just focused on one group. You can catch up on emails and things but it’s not like being in your office where the phone is constantly ringing and emails are constantly coming in.

You mentioned that the USOC sport psychology department’s philosophy has really changed from “less quality/more teams to more quality/less teams.” Could you tell me more about that experience or what you mean by that?

Yeah, um, it’s evolved, as sport psychology becomes more trusted. It’s become normalized as something to enhance performance. Again kind of like strength and conditioning, its just part of the program for serious teams. There has been the opportunity to travel more, but also for those of us that work here, you start to realize the limits of what you can do. You start to get feedback on what works for teams and what doesn’t work for teams. We’re starting to see... okay maybe you can be with a team too long, kind of like a coach can go stale for a team. I was just reading Larry Bird’s recent book where he says, “No coach should be with a team more than 3 years cause the

athletes stop listening.“ So we are trying to now see what is the upper limit in terms of working with teams. But, we knew for sure before, what’s not enough, always feeling we were doing just not enough. You get to know the athlete and get to know the coaches, but teams don’t plan their crises for when you are there. They happen all the time and if you are not around enough you are cut out of the loop because they don’t pull you in if they can’t count on you.

What do you mean when you say, “we know what isn’t enough”, in terms of the amount of time you spend with a team?

It is dissatisfying professionally [not getting a lot of time with a team or athlete] because you know you could really make a difference, but you are not making a difference because you just aren’t there enough. And, it becomes uh, you get into tradeoffs in terms of balance of life. Do you want to have a coach’s life and family balance issues that affect anyone that travels a lot? As well as our mission, how many teams should we work with and how do we make those decisions. Which teams should we work with? There’s lots of variables in that equation, but we are quite comfortable with the idea of choosing few teams that you really have the chance to make a difference. And, really try to make a difference and really focusing on one of our mission statements here at USOC which is “from national teams to Olympic success.” That cuts out a lot of potential sports psych work that we could do. Our mission is not to do developmental sports psychology. Our mission is not to work with teams who do not have a chance at Olympic success. There are lots of different ways to define that, personal best and everything, but it would indicate that we probably shouldn’t work with sports that constantly – every year a new coach comes in. The NGB’s a mess, or there’s not a commitment to excellence or the coach is not into sport psychology. All of those variables play in, and we have made very conscious decisions, you know there are some very great athletes in this sport, but the coach is never going to allow us to be effective in sports psychology, so we choose not to institute a program with this team. That’s sort of where we are at in terms of being comfortable in being selective about the work we do.

That selection process is fascinating. Can you tell me a little bit more about what that experience is like in terms of choosing which teams you will work with at the USOC?

Um, well, you have to kind of look ahead. From a practical point of view at the USOC, the most important issues are the Olympics. There is a natural four-year calendar that comes into play. There is lots of turn over of athletes and coaches every four years. So it’s a logical time to re-evaluate and make arrangements with teams. For example, a team I am working with and will work with quite a bit through Athens is the shooting team. After their experience in Sydney where they had a lot of athletes make it into the finals and the way shooting works is like archery. You shoot for a couple of hours and then the eight people with the highest score then go into the final. So, they discovered in Sydney that they had lots of athletes make the finals and then a small percentage of those athletes won medals. They thought the big push needed to be in sport psychology and they made a very conscious decision to do a first class sports psych program. So, they really got the athletes to know the sport psychologists and take that sports psychologist to competitions.

Develop individual sports psych training programs; the whole nine yards on the performance enhancement side of sport psychology. So we have been working with that team in a real straightforward way. This will culminate in Athens and our goal is to win more medals than we ever won before. And, sport psychology is hopefully going to have an impact on that. We are getting more and more comfortable in saying that if we do our job correctly we should be able to help performance. Which is something that a lot of times you struggle with, in terms of do you actually take credit or do you say you can actually make a difference? We are at the point that if we do good work, with good teams, we should be able to make a difference, and if we don't then get somebody else in. That is a sport where they have good athletes. They have a culture of excellence in the sport. Their goal is to enhance their medal count, double it actually. They have coaches who are quite into sport psychology. On all of their plans that they turn into the USOC, they all have sport psychology as their number one additional thing aside from coaching. All those factors are in place; that is clearly a sport that we can make a difference. That is one that is pretty easy. There are other sports that are not as easy because maybe the athletes are really talented, but the coaches are not into sport psychology. Or, maybe the coach and athletes are into it, but the NGB – the governing body – is kind of a mess. At the USOC, there is actually something called a tier system, where athlete talent and NGB skills are having an effective plan. Or, just an x-y axis, or a series of boxes you can go into from tier one to tier five sports in terms of which ones are the locks for winning medals and which ones are probably never going to win medals.

You mentioned that you have struggled in the past taking credit for a job well done. Could you tell me a little more about that experience?

I think that is a good question for a phenomenological study. It is complex and subtle and uh. The two sorts of dilemmas that I see in sport psychology are, on one side, you get potential guru types that will promise their services if you hire them. They will guarantee you will win something. That to me is a, a, just horrible. Typically the people that write these statements are sending them off to 15 to 20 teams. It obviously has nothing to do with their sense of whether they think this team can win. Simply its more about if I make these brash statements, people will say, "Hey, let's try this guy out." And, then they get their foot in the door and you know they can earn some money or hang around. So that is one extreme. On the other extreme is, as I heard Bill Morgan say at ACSM one time, there is no evidence that sport psychology can have any impact so we shouldn't do any applied work; we should just do research. And, that is I think also horrible. I don't agree with that at all. I am a psychologist by training and I think that psychologist can have an impact on behavior and can have an impact on people's lives. Clearly sports psychology is simply applying that field of knowledge to the area of sports and have an impact there too. Between those two extremes there's issues of... how do you want to play it? And, there's people who get uncomfortable with getting to strong. And, there are people that get uncomfortable with "Can't you guys commit to anything." Where I am at personally, and as a reflection of our staff of four sport psychologists are, we are going to put ourselves on the line and say, "Look, we are here to impact performance and if you are not satisfied that we are having an impact on performance and you don't feel like you can measure what we do or that it isn't working for your coaches

or your athletes, replace us. Don't work with us. But we are going to do our damndest to have an impact. That is sort of where we are at this point in time. I have written about this issue in different things and have talked about it. I had a very powerful experience in Salt Lake City where I had worked with lots of athletes – Salt Lake City was my fifth Olympic games traveling with the teams either being the or one of the sports psychologists for the US Olympic teams. But again, here is a situation where we are focusing just on specific teams and I was working with the women's alpine team. And um, talk about living and dying with a performance, and I died with the performance. We had some horrible luck, we had some bad performances, we had some crazy equipment performances where skis fell off. You name it and it happened. We had one athlete who was called a "mental wreck" on national television after falling three times. So, that was really a challenge personally where for the first time I really understood what it was like to be a coach at an elite level. When you know, you know, that people are watching your performance. And uh, when a commentator for NBC says that an athlete is a mental wreck, clearly they are making reference to the mental game. So someone may argue, well, maybe the sport psychologist had something to do with that. And that is a sport where, gosh, they have had someone been working with that team for 60 days or so on the road. So that was really a good experience for me to go through that and be able to see that in my mind I had complete clarity that I did a much better job with that team getting ready for Salt Lake than I had before at Lillehammer and before at Nagano where we did have athletes who won medals in skiing. Yet, the perception was that we hadn't done the work we needed to do and it was really interesting. Again, you have to be clear in your own mind to evaluate the work that you do, but also be willing to take the hits when you are focused on working with just one team. And, not ducking it and just saying, "Hey, no it's because the ski's fell off." And, you've got to be able to say, "You know there are athletes that didn't step up to the plate, maybe there were no favorites here, but somebody could have performed better than normal." So, that was a real good example of experiencing that. That was the first time that I really felt and really understood what coaches go through.

You mentioned that you thought there was a need for sport psychologists to evaluate their work? Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Uh, yeah, there are a couple levels there. One level is to get feedback from coaches and athletes. Another level is to find a way to balance confidentiality issues with accountability issues. What I mean by that is, how does the team like skiing know what you are doing if all of your meetings are private? How do you find a structure to protect the private meetings, and yet give coaches and the people who pay the bills a sense of what is going on? And, that is what the field has not really talked about very publicly, how that works. I have seen certainly where it has gone wrong. Where coaches want access to stuff that should remain confidential and the sports psychologist has not handled it very deftly and have been fired because they got into a confrontation as opposed to having a pre-agreement on how things are going to work. And, are you guys comfortable with that and if you are not, then we probably can't work. But, we will provide you with this amount of information and we'll rate these reports after camps and tell you what we see in a general with the team.

Is there anything you haven't had the opportunity to share with regards to your experience providing sport psychology consultation with athletes that you would like to add?

[Pause]. One area, in terms the idea of developing expertise, that is real critical is the ability to bounce off other people. To be able to talk about the work you do. I have that luxury here of having colleagues which is a rarity in sport psychology. And, I don't know how you can develop without that ability to talk about the work that you do. And, I think it is a real important factor, again I don't know what it is like with out it, but I do know that it has been incredibly valuable for me uh, personally and to our staff generally to have 10 to 15% of cases that are really complicated. You know those crossroads of performance enhancement and clinical or counseling issues. Or maybe it is a really messy system issue where you've got a coach sleeping with an athlete or NGB executive-director who has a personal agenda with a coach, those sorts of issues that come up in real life. Where to be able to say, "What the heck do I do in this situation?" To be able to talk that out I think is essential and is a big problem in this field of sports psychology. Um, that is an issue for me. Another issue that I think is a real big problem is that we don't have a generally agreed upon idea of what a sport psychologist is in our field. We don't have a generally agreed upon training model. You know, I am working in an organization at the USOC which clearly shows it's inability to fix itself and I think the field of sport psychology are in a similar state where you've got different stake holder's defending their areas and people that suffer are students. And uh, that is a giant concern for me because I don't know what the future will bring for the field of sport psychology. I would be really excited if we could get to the point where we had a training model. If the USOC goes under through it's own ineptitude or terrorist acts and the economy goes under, I do have a degree that I know here's how it works and here is how you go about doing it and here is a pretty defined model. And you know coming out of graduate school what you will be able to do to support a family and I really regret that sport psychology doesn't have that. That's is an issue that I think will always be a stumbling block in terms of developing expertise. I don't know what to do about it.

You mentioned that at the USOC, you have other sports psychologists there with you. Could you tell me more about that experience?

We have both in doing weekly supervision with staff as well as peer supervision where we have group case conferences. As well as you know I have one guy, Jim Bowman, out in San Diego and we bring him in 2 to 3 times a year where we talk about our mission and plan together as a group. I am a pretty extroverted guy. But, on a professional level I learn a ton by working through supervision of great people who I steal ideas from, as well as, just being able to bounce things off other people. Just checking, am I way off course here or are you feeling this too? Have you been feeling this with any other team? I don't know what it is like not to have that, but I do know that it really is important to becoming better.

Any thing else you would like to add about your experience?

No.

Co-Participant: Shane Murphy (SMU)

Could you tell me about your experience providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

Wow! That's a broad question to kick it off. Tell you about my experience. Now, let me try to think of some ways, uh, uh, to categorize that. [Pause]. I mean I think one thing that I find fascinating about working in sport psychology is just the nature of consulting. The field itself has always been sort of hands on, where you go to the athlete and you work with them and my style has always sort of been that way. Um, even when I was working with children and adolescents I would often go the schools -- talk to the teachers. I even went to families' homes to work with children so that style came very easy to me. Um, and, but it's very different from your traditional models of training. You're taught to, to conceptualize things in very sort of diagnostic, clinical way. The model that is out there that most of your colleagues that aren't in this field talk about, is that most of the time the client comes to them, one-hour office visit, and so on. So, I think what I have found over the years is that you are often pushing the envelope, you are pushing the boundary of consulting. You run into issues, you run into situations that uh, are not often talked about in the literature or at the time, weren't being discussed at conferences and so on. Um, I found it a really challenging field from that perspective. I always enjoyed the field, I always that it was challenging from that perspective, but uh, I always felt like you had to keep your eyes open and see how do you negotiate this kind of stuff. What do you do when you are working with the team, traveling with them for two weeks? At the time we were sort of writing the book as we went along, kind of making it up as we did it. Now, I think there are some road maps out there for people, I think there have been some books that address it pretty directly. I really, like that uh, that book that Mark Andersen put out called, *Doing Sport Psychology*, which has a ton of chapters from people who have been there and talk about their real life experiences. Uh, back in 1987, there just wasn't anywhere you could turn to, to read or discuss that. So, um, I think that is one of the first things I think of when I think about what's it like to do sport psychology consulting. It's very challenging; it takes you in a lot of directions you don't always anticipate going in.

Could you tell me more about what you mean by the phrase "pushing the boundary"?

[Pause]. Well, some of it is the issues that come up, rarely; rarely does any situation turn out to be as simple as some of the neat case studies you read about in the textbooks. [Laughter] Person comes in with an anxiety problem, I'll help them with some relaxation training and that's it. You know, they come in and uh, their brother's on the team and they are having some fights with their brother and that is distracting them. The coach thinks that there is a lot more potential there, then they are putting out, so he think the guys motivation is not that high. And, there's a girl on the team that thinks if you go to a sport psychologist you're a sissy. So, so, when he comes to me, he doesn't want anyone to know about it. [Laughter] There are so many complicated factors, that's like it's not simple, it really forces you to stay on your toes at all times and even the assessment of the outcomes is quite complicated at times. So...it's not just a matter of are they performing

better, it's how are their relationships on the team? How's the relationship with the coach going? Very often, in the Olympic sports there is a whole political side to it that the athlete has to be good at uh, or, they just won't get the opportunities to compete. In many sports it is quite subjective, figure skating comes to mind. Where it really is a matter of impressing judges, getting on the right side of people and so, in, in the work you do with the athlete there may be a whole host of sort of what you would call emotional control or interpersonal type issues that you would have to work with them on. But, even with other sports that are very objective, I mean even track and field where it's very simply being the first one over the finish line. Coaches still have the discretion of who they pick to be on the relay team and who they put with who and who gets sent to the World Championships and who gets sent to the Junior World Championships. You know, kinda that sort of stuff going on all the time. So, so, the consulting, so when I say pushing the envelope part of it is the techniques you are using are not simple and uni-problem, they are multi-systemic. And that is why I have been influenced over the years by systems theory and by family therapy and some of the ones like that because those approaches you have to take into account the fact that there are multiple factors operating on the individuals environment. I think that is really important in all areas of sport psychology and even to do this day when I wrote *The Cheers and the Jeers*, a lot of what I wrote about was between parents and young athletes. I mean that's very specific example of what I'm talking about, but has, has a, a host of really interesting issues involved with it.

Could you tell me more about your experience of working with athletes that present multiple issues at the same time?

[Pause] Part of it is how sophisticated your own models are for understanding the situation. I think that is probably an area that I have grown in over the years. And, I think the field has become more sophisticated in that respect. You know, if someone is telling you something, there is an element of being a genuine person as you are counseling them, listening to them and connecting with them in the here and now. But, there always has to be that part where you are analyzing the situation and putting it into the category boxes in your own head and asking yourself, where does this fit into your own experiences of, and how might I intervene in this situation to make change happen? So your models have to be pretty sophisticated when you start to understand how many levels of interaction are going on for this individual. And, still, a heck of a lot of it still comes back to you know, sort of clarifying their own thinking. Sort of getting rid of their own irrational thoughts that sort of bog them down. You know, pointing out to them when they are being their own worst enemy. That is still a huge part of it, but then there still concrete and practical things and you might suggest you need to sit down with the coach. You need to make an appointment with an NGB official. You need to bring your Mum or your Dad in and talk to me and discuss this. You know there can be a lot of concrete interventions like that and you have to know when it is appropriate to do those things, when it is appropriate to put them on the back burner. Um, you gotta realize what some of the ramifications of those things are. You gotta realize sometimes, you are almost working, I call it subversive therapy. You are almost infiltrating the system and causing change that they don't expect. Uh, and, you know, again you have to be careful with that. You might think you have the right analysis and they might expect what you

are doing will work out fine. But, that may be at odds with one or more of the key players in the system. Where I find that happening a lot with the current clients that I have is where the young athlete and one of the parents usually have very different ways of looking at the situation they are in and I, 9 times out of 10, I am there for the athlete. Trying to reinforce their world view help them reach their goals. I have to then help the parent understand that they have to give up some of the things they have been counting on if they are going to support the athlete 100%.

Could you tell me more about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that play 'subjective' sports?

I think emotionally those are the toughest sports for athletes because um, the subjectivity of it means that nobody can ever really come to a clear, cut consensus. And, you can get into problems as simple as, is this athlete really as good as the coach is saying they are? Or, is there a limit here on how far they can go and maybe the parent needs to realize that spending another \$50,000 on such and such may not be in the best interest of the young athlete. Um, and I find that enormously hard working with the athlete because um, you go to three different people and you get three different assessments of the athletes' capabilities. Um, so I think, one thing I tell athletes up front is this is a brutal business prepare to have your heart broken. And, one thing we are going to do in some of our work together is help you be tough enough where you can bounce back from some of the negative things that get thrown at you. And, a sport like figure skating, if you've got a 13 year old athlete who is at the Junior National Level, they will get negative stuff thrown at them. A lot! And, they really do have to be able to bounce back and take the negative and either find some positive in it or, or work on the things that are objectively a weakness in their game. Or, the sport just crushes them. It crushes their resistance. It crushes their spirit and you see that a lot unfortunately. [Pause] Swimming for example. I work with swimming a lot. You know that can burn you out to, but usually just because of the sheer physical demands of the sport. It just wears a lot of athletes down and they just get to a point where the time and energy and the commitment involved becomes too much for them. But, with figure skating they still have the commitment at some level, they still love the sport, but it's the politics that kill them. So, it is different.

How has having to work within the organization of a national governing body influenced your experience of providing sport psychology consultation?

I think, I go back to what I said earlier, it has made me much more aware of a simple – cognitive-behavioral approach where you are simply working on helping the athlete clarify their thinking, remain optimistic, setting goals, so on. That only gets you to a certain level. You also have to think about the systems point of view. What's happening within the general system? And, how can I help the athlete too, understand that enough, in other words, its too much to usually think about all the time, but they do need to have some sense of control over this complex system. They need to set some system related goals. And, they need to be comfortable that those are helping keep them on track and helping them be effective. And, uh, I'm talking about Olympic athletes. That is where I have had the most experience with but, the consulting I have done with closed-sports, it's exactly the same thing. If you are in a minor league system in baseball you have to

impress the minor league coach. You have to be aware of what the talent scouts are doing when they come to see the club. You know there may be certain key players on the team you have to influence in order to get certain opportunities to really prove yourself. So, it happens at all levels, I think again, individual approaches to sport psychology counseling only get you so far. You really have to be aware of systemic-organizational type approaches. And, that's why, when I take on a consulting role with a whole team or a school. For example, quite a few high schools have hired me on as a consultant. I really try to lay out the terms of the contract very explicitly and very clearly. That gives me a lot freedom to operate. It gives them a very clear picture of what to expect. And then it's not just a short-term thing. It gives us the possibility for long-term interventions, where maybe we decide we need to make some systems changes. We have the time and the energy in which to do that evaluate whether that is working or not. I've...you know another thing I have found increasingly over the years is I have come unhappy and unsatisfied when I do a very short-term consultation or intervention. Because I just realize that at some level it's not really gonna be enough to cause any real long-term change. You have to have follow-up and you have to have consistent follow-up to really see any long-term change.

Could you tell me more about your experience of working with a team or tell me more about what it is like working with athletes and a coaching staff?

Uh, my preferred approach is to work with the coaching staff first and foremost. Even before I see the athlete because they are the key people. They are the ones the athlete looks up to and anything I do with the athlete is not going to work unless the coaching staff is reinforcing that generally. And, even to the point over the years, there will be a lot of situations where my intervention is just with the coaches. And, I don't do a lot with the athletes individually because I want the coaches to be the ones to be able to take over the program and run with it when I'm not there. Um, so, um, I like working with coaches. I think they are a good group. They are usually very hungry, uh, for information. You know if a coach is defensive and they don't want you there. Say the club president brought you in and the coach is not really on board with it, I will usually terminate that situation very soon because I don't think that situation is going to be very successful because the coach isn't on board.

Could you tell me more about your experience of providing consultation when you get called on to do a 'short-term' intervention?

Well, you know when you are starting out and you need clients you will do anything to get work, but as you get more established and you get calls like, "Dr. Murphy, we got a conference championship coming up on Saturday and we want you to come talk to the team on Friday night." Uh, I just say, "I'm not a motivational speaker. I'm not Knute Rockne. They are not gonna run through any walls for me. Me coming in on Friday night and you paying me for that is just a waste of time. Why don't you wait until the season is over and you and I, the coach, we'll take a look at the season and see if you and I can do anything for the long term." And, probably half the time they never do get back to me. It was just totally a short-term thing they wanted. I'll get calls from parents sometimes saying my son or daughter um, got a big tournament coming up and can you

come in a couple of times and help them. I just explain look it's not like that. You don't just wave a magic wand and the athlete will change. By the same token, when I am doing individual counseling with athletes, young ones and old ones, I will explain with every one involved this is a finite thing. At some point, I'm going to say look we've done everything we can do. We can stay in contact, you call me back for the consultations, but it's not like we need to meet every week for a year to make this happen. I really like that about the sport psychology field. It usually is a very time-limited intervention. I usually see a good deal of change in a very short time period. So its a very um, rewarding field to be in. There are some fields in psychology where you can work with people for long period of time and see very little change. You know my wife works in neuro-psychology with people with brain injuries and mental retardation and so on and I think, my God she's a saint. I couldn't work with those populations and see very small amounts of change that she has to work with. Whereas often with an athlete that comes in they have a performance block or they are about ready to burn out. The situation can be totally different three months later and that is very nice to be a part of. Um, so that's sort of both sides.

Could you tell me more about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation when you thought the coach or management did not want you there?

Um, a lot of the times those are really unhappy situations. Like if you are brought in by a management team and it turns out the coach is not really on board. You know sometimes you try to hang in there and make the most of a bad situation. Um, and I have had my failure experiences in those situations and I think, man this is not going to change. I just don't see how we are going to do this here, because the people I'm really supposed to help are just not open to change. They don't see...there is no motivation to change. Um, now, sometimes I can work around that and we can find a motivation that didn't seem to exist before. Find one that wasn't immediately obvious. But, those situations have ended up where... you rack that one up to experience. Or you say hey, that's just the politics of the situation. With families and parents I think it's a little bit different or a little bit more interesting sometimes. I'll have situations where in my eyes the consultation is being a success and if you asked the parent they would say it has been a failure. And that might be something where like the kid cam to me and the parent wants them to go onto the next level and get a college scholarship and the young athlete is saying they want to hang up their socks and move on to something else. And, if I help the athlete negotiate that that is what they really want is to move out of that particular sport and on to something else that is a success for me and the athlete. But, the parent who wanted me to help re-motivate them to do something more in the sport might count it as a failure. So, that's interesting where, that's one particular area, where I am considering sending in a proposal to AAASP this year because I think that is one particular area that hasn't been looked at enough.

You talked a little bit there about success in the consulting relationship. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by success when consulting with an athlete?

[Pause] Um, the success of the consultation comes out of the process of working with the athlete and trying to understand what their goals are. And, very often that is just a huge part of the consultation right there. Just helping them clarify what they really want and how to go about it. And, I just really enjoy that. I mean I do it in my teaching. I do it in my consulting. I do it in my counseling. That is something that is really rewarding and satisfying to me is helping people with that. And, again I think there are some things that get in people's roads. They are their own worst enemies. They are too self-critical. Um, they lack confidence to try things they would like to do, but think they can't. Or, they perhaps have not considered some of the resources they have or don't employ efficiently in achieving their goals. Um, very often it comes down to sort of, from a theoretical point of view, a motivational goal-orientation approach. They, the individual, or sometimes even the team maybe very outcome-oriented, you know? And, for them to be more mastery-oriented would really help them and so I work with them on that. So success for me is the success of the client. And, sometimes that maybe, the best of all possible situations means success on the playing field. And you see them make progress in all areas and you see them being more successful. That's wonderful. I mean I don't think any sport psychologist could deny that when working with an athlete and they start winning more that there's a certain, Wow, that's a great feeling for you the consultant. Um, but on the other hand, I also try to remain as objective about that as I can. You can't always because you get caught up in it. But, to realize that sometimes that's not what is going to happen sometimes necessarily or maybe not even the most important result for this individual. Maybe there are other things going on that have stopped them from being successful or there are more important things in their lives than just winning on the field. Success for me then is really staying true to my client and doing what's best for them.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you meant when you said that sport psychology consulting, for you, is finite?

[Pause] Well, my first thing for me is that when I'm working with a client I say to them let's try this for a certain amount of time. And, I might say 2 or 3 months and I am working with a high school athlete and the problem seems very simple. Or, if I am working with a team I might say let's do this for a year. And, I build up the expectation up front for them, we are gonna take a look at this when we get to the end of that time period. And, we need to figure out before then how are we gonna evaluate how we are doing. And that usually means what are our goals? How far have we moved along the path to reaching those goals? At the end of that time we may reevaluate and say hey, we really need either another 6 months or a year. Or, what often happens is some goals are met and new goals emerge and those goals may or may not involve me. You know that might be hey, we realize that you need to get in better shape. Hey, you really need to work with a strength coach and that may be more important right now then the mind game. Or for a school system, look you guys are flying me in and me being here you know, two days a month, really got the ball rolling. Now you really need to find a guy in the local community that can run workshops 2 or 3 nights week on coaching education if that is what's needed. So, when it's finite I mean that it is both time-limited. There are goals you have evaluate that you have met them and that when you get to the end of that finite period of intervention that new goals may emerge that don't include you.

Could you tell me more about a time when you have gotten caught up in an athlete's success while providing sport psychology consultation?

Well that's an amazing part about being a sport psychologist. Again, cause you are with the athlete particularly if you work with a team on a consistent basis and you are with them a lot. You see how hard they work. You identify very strongly with your clients in that setting. Um, I think back to working with the US Canoe/Kayak Team standing on the banks of the Potomac River in the middle of January and he is chipping chunks of ice from his beard and I'm blowing on my hands wondering whether if I'm ever gonna get feeling back in my fingers. And, there is a part of me wondering what the hell are we all doing out here. This is insane! You realize they have got an incredible commitment to be doing that and it is inspirational. Wow! I've got to hang in with these guys cause if they prepared to do this then they very least I can do is what they are asking me to do. And, so then, then when you get to the Olympic trials 3 months later and three of them make the team and 4 of them don't. You are so happy for the ones that make the team and you are so heartbroken for the 4 that don't. That's what I mean by that, you get caught up in the emotion. When you are in a field where the outcomes are so public, so decided, so finite. I don't think you can help but feel that way. I feel the same way for a business client that gets fired or land a billion-dollar contract, but it's not the same. There is just something about sport, I don't know, the raw emotion of it. Or, the one time thing like the Olympic trials or the World Series that just puts you through the ringer. I mean I always tell people this, I never felt pressure as a sport psychologist working with athletes like I did at the various Olympics that I went to. I mean the pressure on the athletes at the Olympics – it's just mind-boggling. And, then for you to be there as a sport psychologist; I was fortunate enough to go to two Olympics as the team sport psychologist for the US Team and boy, you get caught up in that too cause you're like God my ass is on the line hear too.

Could you tell me more about that experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes at the Olympics?

Well, I can give you just stories about what that experience was like for me. The first Olympics that I went to with the US Team was in Seoul, Korea. And, you know talking about that political thing. Not only was I there for the US Team and I knew a lot of coaches and athletes, but I was also the first sport psychologist that officially went with the team as part of the delegation with all the full credentials from the USOC. I wasn't there just with one team or anything like that. And so part of me realizes that I've got to do a good job here for my field and for the people that are going to come along behind me. And, I can't help but think about that. That was definitely on my mind. That was definitely on my mind the whole time I was with the USOC, but definitely when you are at the Olympics. So that's where I felt pressure. I had to realize at what levels was I being evaluated. It was kinds like being an athlete. How is my performance going to be judged? And, let's make sure I do a good job out here. And, I had triumphs and heart brakes in those areas. I think some things I did very good at and there was other areas uh, I think I made the right decision, but either people would evaluate it poorly. Um, so, again as a sport psychology consultant again I am experiencing what the athlete goes through. You have no control over that. You do the best job you can and you have no

control over what others think. So at times you can really empathize with the athlete you are working with because you are at the same event and the fact that it is such a big thing and the whole world is watching is why I feel the pressure as much as they do. And, I remember Lew Hardy telling me the first World Championships he went to with the US Gymnastics team. And, he walked into the building and out onto the floor with the coaches and he had the track suit on and there was 20,000 people screaming, waving flags, and he was like, God my knees nearly buckled and I fell to the floor. And I said, "Hey man I know what you're talking about."

Could you tell me about more about what you meant when you said that working with an athlete is different than when you consult with a businessperson?

That's interesting. One of the things I have always thought um, when I wrote *The Achievement Zone* for example, and I spent a year thinking about this. How has human performance and the mind game that goes along, how is that similar between sport and business. There is certainly overlap between sport and business and other areas of human endeavor...music, theater, drama. Anytime where your performance is being seen and evaluated by other people I think. Um, and so that's interesting to me and it has been very gratifying to me to see that other people see that connection. It has not always been easy thing to convince people of, I remember I was in the American Psychological Association for over 20 years now and back in the early 90s I started going to Division 13, the Consulting Psychologists Meetings. And, I would say God what I'm doing in sport psychology is so similar to what you are doing with business consulting and they would be like, "What!" What are you talking about? They just didn't see it. And, uh, and well let's do something here and a couple of people we did a workshop at APA in '93, '94 and at the end of the workshop we did together – I have to give them credit they hung in there – we put a plan together and a schedule and at the end of the workshop they were like, God this stuff goes so well together. Thank God I'm not crazy. That has been very gratifying. I have been invited to do talks to musicians groups and they are like, Wow I can take this stuff and do stuff immediately after the session with my...tuba playing! And that's great. Um, and, at the same time I still think there are some things in sport that are a little unique. Some of the physical demands, some of the training demands that have psychological ramifications and even though I like the business consulting and still do some of it now, sports is my first love and that is the one I really get the most juice out of with my clients and when I'm teaching.

Could you tell me more about what you mean when you say there is an "overlap" between sport and business in your experience?

Well, take like what I call the performance management model, which is just the three steps. First of all, you have to realize what psychological states contribute to your best performance. That's something Terry Orlick has been talking about for 20 years. The second stage is figuring out where you are at any given time. Sort of say today, how am I doing? Am I giving myself the best chance of a high performance by being in the right state? Or are there things that are holding me back? The third stage of that model is well if I am not there and I need to change, what strategies can I utilize to help me change. So that's a very simple model. And that model works very nicely in a variety of settings. I

use that model with my business clients um, all the time. How are you doing with your job-related goals? And, you know, they can be a huge part of my learning curve is understanding what those goals are and how to understand them and evaluate them. What it comes down to is if I'm helping them with is not the technical side but understanding how their own head gets in the way or helps them achieve that technical side of it. And, that's the overlap. And, and, I don't always describe myself as a sport psychologist when I'm in those other fields, but really if I looked at it yeah, those models have come out of sport psychology.

To go back to that original question, is there anything you would like to add about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that you have not had the opportunity express?

I'm just thinking, how honest am I being with you as what a sport psychologist is all about? There, there are probably three things that didn't come out. One is that it is a lot of fun, a lot of good times. There is the closeness you can have with your clients. Uh, I have gotten to know athletes over the years. And, some of the great fun times you have with some of your colleagues. They are a very creative group of people [laughter]. And, that's the second thing. I think it is a very creative field. I think there is a lot of room for individuality. I always say that everybody has their own style. Dan Gould, he is like the "Colombo" of sport psychology. He comes in, I don't quite understand, you know what is the coat rack doing with that hat [laughter]. You got someone who is more flamboyant, somebody like a Jim Loehr. Or somebody who is like a cut the bullshit and get down to work, like a Bob Rotella. Everybody has their own style and I like that about the field. And the third thing, to really be honest I think there are times when being a sport psychologist working with athletes and coaches can be a lonely experience. There is just no one you can go to, there is just some things you have to keep to yourself. And there are times when you perceive you have failed the client or you wish you had gone another direction and it's too late. Uh, I'm just thinking about one athlete. The greatest young kayaker I ever worked with and she didn't make the Olympic Team and she just hung up her paddle and never went back to it. Probably for a year and I still think back to it, what could we have done differently together cause it just seems that it was in her reach? You work so hard for these people and everybody doesn't see behind the scenes for every one or two successful athletes that make it, there are so many that are right there underneath. That can be a really hard experience for a sport psychologist.

Could you tell me more about your experience of growing close with your clients?

Well, it's weird I was telling other psychologists, you know I was with the men's snowboarding team out at Park City, Utah and we are all sleeping in the same house. And they are like, "What, do you mean? You sleep with your clients?" No, I don't sleep with my clients, but they can't seem to get their heads around that level of intimacy and closeness. You eat breakfast and travel with them. Those sort of experiences lead to bonding that is sort of hard to put into words. It's unique. There aren't too many other fields like that where psychologists get that close to their clients. But, then again when

you are at the bottom of the hill at a World Cup event, you are more than happy for them. You really feel for them.

Co-Participant: Terry Orlick (TO)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

That's a nice open-ended question [laughter]. Yeah, well, I guess I could start with um, [pause] maybe how I think you get good at it. One thing, I think to get really good in this field it's similar to what athletes need to get great at what they do. I mean you have to want to be as good as you can be. You have to learn from each experience and roll it into the next. And, you have to be passionate about it. You have to care about the people you are working with as people as well as performers. And, maybe even more the people-side is what...when people feel you care about them as human beings they probably respect you more and listen to you more. And then there is the whole interpersonal skills-side. You kind of have to develop listening skills and empathy skills and those kinds of things. The interpersonal connection is very, very important in terms of having the opportunity to be effective or for people to trust what you say and go with it. So, that's something, I think without that you are not gonna get far in this field. Maybe, you have some of that to start and maybe.... Other parts you have to develop like listening skills. I really worked on being able to totally, absolutely connect with what a person is saying and the whole world falls apart and nothing else exists in the whole world when I am interacting with a performer, or an athlete, or a group in this area. And then there is the whole sort of knowledge-based technique kind of mental skill knowledge. To really understand that I think you have to get out and really work with people. You can learn a certain amount of that sitting in a classroom, but you don't really learn until you either use it in your own life – which I do – or, you work with people and you work through their challenges and their struggles. And they try this and try that. Um, refine those things, so eventually you end up – know I have like thousands of those experiences in my head so if I am meeting with someone there is so many good things that I have learned from so many great athletes. And, everybody has challenges and struggles. No one has an easy ride. Even the very best of the best – the Olympic champions – they still have issues.

[Pause]

The other thing I just think of when you ask that question is for me it has really been a joy being involved in this field. And even though I have been doing this for so long now I always learn something from each person I meet with. I mean it doesn't matter what age they are, what level of performance. There is always something to learn and even though a lot of the same things come up, there's always uniqueness in how people apply things, what works for them, how committed they are, their specific discipline, how they see things. So it's, it's something I have never gotten tired of doing it. It's been something I have really loved. I guess that's why I have stayed intimately involved for this long. Um, yeah, it's been a real growing experience for me. And, it's been impressive to see what human beings are capable of doing when they really commit to do something. The other part, great part, of working with performers. Not just athletes, but any performer that is really committed who is really committed to being what they can be is that they are so committed. It's kind of an inspiration because a lot of people aren't committed to anything. They kind of blindly walk through the day. They have no

mission. They are not interested in quality in anything. So, that's a nice kind of group to be around. And, I have learned that in this field if you are good at what you do you can make real differences – meaningful differences – in people's lives and people's performances. Many of the athletes that I have worked with over the years I still have contact with. Some are very good friends. Some I do things with now. There are certain friendships that have developed. Kind of like an extended family for me in a way because when I was working with them I really cared about them. You're kind of invested in helping them do what it is they want to do – whatever that is. And um, I have developed some really close ties with some people. But, I still have contact with some of these people. So, I learned a lot from them. I think they learned a lot from me. And um, they were always very respectful relationships.

[Pause]

Probably got a little easier along the way because um, because at a certain point I would go in and people already respected me because they had read my books or they knew something. They had talk with someone who had talked with someone. So, it kind of opened doors a little more easily. Initially when you walk in you know people are kind of checking you out like, "What does this guy have to offer?" Or, "what is this stuff?", especially at the professional level. Um, yeah, and I like the on-going contact, year after year. There were some teams, like with alpine skiing, when I was working with that team we went through three head coach changes during the years that I worked with them and I was the only sort of stability. And the association was looking for me to help people make the transition from one group to another. And, that was really kind of neat and I worked with some of those athletes on the national team who were traveling at 15 years old, 16 years old. You know a lot of uncertainty going to Europe. They're not in school. And, then seeing them develop through their careers from that sort of tenuous 15 or 16 year-old being totally blown away by all the top racers in Europe. And, 10-12 years later going up there and winning a World Championship or Olympic gold medal. It was kind of neat to be involved in that whole process. And then in that transition...obviously in sport there is only a certain amount of time you can remain at a very competitive level. Working through the transition into other meaningful pursuits out of sport or within family situations and so on. I think it was a really great opportunity for me to sort of take people through that whole life process. I don't know very many people that get that experience to do that. Sort of lucked out in a way.

[Pause]

When I started there really wasn't that much going on; there were no books, there were no applied books. You couldn't find an applied book. They were all theoretical. And the stuff you got in university at that time in sport psych courses really had nothing, nothing applied and I was interested in application. That's what I wanted to do was work with people in real world settings. Um, now there is all kinds of book and tapes. We had to sort of chart our way and figure out what we were going to do. There really was no one to follow and I guess, in a way, I sort of liked that. In a way I think that's one of the reasons I wrote so much was because there was nothing out there. And um, you know, I wanted to share some of my practical experiences and I was trying to make the field more applied. And, I still don't think it's as applied as it could be and I don't think there are courses at many universities that are applied as they should be or conference stuff. The

percentage of things that are really, really hands-on applied is less than I think it should be for young people to learn what you really want to do. Um, and um, my experiences with the professional athletes and teams. NHL and professional football and baseball and so on, they weren't sort of long term – it wasn't like 12 years or so. It was later in my career that people came to me. I wasn't looking to do it, but they came to me and I thought it would be an interesting opportunity and um, I enjoyed that work as well. In a lot of ways I thought those athletes weren't as committed as the Olympic athletes who weren't making any money. I kind of expected a higher level of absolute commitment from those athletes. And I learned about different styles of coaching especially in hockey. You know there is still a lot of stuff going on that isn't the most respectful interactions that there could be. There is probably some room for improvement, but I worked with...the longest period I worked for was three consecutive years. There were other things I wanted to do. I didn't just want to do that. Even though parts of it were exciting I thought there are other things I could do with my time as well. There are lots of need and that is one of the reasons I have moved over the last 10 years or so towards trying to apply these principles and strategies to everyday living and kids. To everything we do in life in terms of doing it with quality, in terms of joy, in terms of having strategies to deal with stuff in whatever areas in your life. That *Embracing Your Potential* book, part of it is related to just quality of living. When you get right down to it that is probably the most important contribution we can make. You can make it through a sporting context because for a lot of people that is the center of their life. But, a lot of those strategies and skills can be rolled over and applied in all areas of your life, not just on a particular playing field. Um, [pause] yeah, so I guess overall, the experiences have been rich and varied. And I've liked the varied thing because every time you enter a different domain you are learning things. Like even the interview studies with surgeons, well how did they deal with setbacks when all of a sudden they make a mistake and there is blood spurting all over and lives are at stake. How do they do it? Or, astronauts, what do they do when the whole mission is at risk. How do they stay focused? And what I have found. I did work with opera singers in Sweden. And at first I'm like, I have no knowledge of that particular discipline, but I know about performance. I know what it takes generally to perform to capacity. There's certain basic things that you have to take in, in terms of trusting yourself, and being prepared, and being connected to what you are doing. There's general things that I know about performance. And, it's surprising what you can offer to every area. It never really ceases to amaze me. You walk in, I listen, I learn, they tell me about what they do and their needs. I tell them about what I know. I share my experiences of what works for consistency for high level performance. And then collaboratively we work together to develop something that is meaningful and effective for that individual. And, I, I also worked with the first all-women's Americas Cup team.

[Pause]

I got a call. I didn't go out banging on doors...they called me. There was some U.S. Olympic athletes that I had worked with that tried out for the team. They actually brought people in to talk with the team. I asked them, "Why did they choose me?" Even Anthony Robbins came in and talked to them. They wanted something that I could offer and one thing that came out in talking with some of them was, well, even with the

gentleman I spoke of earlier. Some people were coming into a group where some of these women had sailed around the world and they were like, “Yeah, you know, I’ve done a bit of sailing.” And, they are telling me instantly – even with Anthony Robbins – it’s a total turn off. You know, almost like a put-down. I go in and say, “I don’t know anything about what you do, but I know about excellence. I know about what it takes mentally to get to where you want to go. I know about working as a team. I know about stress. I know about connecting with what you do.” It’s a totally different approach. I don’t come in like I know everything. I come in like I know certain things and they are the experts in what they do. So, part of that maybe just respecting people and what they have already accomplished. I think that’s appreciated.

[Pause]

Well, I have enjoyed every experience that I have been with. I have worked with ski jumpers, skydivers, climbers, surgeons, every Olympic sport, even sports that are hardly known like goal-ball, which is played by blind people. [Pause] I did a lot of interviews with astronauts. I did work with some astronauts and that was an amazing experience too cause I went down and uh, watched the kind of simulations they do. Well, they call them their toys. They are the absolute champions of simulation with what they are doing and unbelievable amounts of mental simulation of precise things they are going to do. They simulate back-ups, what if this, what if that. And, surgeons are the same. They have a load of back-ups. If this, then that. It’s so pre-planned. Fighter pilots and some military things I did are the same way. They all present challenges; they all require focusing and mental skills to be good at them. I guess the biggest thing I have learned is that the applicability of what we have been doing in sport that allows athletes to excel to every aspect of human performance. It doesn’t matter what it is. That’s been a fun process. The other thing I guess I have realized over the years is there is no simple path to excellence. Everybody struggles. Everybody has setbacks. Everybody has injuries or downtimes. Everybody has doubts. It’s not like oh wow these people are great and it’s been an easy ride up. I have not seen that. It is not a straight ride up. If it is, and it rarely is, then once you get there there’s a whole different set of demands to stay there. About like winning after winning and how important it is to respect the patterns and the focus that got you there. And there’s all the demands that are placed on you as an Olympic champion or a professional star. There’s a whole bunch of other things that are pulling on you, tugging on you, that can easily detract from your quality practice time, your preparation time, your rest time. So there’s a whole bunch of different demands that come in; that’s why what I have done...it never ends in a sense. You think okay you help them gain these tools or skills, but there is always something that maybe they would like to bounce an idea off you or something because maybe they are facing something new. At one point I probably thought that if someone won an Olympic gold medal they would be absolutely confident, but having worked with probably 20 or 30 who have won Olympic gold medals, no, they can still have doubts. How do you stay on top? Then you start thinking about outcomes. People expect certain things from you now. There are different expectations placed on you by others or yourself. You get away from the focus that works, or maybe you have a bad practice or something. The doubts still surface even for the best of the best. And the great ones, what they are able to do or what they learn to do is change channels when those doubts come in. To think of the things that will help

them get back into the focus that will allow them to feel more confident. You expect from the outside that once you get really great confidence is automatic, but it doesn't. It does wavier. The great ones, even if they have the doubts, when they are coming to the line getting ready to perform, they are able to shift focus to an absolute connection to what they are doing. That can give them the performance. Focus is so absolutely essential to skilled performance and to learning. If you are not focused you can't learn. It is pretty much that simple. I've done a lot of work over the years on focus. On distraction control because that has been the biggest obstacle to successful performance especially in very high stress contexts. And, you have to be great at that if you are going to be consistent at a high level. Well, I have been rambling there for quite a while.

That's all right I have been feverishly jotting down notes the whole time. Um, I've got a few points I would like to go back to. The first and this came up early in the interview, but you mentioned learning as being a part of your experience of providing sport psychology consultation. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you meant by that?

Yeah, well, every person I work with and it doesn't matter if it is a six-year-old or a ten-year-old or a great professional athlete or an Olympic champion or someone who is struggling and thinking of quitting. So, in my own life I try to learn from every experience and take the lesson and have that lesson as a part of me. Remember it and keep that in my repertoire. Everyone I worked with I can think of things I learned from them about what they do, what they needed, how they got through certain things. If you don't do that, it's kind of like saying you have been working in the field for 30 years, but it could really be one year thirty times in row. You do the same thing. You make the same mistakes. You don't grow, cause you don't grow you are not that inspired. But, there is a great opportunity to learn and even jotting down things like, "Wow, this is something I learned about human capacity or about overcoming obstacles or about maybe taking a different perspective." There is always something you can learn and if you collect those gems of knowledge and they become a part of you, you are a better person as a consultant and you have more to offer every person you work with. So that is kind of the thing. The group that I worked with that does this the most is astronauts. They have an incredible debrief procedure after every mission. They will spend months and months going through every aspect of that mission, even things like what they ate, and the suits they wore. That feedback is given to everyone. If there are things that need to be changed right now they will make them standard operating procedures. They will roll them into the next mission. They learn everything they can from each person's experience with that mission. It makes what we do in sport look pretty small. Maybe what we do in sport is spend 20 minutes talking about a game or a performance. But, it is not as detailed as it could be. So with athletes I try to push the on-going learning with athletes. Everything you do to try to take a lesson out. If it was great there's a lesson. If the performance was terrible there's a lesson. And, usually the lessons in what I do are related to focus or what perspective you are carrying. I think a huge part of getting great is...people who are great at anything take the time to learn from what they did. We did a study on professional golfers. Only the top players were willing to go right out after a round and work on what went wrong that day. I think this is one of the reasons athletes

are so inconsistent with their performance, they don't take the time to reflect on what has worked and what hasn't from a focusing perspective or a preparation perspective. So, of course, if your focus isn't consistent or your preparation isn't consistent, you are going to be inconsistent.

You mentioned that expert practitioners care about people as more than just athletes. Could you tell me more about what you meant by that?

Yes, um, somebody said this about athletes, "They have to know that you care, before they care what you know." I mean you could know a million things, but if the person isn't open to what you have to offer it's nothing. They'll be in the room, but their heads will be somewhere else. You have no chance. It's like I said earlier about focus. If you are not focused on what somebody is saying you are gonna learn nothing. But, the caring, I'm not saying faking. I mean the genuine caring about people and their performance and those people achieving their goals and showing that you care. I am only there to help those people be what they want to be, or become what they want to become. It is all them, not me. I mean they may stumble on some things, but over time we can short cut that. You don't have to start at the ground level. I think that is a huge thing. If they know that you care and you are really there for them, and not for your ego or whatever, if they know that they are gonna be more receptive to what you have to say. And, then when you have something to offer, they listen. I remember one time I was at a conference on sport psych in Sweden and Rich Gordin and I think Keith Henschen were there. And, this athlete was an archer and she had made like 80 shots in a row and she was wondering when she was gonna miss. Well, I sat with her and listened to her for probably 30 minutes while she told me everything that she does and what she had tried. And I offered her nothing. Well, afterwards Rich Gordin comes up to me and says, "That was amazing." AI would have jumped in after a couple of minutes. I couldn't believe how long you waited before you actually gave some input. I don't know how I am different from other people and that is very rare that we get someone to sitting in, especially someone else in the consulting room who can give you feedback. The other entry point I have found with caring and this would be at a lot of levels, but even more so at the professional level. People are probably a little less trusting. I found a great entry point was in the training room. When people are injured and now nobody seems to care about them, if you can care, and you really do care, and you're helping them through the injury with some strategies. Or, you are just talking to them about stuff outside of sport they light up cause somebody is talking to them about things in their life that are important or count. That doesn't mean you spend all of your time doing that, you do some of that and that kind of opens the door to trust and realizing that you honestly care about them as a human being, not just a commodity. Then I think you are in a position to be heard more because they know you are not just in there to thump your own chest. So for me in my career it has been very, very important whether it's playing with little kids or working with pros.

[Pause]

One thing that I haven't mentioned yet about my experience that I have realized is that I do have a lot of stuff there that reinforces people's belief in themselves. I believe in them and I tell them. And I do that on an individual level too. So in addition to all the

strategies, I believe in them and I tell them based on this and this and this. You have the capacity and the ability to do this. If your focus in this way this is a totally realistic goal for you. If they are capable of focusing in ways that will free them and help them they would perform well. It's all about focus at that level. They have the skill level. They have the physical skills. So that is another thing I don't consciously set out to do, but I do that. People need to hear they are doing well. That is something I even try to do with our grad students with our internship program where they go out and do consulting. If I think they are doing a good job I will tell them. People need to be told when they are doing stuff well. There are so many people telling them, "this is wrong, that is wrong, you should've done this, you should've done that." I mean you need some of that corrective feedback as well, but at least as important and probably much more important is probably demonstrating a belief in people and their capacity. And, kind of rewarding and acknowledging the good things they are doing.

[Pause]

Anyway, I think I do have a meeting at 1:30

Thank you so much Doc. You have given me a ton of great stuff.

Co-Participant: Ken Ravizza (KR)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sports psychology consultation to athletes?

[Pause]. Yes [laughter]

Great, could you tell me a little bit more about that?

Like I mentioned you know starting in the university setting, just teaching in that area and trying to learn from athletes experiences, what they learn about themselves, what they learn about others, what they learned about movement, and really getting into that perspective on it. It's really... well that was the beginning of it in terms of doing any formal work.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by "formal work"?

[Pause]. I think for me, I was preparing for this, without knowing it, since I was a young kid because I was around sports, you know. I had older brothers who participated. I was the water boy for the high school football team. I was used to the culture. I just grew up around it. And, that really helped me understand what was happening and what was going on. Of course, I was an athlete, I played football, basketball, and ran track in high school and I really had an understanding of what it was about when I went to college. My dream was to coach in the Rose Bowl by the time I was 30, that was my dream. And, by the time I got out of a college the last thing I wanted to do was coach, but that is why I went on and got the Ph.D. and did the whole academic. So, when did it formally begin? I think it began at Cal State Fullerton when I started teaching classes in Hatha yoga and um... I got into that in graduate school for my own sanity. And, uh... I really did it extensively for about a two year period of time and then I would teach some real beginning level classes back at the state university of New York and then when I came to Brockport, being in California it was pretty hot and I got into it even more. What was driving me was the yoga; I never had a dream of being a sport psychologist. I didn't know what one was. I was into humanistic physical education. How can we help people be great? How can we help people go beyond their bodies? Um, and, through the yoga, I had different guys on the gymnastics team in the class and they kept coming in and saying I'm using this in the gym and I said how are you doing that? And, they would tell me. And, next thing I know the coach came in and took the class and then he asked me to start working with the team. And, that is how it stated. At first, I was mainly doing a lot of relaxation, imagery, self-talk - mental skills stuff. As well as dovetailing into their body awareness and their stretching because they had such a keen kinesthetic sense. And then one thing led to another with uh...just working in gymnastics learning. And, I didn't go in saying I got something to teach you, I went in trying to learn from them. I spent a lot of time in the gym just watching and observing it's not like I took research and brought it in and tried to apply it. It was much more being there observing that's where my phenomenological skills came in and just watching that's where I had the privilege to learn from these coaches and athletes. And earning their trust and respect so that they would talk to me. And that, that just mushroomed, it led to a lot of success, one thing led to another. Next thing I know the baseball coaches are meeting with me, we win the

World Series in 1984. Um, the Angels contact me because some of our pitchers had talked about our work. I start in professional baseball and that really got me going. I was with the Angels for 14 years and I look back on that A.J., uh, I don't know of anyone that was able to do it. I mean that was phenomenal. It's called tip toeing through the tulips. Um, but it, uh, one thing built on another. It was never like I was trying to get somewhere, it was like I was totally into what I was doing and I loved it. And, that is one of the things I think with a lot of the young people today that are so goal driven, I'll do this to get this, and uh, I know with me it was never well I'll work with this team so I can work with this team. It was never that way. It was much more the search for truth. Now, that is idealistic as it comes, but with a couple of coaches I worked with, Dick Wolf, one of my mentors, a gymnastics coach, that was one of our buzz words, we are searching for truth, ya know? Blah, blah, blah, does that give you enough to ask me some questions or do you want me to keep going through the whole thing?

Well, you're the boss in this interview, you tell me if there is anything else you want to share about your experience?

Well, each sport has a different direction for me. It depends on how you want to approach it. Um, well my gymnastics, working with gymnasts went on for 10 years and the last 10 years I haven't done much work with gymnastics. But, the principles are similar, but the other thing that is key is I think you've got to learn the specifics of the sport and really, it comes from my yoga background. Um, it was always a matter of integrating the mental skills into task relevant performance cues. So, it's not like well we are going to go do relaxation, we are going to go do mental skills training and then we are going to practice. It was always for me you are doing it all the time. The key issue is being aware of when you are doing it. And, um that has been my greatest strength has been my ability to integrate. Because when you integrate, you speak the coaches language and coaches aren't as threatened by it because 23 years ago because when you went into a group and started talking about some of this stuff it was very strange. Today, people are more receptive, I'm not saying that they are totally receptive, I'm saying that they are more receptive. And then, the way you present to a gymnast is different from how you present to a baseball player, which is different from a football player. All of those sports have different cultures and I think if there is one thing that really helped me out, um, it's the field of sport sociology and understanding sports as sub-cultures. I think, uh, that background has really been powerful for me. To look at a sport as a culture and ask yourself, "How do I fit into that culture?" Um, I also think another thing that has influenced me is I think basically counseling skills, communication skills. At the time I was into that, it was the human potential movement in the early 70's where you spent a lot of time trying to reach your potential as a person and you worked on yourself. And, I spent a lot of time working on myself trying to figure out who the hell I was and I attended a lot of seminars, I attended a lot of workshops and did these types of things and that was most helpful. One thing that I can feel good about was there are very few things that I have done with an athlete that I haven't done myself. Um, and I think that is one thing that is real critical in this field is that you better work on yourself some because you have to get your own stuff in order and understand that. So, some of the basic counseling skills have been very helpful for me. And, at the same time, the Phys. Ed background,

being able to relate to coaches, being able to speak with coaches, because for me as a physical educator, um, at the time I came up many people wanted to distance themselves from coaches because coaches were dumb jocks. We got research; well research hasn't influenced me that much in the work. It's been much more in the trenches direct observation. I think research can give you a framework, but you better be able to let go of that framework. Um, and you have to be flexible.

You have mentioned the term or phrase “observing” quite often. Can you tell me more about that experience or what you mean by that?

What I meant by that was just going in and watching. And watching in terms of sitting there and being around it and feeling the energy and watching the interactions and watching the athletes body language and facial expressions. And, also with the observations asking them questions to see if any of my hunches were what they were experiencing. So when I say observing, a lot of it being blending into the woodwork. That is a term I use with a lot of my graduate students, you have to learn how to blend into the woodwork. You learn how to take it in and see what's going on. In our program I encourage a lot of students, what they have to do is just watch. You're not ready to do any work or work with anyone. Um, you need to just watch and observe and then I have them just follow me around and see the way I work it. And then, we get them in with some coaches who I know are really into it so that they are in a safe environment so they can start observing. By the time I get done with them, like Melinda, they are ready to really do the work and then she leaves. But, that is the way it goes with a two year program.

You mentioned the phrase “blending into the woodwork” to describe your experience. Could you tell me more about that?

It was exciting, because I could see the different ways that coaches worked and the way their personalities came into play. Um, and I saw very quickly that coaches were all different in the way that he or she went about it, but they were all effective in their own different way. And, I saw the way the really good ones um, handled each of their athletes in a unique manner. And, they weren't cookie-cutter. You know they really had respect for the individual and at that time that was the kind of stuff I was really into. So, it was real positive to be around it and I also think I was around it because those types of coaches are going to be real receptive to someone like me sitting there. Someone who isn't into that is going to be like who's this guy sitting there? You know. So there would be that thing. The other thing for me was that I was learning, I was really learning. I was learning a lot and that was exciting. I was learning for learning's sake. It wasn't...and I just get this from young people today. I'm learning this so I can do this and then I'll get this job. That was the last thing on my mind. Um, it wasn't to get somewhere it was just to be there doing it and that was exciting.

You mentioned that a part of your success could be attributed to “integrating”. Could you tell me more about what you mean by the term “integrating”?

What I mean by integration is that, the, in my early years I would do a lot of relaxation. I remember a softball coach saying to me one time, after we were up in the wrestling room

with the lights out and we had just taken the team through a relaxation exercise, she said to me, this was Judy Gorman. Ken I'm sick of the girls lying down and relaxing. I need the girls to relax when it's 3-2 and the bases are loaded and I said okay. So then the issue became, okay they have got to learn that relaxation skill, but what become important is integrating that into task relevant performance that's key. So that, in other words, if you know me all my stuff on routines, pre at-bat stuff, all that is the centering and relaxation process. Because what it basically provides the athletes with is something to go to when the garbage hits the fan because one thing I believe in strongly is that confidence is fragile. It comes and goes. You are not going to be totally confident all the time so the issue becomes when confidence goes, what do you have to go to? And, one of the things you have to go to is your routines. Another thing you have to go to is basic skills. Another thing you have to go to is breathing. But, to provide the athlete with some resources, so that she has some options for how to deal with it. So integration is about where it needs to be integrated. It also needs to be integrated into practice. If there is one thing that I think is key is, there's nothing you can expect the athlete to do in competition that they are not doing in practice. Now that sounds simple, know let me give you an example because it is not that simple. When do we practice timeouts? When do coaches practice timeouts? When do coaches practice making errors and letting them go, if in the game they are asking the athlete to do that? Um, for example, in baseball we have an on-deck station in batting practice. They practice being on deck. Um, some of these things sound real basic, but you have to be around the sport to see them. You know, and then you can start picking up on them. I think one thing we, as sport psych people provide, is perspective because we are coming from a whole different mind-set. Also, we are not there every day. So we get to come in and go out. Sometimes when you are in the forest all the time you don't see stuff.

You mentioned that another factor that has influenced your work is that you have “worked on yourself”. Could you tell me what you mean by that phrase?

Well, what I mean by that is uh, that I have to look at myself. You have to look at yourself, before you can help someone else. I was a guy in graduate school that traveled with an aspirin bottle. I had headaches, then when I started to become aware that I was the one tensing up and flexing certain muscles it really liberated me. It really liberated me because as an athlete, I had very little awareness. If the coach told me to run into a wall, I would ask how many times? My body was a tool. It was nothing more. This is sad to say, but I never experienced my body until I stopped participating in sport. It happened for me at my first yoga class and I was lying on the floor and the instructor asked us to raise our arms up to the ceiling with our eyes closed and really feel our bodies. And, I had never felt me body like that and I remember starting to cry. And, the tears were of sheer sadness and joy simultaneously, and thoughts of how could I have gone this long and that's of, wow, this is a whole other world! That fascinated me, absolutely fascinated me. Changed my life. The working on myself was key. I knew what it meant to be more aware. Um, because. Especially, when you are working with elite level athletes. Athletes can smell bullshit better than any other group and if you don't know what you are talking about you are gonna be found out real quick. Now that doesn't mean you got your stuff all together, it just means you understand who you are

and where you are coming from. We all have our fears, weaknesses, and it is something I am still working on, accepting those parts of my being.

You mentioned the term “sport culture” earlier, could you tell me what you mean by that?

Exactly, what I said. It means each sport is its own culture. You look at golf, which by the nature of the game is so cerebral, you have to pay \$150 out of your wallet and dress a certain way, versus rodeo, or basketball, or football. And, the cultures are different. Also, other things are open and closed skill sports. Golf, darts, ripe for sport psych. Soccer, it's a little tougher. When you work with soccer teams, you are generally doing more team cohesion stuff. You look at football, you can do a lot of great work with field goal kickers, but there is a lot of stuff going on. Baseball, and that I where I have spent a lot of time, because it is an individual sport within a team setting. Contact sports like ice hockey for example, you have to deal with controlling rage, you have to deal with being able to take getting hit. You have deal with the crap that goes with the game. Judging subjective vs. objective sports: the figure skater vs. the track and field. Just having that watch, big differences. I think understanding all that and how they function is key because if you don't you are going to have difficulties because you are not going to be able to speak the language and relate to what the athlete is going through.

What is your experience working with those different cultures?

I enjoy some more than other, I also find it is a challenge and keeps the work exciting. Because you have to figure out whatever the culture, whatever the sport is, it is not only sport, it's whatever situations. Over the years I worked in sport, but I have also spent a lifetime working with students. I've spent years working with healthcare, my wife is in the field of hospice and I have always done stuff with nurses and physicians and there was a time I was doing a lot of business stuff. This was mainly 15 years ago. Basically, I burnt out on the business stuff. I found the athletes to be much more exciting and challenging...for me. But, the issue was one of being able to understand what's their world like? To use your phenomenological term, what's it like to walk in their shoes? And, when you look at their world, what are the sources of joy? What are the things that turn them on? And, what are the stressors? And, then when you start looking at stresses they have to contend with, you start looking at what do they have control of and what do they not have control over? And, then you have to start tailoring your program around them. So whenever I work with business groups, if it was office stuff, whenever I would go in I would spend the morning just hanging around the office checking out what's going on so that when I talked to them I could really use some real world experiences. So this is what goes on, I'm seeing this, I'm seeing this. By getting that you build respect and trust. Then people go this guys knows what he's talking about. Now, at the same time, where I have worked with some teams where I did not have time to do that. So you have to be up front and honest with them and tell them up front, I don't have time right now. I'll make an effort, but I don't know your language. I've found for me you can't bullshit them, I just tell them where I'm at. You know?

You stated earlier that you thought confidence is fragile. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

I don't think people have their confidence all the time. Dan Gould really reinforced this with his studies coming out of the Atlanta Olympics. I think those of us who have really worked have seen it. I think the literature may say something, but the real world is confidence ebbs and flows. And granted there is the term for the baseline of confidence, state or trait, I'm just talking about confidence in terms of how you see athletes on a day-to-day basis in terms of when you see them in the gym, in the practice, dealing with it. There are highs and lows, and there are times where...what I have really come to in the recent years of my work, peak performance is really about compensating and adjusting. It's not about being in the zone. And, if you know anything about my background I was one of the first people to write about peak experience in sport. In fact, I think I was the first person to write about it. And, I was into that for a long time because that was all I knew and then I had a gymnastics coach say to me, I'm tired of hearing about that bullshit! You know you are not there enough! I think when you really look at it, what percentage of time is the athlete really in that zone...20% if you're lucky. So what a lot of performance is about is compensating and adjusting, it's about being comfortable when you're uncomfortable. And, stop freaking out that you don't feel right. Why be so damn surprised? And, it requires, and this is another area where my work in the last five years has really hammered is practice. Practice is where you work on it. Practice is where you get better. Practice is where you learn to have good, shitty days. So when you get in the game and you're not feeling great, so what? You know how to deal with it.

You stated you think peak performance is really about compensating and adjusting, could you tell me a little more about that?

The vast majority of times that we perform we are not totally locked in totally in the zone and we better learn how to deal with that. I think if you are going to have a gold medal performance, the ones that get the gold medals are fortunate enough to be in the zone that day. But, the idea that you can achieve zone like states, you know you read the books and it sounds like A-B-C-D we got it! And one thing I always tell audiences, especially sport psych audiences is, you know the gold medal winner always talks about all the things she did. What the hell do you think number 2 through 30 did? Sit on their rear ends, it just didn't happen for them that day. You know? The gold medal winner isn't the only one working the mental game. Cause and effect in sport psychology, not in the real world of sport psychology...from my perspective.

Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by cause and effect in sport psychology?

You are doing everything the athlete can do to give themselves the best chance or opportunity for success, but there are no guarantees. And, you read some of the literature and you think if I visualize I'm going to be the champion, I'm going to see myself on the podium with the gold medal. Yeah, that happens for one, but there were 99 other people that did the same thing and did not get the gold medal.

You mentioned quite often over discussing your experience of providing sport psychology of working with one sport for a length of time and then not working with that sport for a length of time, could you tell me more about that experience?

That is a very good question that you are asking, because it is challenging and exciting when you move into a new sport, especially if you like that sport. Um, that part is fun and then learning it. I've had to learn field hockey, which I knew nothing about. I had to learn water polo, which I knew nothing about and it was exciting. Um, gymnastics...it's always fun to work with gymnastics because I can't believe the stuff that comes out of my thought processes cause it's still there. So that part is exciting. Um, um, [pause] I guess, I don't know how to respond to the question except to say that it's challenging and it's fun, you know, that's why you do the work. I think the key thing for me is that, no matter what the sport is, if you are working with someone who is really committed and has passion for what they are doing. And, is open to what we are trying to do because that is something for me that at this stage of my career. At my earlier stage, I was sort of like, not the messenger; I was the missionary bringing the message of sport psychology to people. And, I'm done convincing people of the need for sport psych. I've done enough of that it's up to young people like you guys to do that. My thing now is much more, hey, we know it can work, what can we do now to take this thing to the edge? And, really help people to achieve excellence.

Could you tell me more about what that experience is like to work with athletes that are motivated about their sport and open to sport psychology?

It's stimulating, it's fascinating because you see the way they go about it with such passion. The way they are willing to take such risk and they way they are willing to fail and learn from their failures. The openness and their willing to be scared at times. And, to just have the privilege to be involved in that and to give them some tools and resources to help them deal with that in some little way. And, one thing I always say there was one time in sport psych, where sport psychologists were taking credit for athletes performance. And, one thing I have always been clear on is that I am one tiny piece of the puzzle, one piece of the pie. And, I think that as a sport psych person, if you are taking credit, you are making a big mistake because, cause there are so many factors that play into it, so many factors. I don't know if I answered your question.

One thing you said of interest, you stated that your thing now is taking sport psychology to the edge. Could you tell me what you mean by that phrase?

Really seeing how good they can be. Really, really taking the risk to do that. Really going through the introspection, going through the dark, depths of the soul, going through, staying on task and sticking with the process even though your not getting your end result and then to see them get a little of that end result. Oh God! That's incredible, you know!

You referred to yourself earlier as a piece of the puzzle, what did you mean by that?

Well, there are so many factors that go into it. There are so many factors that go into excellence. I mean there are physical factors, strategic factors, biomechanical factors, nutritional factors, and equipment factors. I mean there are so many different things that

are involved in it. And, we are one piece of that pie. I personally think a very important piece of that pie, but I think coaches and athletes realize one small piece. And, I think this is something for young consultants when they start working with teams they think they got this big thing. Look, it's just one piece. And, for coaches they got so many things going on and the young people they don't understand why phone calls aren't returned and sometimes practice time isn't given. Sometimes there are other things of high priority. Now, of course, I think uh, the sport psych thing is critical. I think the other thing with one piece of the pie is that when you are doing consulting you have to understand the context in which you are working in. That's a very big word for me with consulting – context! Context basically means things like, what is the environment that you are going to be working in? What is the culture in which you are going to be working in? Is the coach going to be supportive? And, that support is evidenced by the amount of time you get with the athletes, how soon phone calls are returned. Do you do your sessions at the end of practice or at the beginning of practice? Is the coach taking notes while you are doing your talks or returning phone calls? Is the coach active? All of those things, it is a blending of all of those things when you are doing the consulting. It's not just going in with your canned, packaged programs. I have a term called it's not New York Life Insurance Mental Training. You know it's a great day, it's a great day. Every day's a great day! That type of approach is not going to work with people who really dance the dance because it's not always a great day. That type of approach. It's not gonna work because there is too much rejection and failure involved in the dance. It's not a great day every day. Now, they may have to come to terms with, you know find the positive. Context is crucial. Because the other is, are you going to be successful? Are you going to have access to them as much as you want? It's like for the Olympic Games, one thing I have determined is if you are not fully credentialed don't bother going. Cause you are not going to have access to any athletes and you are going to be real limited. Now, if you haven't done an Olympic Games go do it. Sit outside the gates. How's the coach gonna use ya? Is he gonna use ya? I've worked with some coaches or organizations in baseball where if your seen talking to the player the coach thinks that guy wants to be great, I want him in the lineup. I've worked with other managers where the guy will say that guys talking to Ken, he's all screwed up I can't go with him today. You know, cause the biggest barrier I find in sport psychology is the shrink image. Cause athletes are not the securest people and when you bring up the issue of hey how's it going. There's nothing wrong with me I'm okay I'm okay. You know cause they gotta be okay all the time. And, if your not that's a sign of weakness. That's a tough one, that's why you gotta earn their trust and respect.

What's that experience been like when you have had to work with organizations or people that view sport psychology as a bad thing?

Frustrating. Frustrating. Because then you wonder why are you there, but sometimes the dynamics of the program are the head coach wants you there, but the assistant isn't into it. Or, you gotta trainer that's sabotaging you on the side. Or, you got a general manager who thinks this is important and a manager that's just doing it cause he has to. And, those are all important factors and it is hard to deal with.

Often, throughout the interview you have stated that your experience has been different or what you believe are the motives of young people in the field today are different from yours. Could you tell me more about that perception?

That's a good, good perception. Um, I think a lot of it with the young professionals is that they don't spend a lot of time doing the observation and really blending into the culture and they think because they have this academic book knowledge there is a group out there salivating, waiting to get it. And, I just don't see that happening. Um, the other thing that gets me with young professionals and it really used to startle me, now I'm getting used to it is when you are talking to a group of graduate students and by the fifth question, they want to know how much you make. That's not why I was in it! And, you know that's hard, especially Ph.D. students, because this is what I say to a Ph.D. student, but I say, "Why do you think you are entitled to get money just because you have a Ph.D.? What work have you done? Have you really put in the work?" And, I don't mean internships with intramural teams. I mean have you really paid the dues. The one thing about athletics, and you really see this with coaches and it is a lot like the old serf system. You know you're a serf, then a craftsman, then a journeyman. You know you go through all these things different stages, but it's very hands on and when you are doing applied work it has to follow this mentoring process that has to take place. I mean you read the literature and it says do seven imagery sessions and determine whether you want to use internal or external imagery. I mean when you are actually doing the work that has nothing to do with it. You know? I mean if the athlete tells you they are doing imagery, you jump up and down. I mean who cares if it's internal or external. They at least did it for five minutes.

[Pause]

Actually, let me say something. There are ones that have the passion or the heart that comes through. It's sort of, they have the authenticity, there are those that have it. You know. And, you see it in the types of questions they ask you about what's going on. A question like, when does a routine become automatic and it's no longer a routine? When can you get the athlete too into the mental game? What are some of the learning stages that go with learning the mental game?

You've talked a lot of what you think is going on with young professionals, could you tell me more about how you think your experience is different from theirs?

At the time I came along, there was no field of sport psychology so that makes it totally different. I mean there was Bruce Ogilvie, Tom Tutko, they were doing their thing. Other than that there wasn't that much going on, where as today there's much more going on with it.

Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that you have not expressed already?

I think the other thing is that from the position I take, which is more the existential phenomenological humanistic. And, we use words like you have to care about students and care about the individual. I mean I have been to prison to visit ex-athletes and ex-students who took the wrong path. But, you're still there and that hurts. There is a lot of hurt and rejection that goes with the field. Like I mentioned at Cal State Fullerton, I've

been there so long, I know a lot of the coaches and all that. With the Angels I survived for 14 years, but there is rejection when you open yourself up, there is a lot of hurt that goes on that we never talk about. I know I do some at meetings and some, cause I think people got a rosy image of this. In the end, the other thing is the rejection, in terms of when you are working with a team how many people are going to really be into what you are talking about. I think that's where young people are misled by the research. It makes it sound like everyone's going to jump up and down and do this stuff. Some athletes are really into a formal way like we do in sport psych, some athletes do it on their own. And, um, sometimes the frustration of trying to get athletes to listen to what you have to say gets old. You know? Uh, the other thing, and this came up with a group of us who had worked with Olympic athletes, you are part of the team, but you're not part of the team. Young professionals better be ready for that part; you are not going to be in there holding the gold medal with the team. That's their thing. That's the coaches' thing. You gotta be sensitive to that, cause I know for me, I wanna be in the middle of it, but you can't. You're not there day in and day out, because that's what they are doing.

Could you tell me more about your experience of rejection as it applies to your consulting work with athletes?

Uh, it hurts. I never um, for example with the Angels, I never, I always talked with players when they were sent down, how to deal with it, but I never got it to the degree or had the compassion or the empathy until I was sent down. And, when I was told hey we don't need ya with the big club, only the minors [sigh!]. Uh, then when I was released I got a whole other level of understanding. Now I'm not saying that's the only when you get it. But, there is the richness you experiences when you walk the coals. Um, you don't have to, I think there are a lot of good professionals in the field who were not elite-level athletes. But, at the same time when you experience it, it gives you compassion and understanding for the athletes you worked with. But, in terms of my approach and the approach that I take is a caring approach, but that's just what I use. I'm not sure everyone does. I think that for other people another approach may help protect them from that rejection. Do I take it personally at times, do I tell athletes not to? Yes, do I, yes I take it personally at times. It's easier said than done.

You described your approach to consulting as "caring". Could you tell me what you mean by that?

That you really get invested into the athlete. It's, it's also an approach that I have had as an instructor and I have been criticized for that. I'm more into the students than I am course content, um, because the students drive my class not the content. I want to come across here that I am not the only caring person in sport, I don't mean to say that, I'm just talking about my approach. And, I think one thing as you interview these people I would be interested to find who brings up methodological approach.

You mentioned that in this field you are part of the team, but not part of the team. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that phrase?

You're not a part of it. Unless you are there every day, then you are a part of it. Most of us don't get that opportunity. We don't become part of that inner circle. That's the

nature of the work, that part I'm used to. Lots of times when you do this work, you feel awkward. Should I do this, should I do that? Should I push? Shouldn't I push? If you don't push, they're not gonna know you're doing anything. If you push too much, you're pushy and your ass is out of there. That's the art. That's the ebb and the flow. You gotta be confident in your delivery, if you're too confident you're insulting the coaches. If you don't take credit how are you ever gonna be successful? If you take credit, the athletes and coaches might resent it.

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience?

[Pause] If there is one last thing I could add, it would be having a support system of other peoples. I value their opinion. And, when I was talking about working on yourself, I mean being open enough to hear criticism from other people. Getting perspective, not necessarily agreeing with it, but getting perspective. That's been very important. And, learning from coaches. A lot of my mentors have been coaches. Those are two big ones. All right man?

Thank you so much Doc for your time and insight.

All right, take care. See ya man!

Co-Participant: Bob Rotella (BR)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

What do you want to know?

I want to know about your experience...in your words?

My experience [laughter] I've been doing this for 30 years! What do you want to know?

Um, well, to go back to that original question, could you tell me about your experience?

Well, it's been fun. I guess what I feel is that I've had a lot of fun. Um, my wife's had a lot of fun; my daughters have had a lot of fun. Um, you know it's beyond what we ever imagined it would be. I guess people are always asking me about coaches and athletes that have resisted or too macho for it. I just told a guy the other day, I don't ever find that. Um, I just don't find a lot of resistance to it. I don't find a lot of people fighting it or being afraid of it. I think I have always found a way to present it that's very easy to understand and athletes know what I'm talking about. I mean it's very time-consuming and energy consuming. I don't know; I just continue to remind myself to appreciate the opportunities that I have had and not get lazy or sloppy with it. Try to keep my enthusiasm up. I guess over the years I suppose with other people in sport psychology they always want to say I have had success because I am charismatic or something [laughter]. I tend to laugh at that, okay, if that makes you feel better, but I don't think it has anything to do with that. I think it's the same with coaches, you can see coaches that are introverted, extroverted, somewhere in the middle. I think it all has to do with whether or not you are a good communicator and whether or not you can get people to do what it is you want them to do. [Pause]. What else would I say? I guess a lot of people like to ask me, what is my strength? I think it is real simple I have a wonderful ability to see talent in people that they don't see themselves and get it out of people. Um, I guess you kind of bring me back to the earlier issue of what my approach is or whatever. It's like, I guess I don't look at it as one. I guess I really disagree with people who are technique-oriented. I've always said that, why do I want to teach athletes to believe in some technique? I want athletes to believe in themselves. I don't want athletes to believe in some technique. I don't want athletes to believe in me. I want athletes to believe in them. And, I think that gets really lost in our field. I think people are in love with techniques. I just don't get it. I'm not saying it's wrong, I'm just saying I don't get it. That's my point.

You mentioned that in your experience of practicing sport psychology that you did not experience any resistance. Could you tell me more about what you meant by that?

[Pause] Well, I am always having people in sport psychology call me, or write me letters, or want to complain about how come sport psychology isn't growing and how come people aren't listening? And, I'm like jeez; I've been busy for seven days a week with people all over the world to come and spend two days with me. I mean coaches

call...I don't have resistance. If someone is having resistance they need to really look at what they are doing they must be doing something wrong. I think you have to look and say, "What am I doing wrong if people aren't listening?" I think people in competitive sports are trying to get better. It's all a matter of whether they think you are going to help them get better or not. You know, so I guess there is a credibility issue and that's a big issue. I guess once you get credibility you know everything gets a lot easier. I just tell people you have to start somewhere and usually you have to do a lot of work for nothing, you know, to get credibility, but more importantly to learn how to do what you are doing. And, I don't think there is any place, and I ran a program for years, I don't see graduate programs that are really teaching graduate students how to get athletes to play better. So I mean a lot of times when you get out of your degree you are gonna spend a lot of time doing stuff to get better at it. What was the question again [laughter]?

You had mentioned you had not experienced much resistance and I was asking you to tell me a little bit more about that.

I mean I don't know what else to say about it.

You mentioned that one of the things you did best was that you were a good communicator. Could you tell me what you mean by that term?

[Pause] Well, I am an old coach. And, when you coach you have to be a good teacher and a good communicator. You have to make it crystal clear what your expectations are and make sure they understand what it is you want them to do because if they don't understand what you want them to do it is awfully hard for them to do it. And, I guess the other thing I'd say is I don't get somebody to do something unless I think it is unbelievable important. In other words, there are a lot of things that you can try and get people to change when you work with them. And, I think I am very good at identifying one or two things that are really crucial for them to change and to drive them nuts to do it. It is so hard to get people to change anything so if you are gonna try and get people to change anything it better be important. If you get them to spend a lot of time trying to get them to change something and it ends up not making any difference you are probably done. [Pause] Uh, I don't know, people always want to get into, how much of it is talking? I think people tend to think of me as having a big mouth and talking a lot. And, I definitely would agree with that, but I also am very good at listening and I know when to listen. I guess more than anything I feel like I really know what I am listening for and I can sort out information when they are talking to me that isn't important so I can pick up the stuff that really is important. Um, and it really doesn't matter if I am working with an athlete or last week I'm working with a basketball team at the college-level. I, I've been around it enough that I can go meet with a coaching staff at night. The next day I have individual meetings with all the players. That night meet with the coaching staff and somehow pull together all the issues within the team. Convince the coaches to listen to it and change the way they are dealing with people. And, that is very different from when I am working with an individual athlete. You know with a team that I am not gonna be there with every day, if I don't get the coaches to change what they are or change their perception of a kid. I mean last week we made some great progress just helping a coach understand some kid that he sees as lazy. And, I'm trying to get the

coach to understand that the kid isn't lazy he's just never been taught any different. And, I told the coach if you did that you would be lazy, but he's not, he's just never been taught. So it doesn't mean he's lazy he just doesn't know any better. After we know better and you've taught him then we can know whether he's lazy or not. And, it is just amazing how that can change a coach's perspective on stuff. Um, and lead to a much better relationship. I don't know it's kind of non-stop in that regard. I don't know how much of it is listening and how much is talking. At some point I feel like, I mean athletes don't come to me because they want to talk all day to me. They come to me because they want me to teach them what I know. And a lot of it is, you know, what do I know, I was gonna say 30 years of working with athletes, but I don't think it's that. The bottom line is they know the players I'm working with win a lot and the teams I am working with win a lot. That's why they listen. You gotta be able to listen too, but you gotta know what to listen for.

You mentioned that you thought working with athletes was “time-consuming” and “energy-consuming.” Could you tell me what you mean by that?

Um, I guess what it means to me as a competitive person, people that don't put the time and energy that I put into it don't have a prayer. [Laughter] That's in its simplest way. I have a lot of people in the field ask me about it and I just say that I put a lot more into it than you do [laughter]. I spend a lot more time on the telephone. I spend a lot more of my waking hours doing...that's what I do; it's my life. [Pause] I got a wife that's a saint. Yeah, that's probably the number one thing I would tell somebody, “You want to be in sport psychology you better have a spouse that's a saint.”

You mentioned that working with a team is different from working with an individual. Could you tell me more about those two experiences?

Well, it's mainly different in, it's not different in what I work on, it's different in the fact that with an individual sport athlete it's just me and that athlete. With a team sport, first of all you got coaches that are gonna be making all the decisions on playing time which is a huge issue. Second, they are gonna be with the athlete every day and they are gonna have more impact on the kids head then I'm gonna. Third of all, a lot of times kids have to accept roles that aren't really the roles they want. You know, you get all these kids recruited that want to be the star and the coach says, “Well, you're gonna sit on the bench or you're gonna play four minutes.” You know, try to get kids to feel good about themselves while trying to get them to accept an unimportant role in their mind. You know the coach might not see it as an unimportant role, but they do. It's easy to feel good, you know, we are teaching people to be confident and feel good about themselves. Well, it's easy to be confident when the coach is giving you the green light, if the coach is telling you he doesn't if ever want you to shoot if your on a basketball team...well it's a different ball game. The other thing I would say that I have tried to tell people a lot over the years is when I work with teams I don't care if the athletic director likes me or wants me there or the general manager or the owner of the team. I always make decisions on whether or not I will work with the team on whether or not the head coach wants me. If the head coach doesn't want me it's useless as far as I am concerned. I mean I am amazed that people would even want to do it. And, some people just want to have a job,

but if you want to have an impact. If I can't have an impact on the team's success then I don't want to waste my time with it. And, that is certainly what I have found is the key. Is the coach really into it? I mean does the coach really trust me? I mean is the coach gonna trust me to go talk to each of their athletes and get the athletes to tell me the truth. Then can I go back to the coaches, without violating an athletes trust and understand what our goal is here – to help this team. I mean there is some finesse involved in that. You have to get everybody there to think you are looking out for everybody's best interests. You know sometimes, you know some coaches think you are supposed to look out for their best interest. Some players think you are supposed to look out for theirs and I gotta get them to em' to understand they aren't mutually exclusive. That's the tricky part. And, sometimes they'll say are you here for the university, or the pro team's best interests, or Dr. Rotella's best interests? Are you here for the coaches? Are you here for the players? Are you here for the stars? Are you here for the subs? Well, we are all the same. If I am looking out for my best interests I am going to help this team. In order to help this team I gotta look out for the players best interests. To look out for the players best interests I gotta look out for the coaches best interests. So that's interesting, but a lot of people don't understand that until you explain it all to them.

You have used the word teacher quite often to describe yourself and your experience. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that word?

Well, I probably use it in the sense that I am always trying to get people to understand that I don't do anything to anybody. I don't ever play the game for anybody, I just teach people how to use their brain to help them play better. And, I guess that's what I mean by it. I guess the other thing I mean is that I have learned how to present information that I want them to learn in a manner that they can comprehend and figure out how to apply. And, I guess the third way is what I call hammering the points over and over again. I think a lot of good teaching is repetition. And so, I'll keep hammering people with the same stuff over and over again.

You mentioned in describing your experience of providing sport psychology that you know what to listen for. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

[Pause] Well, let me begin by saying I don't know if I know for sure. I hear very different stuff than a lot of other people would here. And, I pick out different stuff from what other people would pick out. And, somewhere in the back of my brain I've got a list [laughter]. There's certain things I'm looking for in terms of confidence, certain things I'm looking for in terms of composure. You know, there's certain things I'm looking for in terms of focus. There are certain things I am looking for in terms of commitment. Uh, you know there are a lot of things I am looking for in terms of this person's self-image that tells me a lot about this person and where I've got to go with what I am gonna do. I mean I think it certainly helps that I have played a lot of sports and coached a lot of sports and I still compete a lot. You know, I think that all helps. And then at some point with a lot of experience you get a pretty good handle on what you need to be able to do. The more you watch them the more you learn. I guess that is another thing you figure out over time. A lot of people can sit there and tell you a lot of stuff. Then you go and watch them. You find out which people are being honest with

you and which aren't. Certainly, honesty would be very high on my list of people who you help.

You just mentioned that honesty would be high on the list of people that you work with. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Well I mean some people...I mean I guess what you are trying to figure out is are some people lying to you about how good or bad their attitude is? [Laughter] Are they lying in the positive or the negative? I mean are they understating themselves? Um, are they totally unaware and out to lunch and really have no idea? Or, are they intentionally lying to you? Then you have to figure that out. And then you have people at the other end of the range that are way too aware. You see this with a lot of psychology people they are in love with being aware of awareness. That doesn't work too well in sport either. So, I guess it means all those things to me. And, keep in mind I'm only thinking about half this stuff cause you are asking me. This is not stuff that I spend any time thinking about. The other day in an interview, do you look back and think about all the wins, all the people you have worked with? And I go not really. Well, how could that be? I'm usually immediately thinking about tomorrow. And, I guess I keep reminding myself that I take tremendous pride in – I guess the word I would use is being juiced for every athlete I work with. I always tell myself, I don't think the next athlete you work with gives a heck if you are good with someone yesterday, if one their day you were asleep or distracted. So, if I am asking them to be into what they are doing I should be into it with them; and, same thing when athletes call me late at night or early in the morning. They don't want to have a sport psychologist be tired or in a bad mood. And, I think anybody that is in this field needs to understand that. This is what you are gonna do, there is expectations of you and your behavior and you need to understand that. I don't think it is strange that they have these expectations.

You mentioned early on in our interview that your experience of providing sport psychology consultation was one of enthusiasm. Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?

You know...it means to me that I am very into it, when I'm into it. You know, if I got an athlete I'm with, that's where I'm at. I'm not thinking about something else. Usually, I'm quite drained when I'm done cause I have put a lot of energy into it. You know I look at it as being very different from other kinds of psychological help where people just sit there for an hour and let somebody tell them their problems. [Pause] Um, they're not gonna talk to me about their problems for too long. Pretty soon I'm gonna be like, "Let's start talking about what you wanna do [laughter]!" I mean...cause I'm gonna sort it out. If someone wants to just tell me their problems and all the reasons their lousy, it's not gonna be long before I tell them, "I don't really care. It doesn't matter." They start telling me about their Mom and Dad, I might listen for a little while and I might make a few suggestions, then it's gonna be very soon after that I'm gonna say, "Now that you are a big boy or girl what do you wanna do? Now that you don't live with Mom or Dad what do you want to do? It was bad enough when you were a kid, now do you want to live your whole life as if they are with you?" So I'm – which I guess goes to the earlier question –

I guess I am fairly direct. Someone might say that I am blunt. I just think I am very honest with people cause I can't help them if I am not honest with them.

You mentioned that if an athlete is telling you their problems for too long, you stated you would stop them and help them sort out what was wrong...

Well, I guess what I would say on that point is I don't try to figure out their problem. I tell them that if you would like me to lie and make up an explanation for why you are the way you are we could do that game if you want? But, I'm not a therapist. I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't pretend to know why you are the way you are. I don't know if you would have been this way if you had the greatest Mom and Dad in the world or if you had the worst ones, or if that is just your perception and they are actually wonderful people, but you see them as being negative. I'm gonna say, "I can't do a damn thing about that. Why don't we start working on what we can do today to become a great athlete, instead of you spending the whole day telling me why you can't become a great athlete." I'm very into personal responsibility and accountability. It's your choice and let's get on with it.

You stated you are very into personal responsibility with the athlete. Could you tell me what you mean by that?

Well, I mean I am in to getting them to take personal responsibility for their attitude and for their success. That is a real important part of what I teach. [Pause] If they are not into that then we are not gonna work real well together cause I don't even want sport to be something where somebody else does something for you. I don't ever want there to be a pill. I don't want them to be hypnotized under my spell. I want them to be under their own spell. That's all it means.

You stated earlier that you did not want an athlete to believe in a technique, you wanted them to believe in themselves. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you meant by that?

[Pause] Gee, I meant what I just said. I want them to believe in their brain, not somebody else's technique. I don't think the power is in a technique. I think the power is in the person. And, the person has a brain and a free will so it's how you think about yourself. It's not in this technique has power. I mean a technique is just an organized way that somebody thinks, but in psychology they tend to, oh these are mental training techniques. And, I tend to be screw mental training techniques. Learn how to think right. Learn how your brain works. Learn how your emotions work. Learn how they impact on how your body moves.

You mentioned earlier that you thought people are very reluctant to change. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Well, let me begin by saying I guess I wanted even look at it and say I think. This would be one of those things I could comfortably say, "That's a fact!" Most people find it very difficult to change. Even people that don't think they have a difficult time making changes. You take all the graduate students in the field of sport psychology and I'll promise you that most of them have a terrible time changing anything. And, I think its

true of every athlete. So you better convince them that it is really crucial and you better find a simple way to help them make the change cause if it takes them a long time to make the change you may lose them before they even make the change. Um, and then you got to get them to sustain it. I just think most people...it's tough to change stuff. Particularly if you are an athlete and you are past the age of fifteen it's probably been engrained for a while. I mean most people that come to you, the things that are holding them back attitudinally they've probably be doing for a long time. It's probably a pretty strong habit and it's been killing them, but people are comfortable with it. So, you got this combination of it being a bad habit, but they are comfortable with it. So a lot of people, even though its comfortable, will keep doing stuff even though it's killing them. Even to the point that people will develop belief systems to justify what it is they are doing even though it's killing them. So at some point you deal with changing people's belief systems about things. And, on the part of the athlete it often times takes blind faith – which I have no problem with. You know most of the great things in life take blind faith. I mean my wife marrying me took blind faith. It was a big mistake but...
[Laughter]

Well, to go back to that original question, is there anything about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation that you would like to add?

[Pause] Well, let me think. Well, if someone wanted to define being successful at it you better pay attention to your results. I mean we are probably preaching process stuff, but boy you better pay attention to results because if you are not getting results you are probably doing something wrong. I'd say you better be ready to be extremely passionate about what you do because it usually takes a lot of time and energy before you get any where in it. Uh, uh, [pause] I don't know it's uh, you better understand that the world of sports is very into loyalty. Um, I think that's a big part of it. I think all the players I work with know that if they spend time with me I'll be committed to them forever. I'll never give up on them even if they give up on me. If at some later point they are ready to get back into it, I'll be there. I think they all know they can call me or talk to me anytime they want. You know they are like a part of my family. I guess I probably feel like you better have a lot of confidence if you want to get anywhere in sport psychology. Um, and people always ask me if I think the field is gonna grow. For twenty years I haven't known the answer to that question. I have always said that depends on whether graduate programs are gonna put out people who are good at what they do. I think there is always gonna be plenty of work for people who are good at it. Um, you know I see all these people coming out and they ask me, "How did you market yourself?" And I say, "I didn't. I got people to win." If you get people to win, it will take care of itself. Um, but, uh, yeah I guess you got to live it.

You mentioned that any of the athletes you work with you consider them family. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Yeah, don't ever have sex with them. That's probably a legitimate point. I mean I have probably seen more and more of that happen since sport psychology has grown over the last 30 years. And, I think it's terrible. I uh, I think it means you are there for them through thick and thin. I think it means you realize that you are there for them more

when they are struggling, then when they are doing great. Um, I think it means you care about them and are committed to them. It means you would do pretty much anything humanely possible to be there for them when they need you rather than when it's convenient for you. I mean those are all the things it means. It probably means that they call and want to come to my home for dinner or to stay the night, they can. Um, they know my wife feels the same way about it. Those are all the things it means. It means most of the time I am talking about performance, but there's another 10% of the time we may get into issues about life. And, if you do a really good job, and this is the way I think about bringing up my daughter, you teach them everything you think is important so that when they get to 18 or so you start letting them go. And, I think the more you let them go the more interested they are in coming back and asking you stuff. The more you try to hold on, the less interested they are.

You mentioned that you thought anyone going into this field [sport psychology] was going to need a lot of confidence to be successful. Could you tell me what you mean by that?

Well, I think everything I am talking about is just my opinion. I never try to tell people they ought to do it the way I did it. I try to tell them because I didn't try to do it the way anybody else did it cause I didn't know anybody else who was doing it when I started so it was irrelevant to me. Um, I think everyone has to find their way, but certainly when I am giving my opinions it's what I really believe. Certainly, since I left teaching at the university I don't spend any of my time telling people how to do what they do. I spend my time now with athletes. I just think you have to have a lot of confidence in yourself. You have to believe you know what you are doing. And, how can I put this? You see people make mistakes at either end. You see some people who have confidence and you watch them and you say, "I don't know if they are competent." So they got more confidence than competence. So, they got more confidence than they deserve to have and they want to jump in with high-level athletes and what they don't understand is if they jump in with high-level athletes you are gonna get found it if you don't know what you are doing. And, if you mess up it will probably destroy your career. So I am always telling people don't jump in until you are both competent and confident in what you are doing. On the other hand, once you know what you are doing you better make sure you believe in what you are doing cause that will show through. It will certainly show through when an athlete you are working with is struggling a little. And uh, that is when they are gonna find out if you believe what it is you are teaching them. I mean we could go on for hours. I guess it means...I guess you better think you are really good at what you do. I would say that about anybody in any profession. You better think you are good at what you do; yet, you better pay attention to your results. I mean if you think you are good at what you do and no one wants to listen to ya and none of your athlete are playing better or none of them are sticking with you or coming back for more...you got problems. Does that mean sport psychologists should have sport psychologists helping them? I don't know.

You mentioned that loyalty was part of your experience of providing sport psychology consultation. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

I think you have to be loyal to athletes, but what I guess I meant when I said that is. Like when you are working with teams...you know in the world of athletics, every coach that works his way up the ranks starts as like a 5th assistant. And, makes like no pay for a salary or maybe as a volunteer and they do it for a sustained time period early in their career. They're not making much money. They are not getting any publicity. They are not getting any credit, but you're learning. And, if you demonstrate that kind of loyalty to a head coach and a team long enough eventually you will move up into a position where they will pay you for it. And, eventually they'll help you, but if you start questioning or you start thinking you are smarter than the person at the top of the totem pole too early you will be destroyed in the world of coaching. I think it's pretty much the same way in sport psychology. And, I think it is very typical in today's world for people to think they are smarter than everybody very quickly. I think a lot of people argue that it's a generational thing. I don't know. My guess is it's been around forever. And, I mention it all the time with students over the years because I think it is very different in the world of academics. I think academics can be very different in that you can do your own thing and you don't have to be loyal to anybody. And, I think athletics is a very different world. I think athletes and coaches are much more confident than most people in academics. Um, I always used to say in the world of sport when I coached if you were sarcastic people would be sarcastic back and get cockier. And, it was a fun game you played. If you were sarcastic with someone in academics they might roll over and start crying and ask you why you're picking on them. And I'm like, "Jeez. Excuse me I was kidding. It means I like you." It's a different world and you can't understand it unless you spend a lot of time around it. And, it's not like it's a big requirement in grad school to have a lot of experience in the sport world. Your SAT scores are more important or your GRE scores or whatever. And, you know that's certainly of some value, but ultimately it has way more to do with how good can you coach and teach people. And, I just look at you know, previously I coached people on sport skills, recruiting, etc. Now, all I do is coach people on attitude and success. I always thought, even when I coached basketball and lacrosse, I always thought I was...always my best skill was getting people to believe in themselves. You know, that was the part of coaching I liked the best and that was the part of coaching I was the best at. I don't know if I have ever been organized or structured. I was much better once practice started and meeting kids before and after practice started than I was with spending hours getting this unbelievably structured practice organized. Once, I got in there it would be organized. It wouldn't look it to someone else, but in my head it would be organized.

You mentioned that in your experience with grad students you thought they could use more experience in the sport world. Could you tell me more about what you meant by that?

Well, I mean just...the bottom line is you better spend a lot of time with coaches and athletes. And, if you are not spending a lot of time with coaches and athletes you are going to have a really rough time getting anybody to listen to you. You know that is

where you sort out...what in a textbook is bull and what in a textbook is useful. And, I know the fact that I coached at both the high school and college level all the while I was in grad school it just kept me all the time. If I read a book that someone said is the book in sport psychology, I'd go coach kids and none of it was relevant in any way to anything that was going on with my team. You either decided your experience with your athletes was irrelevant or you decide that the book irrelevant. I usually trusted my experience. And, you start figuring out which stuff is useful. And, there's stuff that is...and even if you look at stuff that is more exercise physiology or exercise psychology related. Well, every time I work with a basketball team I am gonna talk to coaches and player about perceived exertion. Um, it's not like there is a lot of literature out there about perceived exertion within a basketball team, but it's a huge issue. I mean just last week I worked with some basketball players. We hooked these kids up to some monitors cause they wanted to show these kids they are never going hard. You know they are always telling you how tired they are and you're like, "My God", you're not even close to working yourself and the kids like, "What!" Even within topical areas you've got to be able to extrapolate and figure how this is useful and it's usually not the way that it is written up in a book. I mean I think that's changing over time, but certainly when I was getting started it wasn't.

To go back to that original question again Doc, is there anything about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation that you have not had the chance to express?

Get across to you. Uh, you keep asking questions, I'll keep answering them. You're making me work [laughter]. I'm sure there is something, but I don't know what it is.

Then I think I have taken up enough of your time.

All right, good talking to you. Uh, good luck to you.

Co-Participant: Ralph Vernacchia (RV)

Could you tell me about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

Uh, stream of consciousness or something?

Tell me about your experience. You're the boss in this interview.

Well, I think uh, providing services to athletes is all about being an advocate for the athlete. Hopefully, having the wisdom. I think one thing uh; one reason that I have been able to be effective is...I understand the breathing mechanism of sport. I lived it. You know I rode the bus. I worked with athletes. I have seen the ups and downs. I've been a coach. I have gone through the process for many years prior to getting to the position where I would actually work in the field of sport psychology. Which, even though as a coach for those 22 years, I was applying many of the principles it was very difficult in that role to actually do sport psychology. So, um, I feel that the most important thing is to understand the breathing mechanism of sport, what sport is about. I am very personally very; I try to convey to the athletes that I work with the importance of integrity, honesty, and character. I am a big believer in mission-driven programs or behaviors or value-oriented; all the people that you are interviewing, I think the one thing that comes through loud and clear is those are people of great character. Wonderful people that just have very strong character. So that is one of the focal points that I have. I think I am different from most in that I try to integrate a lot of knowledge from physical education that today many of the young professionals are missing out on. For instance, sport psychology is an outgrowth of motor learning. The field of motor learning has for all intents and purposes disappeared. It is now called motor control and the neuro-physiology has pre-dominated the acquisition of skill learning. There used to be in physical education on every faculty someone that knew how to teach physical skills. And uh, there would be a specialist in that area. Many people, including myself, taught activity classes. Everyday at 3 o'clock I would go out and coach and so I was teaching physical skills to people in a variety of different events in track and field. And, uh, I think there are many people in the field of sport psychology right now that don't understand motor learning. They don't understand uh, how people learn and perform motor skills. They don't have that orientation. They don't have a real understanding of what it takes to learn a physical skill cause sports are physical. So, I think that uh, when I first became aware of all of that was in relationship to exercise physiology and motor learning. I studied both of those. Uh, you start to realize there was a psychological component to it. I knew that from my own performance. I knew that from watching athletes that I worked with and trained. Then towards the end of my career uh, I was able to help athletes perform at a very high level and combine a lot of those things. So we had a lot of success, in terms of our team and individual athletes. So, I really start to uh, look at the issue of wear and tear of coaching. Which is pretty tough, tough profession. I needed to make a decision professionally and how to go with that. So I left coaching and went the sport psychology route. I think that what it comes down to is basically uh, knowing people. Understanding human behavior. Why people do the things that they do. Having the ability to listen to them.

[Pause]

I think the wonderful thing about the field of sport psychology is that it is low tech and high performance. It is deductive. You have to deduce what is going on from all the information. You listen to it, then you form an idea or theory. Then you start to hone in on the real issue. You know, and then you give mental training strategies to help a person walk through that emotionally, physically, spiritually, whatever it is. And see how can I be most effective in that situation? I think it is mostly about service and not self-service. I think it is about education, not intervention. I think it has a lot to do with ethics because I think that a lot of times that can get lost in the mix. I think it's all about learning life skills in the process because being an athlete is a lifestyle. It involves a lifestyle that has many challenges to it. So, I think it's important to start and work at the appropriate developmental level. I think a lot of people have a misperception that they want to work with Olympic athletes or professional athletes. What they miss in the mix is that whatever level you are at there is elite athletes. You could be working with kids in middle school and there are elite kids. Everyone wants to start at the top. If you just start at where you are at and learn...you know serve your apprenticeship. You learn your skills and be a craftsperson. You find out if, you can be at the high school level and you've got elite kids. You can be at the university level and you've got elite kids. I've been at the Olympic level and I know there is elite people at that level. So, what I see it as is the process of helping people make the transition uh, from being the big fish in the little pond to going to quote "the next level." Now they are the little fish in the big pond and how are they gonna handle that. You know, the freshman coming to the university situation. How do you handle that? What are some of the aspects that help people perform at that particular level. So I think developing that, I just completed a book called *Inner Strength: The Mental Dynamic of Athletic Performance*. It will be published this spring. Um, but, in that I kind of set out a model I utilize when working with athletes, coaches, and so it was important for me to sit down and do that. I think it is important to get your ideas out, think them through, write them down, have them field tested, scrutinized by colleagues, and then put it in print and see if there is any reaction to it. The first book I wrote with Rick McGuire and Cook, *Coaching Mental Excellence: It Does Matter Whether You Win or Loose*. It's just a little book about coaching and it seems to resonate with coaches. My publisher says, "Wow, this book has legs!" Well, it, good science makes good sense. And that is where we are losing it in sport psychology. Our task is to take complex issues and make the simple so that people can get a mental foothold on them and accomplish what they would like to do. Not to take something simple and make it complex so that they can't figure it out and can't do it. That is the real trick. How do you do that? I know Bob Rotella always said, "You don't have to be ill to get better at something." The second book I wrote was an edited book on case studies. What I believe in is uh, a qualitative aspect. It's nice to see it come of age. What I did in 1973, fortunately I had a great advisor, Keith was supportive. What I wanted to do for my research no one had done before which was case studies. In 1973, I think I wrote the first doctoral dissertation in that area. And, I don't say that to say, "Yea me!" I'm just saying that I did my master's thesis and found...nothing. There was nothing I could use as a coach. Okay, I've got some stats, so what? I used the athletes I was coaching and big deal. I used runners and some were all-Americans and at the

highest level, but when you use a small population, the whole statistical thing. There was no practical significance to it! So I wanted to know more about the athletes that I coached so that's who I did my dissertation on...case studies of athletes. And, what you are looking at now – the phenomenological approach – that was my approach. It wasn't taken to the point of a content analysis that hadn't been invented yet, but I presented in a very descriptive way these case studies. The idea being that covering different topics within the studies, in-depth interviews, just condensing it into a performance profile. I also took a look at what are the things that helped them perform. What motivated them? What are their thoughts? What are their feelings? My coaching belief has always been coach the person first and the sport second. So I believe in it from that perspective. I have always been interested in qualitative work as well. [Pause] I think it is really challenging from a professional standpoint. Um, to have a passion for not only helping people achieve at the highest level, but it's the process of doing it. Building trust, building confidence. Uh, building beliefs of athletes. Creating a sense of, "I can do that." Uh, just helping them.

You mentioned that you are “all about being an advocate for the athlete.” Could you tell me what you mean by that when you say that phrase?

Well, I think that most athletes uh, they don't really understand the politics of their sport. What I am interested in is to help athletes understand the culture, politics, and the mentality of their sport. A lot of athletes don't understand any of that. They understand the physical aspects of their sport, but they don't understand the politics of playing time for example. They don't understand the culture of the sport they enter into. What it takes? What the lifestyle is going to be? Many of them are so good they have risen to a certain level of their physical talent and they have no mental skills [laughter]. And, some of them have a lousy attitude. So you have that issue. Those are the three areas. So by being an advocate I think, "What can I do to help you achieve what you would like to do." So I think that is what advocacy is. My idea of being an advocate is to protect the athlete in a way that they learn the process and they understand and learn the politics of what they are doing and still maintain their relationship. No when to be quite. If they are angry, don't speak. To do those kinds of things that are going to build a relationship.

You mentioned earlier that one of the reasons that you thought possible made you a successful practitioner is that you “understand sport.” Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Uh, again the breathing mechanism of sport. I have studied sport from all angles. I mean I teach a class on the Olympics. I taught motor learning for 23 years. There are just very few people left in the field that are approaching it from the physical education perspective. I mean many people are looking at it from quote, "sport science." But, that is different from physical education. In physical education you are actually behaviorally oriented. Exercise science is not behaviorally oriented. I mean they are medically oriented and they are confused when things don't work out for them because they think the behavioral sciences are quote, "the soft sciences." Now they are studying exercise psychology to the nth degree to try and figure out exercise adherence and exercise compliance. Well, big deal! You know as a coach I had to throw kids off the track and I

never had a problem with that. You know what? I was there from 3-6pm every night and I'd be with them on the weekends. We would set goals. We would do team building activities. I designed their training programs etc. Do you think they are willing to do that? They don't know their profession! What they have to accept is if I'm going to be in sport psychology, I have got to be able to talk turkey with the coaches and the athletes. I have to speak the language of sport. Well, you have to know what you are talking about because what people don't understand about sport psychology is it's performance oriented even if you're the sport psychology person. You get up in front of a group; those coaches will [laughter]. You'll look like a jerk pretty quick. They don't care. They'll embarrass the hell out of you and the athletes will blow you off as well. So, you better know what you are talking about before you get up in front of them. Now, the people in exercise psychology haven't figured out that if you are going to work with people in that field, you better understand exercise physiology and medical science. Well, you know...good luck. There's always doctors and there is always gonna be nurses. This is the other thing that people find out in the field of sport psychology that I found out as a coach is BST (Blood, sweat, and tears). You gotta go the distance. In for a penny, in for a pound. You can't parachute in there to work with a team or work with an athlete. It is an issue of on-going service providing and doing that. Then the other issue is can you work with coaches AND athletes to bring about a certain effect? The most common thing is...coaches and athletes. There is always some friction there. So the athletes want you to come in. They think you are going to solve the problems with their coach. So they get a little disappointed at first because I don't take that approach. I triangulate the problem. It's a performance issue. You work with the coach. You work with the athlete and the sport psychology person. You don't get between the coach and the athlete. So they get a little disappointed. You still establish trust and so forth. I don't know there are still a lot of people out there, particularly psychologists and people that come from the psychology perspective; they don't have a clue about sport. And I clearly differentiate sport psychology from psychology. They are two different things. And uh, the operable word in sport psychology is sport. My emphasis is on, "Do you know sport?" I mean I will go to a conference, AAASP conference, and they bring in people to speak. They bring in coaches to speak sometimes and these guys use language. You know how coaches are. They speak at these conferences and these guys get upset and I'm like, "Man, you've never been in a locker room!" I've been in there when the walls, you know the paint fell off the wall. I mean you are an advocate for the athlete. I just think there are a lot of people that don't know sport. They don't love sport. You know to the sense of...I have a passion for sport. I love sport. I am a champion of athletics. Uh, it's just a part of me.

[Pause]

I tell my graduate students, "I hope you are a sports junkie." I mean I watch ESPN. I read Sports Illustrated. I watch the Golf Channel. I mean I'm a junkie. Grad student says, "I don't have time for that." Well, you are not gonna be very good because you are not gonna know what is going on. They don't even read the sports page. So when they come into school I say, "Did you see this? Did you see that? Did you read this? Did you read that?" My students look at me like. I mean I love it. What a human laboratory!

You mentioned earlier that sport psychology is “about knowing people and understanding human behavior.” Could you tell me what you mean by that?

Right, uh, well, uh, I guess uh, knowing people. Know the activities they are involved in and place them in situations that are appropriate to meet their needs. If I had to define it...if I work with coaches I say, “You know what I know sport psychology and you know the people. We need to work together.” And, I was just talking to the young ladies in softball here [Western Washington University] and said, “You know what, I don’t know anything about softball.” I tell them flat out. You can tell me I’m full of you know what. You let me know when I am off base, your not gonna hurt my feelings. I need your help, just like we need each others help if we are gonna get where we want to go. But, I can tell the basic things. I think you know people, you know human behavior. My situation is, my thought on that is, after 35 years in the field, the faces change the behavior remains the same. I can tell you, I’ve seen it before. Here’s the behavior. Here are the situational characteristics. Here is what is causing it, etc., etc., etc.

[Pause]

My measure of um, you know how effective I am is by asking athletes, “Does that make sense to you?” Now, a lot has been said recently about resonance. I guess I’m not sophisticated enough to get to that level. But, does it make sense to you? You know? And they shake their head. You usually get the bobble-head effect or they blow you off. Usually I get the bobble-head effect. Yeah, that makes sense or they are not gonna listen to you. And it demonstrates that you understand and you can communicate with them. And build that bridge that they are willing to listen to you because your saying something that really enlightens them. You kinda shed light on the problem they are having. You don’t give them an answer, but gives them a way to think through it so they make a good choice. So, I think that issue has been lost in sport psychology and I think that is a question you have to ask athletes. But, common sense isn’t too common. My thinking on it is, we are trying to help people make great decisions with crystal clear thinking. The trick is can you see it crystal clear right before you are about to perform and when you are in the middle of it. Those are the people that are most effective. Win ugly. Get the job done. Everybody can flow; can you do it when you are ebbing? [Laughter]

You stated earlier that you thought the practice of sport psychology was deductive. Could you tell me more about what you mean when you say that?

Well, because we are living in a very information-oriented society, which is inductive. The field, exercise science, ahs gotten so molecular in thinking. That’s one of the reasons that the idea of the qualitative research, like you are doing now, is so engaging to me because you are taking a molar approach to it. And, deducing what are the elements that are the critical elements. You are not looking at the elements pre-identified and investigating those to the nth degree. What I think is important is to find the people that are doing it who are most effective and ask them what they are doing. They have obviously figured it out [laughter]. I tell my students, “You want to find out how to be good at something, find somebody who is good at it and ask them what they are doing.” Then adapt it to your style.

You mentioned that the provision of sport psychology services is “all about service and education.” Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Uh, okay, it's about service and not self-service. Here is the delineation, “What can I give?” Okay, that is part of being an advocate. What can I give to that situation to make that person successful? So my role as a sport psychology person is not to be on stage, not to be side stage, not to be back stage, but to be off stage. The spotlight belongs to the athletes and the coaches. And I am, my role is to be invisible, but available. So that's the way I do that. So you see today, people are not about giving they are about what can I get out of it. So they are self-serving. Can this enhance my practice? Or, can I get this from it? Or, can I get this on my letterhead? People ask me this all the time, “Do you have a web page or a brochure?” I can barely use a computer! I said, “No, I just answer the phone [laughter]. People call me up and I answer. There are two aspects of that. It took 25 years before the phone started to ring [laughter]. Number 2, do a good job when you get a chance so you get invited back. So my measure of somebody who is good in the field of sport psychology is not about what they have done. It's did you get invited back to do it again. So that's the service issue, the other one was...education. I believe in education, not intervention. Provide mental skills training. Yes, people want us to have the magic bullet and yes, you are going to be dropped into situations. You are trying to provide educational training in mental skills and sport psychology so that people can apply it to a particular situation. This is different from intervention, which is a psychology approach. The sport psychology approach is education. I think athletes are very smart. They have a high degree of athletic intelligence. A lot of them are already doing it. They just don't have a label for it.

You mentioned that those practicing sport psychology “need to serve their apprenticeship.” Could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that statement?

Uh, apprenticeship is, you've got to learn your craft or trade. The only way you learn something is by working along with someone who is good at what they do. That is where the mentoring comes in. You've got to serve your apprenticeship and work long hours and do what it takes so that you learn from that individual and from experiences that go along with that sport. An apprentice would go into a blacksmith shop and sweep the floor. Then they became a journeyman. Then they became a craftsman. You worked your way up. And that is what people do not want to do. They all want to start at the top, well hey, if you want to get to the top of the ladder start at the bottom rung. You got to pay your dues and go through that process. The thing that confuses me is I will go to AAASP and give presentations like everybody else you talk to. People come up and they say, “Wow! This is great stuff.” And I say, what are you learning in school? Isn't this what you are talking about in class? If you are not, what makes you think you are going to be very effective in sport psychology?

You stated earlier that “you have to coach the person first and the sport second.” Could you tell me what you mean when you say that?

Well, I mean you really got to know what that individual is about. You see when you are a coach you have to love all the athletes that you coach. You may not like them and what

they do, but you have to love them. And so, you've got to know that individual in order to establish a caring relationship. I think that goes a long way in terms of building a bond between coach and athlete. You need to know the cultural differences of the athletes you are coaching or providing sport psychology services for. I mean you have to know the person before you know the athlete. That is what we do in sport psychology is get to know the person. I think it's a little tougher for coaches. We are in a world of specialization. So there are a lot of things between coaches and athletes. You don't get to know them as well anymore. You don't get to demonstrate that you care about them as a person. So, they know that you may challenge them. I think one of the things you have to do in sport psychology is mentally challenge people. I think you have to be able to establish a relationship and be able to talk to people on topics not related to their sport. Caring is very important.

To go back to that original question Ralph, is there anything about your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes that you feel you have not had the opportunity to express that you would like to add?

[Pause] Uh, [pause] I don't know how...it's just. It's really uh, pretty hard work in terms of. There is that performance issue to it. This is why people in psychology can not understand it. They may be in clinical psychology, but there is an office and no one knows what is going on. But, when you work in sport psychology everyone knows. The athletic department knows and they know that that kid is a kid you have seen and they know x, y, and z. There is no...you are on the spot. Do you have the wherewithal for that? I've been in some situations where it has been pretty tough. You can meet some pretty hard core people the higher up you go, especially at the Olympics. These are individuals that have a lot of talent and similar problems to you and I and few people to relate to, to get through these problems. I guess my biggest thing is I'm pretty concerned about the future of the field. I am very concerned about professional preparation. What's gonna happen in the future? You are looking at a group of people that are in the twilight of their careers. My major concern is about the future of the profession. I just don't know where that is going. I guess looking back; you gotta take the good with the bad. There's ups and there's downs. It's pretty challenging, but I just don't really have a clear. I mean where do I send my students who are interested in the field. Will they be able to do sport psychology when they get out?

Well Doc, any last points you would like to make concerning your experience of providing sport psychology consultation to athletes?

Uh, well, I have uh, been very fortunate. Very few people in their lives get a chance to live their professional dreams. You know I have always been involved in track and field. And, being able through sport psychology to be a member of an Olympic team. I mean to provide services and serve in that roll of as a sport psychology consultant at the Olympics. When I went to the Olympic Games it was a mind-body experience. It was a special experience, one that I am still processing. It wasn't my goal. I just started working with anybody I could work with and to have that opportunity to live their professional dream. That was my peak experience in sport psychology. I don't know how many people get to do that. I think, here is the last thing I will say. It is important to

live your dream, it's more important to commit to living your dream everyday. If you just do the very best you can and commit to that, good things will happen. As a coach you are pursuing the truth. Coaches are one of the few groups that are giving young people the word. I mean they are challenging them. That is not happening in a lot of areas and the same thing for us in sport psychology. That's kind of it.

Thanks Doc.

Vita

Andrew Justin (A.J.) Ploszay was born outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 3, 1977. He attended elementary school at Mother of Divine Providence Catholic School before matriculating from Archbishop John Carroll High School in June 1995. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Sport Science from the University of Richmond, Virginia in May 1999. During his four years of undergraduate study, A.J. participated on the Men's golf team. In August of 1999, A.J. entered the masters degree program in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. During that year, he was awarded the A.W. Hobt Memorial Award for excellence in teaching for his work as a Graduate Teaching Associate in the department of Physical Education. The following August, he graduated with a Master of Science degree in Human Performance and Sport Studies with a specialization in Sport Psychology. In August of 2000, A.J. entered the doctoral program in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee. Since December of 2000, he has been employed with the Men's Athletic Department at the University of Tennessee as a graduate assistant in Sport Psychology. During that time, A.J. has primarily worked with the Men and Women's golf teams at the University of Tennessee providing Mental Training services. A.J. will receive his Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in Sport Psychology in May 2003. His future plans include marrying Kelly Patricia McGurkin in June 2003.