Bob Brustad (affectionately known as Bru to many) passed away on February 6, 2022, after a yearlong battle with cancer. He was 69 years young. Bob was a significant contributor to the field of sport and exercise psychology, a former editor of the Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology (JSEP), and beloved colleague and friend to anybody who had the joy and privilege of interacting with him. Bru was my first full-time doctoral student and a best friend for 40 years, sharing so many adventures and memories together. I embrace this opportunity to honor Bob’s professional achievements and reflect personally on a dear friend who exuded a big personality and an even bigger heart.

In September 1982, an intelligent, witty, and enthusiastic student entered my graduate social psychology of sport and physical activity class at the University of Oregon. Bob’s smile, humor, and laugh were infectious and his academic insights deep, thoughtful, and challenging. These personality and intellectual qualities were admired by his many colleagues, students, and friends. Our common bond of growing up in Southern California, being alumni of the University of California system, and possessing a deep love of baseball sealed our close friendship. We shared many adventures at Spring Training in Arizona and later at Colorado Rockies games, as well as at other ballparks. Bru taught me how to throw a curveball and chase down a foul ball, but most importantly he encouraged me to not take myself too seriously. When I regressed, Bru was always there to boost my spirits. His enduring positive and optimistic outlook defined his approach to life every day.

Bob obtained his B.A. degree in sociology from the University of California, San Diego, in 1975. For several years prior to starting graduate education, he worked as an afterschool program facilitator with migrant children for the State of California, where he learned to become a fluent Spanish speaker. I remember Bru excitedly telling me about a surprise day trip he planned of taking the children to a baseball game at Chavez Ravine, ballpark of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and arranging the transportation and tickets all on his own. The animation with which he told this story exemplified his deep caring and compassion for children and their families, especially those less privileged and with fewer opportunities.

During the 4 years of his graduate studies, Bob taught elementary-age children, primarily kindergarteners and first graders, in my Children’s Summer Sports Program at the University of Oregon. Kids and parents praised his gentle manner, inherent ability to form trusting and respectful relationships, and propensity for structuring activities to maximize motor skill development within an enjoyable and motivating atmosphere. I vividly remember the children’s exhilaration in running the track backwards, wading through the steeplechase water pit, and climbing over the hurdle to get to the other side. Bob’s experiences as a migrant educator and sport skill instructor laid a foundation for what would become his passion for research and scholarship—pursuing ways to enhance the psychosocial health and well-being of children and families through participation in sport and physical activity.

After completing his M.A. in 1985 and Ph.D. in 1986 at the University of Oregon, Bob secured a tenure-track assistant professor position at Portland State University. His master’s thesis (Brustad & Weiss, 1987) and dissertation (Brustad, 1988), both published in JSEP, centered on positive and negative affective experiences in competitive youth sport. They were some of the first studies to use Harter’s competence motivation theory as a framework for exploring individual differences and socialization factors related to enjoyment and anxiety in the sport domain. These studies launched Bob’s programmatic line of research exploring parents’ beliefs and behaviors on children’s psychological, affective, and behavioral outcomes. His scholarly work was conducted while serving in two academic positions over 36 years—at Portland State University (1986–1992) and University of Northern Colorado (1992–2022).

Bob’s 1992 conceptual paper in JSEP, “Integrating Socialization Influences Into the Study of Children’s Motivation in Sport” (Brustad, 1992), significantly shaped the theoretical and scholarly approach to this area of study. In this article, Bob advocated for a developmental approach to the study of children’s social and motivational experiences in sport, bolstered by his academic background in sociology and developmental sport psychology and real-world experiences teaching and coaching children. He offered a convincing rationale for the use of developmental theories to guide the study of social influences and motivational outcomes and reviewed studies supporting these theories in the academic domain. Although this paper was published 30 years ago, it remains a critical source in which sport and exercise psychology students can appreciate how and why contemporary perspectives stem from early and innovative visions for the field.

Bob’s systematic line of research on parental socialization of children’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes in sport and physical activity aligns with the developmental philosophy in his 1992 paper. Studies, reviews, and chapters highlight appropriate theoretical frameworks; include breadth and depth of empirical support; and translate theory and research to professional best practices for parents, coaches, and health care providers (e.g., Brustad, 1993, 1996a, 2003, 2010, 2012; Brustad & Babkes, 2004). His intellectual curiosity came through in all his written work and he was devoted to balancing the conceptual and...
practical aspects of sport and exercise psychology, which he believed strengthened and complemented one another.

Bob also significantly contributed to methodological and measurement issues in sport and exercise psychology (e.g., Brustad, 1996b, 1998, 2002, 2008, 2011). He developed and validated the Children’s Attraction to Physical Activity scale (Brustad, 1996b), which is used broadly to tap affective responses toward participating in sport and physical activity. His chapter on developmental considerations in sport and exercise psychology measurement (Brustad, 1998) presents an informative and compelling rationale, accompanied with examples, for carefully selecting and using quantitative assessment methods with children and youth of varying cognitive-developmental abilities.

The quality of Bob’s scholarly work, writing skills, and reputation as an excellent reviewer afforded an invitation to join the JSEP editorial board early in his career, a role he maintained for 30 years. Importantly, Bob was Associate Editor of the Journal from 1995 to 1998 and Editor-in-Chief from 1998 to 2000. In 1999, he published a timely and thoughtful (and still relevant) editorial essay, “The Contribution of the Manuscript Review Process to Knowledge Development in Sport and Exercise Psychology” (Brustad, 1999). Basing his ideas on editorials in psychology journals and experiences as a reviewer and editor, Bob conveyed the critical importance of the peer-review process and the roles and responsibilities of reviewers to maintain the quality and credibility of scholarly journals. After outlining the manuscript review process adopted by JSEP, he discussed characteristics of good reviewers, as well as quality manuscript reviews. Bob accentuated a mentoring approach to reviewing, in which peers and young researchers are supported for their considerable time and effort in crafting a manuscript while also offering helpful comments using a respectful tone. He encouraged advisors to formally teach graduate students to write timely and constructive reviews that motivate authors to pursue greater clarity of writing. The ideas he expressed are timeless and provide a good resource for students and young professionals. Respect for Bob’s editorial and reviewing skills is reflected in his appointments as associate and section editor and editorial board member for several other international journals.

In addition to co-authoring several papers with colleagues from France, Bob’s fluency in Spanish and Portuguese forged collaborations with scholars in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Chile. He was an affiliated faculty member at universities in Chile and Portugal, where he taught, advised projects, and helped develop graduate programs in social psychology of sport and physical activity. These efforts broadened the reach of sport and exercise psychology globally. He particularly enjoyed traveling to Europe and South America to present his research, teach workshops, and engage with graduate students on theses and dissertations. He was an inspiring and beloved mentor to undergraduate and graduate students alike, domestically and abroad.

Bob was sharp as a whip, always at the ready with a quick-witted reply accompanied with that infectious smile and laugh. And what a knack he had for storytelling, which kept listeners captivated no matter the embellishment. Bob’s big personality and kind spirit endeared him to colleagues and friends who will deeply miss him. My enduring image of Bru will always be his positivity, optimism, passion, and charm. This image brings a smile to my face now. I’m often reminded of the song lyrics in my favorite play, “Wicked,” a tale about the friendships we make in life: “’I do believe I have been changed for the better . . . Because I knew you . . . I have been changed . . . For good.’ Bru, I love you, I will never forget you, and I can never thank you enough for all that you meant to me.

References


Brustad, R.J. (2011). Through their eyes: Quantitative researchers’ perceptions of qualitative forms of study in sport and exercise
psychology. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 3*, 404–410.

