Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology
By Robert S. Weinberg and Daniel Gould. Published 1995 by Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825-5076. (544 pp., $49.00 U.S.)

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One of the greatest challenges of undergraduate instruction is the selection of a comprehensive and user-friendly textbook. Often, such a book is worth its weight in gold as it enables the student to successfully obtain an understanding of the general concepts and jargon of a previously unfamiliar topical area. Robert Weinberg and Daniel Gould’s Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology appears to fill this niche for undergraduates enrolled in introductory sport and exercise psychology courses.

The authors have successfully taken the vast amount of information found within sport and exercise psychology and have organized and condensed it into 27 easy-to-read and interesting chapters. Each chapter comprises theoretical and practical information that provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of each topic. In addition, the use of case studies and specific information (e.g., strategies, dos and don’ts) that are highlighted apart from the main text greatly enhances the readability, as well as comprehension, of the material. This book also incorporated a “roadmap for understanding sport and exercise psychology” that clustered related chapters into seven major themes, resulting in a systematic and pictorial representation of this multifaceted domain. This organization of the material allows the reader to grasp the logical presentation of the information that also enhances readability and comprehension.

The first theme provides the reader with a general introduction to sport and exercise psychology, including a discussion of the past history, current state, and future directions of this domain. In addition, chapter 2 distinguishes and calls for the integration of scientific and professional practice knowledge. The second theme addresses the need to understand individual differences through the topics of personality, motivation, and arousal, stress, and anxiety. Understanding the sport and exercise environment is the third theme and incorporates chapters on competition and cooperation and feedback, reinforcement, and intrinsic motivation.

The fourth theme examines the nature of groups within sport and exercise and includes the topics of team dynamics, cohesion, leadership, and communication. The performance enhancement domain is discussed in the fifth theme. Specifically, the topics presented in this segment include an introduction to psychological skills training programs, arousal regulation, imagery, self-confidence, goal setting, and concentration. The sixth theme focuses on the domain of exercise and wellness. The topics presented include an introduction to exercise and well being, adherence, injuries, substance abuse and eating disorders, and burnout and overtraining. Fi-
nally, the seventh theme addresses various issues related to psychological and character development. The issues discussed include children in sport and exercise, aggression, sportspersonship, and gender issues.

The readers’ exposure to current and innovative topics within the physical domain, some that have not been included in previous undergraduate textbooks, is a strength of this book. Chapter 12 provided an excellent overview of the communication process and its importance to individuals engaged in sport and exercise. For example, effective listening and inter- and intrapersonal communication among individuals were identified as critical elements for success and positive experiences in sport and exercise. In addition, this chapter presented “guidelines for sending effective verbal messages” and “dos and don’ts when initiating confrontation” that identified essential practical strategies for successful behavior in the sport and exercise domain (e.g., positive athlete–coach interactions, effective feedback, and reinforcement).

The topic of substance abuse and eating disorders was addressed in chapter 22. Although a very good overview of these topics was presented, the greatest contribution of this chapter was the communication of practical information to the reader. Specifically, behavioral warning signs for recognizing substance abuse and eating disorders as well as the “dos and don’ts for dealing with eating disorders” were presented to educate readers regarding their possible involvement and interactions with others suspected of suffering from these maladies.

Another asset of *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology* is the available test bank and instructor’s guide. The quality of these materials parallels that of this book as they are comprehensive and easy to use. The instructor’s guide furnishes supplemental information (e.g., additional resources, sample course outline), as well as the masters for reproducing overhead transparencies for use in the classroom. These materials would be especially beneficial for first-time sport and exercise psychology instructors.

Interestingly, the comprehensive nature is also a drawback and limitation of this book. Specifically, a “double-edged sword” is evident as efforts to provide a great breadth of information occasionally restricted the delivery of the necessary depth. For example, the importance of perceived competence on the participation and discontinuation of youth sport participants was discussed in chapter 24, although Harter’s theoretical framework was not addressed. The inclusion of this information (e.g., definitions, perceived competence–motivation relationship) may enhance the readers’ understanding of participation motivation and its utility within the domain of youth sport. In addition, although socialization patterns (e.g., gender-based stereotypes) among girls and boys was presented in chapter 27, no other discussion regarding the role of socialization (e.g., into, via, and out of sport) existed. The influence of significant others (e.g., parents, peers, coaches) appears to be critical to sport participants (especially children) and, thus, should also be addressed.

Another limitation of this book is the absence of information pertaining to transitions in sport and exercise. Career termination may be a critical life event for athletes as many experience difficulties (e.g., depression, alcohol abuse) in adjusting to life after competitive sport. As a result, providing information regarding the transition from an athlete to an ex-athlete (e.g., reactions, behavioral signs) is suggested. Finally, the lack of an effective conclusion within the “roadmap for understanding sport and exercise psychology” is another limitation of this textbook.