Trendy Physical Activities Promote Narcissism

In an effort to determine whether participation in popular types of physical activity is linked to narcissistic tendencies, an examination of the psychological profiles of randomly chosen Belgian aerobic dancers (4 males, 46 females), joggers (43 males, 7 females), and bodybuilders (36 males, 14 females) was conducted. Subjects were administered both paper and pencil (Lavoegie self-estimation test) and projective (graphic self-representation test) personality tests designed to measure various traits. Results of the paper and pencil test revealed that female joggers and male aerobic dancers were the most sociable and tenacious; all participants except aerobic dancers and bodybuilders had a high level of dynamism; female joggers and bodybuilders had low ambition; aerobic dancers and female bodybuilders had a lower capacity for reflection and circumspection; all subjects were very optimistic except for female joggers; and aerobic dancers and female bodybuilders were very sincere as opposed to male bodybuilders and joggers. In addition, analyses of graphic self-representation data indicated that all participants showed very little signs of joy. Bodybuilders and female aerobic dancers seemed to have keener senses as opposed to joggers and male aerobic dancers who appeared somewhat inhibited. A majority of participants displayed psychomotor instability and feelings of inferiority, and all subjects showed narcissistic tendencies, especially bodybuilders and aerobic dancers. Results are discussed in light of recent conceptualizations of narcissism as an exaggerated form of love for oneself. It is contended that today’s fashionable physical activities do not promote well-being, but rather foster an overemphasis on the self which may result in narcissism. In conclusion, the need to increase public awareness of the appropriateness of other forms of physical activity and physical education is underscored.


Gold Medal Psychology for Olympic Athletes

In response to the widespread success of sport psychology programs that have been implemented in East Germany and the Soviet Union, the U.S. Olympic Committee has initiated its own mental conditioning program called the “Elite Athlete Program” for Olympic hopefuls. Based on the premise that mental preparation cannot be achieved the night before the games, Kiester offers a narrative account of how top American candidates for the gold are being taught psychological skills on a regular basis by applied sport psychologists in hopes that it will give them that “winning edge.” A variety of mental preparation strategies for peak performance are discussed such as motivation and concentration development, arousal regulation and emotional self-control, positive thought control, goal-setting techniques, and imagery training. Excellent examples are used to highlight the ways in which Olympic hopefuls incorporate these psychological skills into their training programs.

Aggression in Sport?  
Depends on Your Point of View

Citing social role theory, Teipel, Gerisch, and Busse suggest that the interpretation of an action as an aggression will depend on the role and perspective of the observer. Extending this assumption to the sport situation, these researchers hypothesized that coaches, athletes, and referees, due to their contrasting roles, would judge aggressive sport actions differently. To test this hypothesis, the investigators asked 20 highly skilled male soccer players, 20 male coaches, and a control group of 10 rules experts to observe a series of 40 foul scenes selected from championship soccer matches and presented on a color video monitor. Immediately after viewing each soccer scene, the observer was asked to evaluate the soccer action according to type of foul exhibited, personal sanction to be imposed, and resulting game continuation. Chi square analyses indicated distinct differences between the groups in their evaluation of these sport actions.

Consistent with the study hypothesis, referees showed a greater tendency than did the other two groups to judge an action as foul and to impose the most stringent sanctions. In contrast, the group of skilled players showed the least inclination to identify an action as a foul and tended to impose less stringent sanctions. Teipel et al. comment that these results emphasize the "different ways of perception, evaluation and interpretation of players, coaches and referees" to the same game situation. The authors additionally provide recommendations for using these results to improve the educational programs available for players, coaches, and referees.


Systematical Self-Control Reduces Stress

The Cologne Psycho-Regulation Training program is designed to improve the psychoregulative competence of top athletes. To maximize efficiency in terms of adjustment and consistency with the aims of the coach, training consists of a variety of psychoregulative techniques. These techniques are conducted in a single session and include information, diagnoses, planning, exercising, and adjustment as phases in this training process. As a regulative process for the strain situation, treatment techniques (clearing, change of rating) and avoiding (no attention) were installed. The psychoregulative state is supposed to be influenced by techniques of corresponding conditioning of mental pictures, self-verbalization, and techniques of peripheral motor activation and changing of tension. Sonnenschein reports the results of this training program for 63 athletes from 21 sports. The efficiency of training was observed and recorded by the coach and by the athlete's own self-observation. In a later follow-up interview, 84% of the athletes said that their stress symptoms had become weaker or less frequent and that their more efficient psychoregulative abilities had enhanced their sport performance. Only 14% of the athletes reported no changes and one athlete reported negative effects.


Enhancing Performance  
Through Stress Management Training

Although much attention is focused on managing anxiety in athletic situations, there have been few controlled outcome studies of stress management training programs for athletes. Lanning and Hisanaga conducted