The Development of Sport Psychology in Japan

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Sport psychology in Japan, as in most other countries, developed from modest beginnings to become a vibrant sport science, both in academia and on the athletic field. Indeed, sport psychology is being applied in Japan more and more each year. In order to better understand the growth of sport psychology in Japan, let us trace the four major stimulants to its development: (a) formation of the National Institute for Physical Education, (b) formation of the Japanese Society of Physical Education, (c) development of sport in its own right, and (d) formation of the Japanese Society of Sports Psychology.

National Institute for Physical Education

Sport psychology in Japan dates back to 1924, the year that the National Institute for Physical Education was established in Tokyo by the Ministry of Education. This had major implications for the development of research in sport and physical education in Japan in that a specific research section of psychology was established in the Institute. The date is especially noteworthy because that was approximately when research laboratories for sport psychology were developed in Germany (Carl Diem in Berlin, 1920) and the United States (Coleman Griffith at the University of Illinois, 1925). Research in psychology was given special emphasis with the appointment of Mitsuo Matsui, who had majored in aviation psychology at Tokyo University. Matsui was appointed to the Psychology section, and from this time until the outbreak of World War II, much applied psychology research was conducted in physical education and sport.

With the outbreak of the war in 1941, the National Institute of Physical Education was renamed the Tokyo College of Physical Education and, under the administrative supervision of the United States following the end of the war, an American oriented education model was instituted. A very noticeable feature of the new educational system was its recognition of physical education as an important component of education. In fact, after 1949 physical education became compulsory throughout the educational system, including colleges and universities. Faculty members associated with departments of physical education in Japan...
at that time then became the major researchers in sport psychology. In 1949, the Tokyo College of Physical Education became affiliated with the Department of Physical Education, Tokyo University of Education, and Matsui became a professor in the Department. During his tenure there he trained many individuals in psychology of sport, including Iwao Matsuda and Atsushi Fujita. When Matsui retired in 1954, Iwao Matsuda became professor.

Before the war several books had been published that dealt with the psychology of sport, but none were very substantive. Then Matsui published his book in 1952, *Psychology of Physical Education*, which he based upon work completed up until that time in Japan, Germany, and the United States. The book had an applied focus and its orientation guided the direction of sport psychology programs of education throughout Japan.

**Japanese Society of Physical Education**

The second major stimulus to sport psychology occurred in 1950 with the formation of the Japanese Society of Physical Education (JSPE). Eleven divisions of JSPE were formed in 1960, one of which was the Division of Psychology of Physical Education. This provided a forum for the delivery and discussion of papers dealing with the psychology of physical education and with sport psychology. The JSPE meets annually, and the Division of Psychology of Physical Education, as always, holds symposia and research sections at these annual meetings. The formation of this Society also provided a stimulus for authoring books, specifically in the area of sport psychology. A list of these books appears at the end of this paper. JSPE now has over 5,000 members and is a flourishing and powerful organization, although sport psychology per se is no longer a major part of it. Other organizations have supplanted the role of JSPE.

**Development of Sport in its Own Right**

The third major impetus to the development of sport psychology in Japan was the recognition that sport is an interesting social and cultural phenomenon in its own right. Elite sport has blossomed in Japan since 1960 and, after the awarding of the Olympic Games to Tokyo in 1964, the place of sport in Japanese society began to parallel the development of sport in western countries. A committee of distinguished professors was formed in 1961 as part of the Japan Amateur Sports Association to apply the sport sciences to elite athletes, both men and women. A subcommittee of sport psychology was formed, and this was the first time that focus was directed to sport psychology per se. Although the subcommittee became somewhat smaller following the 1964 Olympics, it remained active and continued to conduct research on sport psychology. The research focused primarily on clinical problems of athletes, and the individuals associated with the subcommittee employed therapy such as counseling, relaxation, and autogenic training. Thus, the first demand for sport psychology came from the sport organizations themselves. Then in 1966 the Japan Amateur Sports Association initiated a trainer seminar to educate coaches and trainers in both recreational and elite competitive sport settings. Indeed, coaches and trainers were obliged to attend the seminar