Bennett and Pravitz focus this book on their view of what traits are present in winners and why these traits are important. They do not use the term "winner" in an outcome sense, but rather in the sense of setting and achieving personal goals. As the sport psychology literature suggests, athletes should focus on controllable performance goals rather than the uncontrollable outcomes of winning and losing. Bennett and Pravitz say their book is about winning, but redefine the concept into a controllable state that athletes can achieve by training to acquire the traits that make up the profile of a winner. Although this redefinition of winning may be misunderstood by some, overall the approach works because it forces readers to reconceptualize their ideas about winning and to believe they are winners if they can develop the traits that make up this "winning profile." This reconceptualization is important because often athletes and coaches are skeptical of sport psychologists who advocate personal goal accomplishment. They misunderstand this concept to mean that winning is not important. This book helps them to understand that striving to win is the most important thing, and that they can achieve the status of a winner as long as they are moving toward personal goals.

The book is organized into three sections. Section 1, "Understanding Mental Dynamics," discusses how the mind works, the power of thought, and how mental factors influence sport success. This section helps the reader master the material in Section 2, "Advanced Mental Training for Athletes," which in turn develops the main theme of the book by detailing each of the 10 traits that the authors feel make up the profile of a winner. Section 3, "Additional Winning Strategies," provides supplemental information to help the reader develop a winner's profile as well as a personal philosophy of sport. This book is an expanded version of an earlier book, The Miracle of Sports Psychology (Bennett & Pravitz, 1982), and the content is based on interviews with sports figures, surveys of athletes and coaches, and sport psychology research.

The six chapters in Section 1 explain how the mind works to influence sport performance. The first part of this section stresses mental training. According to the authors, anyone can develop the traits that profile a winner. Mental attitude is stated as representing 50% of athletes' skill potential, and the analogy of the brain as a computer controlling that potential is discussed. The role of the conscious and subconscious minds in sport performance, and the relationship between the two, is examined. The premises set forth in chapter 4, "Cause and Effect," seem to be the most important in the section from a motivational standpoint. Here Bennett and Pravitz state that everyone has the power to establish his or her own course in life by setting goals, developing milestones, and so forth. They challenge
readers to assume personal responsibility for where they are going. Discussions on positive self-image and "possibility thinking" underscore the importance of programming thoughts and feelings into personal reality.

The last two chapters of this section introduce specific mental programming strategies. The authors discuss the use of goal setting and then combining affirmations, imagery, and emotion to engage in goal programming. They also introduce strategies to create productive self-talk such as monitoring, filtering, and "revivication," or replacing negative thoughts and images with positive, productive substitutes.

Section 2 contains 13 chapters that introduce and create the profile of a winner. The 10 traits that make up this profile are based on the authors' survey of athletes and coaches about the traits they considered most important in a winner: confidence, goal setting, commitment, concentration, courage, communication, patience, intelligence, self-esteem, and consistency. The chapters on confidence and patience are particularly useful, as they package the information in innovative and relevant ways. The chapter on patience discusses having contingency plans and being prepared for delays, detours, and breakdowns in the quest for athletic excellence. Bennett and Pravitz explain that patience is necessary in order to weather temporary setbacks and deal with them confidently and calmly. The final chapter in this section, "Use it or Lose it," advocates practicing mental programming of the profile traits on a regular basis. Suggested ways of accomplishing this include using affirmation and imagery to internalize each trait.

Section 3 contains additional winning strategies that may help athletes increase their psychological skills. The section includes information on slumps, more in-depth imagery training, time management, and motivation, as well as two chapters that discuss the older athlete and problems with parents in sport. The chapter on "slumpitis and its treatment" puts slumps into perspective and presents practical survey findings as to how different athletes handle slumps. The chapter on time management admonishes athletes to plan, budget, and prioritize time to be used in mental training and not to view this book as just good reading.

Although this book has many positive attributes, it also has some limitations. Its organization and structure proved to be confusing. In theory, Section 1 is designed to educate the reader about the mind–body relationship, Section 2 proposes to teach the "how to," and Section 3 is set up to offer additional ideas and tips. This format is not apparent in the content of the chapters, however, and the material appears redundant, disjointed, and uncohesive. Another limitation is that, as with many applied training books today, there is not enough "how to" information. As many sport psychologists have found, educating athletes about psychological skills is important, but it is not enough. Athletes and coaches, even practicing sport psychologists, need step-by-step procedures for implementing mental training into their behavioral routines.

After discussing each of the 10 traits that make up the profile of a winner, Bennett and Pravitz advocate using affirmation and imagery to program each trait into the athlete’s psyche. But this positive thinking approach will not always work. Many athletes have individualized, dysfunctional responses to competition that won't allow them to be more confident, consistent, or attentive. Certainly, appropriate affirmation and imagery will help athletes develop the proper attitudes toward competition, but it may not be enough to help them develop and maintain