
Book and Resource Review

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Sport Psychology: Concepts and Applications (3rd ed.)

By Richard H. Cox. Published 1994 by Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc., 2460 Kerper Boulevard, Dubuque, IA 52001. (US \$34.80, 444 pp.)

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Richard Cox's 3rd edition, *Sport Psychology: Concepts and Applications*, is intended for undergraduate students interested in sport psychology or the psychology of coaching. The author's goal is to "bridge the gap between the scholar interested in research and the coach and/or teacher interested in application" (p. xi). To connect scholarly research with application is an admirable yet difficult endeavor.

Key strengths of the book are the inclusion of listings of key terms, highlighted concepts and application sections, chapter summaries, review questions, a glossary, and suggested readings, all of which provide an excellent format for both instructors and students. I appreciate the fact that the majority of tables and figures utilized throughout the book are reprinted from the original source.

Each chapter begins with a presentation of the psychological theories related to the topic, followed by a summary of the sport-related research with suggestions for practical application. Unfortunately, the author includes too much information, creating an overload of theories, concepts, topics, and suggestions, which may be confusing to students without a background in psychology.

Chapter 1 nicely presents the history of the field; the issue of certification; and the distinction between clinical, educational, and research sport psychologists. The inclusion of a section on ethics is also worthwhile. Unless the instructor plans on discussing original research studies, though, the information on methodological concerns in sport psychology research may not be relevant to undergraduate students.

Chapter 2 is on personality and the athlete. The topic of personality and sport psychology is intuitively intriguing, yet at this time there is a shortage of information to offer students interested in application. If the study of personality is included, perhaps the content should focus on a comprehensive approach to sport personality (see Vealey, 1992) rather than on studies that have offered little predictive power.

The next four chapters pertain to the psychological skills of attention, anxiety and arousal, arousal adjustment strategies, and cognitive intervention in sport. The chapter on attention could begin with selective attention instead of devoting so much space to traditional motor-learning course content (e.g., the information processing model of behavior, memory systems, bits of information, and response delay). Although the author covers Nideffer's Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS), as well as information on attentional focus training, interested coaches or athletes would need to refer to another source to *implement* the techniques of thought stopping, centering, and refocusing.

Similarly, the inverted-U theory, the Yerkes-Dodson law, and Easterbrook's cue utilization theory are pertinent in discussing the relationship between arousal and performance, though I question whether signal-detection theory, information-processing theory, and reversal theory are necessary inclusions in an undergraduate applied course. Including the catastrophe model and Hanin's zone of optimal functioning theory as alternatives to the inverted-U theory is noteworthy. A discussion of these theories, however, may be more appropriate at the graduate level. I do appreciate the author's explanation of drive theory from a skill-learning standpoint.

Chapter 5, on arousal adjustment strategies, begins with examples from sport situations and well-known athletes. A clear and understandable explanation of the effects of a pep talk on the activation levels of four different athletes is provided. The relaxation procedures of progressive relaxation, autogenic training, meditation, biofeedback, and hypnosis are presented along with the research studies supporting their use. There is a preponderance of descriptive information, with little instructions in "how-to." For example, the only script outlined for applied purposes is for autogenic training.

Chapter 6, on cognitive intervention in sport, covers imagery (visuo-motor behavior rehearsal, stress-inoculation training, and cognitive-affective stress-management training), goal setting, and future directions in psychological-skills training. It would benefit students interested in application to be presented with different sample goal-setting sheets that could be used with athletes.

Since identifying and controlling self-talk is an important aspect of cognitive interventions, it is regrettable that the section on self-talk is just a short paragraph. Although Boutcher and Rotella's (1987) Psychological Skills Education Program (PSEP) is presented, greater detail is required in order for a practitioner to apply it with a good degree of sophistication.

The next two chapters focus on motivation and self-confidence and attribution theory. Chapter 7 describes achievement motivation, the McClelland-Atkinson model, and the more recent models of self-confidence (Bandura's self-efficacy, Harter's competence motivation theory, Nicholls' developmentally based theory of perceived ability, and Vealey's sport-specific model of sport confidence). Sound, practical suggestions for developing motivation and self-confidence are listed at the end of the chapter. Unfortunately, behavior-modification theory, which provides effective techniques for dealing with motivation, has been omitted from this chapter. It is disappointing that the author has failed to include the use of rewards, reinforcement principles, and the role of feedback in motivation. Students in a psychology-of-coaching class would find these concepts extremely useful.

Chapter 8 is devoted to causal attributions and includes the models of Heider, Weiner, and Russell. The focus is on causal attributions in achievement situations, egocentric attributions, and information on how intrinsic motivation may be undermined. It would be helpful to highlight those aspects that may be more applicable to coaches and athletes (e.g., the role of the coach in helping athletes form future expectations based on attributions for outcome and performance).

The author should be commended for including aggression and audience effects as part of the chapter on social psychology of sport. These two topics are discussed from an applied viewpoint, with the provision of excellent examples and recommendations. Information on team cohesion and leadership is also included, making this a rather lengthy chapter that perhaps could be expanded into two chapters.