Which Questionnaire? 
Assessment Practices of 
Sport Psychology Consultants

Edmund A. O’Connor, Jr. 
Rehabilitation Professionals, Grand Rapids, MI

Sport psychology consultants have numerous choices regarding which questionnaire to use when evaluating an athlete. Ostrow (1996) listed more than 300 psychological tests specific to the sport and exercises sciences alone. Which questionnaire to use, if any, should be based on a clear conceptual definition and good operationalization of the desired construct to be measured. The measure should also demonstrate sufficient validity and reliability (Schutz, 1994). Vealey and Garner-Holman (1998) supported the need for reliable and valid measures but raised the concern that the pursuit of scientific credibility in measurement can often come at the expense of practicality and usefulness. These authors suggested a movement toward practical measurement in applied sport psychology where the validity of a questionnaire is also assessed in relation to how effectively the measure is used in professional practice.

Sixty-three to 75% of surveyed sport psychology consultants used some type of questionnaire in their applied work with athletes (Gould, Tammen, Murphy, & May, 1989; Vealey & Garner-Holman, 1998) with much variety their testing choices. The survey used in this brief report was intended to update and replicate the previous research on consultants’ test choices in applied practice and identify the issues consultants wanted to assess with questionnaires. Identification of both the measures currently used and the issues to assess may serve as a first step to begin exploring the “practical validity” of sport psychology tests suggested by Vealey and Garner-Holman (1998).

Method

Participants
All 141 United States consultants who were certified through the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) or members of the United States Olympic Committee Sport Psychology Registry at the time of this survey.
were asked to participate via e-mail \((n = 129)\) or mail \((n = 12)\). Fifty consultants responded \((35.5\%)\). Respondents indicated a background in psychology \((n = 21)\), sport psychology \((n = 12)\), both psychology and sport psychology \((n = 3)\), and physical education or sport science \((n = 11)\). Three respondents did not indicate their background. Employment settings included university \((n = 29)\), private practice \((n = 20)\), sport center \((n = 2)\), sports medicine clinic \((n = 2)\), and medical center \((n = 2)\), with 8 respondents indicating more than 1 setting and 3 not reporting any. Respondents spent an average of 15.2 years practicing sport psychology.

**Questionnaire**

The consultants completed demographic data and identified whether or not they used questionnaires in the assessment of athletes. If questionnaires were used, the consultant answered the following questions: (a) What issues/areas do you feel should be assessed with questionnaires when evaluating athletes? Then please rank them in order of importance, with 1 = most important, 2 = next most important, etc. All areas were allowed a ranking. (b) What measures do you give your athletes? Please indicate if you give these to all your athletes or just some of them. Vealey and Garner-Holman (1998) cautioned against the use of a predetermined battery of inventories that may not be appropriate for certain athletes if the characteristics measured are not as relevant to their psychobehavioral functioning. This “all or some” question intended to identify either a broad use of questionnaires or a choice of tests dependent upon other factors (e.g., specific performance issue).

**Results**

Thirty-three \((66\%)\) respondents reported using questionnaires in their assessments. Respondents who used questionnaires did not differ demographically in academic degree, \(\chi^2(2, N = 49) = 1.12, p = .570, V = .15\); educational background, \(\chi^2(6, N = 47) = 5.36, p = .498, V = .34\); or employment setting, \(\chi^2(3, N = 46) = 3.70, p = .296, V = .28\) from those who did not. Those who used questionnaires had significantly more years experience \((M = 16.5)\) than those who did not \((M = 12.1; F = 4.23, p = .046, \eta^2 = .09)\).

Respondents identified 61 issues to assess and 73 questionnaires used in applied practice. The most frequently cited issues and measures are listed in Table 1. Examination of each respondent’s data found that some of the issues identified as important to assess did not have a corresponding test listed. The Self-Created category of 7 different tests is limited to those that are not published or regularly distributed. Eleven respondents reported using 16 different “self-created” measures when worksheets made available to the public via a book or by contacting the author, but were not known to have published psychometrics, were included. Examples include Competition Reflections from Orlick’s (1986) Psyching for Sport and The Nine Mental Skills of Successful Athletes: A Self-Assessment by Jack Lesyk. Availability information for the most frequently cited measures is listed in the Appendix.

**Discussion**

Sixty-six percent of the surveyed consultants reported using questionnaires in their applied practice, similar to previous findings of 63\% (Gould et al., 1989)