Reading List in Applied Sport Psychology: Psychological Skills Training

Michael L. Sachs
Temple University

One question that applied sport psychologists frequently get concerns finding information about psychological skills training (PST). Thus the following reading list was developed to identify books in applied sport psychology that focus on PST. The information may carry a different label, such as mental training, but the focus is still upon a set of psychological skills that will help athletes enhance their performance. These psychological skills encompass relaxation, concentration, visualization, goal setting, and so on.


Some of the books listed have been reviewed in more than one of the journals examined. These book reviews are noted, if available, following each book. The primary goal of this listing has not been to judge the quality of the books listed, although the book reviews may help in this regard. Indeed, the books available range from scientifically oriented texts designed for the more scholarly oriented to popular press paperbacks designed for the layperson. Similarly, the quality of the books ranges from comparatively poor to excellent.

A good place to get started in applied sport psychology, even considering the diversity of orientations in the books available, would most likely be the following five books: Martens (1987), May and Asken (1987), Orlick (1986), Weinberg (1988), and Williams (1986). These are perhaps the best available. Progressing from these more general volumes to specific ones, there are books dealing with running (Lynch, 1987), basketball (Mikes, 1987), bodybuilding (Kubistant, 1988), golf (Mackenzie & Denlinger, 1990; Rotella & Bunker, 1981), and other sports.

A key question concerns the efficacy of these books. Some are designed to be incorporated into courses or workshops. Others are meant to stand alone, presumably to give the reader the basics in applied sport psychology and let him/her proceed from there. The number of books available is rising exponentially, with many authors seeking to publish their PST book as soon as possible.
Studies have yet to be published in the sport psychology literature detailing how effective the PST books really are. A recent meta-analysis of self-administered treatment programs found them to be effective in comparison with no treatment, and not significantly different from therapist administered programs of psychotherapy (Scogin, Bynum, Stephens, & Calhoon, 1990). However, limitations of the work precluded the authors from indicating that self-administered treatments were as effective as programs administered by therapists.

Readers looking for a broader array of sensory stimulation modes will find a number of videotapes and audiotapes available in applied sport psychology. Many are listed and some are reviewed in issues of The Sport Psychologist. Vealey (1988) indicated that the Hendricks and Carlson (1982) and Kappas (1984) books were out of print and not available at a number of libraries that she searched. Readers who have trouble obtaining such volumes should request them through interlibrary loan. This is often the only way of obtaining some of the older and lesser known or out-of-print titles. Finally, there are many excellent articles on applied sport psychology in the journals listed above, particularly in The Sport Psychologist, and the Journal of Applied Sport Psychology.

Reading List


