

# Sport & exercise

**T**O many readers of *The Psychologist*, sport and exercise psychology must seem akin to the distant cousin that we sit beside at a family wedding – we know that she is somehow related but are not quite sure who she is, what she does or where she comes from. The reasons for the distancing between sport and exercise psychology and the remainder of the discipline are manifold, but it is our hope and intention that this special issue will help to bridge the gap and make the unfamiliar more familial.



**JOHN KREMER and  
DAVID LAVALLEE** introduce  
*the special issue.*

For those readers whose opinion may have been prejudiced by the portrayal of sport psychologists on the back pages of the tabloid press, we welcome this opportunity to set the record straight. Sport psychologists are, by and large, not related to birds of the Anatidae family ('Hodde brings in the quacks' was a newspaper response to the then Spurs manager employing a sport psychologist). We are bound by the same set of professional and ethical standards as other practising psychologists. In fact, many sport psychologists are not practitioners at all but researchers: again we hope that this special issue can challenge any lingering and inappropriate stereotypes once and for all.

That aside, it is true that historically sport and exercise psychology is able to trace a quite unique lineage, but not one that has been entirely separate from the mainstream. For example, both sport and social psychology stake a claim to the same study as marking the genesis of experimental work in their respective subdisciplines (Norman Triplett's work on social facilitation, exploring the effects of others on the performance of cyclists). The 'founding father' of sport psychology, Coleman Griffith, began and ended his prolific academic career at the University of Illinois while working as an educational psychologist. Within the UK several eminent psychologists, including Frederick

## WEBLINKS

British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences:

[www.bases.org.uk](http://www.bases.org.uk)

BPS Sport and Exercise Psychology Section:

[www.bps.org.uk/sub-syst/subsystems\\_sections2.cfm#13](http://www.bps.org.uk/sub-syst/subsystems_sections2.cfm#13)

Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology: [www.aasponline.org](http://www.aasponline.org)

# exercise

Bartlett and Hans Eysenck, have taken more than a passing interest in the application of their work to the world of sport. But it would be fair to say that until relatively recently the relationship with mainstream psychology has not been strong. Times are changing however, as witnessed by the high profile of sport and exercise psychology papers, workshops and symposia at BPS events over recent years.

Against these positive trends it is still the case that students of sport exercise and science are more likely than psychology graduates to be familiar with the material contained in this special issue. Indeed, significant contributions continue to be made to the subdiscipline by many people from diverse backgrounds, including sport science and physical education. The varied careers of contributors to this issue are tangible evidence of this fact, and a very positive illustration of the vitality and energy of the field in the UK.

For those unfamiliar with the field, its diversity is likely to come as something of

a shock. In contrast, those of us working in the area are now well used to accommodating and indeed valuing different voices – while acknowledging the energy we must continue to expend in an attempt to square the circle of competing and sometimes conflicting interests. The management of diversity was ever thus, cost-effective but costly nevertheless. The articles by Ian Cockerill and Sandy Wolfson provide a flavour of this process, for example the ongoing discussions between the BPS and BASES (the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) on Chartering, ownership of the term 'sport psychologist' and the overall regulation of professional practice.

All the contributors to this special issue genuinely welcome this opportunity to reveal to the wider psychological community some of the 'big issues' that continue to attract our attentions. The contributors have been encouraged to provide a short yet balanced profile of a particular area; in the process we hope

that sparks of interest or recognition may be kindled. From scanning this issue, you should immediately appreciate that sport and exercise psychology spans a broad church, encompassing those with an interest in exercise from a health perspective through to those with a primary interest in competitive sport. Whatever their interests, the Sport and Exercise Psychology Section of the Society continues to welcome all-comers with an interest or involvement in sport or exercise. If this venture helps spread the word yet further, then to us that is a good result.

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