

# Preface

Sport psychology is a topic of growing interest. Many professionals read journals such as *The International Journal of Sports*, *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, and *The Sport Psychologist*. Division 47 of the American Psychological Association is devoted to “the scientific, educational, and clinical foundations of exercise and sport psychology.” The North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) and the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) convene conferences each year to present scientific findings and new developments in a rapidly expanding field. The AAASP and other organizations also qualify professionals as certified sport and exercise psychology consultants. Finally, a visit to any bookstore will reveal the lay public’s fascination with sports, as revealed in numerous self-help books and guides to perfecting athletic performance.

Behavioral psychologists have studied sport psychology for more than three decades (Martin, Thompson, & Regehr, 2004). *Applied behavior analysis* (ABA), in particular, has been an instrumental approach to behavioral coaching in many sports, including *baseball* (Osborne, Rudrud, & Zezoney, 1990), *basketball* (Kladopoulos & McComas, 2001), *figure skating* (Ming & Martin, 1996), *football* (Stokes, Luiselli, & Reed, 2010; Stokes, Luiselli, Reed, & Fleming, 2010; Ward & Carnes, 2002), *ice hockey* (Rogerson & Hrycaiko, 2002), *soccer* (Brobst & Ward, 2002), *swimming* (Hume & Crossman, 1992), and *tennis* (Allison & Ayllon, 1980). ABA stresses the application of learning theory principles, objective measurement of athletic skills, controlled outcome evaluation, and socially significant behavior change. *Cognitive behavior therapy*, or CBT, also has been a dominant approach to psychological intervention in sports (Meyers, Whelan, & Murphy, 1996; Weinberg & Comar, 1994). CBT addresses athletic performance through cognitive-change methods combined with behavioral practice and environmental modifications. Additionally, there have been many advances in sports-related behavioral, cognitive, and neuropsychological assessment methods (Donahue, Silver, Dickens, Covassin, & Lancer, 2007; Webbe & Salinas, 2010).

*Behavioral Sport Psychology: Evidence-Based Approaches to Performance Enhancement* was written for academic professionals, practicing psychologists and consultants, and general readers interested in athletics. We focused on several

criteria when selecting chapters for the book. First, our objective was to assemble chapters authored by recognized experts in sport psychology and performance management. We also wanted chapters to reflect the most contemporary clinical and experimental findings. Most important, the chapters contain many recommendations for improving behavioral sport psychology applications, advancing research, and refining the performance of youth, amateur, and elite athletes. A book of this type cannot cover every relevant topic, but hopefully, we have addressed many of the dominant areas that make up the sport psychology landscape.

We are, first and foremost, clinical psychologists, but also avid sport enthusiasts. Dr. Luiselli acknowledges the many coaches who shaped his athletic pursuits in middle school, high school, and college: James C. Murphy, Michael Donato, Richard Sterndale, Jerry Splaine, Louis Gnerre, Rocky Carzo, and Herb Erikson. My father, the late James “Jack the Barber” Luiselli, was my finest coach, always there in the stands, consistently positive, and helping me in ways he probably never realized – I am forever indebted to him. I thank my wife, Dr. Tracy Evans Luiselli, for enduring my tales of athletic conquests long gone and commiserating with me during Patriots, Celtics, Bruins, and Red Sox games. Our daughter, Gabrielle Luiselli, has given us so much pleasure watching her perform on the ice and landing those combination jumps. And to our son, Thomas Luiselli, your exploits on the hockey rink and the lacrosse field fill us with pride – you and your sister are true champions!

Dr. Reed acknowledges his father, David Reed, for being a patient trainer, an understanding coach, and most importantly, an unconditional fan and supporter. I thank my mentors, Dr. Thomas Critchfield, Dr. Brian Martens, and my co-editor, Dr. James Luiselli, for supporting my efforts to study the behavioral processes underlying athletic performance. Finally, I thank my wife, Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed, for humoring me when I claim that my playing of football video games is for the sake of science.

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