

1 Special Issue on Using Sport and Performance Psychology in the Management of Change:

2 Editorial

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12 Date of Submission: 17th December 2015

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3 Guest Editorial: Using Sport and Performance Psychology in the Management of Change

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1 Guest Editorial: Using Sport and Performance Psychology in the Management of Change

2 “I think ability is a 10 to 20 per cent requirement, you need 80 to 90 per cent mental strength”

3 (Glenn McGrath ex-Australian Cricketer)

4 *About this Special Issue:*

5 In line with the editorial aims and scope of *Journal of Change Management (JCM)* we are
6 pleased to present to the *JCM* readership two special issues dedicated to exploring key
7 contemporary themes and research regarding using sport and performance psychology in the
8 management of change. The two special issues advance the understanding and expertise
9 regarding the effectiveness of sport and performance psychology principles in facilitating and
10 managing change in organization and workplace settings

11 *A brief History of Sport Psychology*

12 Glenn McGrath, one of the best fast bowlers this World has seen, illustrates in the
13 above quote the importance of psychology within sport. Nevertheless, sport psychology is a
14 relatively young discipline within psychology. To illustrate, in 1920 Carl Diem founded the
15 world’s first sport psychology laboratory at the Deutsche Sporthochschule in Berlin. Two
16 further labs were established in 1925: one by A. Z. Puni at the Institute of Physical Culture in
17 Leningrad and the other by Coleman Griffith at the University of Illinois where he published
18 the first sport psychology book titled *The Psychology of Coaching* in 1926. From this starting
19 point to 1965, scant research was undertaken within sport psychology until the formation of
20 the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) which arguably prompted a revival in
21 the subject area. Indeed, by the 1970s sport psychology courses were becoming increasingly
22 common throughout North America and so too the academic profile of the discipline, which
23 was demonstrated through the development of the *International Journal of Sport Psychology*
24 in 1970 followed thereafter by the *Journal of Sport Psychology* in 1979. By the 1980s sport
25 psychology became subjected to more thorough scientific investigation. To illustrate,

1 researchers began to explore how sport psychology could be used to improve athletic
2 performance along with how exercise and physical activity could be used to aid well-being.
3 The research in sport focussed specifically on determining the key psychological
4 characteristics of athletic excellence including the conceptual development of areas such as
5 motivation (e.g., Duda & Allison, 1989), self-confidence (e.g., Vealey, 1986), competitive
6 anxiety (e.g., Martens, Burton, Vealey, Bump, & Smith, 1990), cohesion (e.g., Carron, 1982),
7 the development of sport-specific psychometrics (e.g., Gill & Deeter, 1988), and the
8 exploration of effective psychological interventions (e.g., imagery, relaxation, and goal-
9 setting) to aid athletic performance (e.g., Greenspan & Feltz, 1988). Today sport psychology
10 is a diverse and multi-disciplinary field with global interest and a wide-ranging scientific
11 community including research publications spread across numerous peer-reviewed journals.
12 In addition, professional bodies such as the Association of Applied Sport Psychology
13 (AASP), the British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology
14 (BPS, DSEP), the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) and the
15 European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC) oversee the professional development
16 of sport psychology, which includes the development of accreditation and certification
17 pathways for university courses and individuals pursuing chartered and certified status as a
18 Sport Psychologist.

19 Given the scientific and professional development of sport psychology during the last
20 40 years there has been an increasing appetite from elite sport to embrace sport psychology
21 services. Generally, there is now a wide-ranging acceptance of sport psychology as a key
22 facet of sport science support in the development of athletic excellence, and this is illustrated
23 in the increasing number of new positions created to work in elite sport along with anecdotal
24 evidence of effective sport psychology support in helping to develop highly successful
25 athletes and teams towards fulfilling their potential (e.g., Barker & Slater, 2015; Clay, 2012).

1 *What actually is Sport Psychology?*

2 In its rawest sense sport psychology can be defined as:

3 “Sport psychology is concerned with the psychological foundations, processes, and
4 consequences of the psychological regulation of sport-related activities of one or
5 several persons acting as the subject(s) of the activity. The focus may be on behavior
6 or on different psychological dimensions of human behavior. The physical activity
7 can take place in competitive, educational, recreational, preventive and rehabilitation
8 settings and includes health-related exercise.” (FEPSAC, 1996, p. 221).

9 In essence, sport psychology addresses the interactions between psychology and athletic
10 performance, including the psychological aspects of optimal athletic performance, the
11 psychological well-being of athletes, teams, coaches, and sport organizations, and the
12 connection between physical and psychological functioning. Typically, evidence-based
13 practice in sport psychology focuses on psychological skills (e.g., mental skills) development
14 for performance excellence and/or restoration, as well as improving team dynamics and
15 cohesion (Cremades, Tashman, & Quartiroli, 2014). Sport psychologists have,
16 consequently, gleaned a lot of information about how individuals and teams perform under
17 extreme pressure and deal with the many stressors and challenges typical of high performing
18 environments. Indeed, research over the last 40 years has yielded great insights into the
19 psychological characteristics, correlates, and predictors of elite performers and teams. In
20 addition, much research exists regarding the effectiveness of a plethora of psychological
21 strategies used to facilitate important individual and team outcomes (e.g., self-confidence,
22 concentration, and cohesion; see Barker, Mellalieu, McCarthy, Jones, & Moran, 2013).
23 Importantly, a growing body of research also indicates that elite, professional sport offers an
24 interesting context within which to explore employees’ responses to organizational change,
25 given the volatile environment underpinned by an ongoing demand for sustained success (see
26 Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, Gilmore, & Thelwell, 2015).

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1 *What is Performance Psychology?*

2 The success of sport psychologists in elite and professional sport has stimulated other
3 domains where human performance is of paramount importance to embrace sport psychology
4 principles and to invite sport psychologists to work and research in non-sport performance
5 settings including business (e.g., Jones, 2002), military (e.g., Hardy, Arthur, Jones, Shariff,
6 Munnoch, Isaacs, & Allsopp, 2010), performing arts (e.g., Hays, 2002; Martin & Cutler,
7 2002), and law enforcement (e.g., Le Scanff & Taugis, 2002). Moving beyond the
8 psychology of athletic performance has been advocated as an important development for
9 sport psychology. For example, it allows sport psychologists to support individuals involved
10 in other performance situations by applying their knowledge of performance enhancement,
11 testing the generalizability of theories and research findings, and studying alternative
12 approaches that top performers from outside of sport use to achieve peak performance
13 (Gould, 2002). Additionally, non-sport psychology professionals (i.e., organizational
14 psychologists, executive and performance coaches) have joined the area of sport performance
15 enhancement due to their applicable knowledge and skills base (Cremandes et al., 2014).

16 During the last 15 years, and due in part to an increasing appetite from performance
17 domains outside of sport, we have witnessed the emergence of the professional field of
18 performance psychology. Despite being a developing field, performance psychology is
19 beginning to have an increased appreciation within the scientific literature. For example, the
20 American Psychological Association (APA) Division 47 has the *Journal of Sport, Exercise,*
21 *and Performance Psychology*. Various definitions of performance psychology have been
22 postulated, with the following contemporary definition being provided by Hays (2012: 25),
23 “performance psychology refers to the mental components of superior performance, in
24 situations and performance domains where excellence is a central element”. Performance
25 psychology is posited to focus on the psychology of human performance in domains such as

1 athletics, the performing arts, surgery, firefighting, law enforcement, military operations,
2 business, and music. Presently, evidence-based practice in performance psychology focuses
3 on performance excellence and/or restoration and well-being in individual performers and
4 groups (Cremades et al., 2014).

5 In sum, sport and performance psychology are ever growing disciplines in which
6 scientific principles are applied to sport and other performance domains. Specifically, sport
7 and performance psychology is based upon evidence from psychological science research and
8 is used to assist those involved in high performance settings to fulfil their potential, deliver
9 consistent and sustained performance, and deal with market-led and organizational challenges
10 (Turner & Barker, 2014).

11 *Applying Sport and Performance Psychology to Organizational Change Situations*

12 Arguably one of the most important aspects regarding successful organizational
13 change is an appreciation and facilitation of key psychological principles (Armenakis &
14 Harris, 2009). To this end, successful change management is dependent on effective and
15 dynamic leadership, cohesive teams, effective social support, clear communication pathways,
16 robust coping mechanisms (including stress management and resilience), and the ability to
17 deliver sustained performance under extreme pressure (Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur, &
18 Hardy, 2009; Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012).

19 Organizational change is inherent in elite sport and in organizations, as we strive for
20 continued improvement and, ultimately, success (Wagstaff et al., 2015). Therefore, much
21 information gleaned from sport and performance psychology can be transferred to support
22 organizational change in a much wider contexts. For example, the many structures and layers
23 within elite sporting organizations creates a complex context to understand and sport
24 psychology research is offering insight into this complexity through providing data regarding
25 the negative effect of change on individuals (e.g., Gilmore, 2013; Gilmore & Gibson, 2007;

1 Wagstaff et al., 2015), and offering insight into the strategies adopted by these organizations
2 to optimize group functioning by harnessing the energies (e.g., mobilisation of effort, co-
3 operation) of the organization to allow thriving during change (see Wagstaff et al., 2012). In
4 addition, sport psychology research has highlighted that the adversity associated with change
5 within elite sport can be a catalyst for team resilience if managed appropriately (e.g., Morgan,
6 Fletcher, & Sarkar, 2015). Accordingly, it is postulated that effective change management in
7 other contexts would benefit further from engagement with sport and performance
8 psychology principles, expertise, and findings, particularly given this recent research within
9 sport exploring organizational change in high performance environments.

10 *Aims and Scope of the Special Issue*

11 Given the potential for the work conducted by sport and performance psychology
12 researchers within elite, high pressurized settings to influence organizational change in other
13 contexts, these two special issues (issue 1 & 2, 2016) aim to facilitate awareness and
14 understanding of contemporary theories, research, strategies, and application of key
15 psychological principles within our sport performance setting, and illustrate their relevance to
16 the successful management of change in organizational and workplace settings. In many
17 ways these two special issues build on a special issue published in the *Journal of Applied*
18 *Sport Psychology* in 2002 (volume 14, issue 4) which was one of the first postulations
19 regarding the relevance of sport psychology principles above and beyond athletic
20 performance (e.g., business; Gould, 2002). Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we present
21 these special issues of the *JCM*. We anticipate the volumes will act as a contemporary
22 resource for individuals involved in organizational change along with those in sport and
23 performance psychology research or professional practice. We hope that this collection of
24 works will provide an increased awareness of benefits and impact of sport and performance
25 principles in the effective management of change. To achieve our aims for these volumes we

1 have received submissions from a number of world leading experts regarding the use of sport
2 and performance psychology in the management of change. We are delighted with their
3 contributions in helping us to fulfil the aims of these special issues.

4 Special issue one is organised accordingly: Our introductory guest editorial here is
5 followed by three articles comprising a review and original research. The first article
6 authored by Slater, Evans, and Turner is a review article and outlines an innovative social
7 identity approach for effective change management including suggestions for applied practice
8 and research. Second, Wagstaff, Thelwell, and Gilmore in a qualitative study report findings
9 from 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with employees' from professional football
10 organizations and highlights responses to repeated organizational change. Finally, Allen and
11 McCarthy provide a thought provoking narrative around the importance of happiness and
12 positive psychology in the workplace to facilitate individual well-being and performance
13 during change situations. The article includes commentary on effective interventions which to
14 promote happiness and well-being.

15 Special issue two comprises a further three articles and is organised in the following
16 manner: First, Neil, Wagstaff, Weller, and Lewis present a multi-study article which explores
17 the relationship between a number of performance psychology variables (including leadership
18 behaviors, emotional intelligence, and cohesion) and performance within a UK Government
19 Executive Agency during substantial organizational change. The article draws on qualitative
20 and quantitative methods to highlight salient findings along with recommendations for
21 practitioners and researchers. Second, Fletcher and Streeter present a case study analysis of
22 developing and working in a high performance environment in elite swimming. Within their
23 article a series of key reflections are presented. Finally, the special issue concludes with
24 another thought provoking narrative from Dixon, Lee, and Ghaye who highlight the benefits

1 of strengths-based reflection strategies at individual and group levels in the effective
2 management of change situations.

3 We would like to thank all the contributors for their patience and diligence in
4 responding to the editorial process, and the *JCM* Editorial Board, in particular, the Editor-in-
5 Chief, Professor Rune Todnem By for his support in helping us to assemble these volumes.

6 We would also like to thank all the reviewers for giving their time to provide thorough and
7 insightful reviews of the various submissions we received. We are, as always, greatly
8 indebted to them, and this collection of works would not have been possible without their
9 contribution and support. Lastly, we hope you enjoy these special issues and that they provide
10 a stimulus for discourse, increased awareness, and further sport and performance psychology
11 research and practice in change management and business contexts.

12

13 Jamie Barker, Rich Neil, and David Fletcher

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