



Editorial

Special issue of Psychology of Sport and Exercise ‘The development of expertise and excellence in sport psychology’



The development of expertise and excellence is of vital importance for the continuing growth of the field of sport psychology, with important consequences for research, education, and social policies. The aim of this special issue is to bring together high quality contributions that consider the development of expertise and excellence in sport psychology from a wide range of perspectives.

Since the classic paper of Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer (1993) on the acquisition of expertise, a significant amount of research has opened new horizons in the study of expertise and excellence. In fact, in recent years, Psychology of Sport and Exercise has established a tradition in publishing articles in this field (e.g., developmental perspectives, Haugaasen, Toering, & Jordet, 2014; individual differences in skills, Loffing & Hagemann, 2014; Lorains, Ball, & MacMahon, 2013; learning and training interventions, Toner, Moran, & Jackson, 2013; Frank, Land, & Schack, 2013).

In this special issue, the development of expertise in athletes and teams (e.g., socio-psychological, cognition, emotion, group processes) is contrasted to other often under-researched stakeholders in sport with reference to how sport psychology underpins the development of expertise and excellence (e.g., trainee sport psychologists, managers and sport directors, parents). The inclusion of various stakeholders goes beyond other recent special issues (Baker & Hodges, *in press*), expertise books (Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006) and reviews (Mann, Williams, Ward, & Janelle, 2007; Marasso, Laborde, Bardaglio, & Raab, 2014) or earlier contributions to Expertise research (Ericsson, 1993) that focus primarily on athletes or athletic performance (i.e., actors). Providing evidence from studies on the development of expertise in both athletes and related stakeholders (i.e., observers) permits a comparison of their skill-sets across multiple levels of analysis: from the level of social-psychological factors to specific aspects of cognition, emotion or bodily dimensions.

We received 23 submitted papers from which 13 papers, fitting the aim of the special issue, successfully progressed through all stages of peer review. We have ordered these papers by the two dimensions of athletic actors vs. observers and whether they focus on larger sets of expertise factors from the socio-psychological domain or whether they specify one aspect of cognition, emotion or bodily aspect (Table 1). We believe that such a taxonomy could also help to identify gaps and future research avenues as the knowledge about stakeholders beyond athletes presented here is often not well systematized and that specific aspects of expertise factors that drive the development of expertise are not yet fully explored.

Social-psychological dimensions of expertise in Actors and Observers

Christian Swann, Aidan Moran and David Piggott provide a narrative review of Expertise definitions of athletes that serves as an excellent starting point for all papers in the special issue on Actors. Within 91 studies examined the authors make progress in classifying eight different ways of defining elite and expert athletes that adds to our understanding of expertise effects reported in the literature. A model is proposed to classify samples of athletes for future studies that allow conceptual and practical recommendations. Whether such classifications could be needed and used as well to observers in sports is something future research may consider.

Andreas Ivarsson, Andreas Stenling, Johan Fallby, Urban Johnsson, Elin Borg and Gunnar Johansson offer insights into the components of youth sport and talent development environments that progress our understanding of optimal environmental features for athlete development. Longitudinal analysis of elite football players' perceptions of their environment and associations with athlete well-being show how different types and qualities of environment (coaching behavior, communication, philosophy) are potentially important for elite athlete welfare and development.

Chris Harwood and Camilla Knight provided an important extension of the expertise literature for observers of athletes, namely their own parents. By reviewing existing literature on parental involvement, including roles, practices, experiences and consequences, they craft a position paper on the components of expertise in sport parenting. Alongside a definition of sport parenting expertise, they use each component as a postulate for scholars to consider and investigate, as well as mapping out recommendations for future research.

Tim Pitt, Pete Lindsay, Owen Thomas, Mark Bawden, Simon Goodwill and Sheldon Hanton added another important extension to the expertise literature by focusing on the applied sport psychologist and an innovative method of service delivery. Specifically, they introduced the notion and application of consultancy teams working together in a solution-focused manner for the athlete. They present the I-Psych process and critically reflect on the consultancy team model and use of technology in the context of nurturing consulting excellence and expertise.

Cognitive dimensions of expertise in Actors and Observers

Patrick Belling, Joel Suss and Paul Ward approach Actors cognitive dimensions using anticipation, decision-making and option-generation in two experiments. The authors challenged potential

Table 1

Taxonomy of papers within the special issue: Dimension “person” orders papers whether they focus on developing expertise of actors (e.g. talents, elite athletes, elite teams) or whether they focus on observers (e.g. trainee sport psychologists, managers and sport directors, parents). The dimension “expertise factor” orders the area of content the papers focus mostly on such as social-psychological, cognitive, emotion or bodily factors in both actors and observers.

Person/Expertise Factor	Socio-psych	Cognition	Emotion	Body (sensorimotor and constitution)
Actors	317, 322	325, 309	323, 304	298, 302, 320
Observers	306, 316	308	297	

conflicting theoretical predictions and found coherent explanations showing that paradigm-specific effects are important to consider in future research.

Olivia Schläppi-Lienhard and Ernst-Joachim Hossner analyzed decision-making of a unique elite national beach volleyball sample as one important cognitive dimension of expertise in actors. The authors related bidirectionally domain-specific knowledge to visual information pick-up using an interview technique that will guide further experimental investigations of enhancing choices in dynamic sports.

Dave Collins and Andrew Cruickshank analyze cognitive dimensions of Observers in the leadership of managers or directors within elite sport organizations' performance departments. The varied challenges faced by elite team leaders reinforce the range of competencies that represent applied sport psychology services in organisations and how sport psychologists can support such leadership. In terms of consultancy expertise in these contexts, implications for the skill set that best frames practitioners' support are examined.

Emotional dimensions of expertise in Actors and Observers

Jonathon Headrick, Ian Renshaw, Keith Davids, Ross Pinder and Duarte Araujo provide a new perspective on how affective learning designs can improve expertise development of Actors. Starting from a strong person-environmental link the authors argue that affective learning requires to implement emotional dimensions into learning that are representative to the challenges in the sport psychologist, athlete and coach interactions.

In terms of forwarding the literature on excellence and expertise in teams, Paul Morgan, David Fletcher and Mustafa Sarkar examined psychosocial processes underpinning team resilience in elite sport. Beyond leadership it was evident from narrative analyses of a world cup winning team in rugby that positive emotions are crucial for team resilience. The study offer implications for how practitioners working with a team may help to develop team resilience at the highest levels of sport.

Literature on the notion of excellence or expertise in supervision and neophyte consultant training within sport psychology is rather scarce. Vana Hutter, Tanja Oldenhof-Veldman and Raoul Oudejans add to this literature by investigating trainee sport psychologists under supervision, and determining the components required to optimize their education and supervision process. This research has implications for both supervisors and educational programmes in sport psychology vis a vis the developmental needs of the neophyte practitioner.

Bodily (embodied) dimensions of expertise in Actors (and Observers)

John Toner and Aidan Moran challenge traditional motor learning theories. They provide a narrative review on somaesthetic awareness and thus paying attention to your own body even in

highly overlearned skills can improve the development and learning at the level of elite athletes.

Christopher Ring, Andrew Cooke, Maria Kavussanu, David McIntyre and Rich Masters showed in an experiment the used EEG-based neurofeedback to regulate golf performance under pressure and thus provide a showcase for technological developments for bodily feedback to enhance the development of expertise in athletes.

Jerad Moxley and Tyler Towne demonstrated in talent selection and predicting future success that early athletes performance as well as environmental factors such as college quality predicts later NBA performance. Further they showed that bodily information such as anthropometric and athletic variables did predict draft order suggestion some bias in selection.

In sum we wish that the reader acquires exciting and new knowledge on the development of expertise in the domain of sport psychology that has recently been at the forefront of trends in Psychology, Sport, and Exercise in special issues (Bar-Eli & Raab, 2006).

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Markus Raab, Associate Editor and Guest Editor of the special issue*

German Sport University Cologne, Institute of Psychology,
Am Sportpark Müngersdorf 6, 50933 Cologne, Germany

London South Bank University, 103 Borough Rd, London SE1 0AA, UK

Chris Harwood, Guest Editor of the special issue
Reader in Applied Sport Psychology, School of Sport, Exercise & Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU, UK

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 (0)221 4982 5491.
E-mail address: raab@dshs-koeln.de (M. Raab).