

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### The Development of a Model to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Applied Sport Psychology Practice

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**The Development of a Model to Evaluate the Effectiveness of  
Applied Sport Psychology Practice**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the University's  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Worcester**

Recent developments in UK sport have seen unprecedented funding made available to the development of performance and excellence (Sport England, 1999). Integral to these developments has been the provision of sports science support, including applied sport psychology practice (UKSC, 1998). As a result, applied sport psychology practice has grown and sport psychologists have been moving towards new professional status. With this professional status comes demands for higher levels of accountability and in order to fulfil these demands, sport psychologists must be willing and able to take responsibility for evaluating the services they provide (Weigand, *et al.*, 1999). However, consideration of the literature and current national developments suggests that the formal evaluation of practice is not customary (Hardy & Jones, 1994). Indeed the need for effective evaluation has been recognised as one of the most pressing in applied sport psychology (Grove *et al.*, 1999; Streat, 1998). The aim of this research was to propose, develop and evaluate an appropriate model to evaluate the effectiveness of applied sport psychology practice.

In order to propose an appropriate model it was important to consider the nature of applied sport psychology practice and the fundamental reasons for undertaking evaluation. A key characteristic of the proposed model is its functional nature, that is, it aims to document effectiveness, facilitate improvement and fit with the demands of practice. Thus, the model presented is practitioner-led and includes a case study design incorporating a battery of effectiveness indicators to be assessed at appropriate times and used in triangulation. Further, it was advocated that the criteria for effectiveness be determined by the idiosyncrasies of each individual consultation.

Instruments to assess the specific effectiveness indicators identified in the model were developed. Specifically, measures of the athlete's adherence to mental skills training, subjective evaluation of performance, social validity assessment and evaluation of the sport psychologist's effectiveness were produced. Additionally, a measure to assess changes in the athlete's psychological skills was examined and a reflective practice model developed to facilitate the sport psychologist's self-evaluation of practice. The credibility of each of these instruments was also considered and it was proposed that each instrument may be used in practice.

Finally, initial evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation model proposed was undertaken. Specifically, feedback from practising sport psychologists through conference presentations and a formal survey was considered. The findings suggested that the model is apt and generally consistent with current practice, although areas for development were identified. Although this initial evaluation was encouraging, the need for more formal and in-depth feedback was recognised.

This research proposed, developed and evaluated a model to evaluate the effectiveness of applied sport psychology. It was recognised that there is room to further develop and refine the model and examine its application into practice. Further, there is a need to promote the model and the research findings to influence and facilitate the development of appropriate evaluation and quality assurance practices in the UK that will enhance the development of a credible profession of applied sport psychologists.

**Key words:** evaluation, applied sport psychology practice, reflective practice, mental training adherence, social validity, PSIS-R5, consultant effectiveness



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*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.*

*And God saw everything that he made. 'Behold' God said, 'it is very good'. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

*And on the seventh day God rested from all His work. His archangel came then unto Him asking, 'God, how do you know that what you have created is 'very good'? What are your criteria? On what data do you base your judgement? Just exactly what results were you expecting to attain? And aren't you a little close to the situation to make a fair and unbiased evaluation?'*

*God thought about these questions all that day and His rest was greatly disturbed. On the eighth day God said, 'Lucifer, go to hell'.*

*Thus was evaluation born in a blaze of glory.....*

Unashamedly borrowed from Patton (1998, p1)