

The integration of research and practice in sport psychology

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LA INTEGRACIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN Y LA PRÁCTICA EN PSICOLOGÍA DEL DEPORTE

KEYWORDS: Sport psychology, ISSP, applied psychology, research, Martens.

ABSTRACT: From the consolidation of the psychology of sport as an independent scientific discipline at an international level, a great advance was developed that also favoured the consolidation of the applied field and the intervention, into two distinct political-geographic areas: the Eastern countries and the Western block. In both the performances began with the elite sport, and the figure of the psychologist as a member of the sports teams. In 1979 the publication of Rainer Martens' article *On Jackets and Jocks* (Martens, 1979) mobilized the reflection of both researchers and applied psychologists. From its publication to the present day, this text became a reference text, especially when it came to direct interventions with athletes, and led to a reflection on the methodological difference between research and direct intervention. However, previously, in 1987, Martens himself had recommended and warned of the need to establish links between both spheres, academic and applied, to strengthen and give consistency to the psychology of sport (García-Ucha and Martínez, 2014).

The First Congress of Sports Psychology held in Rome in 1965 has been a reference of the contemporary stage of Sports Psychology and it is considered by many authors as the international consolidation of Sport Psychology as an independent discipline (Cruz and Canton, 1992; Pérez and Estrada, 2015). The launch of the first congress marked the beginning of a period of growth represented by the creation of new associations of Sports Psychology, both at national and international level, as well as the emergence of scientific journals that brought international attention on this knowledge area (Pérez and Estrada, 2015). Internationally recognized, influential manuals also emerge such as Ogilvie and Tutko (1966), *Problem athletes and how to handle them*, considered the first manual of application, *Motor Learning and Motor Performance* (Singer, 1967), or *Psychology of motor Learning* (Oxendine, 1967). It is from those years, between 1965 and 1985, when some authors situate the period of consolidation of

the contemporary Psychology of Sport (Pérez and Estrada, 2015, Weinberg and Gould, 1996).

During the decade of the 70s significant applied works were developed in the Eastern countries, whose maximum exponent was the USSR. Researches were carried out with the Olympic athletes who would participate at Mexico 1968 Summer Olympics. Psychological preparation was introduced within the general training of the athletes, the psychologists became part of the technical staffs attending the Olympic Games (Pérez and Estrada, 2015). During the former German Democratic Republic, interventions were also made with Mexico 68 Olympic teams (Dasil, 2008).

In Western countries, led by United States America, a set of actions were also initiated that pushed the advancement of the applied field of the discipline forward (Weinberg and Gould, 1996): a) the USA Olympic Committee launched Sport Psychology Advisor Board, (1980), and hired the first full-time sports psychologist (1985); B) the Association for the

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Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) (1986) was founded; C) Division 47 (Sport Psychology) of the American Psychological Association; D) division 12 (Psychology of physical activity and sport) of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) (1994) (Perez and Estrada, 2015); E) two specialized journals in the applied field of Sport Psychology were created, *The Sport Psychologist* (1986), and *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* (1989); F) in 1988, for the first time, a sports psychologist officially accompanied the USA Olympic; and g) in 1991 the AAASP established the designation of "official adviser" in the field of Sports Psychology.

When reviewing the evolution of the discipline from the applied field it is almost mandatory, at least in the Western context, to mention Rainer Martens, considered by some authors (Cox, 2009) the precursor of the current sport psychology. In his famous article *About smocks and jocks* (Martens, 1979) he reflects upon the gap between theory and practice that was taking place on the works developed by sports psychologist, and if the interventions that were being carried out truly provided a suitable response to the real demands of the world of sport. This reflection meant a significant shift in understanding the work of the applied psychology and also served as a guide to position the intervention of psychology and psychologists in the complex world of sport. Throughout the literature, the allusions to this classic article are continuous, when analysing theoretical frameworks (Rubio, 2001), professional practice (Garcés de los Fayos, 2001, Cantón, 2010), or the role of psychologist in interventions (Torregrosa, Sánchez and Cruz, 2004). The applied field has evolved considerably, especially with regard to the multidisciplinary nature of work and its application areas (Garcés de los Fayos, 2001; Cantón, 2010). However, "Martens's (1987) recommendation to maintain the need of building a bridge between academic and applied areas with the aim of achieving a more consistent development of the psychology of sport "(García-Ucha, y Martínez, 2014, p.35) is still latent.

This relay has been taken by the ISSP 14th World Congress which reflects in its motto *The integration of science and practice through multicultural bridges, gender and social equality*. Due their different nature and approaches, the papers contained in this special supplement on the occasion of the 14th ISSP World Congress represent a good example of the research potential in sport psychology. On one hand original research articles are presented. Under the elite sport topic one of articles aims to evaluate how athletes cope with pre-competition anxiety by examining cognitive, self-confidence, and somatic anxiety. Within this same topic, but deepening in athletes' dual career, the required competencies for a successful combination of education and high performance training are studied, as well as the different sport stages of athletes depending on their career path. Researches on sport from a mass participation approach could help to increase the population physical activity level. In this connection, a paper examines the role of decisional balance and different types of motivation in predicting exercise enjoyment among the population. Other researches focused on the differences of psychological determinants to physical activity, the examination of the barriers to sports participation and finally, among other topics. On the other hand, review articles are present throughout the systematic review of qualitative studies on retirement from elite sport.

Applied studies are also included within this special supplement. One of the articles presents the results of an intervention performed with a handball coach who presented symptoms of burnout. Another one evaluates the efficacy of a physiological intervention in the preparation of a candidate for a state exam by using the same method as the used in sport competition. And finally, in connection with the Congress topic, a perspective paper explores the continuing research-practise gap that exists within sport and physical exercise psychology.

In conclusion it can be said that these contributions are proof of the evolution and continuation of the work line undertaken at The First Congress of Sports Psychology.

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RESUMEN/ABSTRACT: A partir de la consolidación de la Psicología del Deporte como disciplina científica independiente a nivel internacional, se desarrolló un gran avance que favoreció también la consolidación del ámbito aplicado y de intervención, con dos áreas político-geográficas diferenciadas: los países del Este y el bloque occidental. En ambos se iniciaron actuaciones directas con el deporte de élite, y la figura del psicólogo como miembro del staff en los equipos deportivos fue estabilizándose. En 1979 la publicación del artículo de Rainer Martens, *About smocks and jocks* (Martens, 1979), movilizó la reflexión tanto de investigadores como de psicólogos aplicados. Desde su publicación hasta la actualidad, este texto se convirtió en un texto de referencia, especialmente a la hora de plantear intervenciones directas con deportistas, y propició que se estableciera una reflexión sobre la diferencia metodológica que debía darse entre investigación e intervención directa. Sin embargo ya anteriormente, en 1987, el propio Martens había recomendado y alertado de la necesidad de establecer nexos entre ambos ámbitos, académico y aplicado, para fortalecer y otorgar consistencia a la psicología del deporte (García-Ucha, y Martínez, 2014).

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