Directory of Psychological Tests in the Sport and Exercise Sciences

A. C. Ostrow. Fitness Information Technology Inc., West Virginia: 1990. 155 x 235 mm. 271 + xix pages. Illustrated in black-and-white

The authors attempt, at least in part, to do for sports psychology what the *Buros Mental Measurements Yearbooks* have done for psychology in general,

that is to provide a comprehensive listing of available tests.

The book lists 175 items and provides summaries of their aims, characteristics and construction, reliability and validity data and norms, together with information on availability and relevant literature sources.

The tests are listed under 20 headings from 'Achievement orientation' through 'Aggression' and 'Anxiety' via 'Confidence' and 'Imagery' to 'Motivation' and 'Sex roles'. Simply glancing through the book gives an interesting overview of the concerns and intellectual horizons of sports psychology. The view is rather depressing. The majority of items are simply Likert type self-report scales, that is they measure attitude and opinion rather than attempting, except through the most indirect methods, to identify and measure psychological processes underlying sporting activities. There are a hundred ways of discovering that athletes sometimes suffer from precompetitive anxiety and often feel depressed after losing, but very few tests which shed any light on psychological mechanisms and fewer still which are capable of predicting actual performance on the playing field. It is notable that, of the tests listed, under 14% claim any predictive validity, while just over 60% 'indicated some evidence of construct validity' – that is, results can be interpreted as support for the author's theoretical predilections. Sceptics who hold that psychological tests constitute

an elaborate hoax on the public will be amply rewarded with examples of tests designed to assess 'the strength of self-efficacy among novice divers' or to 'evaluate the job satisfaction of college athletic directors'. The editor, apparently aware of the credibility gap, appeals for the development of more objective tests, including the use of behavioural and neuropsychological techniques.

One might well ask what is the purpose of these tests? Intelligence tests were developed to meet the needs of a newly established public education system, hastened by the problems of recruitment and training citizen armies in two world wars, but what large-scale public concern motivates the psychological testing of athletes? I fear that the reason lies principally in the growth of physical education as an academic discipline in the USA with the need for each Masters student to complete a project and each lecturer to publish or perish. The result is a 'scientific' literature containing quantities of junk reports. The editor clearly states that most tests listed are 'not sufficiently developed psychometrically to warrant their use as a diagnostic tool' and promises future editions of the Directory will contain, like Buros, independent critical reviews. Until that time athletes and coaches are well advised to treat the results of psychological tests with caution.

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