

Richard B. Aldeman.
PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOR
IN SPORT.

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With the strong impact that sport increasingly has exerted on the world's populus, there has grown a demand for immediate, useful and practical information on the psychological aspects of physical activity and sports participation. In the last ten to fifteen years, after a rather long period of individual and uncoordinated pre-scientific beginnings, a branch of the applied social sciences identified as "sports psychology" has developed to meet the need.

Until recently, writings in this field have been concerned chiefly with sport skill acquisition, motor development, motor learning and motor performance. Now, however, there is a swing toward a looser, more phenomenological approach to the psychology of physical activity and sport as exemplified by an increasing interest in the behavior of the participant rather than his performance as such. The emphasis in this book is on these underlying dimensions of behavior.

The author attempts to examine what the participant thinks and feels more than what he does. He is concerned with the broad psychological, social and emotional aspects of the individual in the context of physical activity and athletics. This is an emphasis directed toward dealing with the needs, interests, attitudes, dispositions and motivations of the participant. The primary intent is to arrive at an understanding of why an individual behaves the way he does in various athletic and physical activity settings.

Aldeman tries to identify the substantive nature of physical activity and sport and to describe and explain those nebulous intangibles (such as self-actualization, tension seeking, need for achievement and competitiveness) that underlie final perform-

ance. The contention is that understanding a construct, such as anxiety, is at least as important as understanding its effect on performance of a skilled task. He has not attempted to include all concepts having a bearing on behavior in athletics and physical activity, but rather has tried to select those broad dimensions which he feels exert the major influences on individual behavior in sport and to examine in depth their structure and dynamic functioning. He has made a serious effort to present the diverse theoretical positions in each of these areas in such a manner that the reader can integrate for himself an understanding of the content. At the same time, he suggests that the main issues investigated should have immediate practical importance and that his approach should hold considerable attractiveness for the teacher and coach.

This selection of topics and approach to them does not, however, seem entirely compatible with providing important, immediate practical information to coaches and teachers on how to understand and help the young participant. If the book is indeed designed for undergraduates, teachers and coaches as well as graduate students with "some psychology and sociology background," as the author indicates, then it could benefit from more reference to meaningful examples from sport and physical activity in place of so much generalized theoretical discussion. It is perhaps too "purely academic" in nature for direct application by the average physical education student, teacher or coach.

How useful such intuitive information will be remains to be seen. At any rate, this is one of the few attempts at taking a direct approach to providing the practitioner with essential insight into why people behave the way they do in physical activity and sport. It may not fulfill all of the author's expectations, but it is a good effort in a desirable direction.

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