Athletic Development: A Psychological Perspective

Edited by Caroline Heaney, Nichola Kentzer and Ben Oakley

The book

The Reader will be approximately 89,000 words in length and will consist of 14 newly commissioned chapters of around 6,000 words, along with an introduction and brief concluding chapter from the editors and an introduction to each of the three sections of the book. The chapters will be authored by subject specialists and leading experts in the field.

The book will explore a range of contemporary and topical psychological aspects of athletic development in sport designed to support academic study and improve professional practice by drawing on case study examples. It will focus on the following three broad areas (see the ‘provisional contents’ section for more detail):

1) An introduction to athletic development, which orientates the relevance of psychological factors in athletic development.
2) Social influences on athletic development, which explores the impact of various social influences (e.g. coach, family, peers, school) on sports participation and performance from a psychological perspective.
3) The journey of athletic development, which explores various aspects influencing mental health and wellbeing as an athlete progresses through their sports career.

The Reader will shine a unique psychological perspective on athletic development but may also draw on allied disciplines such as sociology and health. It will combine key theory with contemporary case studies, illustrating and analysing the complexities of athletic development. It will examine core psychological aspects of athletic development in sport, taking a critical perspective that highlights some of the debates and controversies in these areas.

One of the distinctive features of this book is its contemporary content drawing on topic areas such as thriving in sport and athlete welfare, which have only recently attracted research and professional attention and are consequently absent in more established books. These are topics that engage and intrigue students and which will set this book apart from others.
Provisional contents

Introduction
Caroline Heaney, Nichola Kentzer and Ben Oakley, The Open University
(1500 words)

This introductory chapter will set the scene, exploring athletic development from a psychological perspective and introducing the themes and sections of the book. It will set out the scope of the book and focus on the role of both the athlete and the coach in athletic development. Core issues in athletic development and how they are addressed in the book will be outlined.

SECTION 1 – ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT: A HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE JOURNEY

Section introduction
Ben Oakley, The Open University
(1000 words)

This will introduce the section and its component chapters identifying the links and coherence between chapters. The focus will be on building the underpinning knowledge required to understand other aspects of athletic development explored in the book and introducing some of the significant career transitions that athletes are likely to face on their journey through sport.

Chapter 1: What is athletic development?
Ben Oakley, The Open University
(4000 words)

This chapter will evaluate what is meant by the term athletic development and outline a framework for thinking about this area of study and practice coherently. It adapts some of the ideas of educational psychologist Franoys Gagné (2009) and discusses how athletic ability is influenced by environmental, interpersonal and mental catalysts including transitions and good fortune in a participant’s path through sport. In effect, this chapter frames the diverse psychological topics explored through the book and places them in context.

Chapter 2: The evolution of perspectives on athletic development
Ben Oakley, The Open University
(6000 words)

It is useful to trace how the study of athletic development has evolved over time and therefore answer the question of ‘how did we get here?’ This chapter discusses the biological, social and psychological perspectives previously taken in recent decades to make sense of athletic development. It provides the context for why this book’s focus is on a psychosocial and wellbeing lens on athlete’s journeys through sport.
Chapter 3: Transitions on the athlete’s journey
Robert Morris, University of Stirling
(6000 words)

As athletes progress through their sporting career they experience several careers transitions, both expected and unexpected, which can impact on their mental wellbeing and athletic development. This chapter will explore various transitions faced by athletes and the potential psychological challenges of these. It will cover areas such as theoretical models, transition into sport, and within-career transitions (e.g. moving from junior to senior level). It will also consider strategies to ensure athletes have positive transitional experiences.

Chapter 4: Retirement: the final transition
Candice Lingam-Willgoss, The Open University
(6000 words)

The prospect of retirement can be extremely daunting for an athlete. Knowing when to retire can be a difficult decision and one that sometimes the athlete has no control over. In contrast to other careers, retirement from sport tends to happen at a relatively early age. This chapter will examine what causes athletes to retire and the psychological impact of both chosen and forced retirement.

Chapter 5: Researching athletic development
Joanna Horne, The Open University
(6000 words)

This chapter will outline some of the methodological approaches adopted in research exploring various aspects of athletic development. It will address both qualitative and quantitative approaches and explore research design, research instruments and data analysis.

SECTION 2 – SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Section introduction
Nichola Kentzer, The Open University
(1000 words)

This will introduce the section and its component chapters identifying the links and coherence between chapters. The focus will be on how relationships and environments shape athletic development.

Chapter 6: Understanding the coach-athlete relationship
Sophia Jowett, Loughborough University
(6000 words)

This chapter will introduce the important relationship between the coach and the athlete and its impact on athletic development, drawing on models such as the integrated model and the 3+1 Cs model and case study examples of effective and ineffective coach-athlete relationships.
Chapter 7: Communication and conflict in coaching  
Lauren Tufton, Buckinghamshire New University  
(6000 words)

Effective communication is an essential part of the coach-athlete relationship and other key working relationships in sport. This chapter will explore effective communication in sport, drawing on relevant theories and case studies. It will consider the role of conflict in sport and conflict management strategies.

Chapter 8: Optimising the motivational climate for coaching  
Iain Greenlees, University of Chichester  
(6000 words)

This chapter will explore how to create an optimal motivational climate for athletic development. It will consider the impact of coaches, parents and peers on motivational climate and focus on how coach leadership can promote an effective motivational climate.

Chapter 9: Family influences on athletic development  
Jessica Pinchbeck, The Open University  
(6000 words)

The influence of the family is one of the most important factors affecting athletic development throughout childhood and adolescence. This chapter will discuss a range of psychosocial theories and perspectives to explore the role of the family in supporting and influencing young athletes throughout their athletic development.

Chapter 10: Influences of the school setting on athletic development  
Nichola Kentzer, The Open University  
(6000 words)

Children spend a significant proportion of their daily lives in school and so its influence on athletic development cannot be ignored. In this chapter there will be an examination of the social context of the school setting and its importance in relation to shaping children’s relationship with sport.

SECTION 3 – MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ON THE ATHLETE’S JOURNEY

Section introduction  
Caroline Heaney, The Open University  
(1000 words)

This will introduce the section and its component chapters identifying the links and coherence between chapters. The focus will be on athlete welfare and how each chapter promotes this and athlete wellbeing on the athlete’s journey through sport.
Chapter 11: Understanding mental health and wellbeing in sport
Caroline Heaney, The Open University
(6000 words)

This chapter will explore mental health and wellbeing amongst athletes and coaches. It will examine the prevalence of mental health difficulties, explore reasons why athletic populations may be at risk of experiencing mental health challenges (including mental ill health) and consider the importance of creating environments, systems and processes that promote positive wellbeing alongside performance enhancement.

Chapter 12: Developing resilience on the athlete’s journey
Karen Howells, Cardiff Metropolitan University
(6000 words)

Resilience is considered to be an important quality for athletes to possess in order to cope with the challenges and setbacks that are part of the journey through sport. This chapter will critically examine psychological resilience, exploring what it is, its application in sport and how it can be developed.

Chapter 13: Thriving in sport
Daniel Brown, University of Portsmouth
(6000 words)

Competitive sport can create a high-pressure environment. In order to promote positive mental health and wellbeing it is important that athletes and support staff are able to thrive under this pressure rather than just survive. This chapter will explore how thriving can be promoted in sports environments.

Chapter 14: Promoting/Optimising athlete welfare and care
Daniel Rhind, Loughborough University
(6000 words)

With several high-profile athlete welfare and abuse cases in the media in recent years this chapter examines the important topic of safeguarding and welfare in sports coaching environments. The chapter will draw on case study examples of areas such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse to explore the topic and will consider practical applications for promoting athlete wellbeing.

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 15 Effective athletic development: bringing it all together
Ben Oakley, Nichola Kentzer and Caroline Heaney, The Open University
(2000 words)

This concluding chapter will draw together the key themes that have been explored in the book and consider how they can be applied to practice in sport. It will also propose potential areas for further investigation.