

1 **Current Reflections on Publishing in the Journal of Sport Psychology in Action**

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The Journal of Sport Psychology in Action (JSPA) is now in its thirteenth year. There is as rich a past to this journal, which has informed its evolution and place in our field, as there is an exciting present and future. Though 2010 was the official launch of the JSPA, its roots trace to earlier discussions that were held as early as 2007 within the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's Executive Board. Discussions were about the need for a new type of AASP journal with as strongly weighted emphasis on the practical component of the science to practice model. The Executive Board of the time envisioned a journal that would inform sport and exercise psychology by adopting a vastly different vantage to any other of the increasing outlets within a growing profession. The E-Board understood many of the existing journals were requesting expanded sections and integrations of practice within their science-based peer-review journals. However, much of the emphasis in these sport and exercise psychology journals began with science and parlayed to practice. Consequently, authors submitting their writing for consideration were trained from a young age to view science as the starting point in their professional writing and practice as the consequence of theoretically informed work with clients. Though journal practices were serving the field relatively well, there was also a siloed flavor to our field, evident in national and international conferences; one written about by Martens five decades earlier (1987), though also considered in more recent years (Winter & Collins, 2016). For many years, our co-authors observed that researchers and practitioners often travelled in different circles and attended different conference sessions. Picking up on what was somewhat of a fractured approach to the field, the task brought forth through JSPA was to develop and launch a peer-reviewed publication where scholars would need to emphasize the practical application of their theoretical and scientific underpinnings. There would also be a place for practitioners to share their intervention strategies and situate these in terms of some key empirical scholarship

44 and past writing. In summary, there needed to be a home for a practical exchange of ideas, a
45 dialog among scholars, practitioners, and potential consumers. The emphasis within the
46 exchange would be placed squarely on systematic provision of services and how they were being
47 delivered through the transparent articulation of interventions.

48 With guidance from Mary Fry, Jack Lesyk, Mary Ewing, and Founding Editor, Melissa
49 Chase, the Journal of Sport Psychology in Action was launched by AASP in partnership with
50 publishing house Taylor and Francis. From the very beginning of this journal to present day, the
51 hope has always been that it would attract a high volume of professionals from AASP and other
52 international and national societies to share their applied practices in a free and open exchange or
53 idiosyncratic approaches, as a sort of connoisseurship. Earlier editorial boards sought one or two
54 pages of introduction and scholarly underpinnings, followed by eight to 10 pages of practical
55 substance, where the author could unpack their signature, contextualized work for a wide
56 readership of sport psychology professionals, people in allied professions who were working
57 with athletes and coaches, and for coaches, athletes, and sport administrators. The initial group
58 just named envisaged that coaches and athletes might also one day share their experiences
59 performing with the support of people from the field of sport and exercise psychology, thus
60 providing a 360-degree feedback loop that infused, science, practice, and the intended
61 beneficiaries. The request was that references be limited to approximately 10, again suggesting
62 more printed space be devoted to a transition from “knowing of” how the theories and
63 applications in our field worked to understanding and then “knowing” these applications first-
64 hand through uptake and refinement. Writers were also not to be lost in academic jargon, again
65 averting siloes.

The idea of JSPA was enticing and intuitively sensical, but the submission numbers were initially relatively low, likely because of the unfamiliar request made of the authors. The task of writing for JSPA was unique and unconventional. The challenges associated with growth could be explained exclusively by the journal's stylistic expectations, but one reason alone does not account for modest growth. A second consideration is whether the targeted contributors might be interested in submitting their ideas to the journal. Practitioners by their nature are immersed in practice. They must earn their wage supplying services to clients. Therefore, any request or inspiration to submit to JSPA was likely not among the highest of priorities for many full-time frontline professionals, that is unless one was also a scholar and adding to a curriculum vitae. There was also a stylistic question in this journal of limited length for those straddling the academic and applied worlds, requiring authors who might have been accustomed to at least a 200% increase in page allowance being asked to realign their standard writing practices to accommodate a burgeoning journal. Certainly, there were further considerations adding to the uncertainty whether to submit to JSPA or elsewhere, such as a journal's established reputation versus one new to the marketplace.

Embracing Uniqueness

With the contemplations outlined above, a well thought out idea in the form of JSPA has grown modestly, and yet, consistently, since 2010. The number of submissions to this journal in 2021 exceeded 60, and the diversity of accepted submissions has been comprised of book reviews and smaller "in the huddle" contributions, in addition to a variety of differently styled manuscripts. Some of the practical manuscripts accepted since JSPA's inception have matched with the earliest conceptions of what the journal was conceived to be. Others have included more substantive reviews of literature and abbreviated methodologies, leading to decreased space for

89 applications. The senior members of the current editorial board recognize that breadth of styles
90 reflects the diverse contributors to this journal. Stylistic differences in submissions have been
91 evident and have also been on point with a meeting of the minds. JSPA is a peer-reviewed outlet
92 where science and practice must intersect front and centre. We profoundly thank all contributing
93 authors for their written work and diverse approaches. We believe it is important for
94 professionals in our field and for anyone reading this journal to understand that there are as many
95 styles to writing in an applied sport and exercise psychology journal as there are professionals in
96 our field. We intend to remain open and somewhat flexible in the styles of submissions we look
97 forward to receiving. We welcome a wide range of ideas and approaches, and we also recognize
98 that by sharing your ideas, you are also revealing how you apply what you know with clients and
99 organizations, granted safeguarding identities and anonymity. The contributions to this journal
100 are intended to provide a more expansive dialog about how to work with clients and why it is
101 thus. We welcome your ideas and applications. What we leave you with before outlining a few
102 suggestions and reflections of how to maximize your contribution within the JSPA, is an open
103 invitation to share your ideas with the readers of this journal, past, present, and future. With
104 diversity in mind, we also are hoping to provide some suggestions in this manuscript in terms of
105 how best to write for JSPA and serve our intended breadth of readership.

106 **A Starting Point**

107 Before delving into how to develop your applied writing for this journal, there are a few
108 resources that might be of some benefit. The editors from several key sport and exercise
109 psychology journal already engaged in discussions and developed a manuscript titled “Getting
110 Published: Suggestions and Strategies from Editors of Sport and Exercise Psychology Journals
111 (Schinke, Mellalieu, Ntoumanis, Kavussanu, Standage, Strauss, & Papaioannou, 2021). Their

pre-emptive guidelines were written based on a convergence and divergence of ideas from established journals in our field, where the expectations from authors aligned with more traditional approaches. The editors from each of these journals permitted at least 25 pages of manuscript length, a careful, interpretive situating of literature, clear research questions, a coherent and systematic methodology, a substantive presentation of results, a robust interpretive discussion, and a well-developed reference section. Though the guidelines outlined above do not clearly fit JSPA's context, at very least, not in large proportions, there are certain parallels with previous suggestions that we seek. Though the style of JSPA writing should be highly practical, and the ideas should be easily understood and applied by lay readers and practitioners to create bridges across a diverse audience, a few key considerations need to be adopted from Schinke and colleagues' recommendations.

The introduction and literature review. Among these, a primary suggestion is one we encourage of every author: Manuscripts need to have a coherent structure to their ideas and how these are presented to readers. What we suggest is that there be one or two pages of introduction and review of literature, which together are meant to frame the practical approach to come, while not consuming too much space. Perhaps the easiest approach is an introductory paragraph, which could be followed by one or slightly more than one page of tightly written literature from sport psychology, psychology, or an allied profession, with ties to our field. The scholarship opening your manuscript should contain a few of the most cited foundational writings as well as a few of the most recent state of the art contributions, informing your up-to-date approach to intervention. When writing these first few pages, there is added value when you move progressively from the introduction, and through the review of literature always narrowing your thinking to a specific context and reasoning for your interventional choice.

Context setting. Your manuscript will likely be set within a sport or physical activity context where you have worked or conducted research to practice. The context is important. What do we mean by context? There are two important vantages to the rich unpacking of any context. The first vantage was identified by Fletcher (2013) in a first guide to JSPA authors as reflective processes. Each author comes to a context with a background. The reader would benefit knowing about what your background is. You might have several layers of sport experience, such as former athlete, recent or current coach, and you might have a concurrent background as a mental performance consultant (this term represents sport psychologists, mental training consultants from sport science, and practitioners from allied professions, such as social work, see AASP, n.d.). Your experience is multifaceted, and you need to pick and choose the important parts that brought you to the context being presented, your knowledge base, and finally, the reasoning behind your signature intervention, whilst ensuring authors' names are not mentioned, given the blinded peer-review process being used.

There is also the context you are presenting, meaning the performance environment where you have delivered your craft. When considering the performance environment, you can consider the people working within the environment, such as athletes, coaches, management, staff trainers, and physical activity participants. There is seldom one person in any work context. Therefore, try and consider the interrelated roles of people in the environment as they relate to human performance, your choice of intervention, how you applied the framework, and its efficacy. These two considerations of (a) you and (b) the place where you applied the intervention, might consume an additional page of writing. Context setting is important and should not be rushed or superficially presented, as interventions happen within contexts (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017).

Methodology. Within this journal, there have been several accepted manuscripts that included methodologies. The integration of projects that reveal research to practice are well-received within JSPA, when they are received. Should you be seeking to submit a manuscript with a methodology, the length of this section should be succinct and no more than one page. Within this section you can summarily introduce the methodology, with reference to another publication or written document where the details of the methodology can be found, should they be sought by the reader, including contacting the author directly for more information about methods and procedures. A methodology section should then be confined to who the participants are, the number of people who engaged, and any further essential characteristics. Next, a brief explanation of the methodology within one or two sentences should be followed by the data collection and analysis strategies. JSPA is primarily focused on practical interventions, necessitating a brief overview of the methodology and nothing more.

Practical intervention. The practical intervention component is the central part of this manuscript, and all previous parts are meant to be the lead up to this most important part of the manuscript. With the context set before this section, the focus in this proportionate majority of the manuscript is on (a) what you did, (b) how you did it, and (c) how the reader may gain by applying the intervention in one way or another to their setting. We start with what the intervention is and why it has been chosen to facilitate improved experiences and performances. You likely held several possible interventions, but the one you are presenting was deliberately chosen as a “best fit” choice given specific characteristics of the application in relation to the context. Next, take the time to explain your choice. Then proceed to explain in detail what you did, chronologically from beginning to completion. You might consider not only what you did in relation to convention, but also whether there were nuances to your intervention that better

aligned the approach with the context. Explaining practical alignments will provide the reader with some additional insight of how they might align what you are writing to their contexts. Finally, if a formal evaluation of the intervention was not conducted and reported as part of the manuscript, we encourage the authors to provide guidelines for conducting such an evaluation. You can also provide some additional suggestions of how the reader can transfer the proposed intervention to different sports, levels, cultural contexts, and even various national sport systems where the intervention might fit. The readership of this journal, much like its authors, is international. Therefore, transferability of practice to diverse contexts is well appreciated.

The Reader's Vantage

The Journal of Sport Psychology in Action's inception came from a recognition that sport psychology practice needs to be several things to several people. The writing must be demystified, meaning that how you write should be of a style easily understood by professionals outside of sport and exercise psychology as easily as people within the domain. The writing must equally to be highly practical and easily applied by the readership, comprised of people from sport and exercise psychology, but equally, people from the fields of coaching, sport management (as an organizational consideration), and by athletes. Therefore, when you read over your manuscript, try to imagine you are an athlete, coach, or sport manager working on the frontlines of sport and physical activity. As a reader of what was just written, would you understand the language? Could you understand why the intervention was presented in relation to the context? Could you see understand the intervention well enough to have some takeaways of your own, either in terms of its direct use or through support form a mental performance consultant? Finally, was the read enjoyable to you as someone looking at the profession or sport

and exercise psychology from your vantage point? Do you see the utility of what was written?
Are you enthused?

The Journal of Sport Psychology in Action was conceptualized for good reason, with a novel purpose in mind: utility. This journal holds tremendous opportunity to open windows into the field of a profession often not understood by a broad enough base of people. The style of writing and content are meant to be not only accessible but thought provoking to a wide audience of people. This journal is your opportunity to connect with a wider audience than many orthodox peer-reviewed journals. This manuscript is then, your call to engage with this wide audience and help make an inspiring profession readily accessible.

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