

# Sports psychology can help

By Mark Dewar  
Sun sports correspondent

Has your backhand been setting distance records lately? Do you tend to skull backyard barbecuers with errant tee shots when others gather to watch you play?

Dr. Andrew Jacobs, Ph.D., understands the duffer's dilemma and wants to help. The 35-year-old Mission resident and Shawnee Mission North graduate is a noted sports psychologist, specializing in the treatment of both amateur and professional athletes.

Over the course of his 12-year career, Jacobs has racked up an impressive list of clientele, having consulted with the U.S. National and Olympic Cycling teams, the Kansas City Comets, the U.S. Swimming and Weight Lifting Federations, the PGA, and various other business and sports organizations.

In addition to work in his Kansas City-based practice, The Winning Edge, the clinical psychologist has added a new twist this year. He now serves as the Kansas City Royals' team psychologist, complete with his own locker next to reliever Mark Davis in the team's clubhouse.

Jacobs insists that his

***'If an athlete can feel a sense of satisfaction about his effort, then winning actually becomes secondary. . .'***

*Andrew Jacobs  
sports psychologist*



treatment program is for everyone, regardless of the game being played, the age or skill level of the athlete involved.

"It doesn't matter what sport," he said. "I work with the whole mental aspect, issues that affect performance, whether it's concentration, motivation, or how you handle stress. . . life's issues that affect everybody's daily performance."

In a recent lecture held at The Creative Mind, a self-improvement store in Overland Park, Jacobs gave listeners a basic outline of his program for athletic success.

First and foremost, he

believes that, while it's vitally important, the mental aspect of sports makes up exactly one-third of the total picture. He'd be the first to admit that an athlete must also include physical performance and a healthy diet to reach peak levels of achievement. In other words, if mental powers were the sole qualification, the big leagues would be filled with spoon-benders.

He emphasizes what he calls "the three keys to success": commitment, attitude, and communication.

Commitment, he said, has a lot to do with desire, dedication, and sacrifice. For one young athlete attending the lecture, that included missing the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on television to attend Tai-Kwon-Do practice. Attitude concerns the combining of a positive outlook with a realistic view of your abilities. Finally, communication, the most important of the three, involves the need to deal with problems as they arise, whether personal in nature or stemming from a meeting with a coach or parent.

Jacobs' plan of attack then includes the identification of challenges (the athlete's strengths,

weaknesses, fears, and goals), along with the assessment and treatment of those challenges. He stresses that, by accomplishing a series of short-term goals, long-term goals will ultimately be attained. He differentiates between materialistic goals (a specific batting average, number of games won) and non-materialistic goals (the pure thrill of competition).

He explained: "Invariably, athletes gain a certain degree of satisfaction in performing up to potential. Non-materialistic goals are more important. If an athlete can feel a sense of satisfaction about his effort, then winning actually becomes secondary, although still vitally important."

It's a message he particularly hopes youth coaches will heed, so that burn-out in young athletes can be avoided.

The need for focused attention, visualization, and consistent preparation round out the doctor's bag of ingredients for athletic prowess, along with relaxation techniques which, he said, will help take the edge off before competition.

And give you the winning edge.