

Jacobs helping Olympians, KU athletes

By PETE GOERING
Assistant sports editor

LOS ANGELES — The message Dr. Andrew Jacobs gave Olympic cyclist Steve Hegg on Monday isn't much different from the message he delivers to University of Kansas athletes twice a week.

"The basic philosophy is the same," said Jacobs, who practices sports psychology in Kansas City. "My philosophy is doing the best you can. There's so much emphasis in the United States on winning and being number one that I think a lot of people lose perception of the fact that someone may go out and do the best performance of their life and, yet, it might be fifth place.

"All these guys want to win, and I want them to win, but if they do the best performance they're capable of, you can't ask for much more.

"Cycling is the same as basketball, the same as swimming, the same as track; you've got to do the best you can."

Hegg's best Monday in the 4,000-meter



individual pursuit race was better than anyone has ever done on an outdoor track. A new aluminum bike had something to do with the record, Hegg said. So did the newly resurfaced track. Another "instrumental" factor, according to Hegg, was Jacobs.

So what does Jacobs tell an athlete, other than to just go out and do your best?

"I deal with their attention span, their concentration and personality characteristics," Jacobs explained. "And I've done a lot of work with relaxation and confidence building.

"Once we get to this point (Olympic com-

petition), it's more reinforcement. I'll sit down with the rider after a race and go over how he felt. We'll focus on the athlete's feelings, nothing else."

Sports psychology is a new phenomenon, a yet-to-be tapped resource that Jacobs (obviously) believes can be of tremendous value. But it is slow catching on.

Jacobs says there are only "a handful" of sports psychologists in the United States. "Probably less than 50 are competently trained to do this," he said Tuesday as he chatted at the Olympic Velodrome minutes after Hegg won a quarterfinal race in the individual pursuit. "There are only three (sports psychologists) out here at the Games."

The toughest part of Jacobs' job with the cycling team is helping long-time adversaries overcome animosity.

"These are eight guys who are about as different as you can be," he said. "Lot of them hate each other's guts. HAVE hated each other's guts. They may not be the best of friends, but the key (that Jacobs tries to emphasize) is: they may not like each other, but when they get on their bikes, they

respect each other.

"The team pursuit (race) is such a precision event that if you don't work together, you're in trouble."

Jacobs has been preaching the same message to KU athletes for three years.

"I'm there two days a week, and it's the sort of thing where, like this year, I'll come up and have a meeting with whatever coaches want to come," he said. "A lot of coaches use me a lot; some barely use me. It's up to the coaches."

It was Jacobs who instigated the idea of a sports psychologist at KU. At first, only track coaches Bob Timmons and Carla Coffey expressed an interest.

The next year, he worked with swimmer Tammy Thomas and a few members of the tennis team. When more athletes began coming to him, he and athletic director Monte Johnson worked out the twice-a-week arrangement.

Last year, Jacobs worked with 13 Jayhawk teams. "I'm there," he said, "for the teams that want to work with me. It's reached the point now that when I'm there, I'm busy 12 hours a day."