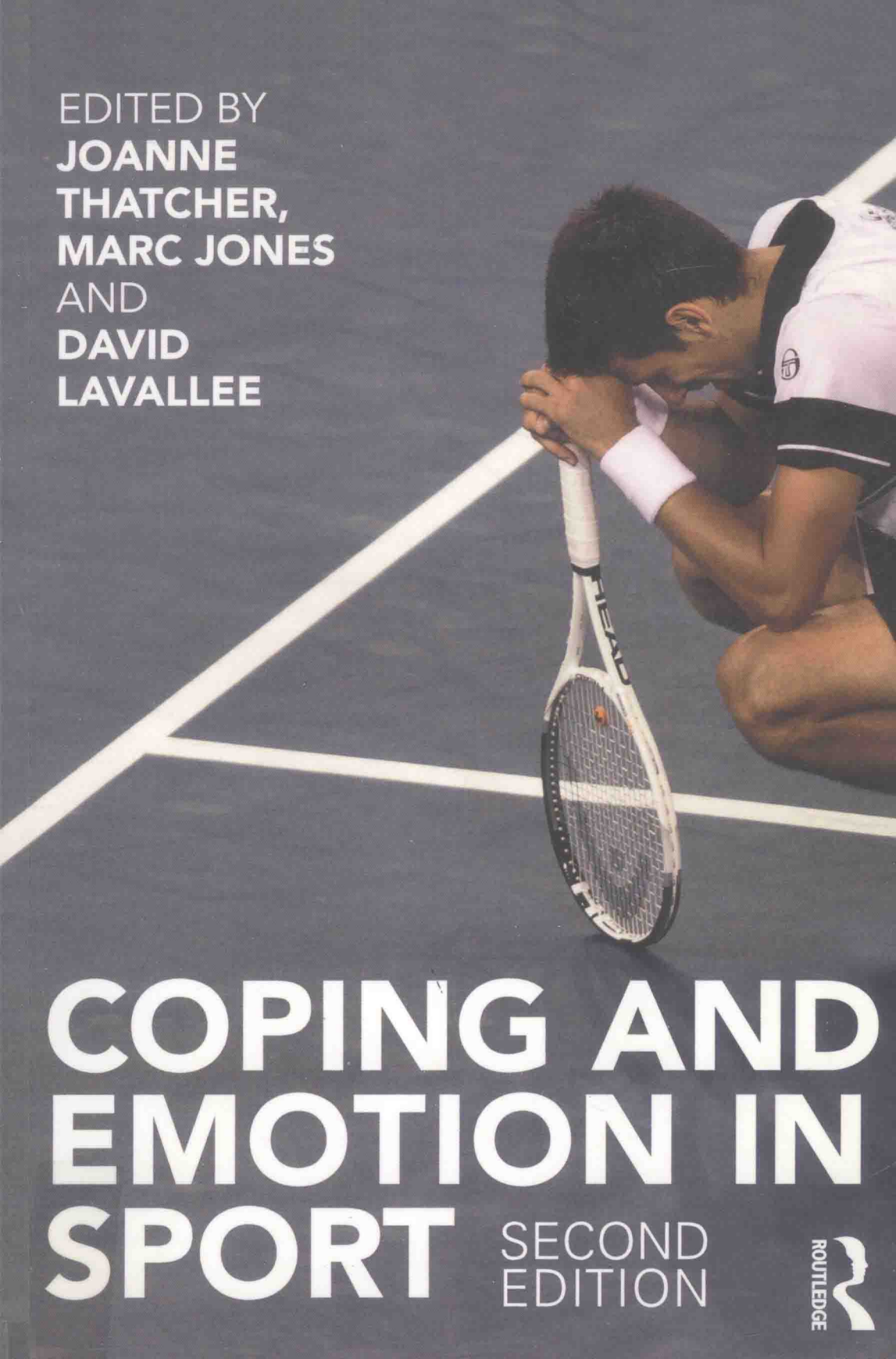
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JOANNE THATCHER, MARC JONES AND DAVID LAVALLEE
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COPING AND EMOTION IN SPORT
SECOND EDITION
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COPING AND EMOTION IN SPORT

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Edited by Joanne Thatcher, Marc Jones and David Lavallee

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COPING AND EMOTION IN SPORT

The emotional highs and lows of competitive sport, whether experienced as a competitor, spectator or coach may be the essential ingredient that gives sport its universal and compelling appeal. Emotion is clearly a pervasive force within competitive sport, and this is reflected in the burgeoning interest over recent decades in athletes' emotions and strategies for coping with these emotions. The interplay between emotion and coping is a critical factor in determining, through its influence on key psychological functions, an athlete's potential success in competitive sport. This fully revised and updated edition of the original text on coping and emotion in sport goes further than any other book in examining the central role that these two factors play in sports performance.

The book explores theory and measurement, current research, and contemporary issues and special populations. Each chapter closely integrates cutting-edge research themes with discussion of practical and applied issues, and case studies and reflections from practitioners working in elite sport are woven throughout the book. With contributions from leading international scholars and consultant psychologists, this book is vital reading for all students and professionals working in sport psychology.

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PREFACE

Joanne Thatcher, Marc Jones and David Lavallee

> Just before the fight, when the referee was giving us instructions, Liston was giving me that stare. And I won't lie I was scared. Sonny Liston was one of the greatest fighters of all time. He was one of the most scientific boxers who ever lived; he hit hard; and he was fixing to kill me. It frightened me, just knowing how hard he hit. But I was there; I didn't have no choice but to go out and fight .... Everyone predicted that Sonny Liston would destroy me. And he was scary. But it's a lack of faith that makes people afraid of meeting challenges, and I believed in myself. I was confident I could whup him. So what I did was, I studied his style, I trained hard, and I watched Liston outside the ring. I went to his training camp and tried to understand what went on inside his head, so later on I could mess with his mind. And all the time, I was talking, talking. That way, I figured Liston would get so mad that, when the fight came, he'd try to kill me and forget everything he knew about boxing.
>
> *Muhammad Ali (taken from Hauser, 1997, p. 74)*

It may come as a shock to some but possibly the most supremely confident athlete of modern times, Muhammad Ali, experienced emotions prior to competing that all of us can recognize. It is also apparent, given Ali's legendary status as a sportsman, that he was able to cope with these emotions, clearly crucial in a sport such as boxing where failure to do so could have substantial consequences for the athlete. The emotional highs and lows of competitive sport, whether experienced as a competitor, spectator or coach, may be the essential ingredient that gives sport its universal and compelling appeal. Who could fail to share the intense excitement and infectious joy when Usain Bolt won gold and broke world records in the 100 m and 200 m at the Beijing Olympics in 2008?

Emotion is clearly a pervasive force within competitive sport, and this is reflected in its academic study, with a burgeoning interest over recent decades in athletes'

emotions and strategies for coping with these emotions. A search of 'Web of Science' showed that since the publication of the first edition of this book in 2004 to the present day (2010) 302 articles have been published in the area of coping, emotion and sport. Research in this area is clearly still flourishing, and the body of literature and thus our understanding of coping and emotion in sport have increased substantially since 2004. We therefore felt it was timely to update the first edition to reflect contemporary developments in the area of coping and emotion in sport.

In the introduction to the first edition we suggested that in the coming years sport psychology researchers and practitioners would add considerably to our knowledge of coping and emotion in sport. Thankfully, it appears that we have not been proved wrong! Also, in the final chapter of the first edition we offered some suggestions for moving this field forward, and contributions in this second edition reflect some of the developments we hoped to see in this field. For instance, inquiry has increasingly extended to other emotions besides anxiety (see Chapter 9), to understanding cognitive processes involved in the generation of emotions (see Chapter 3) and to the positive emotions experienced in sport (see Chapter 9).

A now well-accepted axiom is that stress, coping and emotion are intertwined, and only in research efforts to understand them further can and should we consider these individually (Lazarus, 1999). Stress remains a central theme in this second edition, reflecting the continued interest in explaining and understanding competitive stress in sport. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress still dominates this field of inquiry, and as such this approach permeates throughout the chapters of this book. Lazarus's (2000) cognitive motivational relational theory has also gained prominence in this field, and accordingly underpins discussion of a range of topics covered here. Reflecting the now mature standing of sport and exercise psychology within the parent discipline of psychology sport psychologists are increasingly offering theoretical explanations of various phenomena themselves. In this field, Jones and colleagues introduced their theory of challenge and threat states in athletes in 2009. Research is clearly yet to fully test its proposals and application, but its sport-specific psychophysiological approach is a welcome addition to the field and initial results are promising.

Much of the flavour and content of the original edition are retained here, as many of the central issues and concerns highlighted in the first edition remain, for instance, understanding the antecedents and consequences of emotions in sport (see Jones and Uphill, Chapter 3). Changes from the first edition to the current one reflect emerging developments within coping and emotion in sport, for instance, an increased focus on well-being, and not just in athletes, but in others in the sporting environment (see Day, Chapter 4). Many of these themselves reflect developments in the wider field of psychology, for example, the growth of the Positive Psychology movement (see McCarthy, Chapter 9) and increased knowledge of and interest in human performance in extreme and hostile environments (see Weston, Chapter 16). Although these developments illustrate that the field of coping and emotion in sport is keeping pace with contemporary themes within the wider field of psychology, further reciprocity between the two

would still seem appropriate. It will be interesting to see whether and how, for instance, Rees and colleagues' work on social support (see Chapter 6) and Mellalieu and Hanton's work on facilitative anxiety interpretations (see Chapter 8) is received and applied in investigations into coping and emotion in other subdisciplines of psychology.

The first edition of this book was purposely divided into distinct sections with distinct emphases: theory, research, and specific issues and populations. In this second edition we have removed these sections to reflect one of its key aims. This is to offer greater integration of theory, research and application in relation to specific populations and contexts and the general athletic population as a whole. A second key aim of this second edition is to provide a more integrated consideration of coping and emotion in sport. Such integration is difficult in some areas at present, reflecting the lack of research that has examined these constructs in relation to each other and therefore identifying a clear need to do so in future investigations (see Rees and Freeman, Chapter 6). We are extremely grateful to the authors of all the chapters in this second edition for so eloquently addressing these two aims of achieving greater integration of constructs and of the theoretical, practical and empirical perspectives on coping and emotion in sport. We hope that in doing so, this book makes a significant contribution to this field for both academics and practitioners. In an applied field of study such as sport and exercise psychology, direct and clear integration of theory, research and practice is of clear value, and we hope that this book achieves this.

We feel very privileged to have been exposed to the thoughts, arguments, data and personal insights of such a range of international experts as these have emerged with the development of each author's contribution to this book. We hope readers will share our excitement. Our thanks go to Routledge for supporting the production and publication of this second edition of *Coping and Emotion in Sport*.

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COPING PROCESSES IN SPORT

Hugh Richards, The University of Edinburgh

Unless he is already doomed, fortune favours the man who keeps his nerve.
(from Beowulf, *8th century [modified quote])*

Introduction

In this chapter theoretical and empirical developments in coping are examined. The chapter presents an appraisal-based model to illustrate the fundamental relationship between emotion and coping. The interactions between these key constructs offer a comprehensive explanation of how performers respond to the combined challenges and threats of competition. Adopting a perspective of coping as a process (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) selected recent empirical research is reviewed to summarize current understanding of coping in sport, the impact of relevant individual differences such as optimism, and approaches to train coping and assess coping effectiveness. Throughout, the chapter explains some of the key considerations in coping research in terms of design and measurement, and it concludes with suggested future developments for sport coping research.

Coping and sport performance

Coping can be explained as any changes in thoughts or behaviours that are made to manage the perceived demands of a situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Coping lies at the very heart of competitive sport, and the way in which performers cope with challenges, success and failure provides the human story that brings spectators to modern professional sport. Consider for example the Tour de France champion, enduring three weeks of riding over 3,600 kilometres before claiming his prize. Or the Formula 1 driver, sustaining gravitational forces of up to 5G and average heart rates of 170 bpm whilst driving at speeds that can reach 350 kph. Or

the Olympic sprinter for whom the outcome of hours of training, years of competition, a professional life and sometimes their very identity, all hang, ready to be judged by millions, on less than 10 seconds. When performers produce results in situations like these, questions of interest are often not just about their skill or physical prowess, but also about how they coped with such demands.

For sport psychologists this key question has been unpacked in several ways. What do we mean by coping? What exactly are performers coping with? What different kinds of coping responses are used? Are some types of coping better than others? Are some people better at coping than others? How can performers be helped to cope better? This chapter summarizes the current, empirically based knowledge and understanding in response to each of these questions. Scientific understanding of coping is based on work emanating from other areas in psychology. From the 1960s and 1970s research focused on coping with issues associated with illnesses, medical conditions and treatments, dying and bereavement as well as professional stressors such as combat stress in the military and occupational stress and burnout. More recently sport-based research on coping has developed, so that there is significant and sufficient literature on coping in sport to warrant specific reviews (Nicholls and Polman, 2007) and book chapters (Richards, 2004, 2011) on the subject. Although this chapter focuses on coping in sport it also draws from evidence and ideas from the broader psychology literature. The chapter therefore is not a systematic review of all sport coping research, or one that is limited to exclusively sports-based research. Instead it is focused on providing answers to the important issues identified by the questions at the start of this paragraph.

What is coping?

Coping has traditionally been studied using two approaches, which are described as coping *style* and coping *process* approaches (Lazarus, 1993). Coping style is defined as 'the preferred set of coping strategies that remain relatively fixed across time and circumstances' (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub, 1989, p. 270). These authors distinguish between this definition of coping style and one in which personality characteristics, such as monitoring (seeking information) or blunting (distancing self from information), might predispose individuals to cope in certain ways (Kaissidis-Rodafinos, Anshel and Porter, 1997). In contrast the coping process approach is defined as the 'process of constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands or conflicts appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources' (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 141).

Definitions of coping have consistently emphasized that it involves deliberate and effortful responses, and have described coping as 'efforts to manage' (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 141), 'cognitions and behaviors ... consciously decided' (Cox and Ferguson, 1991, p. 23), 'a response aimed' (Snyder and Dinoff, 1999, p. 5), and 'a deliberate process involving thoughts and actions' (Kowalski and Crocker, 2001, p. 136). Some studies are not consistent with this view: for example Gould, Eklund and Jackson (1993a) found successful (medal-winning) Olympic

wrestlers reported their coping was well practised, internalized and *automatic*. In psychological terms an automatic skill is one that requires little mental effort (Schmidt, 1991) or working memory. However, confusion about automaticity of coping in this case may have arisen from taking verbatim comments from interviews with athletes, for whom the term 'automatic' might have simply meant well-learned responses. It is logical that any skill must be well learned and practised to be effectively used in time urgent, pressurized situations.

Some responses, for example defence mechanisms such as repression, occur to protect the individual, and are not under conscious control. Responses not consciously recognized by the person are categorically distinct from conscious coping. Furthermore such responses require investigation with methods quite different from the self-report that characterizes the vast majority of sport coping research. Therefore within this chapter, and in keeping with recent reviews in this area (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010) the definition of coping adopted excludes automatic and involuntary responses.

Coping occurs in response to perceived changes in the environment or self that are evaluated as requiring alteration. Based on established theory (Lazarus, 1999), coping can be best described through an integrated model in which appraisal, coping and emotion can be identified and their relationship to each other illustrated. However, an analytical model can fail to adequately illustrate the interconnectivity that exists between the different factors. So in reviewing and using this model the reader is asked to consider the following two key points. First, the model separates out constituent parts, but in reality performers' thoughts, emotions and responses are blended together. Second, whilst the model appears like a circuitry diagram that might suggest a temporal organisation, the speed with which thoughts operate means that absolute time is not relevant to discriminating the processes. The model is shown in Figure 1.1.

Central to the model is the concept of cognitive appraisal (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), widely accepted as an explanation for the transaction that occurs between person and environment. Coping occurs following primary appraisal in which a situation is identified as relevant to the individual and presenting threat, harm, challenge or loss *and* following a second appraisal where an imbalance between the demands of the situation and their resources is perceived. It should be noted that recently it has been questioned whether challenge should be considered a type of stress (Blascovich, 2008; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). The outcomes of the two appraisal stages are significant determinants of whether an individual applies effort to cope with the perceived demand (Aldwin, 1994). Despite their names, primary and secondary appraisals are thought to occur relatively 'instantaneously' (Lazarus, 1999). Furthermore, Lazarus suggests that the emotion that results from appraisal is part of this instantaneous process.

Understanding how performers appraise stressors is vital to understand the coping response. For example, Hoar, Crocher, Holt, and Tamminen (2010) suggest inconsistencies in findings on gender differences in coping may be due to a failure to assess appraisal. A further important additional component within this model,

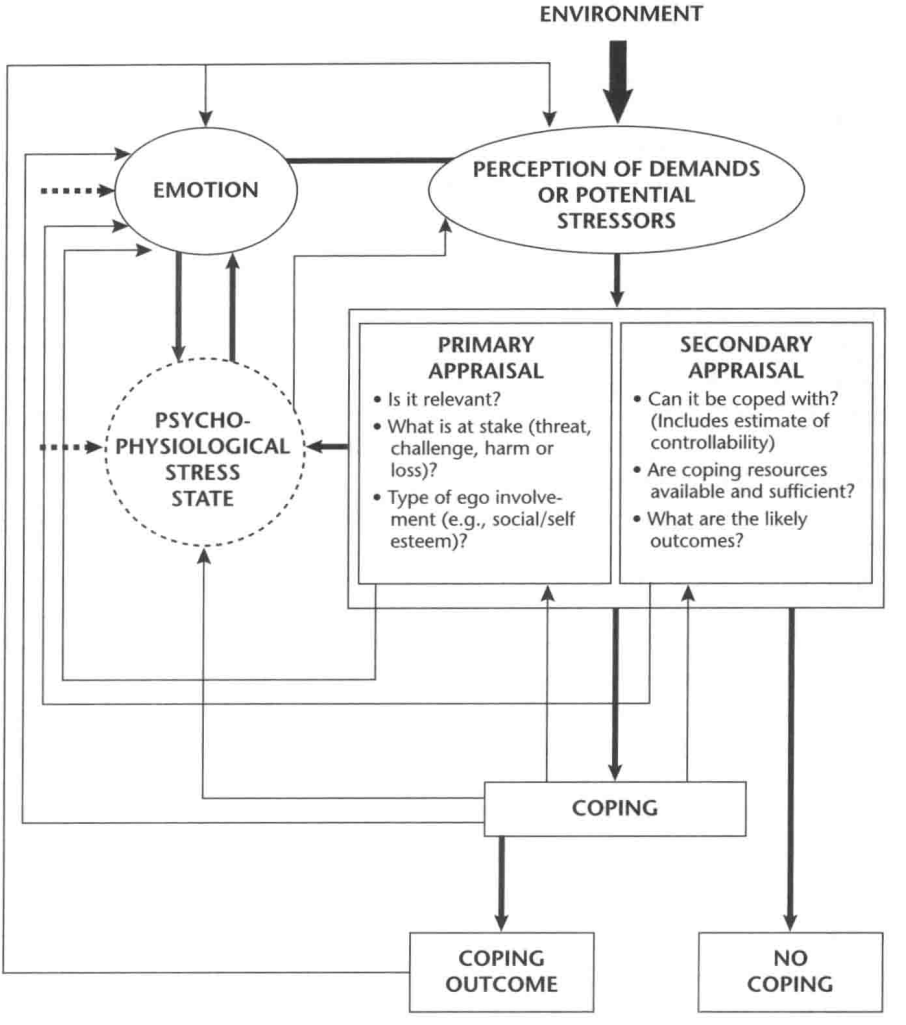

FIGURE 1.1 Model of appraisal, coping and emotion in sport

which differs from previous models (e.g. Hardy, Jones and Gould, 1996), is the emphasis that the demands are *perceived* by the individual. This is central to a transactional view of stress that proposes that two individuals might perceive the same situation quite differently, and that consequently this might have different effects.

The transaction that occurs through appraisal is important to the complete model, and research that assumes a named event, for example the Olympics, presents the same meaning to all athletes, has significant limitations. Consider the difference between two hypothetical athletes, one of whom is returning to the Olympics as a reigning champion and clear favourite who has competed at the top level for ten years, whereas the other athlete is a complete newcomer to