



The
British
Psychological
Society

Northern Ireland Branch

& NIBPS Working Group in Sport & Exercise Psychology

FREE PUBLIC LECTURES

These lectures have been jointly organised by PSI and NIBPS to coincide with the arrival of the Olympic Flame in Dublin (for the first time in history) and in Belfast



Imagination in Action: Mental Practice and Skilled Performance in Sport and Surgery

Professor Aidan Moran, School of Psychology, University College Dublin

Wednesday 6th June 2012 - 2.00 pm

J.M. Synge Theatre, Arts Block, Trinity College Dublin

Think About It? How to Use Psychology to Improve Sporting Performance

Dr John Kremer, School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast

Thursday 7th June 2012, 4.30pm

Regional Office of The Open University in Ireland, Victoria Street, Belfast

One of our most remarkable cognitive capacities is imagination or the ability to simulate sensations, actions and other types of experience. For over a century, psychologists have explored imagination in action by studying "mental practice" or people's use of mental imagery to rehearse skills symbolically, without engaging in the actual physical movements involved. A key finding from this research is that mental practice can enhance the learning and performance of both cognitive and motor skills. Based on this discovery, many of the world's leading athletes now use mental imagery techniques to prepare for, and to improve their performance in, competitive sport situations. But what exactly is mental practice? How does it work? And how can we make it work best for us in everyday life? The purpose of this lecture is to answer these and other relevant questions drawing on the theory and practice of using one's imagination to improve one's performance in fields ranging from sport to medical surgery.



Aidan Moran is Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Director of the Psychology Research Laboratory in University College, Dublin. He and his research team explore cognition in action – especially the motor imagery and attentional (via eye-tracking) processes underlying expertise in athletic performance. A Fulbright

Scholar, he has written/co-authored 15 books (as well as 3 audiobooks/CDs) and has published many scientific papers in various high-impact, international journals in psychology, medicine and sport science. He is the inaugural Editor-in-Chief of the *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (IRSEP; Taylor and Francis, Oxford). A full list of his publications is available at www.ucd.ie/research/people/psychology/professoraidanpmoran/. Applying his research to enhance skilled performance in fields such as sport and medical surgery, Aidan has advised many of Ireland's leading professional athletes (e.g., golfer Pádraig Harrington) and teams (e.g., the Irish rugby team) and is a former psychologist to the Irish Olympic Squad. His two most recent books are *Pure Sport 2: Practical Sport Psychology* (co-authored with John Kremer; published by Routledge, 2012) and *Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Critical Introduction* (2nd ed) (also published by Routledge, 2012).

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The lecture will provide an overview of the current sport psychology literature, looking at examples of where psychology has played both a positive and negative role in performance. Examples from contemporary professional sport will be used to examine what can happen, often disastrously, when the spontaneous becomes thoughtful. This analysis will extend to a consideration of concepts such as choking and the impact that effective learning strategies can make on the potential for buffering against these symptoms. A range of techniques will be outlined for controlling thought during competition, and for building reflective thought into a programme of total preparation in both team and individual sports. The presentation will be illustrated with a range of practical examples throughout.



John Kremer is an Honorary Research Fellow at Queen's University Belfast, where he has lectured in applied psychology since 1980. Since 1990, John has also been Director of his own consultancy firm, Kremer Consultancy Services. He has combined his longstanding academic interest in sport and exercise psychology

with practical work with many organisations and sports. Through this work John has been fortunate to work with many national and county teams and athletes. His co-authored publications include *Pure Sport* (Routledge, 2008; 2012), *Sport Psychology: Contemporary Themes* (Palgrave, 2006; 2011), *Key Concepts in Sport Psychology*, (Sage, 2011), *Psychology in Sport* (Taylor & Francis, 1994) and *Young People's Involvement in Sport* (Routledge, 1997). He has also co-edited special issues of the *Irish Journal of Psychology* and *The Psychologist* devoted to sport and exercise psychology.

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