

UNDAUNTED
BY AGE

Value in working past 60
{EMPLOYEE PROFILE, P2}



LEARNING
MATTERS

Staff inputs count at Clayton Utz
{EMPLOYER STRATEGY, P3}



SAFETY
ALERT

Miners told to log radiation
{HEALTH, BACK PAGE}



THE
WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN
APRIL 21-22, 2012

WEEKEND
PROFESSIONAL

{ READINESS TO COMPETE }

Faster,
higher,
mentally
stronger

Elite athletes benefit from
psychological preparation

CAMERON COOPER

PROUD parents and friends are not the only nervous onlookers when elite athletes line up for their big moment at national titles or the Olympic Games. Sport psychologists are increasingly playing an important role as part of a coaching team that helps prepare our sporting stars for their events. The aim is to ensure that their mental preparation complements their physical training.

Ruth Anderson, senior sport psychologist at the Australian Institute of Sport, says the London Olympics in July and August will be a career pinnacle for athletes and their psychologists.

"It's exciting to actually see the development of athletes over time who you've worked with over a four-year period, and to have the opportunity to see them compete at that highest level," says Anderson, who will be head of psychology services for the Australian team in London, a role she also filled at Beijing in 2008.

Based in Queensland and working with the AIS swimming, diving and tennis programs, Anderson has diverse experience gained from management positions in the mental health sector and qualifications including a master's degree in sport psychology from the University of Queensland. She says a sport psychologist's ultimate goal is to help an athlete achieve strong mental health in day-to-day life and the

optimal psychological state required to achieve their best performance in competition.

"One of the most important aspects is to increase the athlete's self-awareness of their psychological functioning: how they respond under pressure, what works best for them, how they're able to elicit their best performance," Anderson says. "Then you look at a range of psychological areas like emotional regulation, how to deal with performance anxiety and dealing with frustration on the field if things aren't going well."

Sport psychology covers a range of scientific, clinical and applied skills. There are two key areas: understanding how psychology can improve motivation and performance, and determining how athletes can lift their mental health and overall wellbeing. To become a psychologist, the minimum education level required is a four-year degree majoring in psychology from an accredited university. There are then two pathways to becoming a registered psychologist: a two-year master's degree or three-year professional doctorate.

Psychologists who want to specialise in an area such as sport have to engage in a supervised practice plan with a registered psychologist for a minimum of two years. Even after such a long period of training, there are limited full-time positions as a sport



LYNDON MECHEISEN

Ruth Anderson will be head of psychology services for the Australian team at the London Olympics

Psychologists can work on the mindset 'to get that extra 5 or 10 per cent that can be the difference between being a really good performer and an elite performer'

CRAIG HARMS
LECTURER, EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

psychologist. Most of the work is offered on a consulting basis so a lot of new graduates have to consider private practice and pursuing contract employment.

Regardless, there is a growing recognition of the need for sport psychology as athletes seek an edge that can mean the difference between making the national team and missing out, or winning gold rather than the silver or bronze.

"If they can do all those 1 per cent things then the final result hopefully is really good," says Craig Harms, a lecturer in psychology and social science at

Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

A former physical education teacher who started studying psychology about 20 years ago, Harms is one of a band of psychologists who are not registered sport psychologists but nevertheless use their training to assist athletes. He helped prepare swimmers based at the West Australian Institute of Sport when they competed in the Olympic swimming trials in March, and also assists other athletes in football, cricket, surfing, ten-pin bowling and even croquet.

Armed with a master's degree

in human movement and a PhD in psychology, Harms says one of his key tasks is to provide performance-enhancement skills for sportspeople that allow them to develop the mental skills to handle nerves at a big event. Long-term preparation is the key to ensuring they can handle any left-field events that could jeopardise their performance.

"In the ideal world you've been working on these for a number of months and you get a chance to trial them," Harms says. "It's about working out how we can tweak athletes' routines to really get us at

our maximum psychological energy, ready to perform at our absolute best."

Before the rise of sport psychology, Harms says there was a gap in the preparation of athletes. While they usually had experienced coaches and exercise physiologists to handle their physical preparation, their mental preparation was often overlooked. Psychologists can work on the mindset of athletes "to get that extra 5 or 10 per cent that can be the difference between being a really good performer and an elite performer".

Two decades since turning to psychology, Harms is pleased with his career switch. What gives him a kick at work? "The objective is to meet the needs of athletes and help them develop the mental techniques to achieve goals when it counts," he says.

"If I can add to that as a psychologist, then I've done my job. There's a lot of satisfaction if you can help the athlete do that."

The AIS's Anderson agrees that top athletes cannot expect to excel without properly rehearsing the strategies that work when they are in the heat of competition.

"The more practice athletes have, the more understanding they're able to gain about how they react to different situations and how they respond under pressure," she says.

Currently working on a PhD investigating the optimal psychological state for peak performance, Anderson says having a background as an elite athlete is not a professional necessity.

"I think the most important thing is to have a solid foundation as a psychologist, and to have the core skills and the core training required to be an effective practitioner," she says. "And then to apply those specialised skills within a sport environment."

Anderson is also happy with her career choice, while recognising that elite sport is often an emotional roller-coaster ride.

"One of the things I really emphasise with my clients is not for athletes to only measure their success by wins or losses, because sometimes wins and losses won't be an accurate measure of skills development," she says.

"The most important things are that athletes are constantly applying themselves to learn, to improve, and consistently try to implement their best performances. The priority is to play well and keep improving, and then the results will come at the right time for the athletes."

WORKOUT

IT candidates need
wider skills range

THE choice of candidates for employers in the information technology sector has shown an increase after about a year.

The Information Technology Contract & Recruitment Association keeps track of the availability of candidates through its Skillsmatch Dashboard, published every quarter. Throughout last year, the quarterly index showed there were six suitable candidates for each role advertised. This year, it shows there are eight candidates available.

Despite the increase in supply of candidates, there are still many opportunities out there, says ITCRA chief executive Julie Mills.

"There are still five skills among the most requested which candidates aren't currently offering," Mills says.

"Jobseekers should consider how to ensure they can develop skills in areas such as SAP, testing, infrastructure, structured query language (SQL) and 3G modelling systems, to have a competitive advantage."

Contract roles constitute 82 per cent of the placements this year.

"While contract employment has been popular for a while now, this figure is much higher than at any time in 2011," says Mills. "This means that jobseekers will certainly have a greater chance of success if they are open to accepting this flexibility in their career management."

MORE THAN
40,000 JOBS
ACROSS
AUSTRALIA



Department of
Environment and Conservation



Our environment | your future

Industrial premises can produce significant benefits for our society but they also have the potential to pollute or otherwise impact on the quality of our air, land or water. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is responsible for regulating industrial emissions and discharges to the environment through a works approval and licensing process.

We have recently been through a period of reform and re-structure. The Industry Regulation Licensing Branch (IRLB) was formed in January 2012 as the platform for implementing our industry regulation strategic plan that sets out how we will continue on our journey of reform and details the steps we must take to achieve our vision.

To ensure our success we are recruiting to fill positions across all levels within the IRLB. Working in the IRLB means you can really make a difference and help to deliver outcomes that benefit our environment. The full range of job opportunities we have available are as follows:

Position: Sector Manager – Process Industries

Web Search No. DEC3090403

Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 4, \$108,304–\$116,080 pa

Position: Senior/Principal Environmental Officer – Process Industries

Web Search No. DEC3091364

Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 3 or 4, \$94,663–\$104,825 or \$108,304–\$116,080 pa

Position: Senior/Principal Environmental Officer – Waste Industries

Web Search No. DEC3091363

Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 3 or 4, \$94,663–\$104,825 or \$108,304–\$116,080 pa

Position: Senior Environmental Officer – Operational Policy Support

Web Search No. DE3032808

Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 3, \$94,663–\$104,825 pa

Position: Pool Process Senior Environmental Officers

Web Search No. Pool Ref PA12045EO

Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 3, \$94,663–\$104,825 pa

Position: Pool Process Environmental Officers

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Level/salary: Specified Calling Level 1 or 2, \$57,904–\$79,390 or \$81,348–\$89,905 pa

If you would like to join us on our exciting journey and have the relevant experience we want to hear from you.

DEC supports its staff with comprehensive training, safety and support programs and career development opportunities, as well as through promoting teamwork and flexibility within our workforce.

Visit: jobs.wa.gov.au or dec.wa.gov.au and key in the Web Search No. to access detailed information or phone (08) 9219 8275 to be mailed an information pack.

For specific enquiries: please contact **Tony Wynne** on (08) 6467 5233 or **Ruth Dowd** on (08) 6467 5298.

Closing date: Monday 14 May 2012 at 12 noon (WST)



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Experience in a healthcare setting is desirable but not essential. Considerable emphasis will be placed on your results orientation and business acumen as well as your leadership and management style.

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