

Takes one to know one

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Business name: SportsMinded Consultants, LLC

Type of business: Private Practice in Clinical and Educational Sport Psychology

Owners: Chris Michaels, Ph.D. and Nick Molinaro, Ed.D.

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Office hours: five days per week and three evenings per week

Hours of operation at sport venues: Weekdays and weekends as schedule permits (these are hours for observation of athlete in sporting venue)

What is your educational background? I received my undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Delaware, my master's in social work from New York University, and my Ph.D. in psychology from Seton Hall University. I have been in private practice for over 20 years.

Why did you start practicing in sport psychology? I was active in competitive sports throughout my youth, primarily competing in football, basketball, track and field and baseball. My experiences during these years and my later experiences as captain of the University of Delaware track and field team were educational in learning the challenges that face young athletes. My own performances as young athlete would have benefited greatly with the assistance of a sport psychologist. And now, as a recreational athlete, I appreciate the effort put forth in furthering athletic goals while balancing work and family obligations. As a licensed psychologist, I am excited at the feeling of coming full-circle to use my education and training to help young and more experienced athletes achieve their optimal performance.

If you could do it again, what would you do differently? I would like to have started my sport psychology practice directly out of college, but I believe my clinical training has provided me a more solid foundation for my work with athletes.

What's the best business advice your parents gave? My father, who in 1942 was drafted into professional baseball and the Army, told me that business was like baseball -- do your best and keep your eye on the ball (your goals).

What personality trait helps you the most? I have been told by my clients that I have a strong but calming influence. That's obviously important in working with athletes who have performance anxieties or don't get optimal results in their competitions. It also is very helpful that I have an athletic background and understand the nuances of competing in sports.

What's the hardest part of the job? The most difficult challenge on the job is the anxiety I may sometimes feel while sitting in the stands and watching an athlete with whom I work. Parents, coaches and sport psychologists know that the athlete is not the only person who experiences "performance anxiety." The antidote is working with the athlete to enjoy the process toward improvement rather than the result of the competition.



Sports psychologist Chris Michaels, Ph.D., is a former standout in competitive sports, which gives him a unique understanding of the issues facing his patients.

The easiest? Working with athletes, young and old, who have a passion for what they are trying to accomplish is a gift to the Sport Psychologist.

What's your least expensive product or service? We have a number of services that range in price but the least expensive product is a free phone consultation on questions an athlete may have about their performance, or a coach may have about his or her team performance or cohesion. In addition, I have typically seen one or two scholarship student athletes who do not have the financial means to afford services, but have a passion for athletic improvement.

The most expensive? We offer a number of services and products from our golf DVD, "Links: Golf's Mind-Body Connection" (\$24.95) to more comprehensive packages that include computer-based and interview assessment, mental-skills training, with interventions including imagery training, relaxation and sport hypnosis. We also travel to the sport venue and in some packages follow the athlete throughout the season with unlimited phone and e-mail contact.

Describe your worst customer or experience. My least comfortable experience came with a father who wanted more for his athlete son than the athlete did himself. This created difficulties in the concentration and work ethic for the young athlete and began to impact the father-son relationship. Parents can function to support their child and help foster development or they can become a distraction. There are specific things that we recommend for parents that can assist in their child's athletic development.

When you leave the business, what will you do? I don't plan on leaving my business any time soon. I enjoy the work too much. I continue to see myself as growing in the field much the same as athletes who strive for higher goals. When the time comes however, I'll probably retire into coaching or watching my grandchildren's games and matches.

What sports do you work with and at what levels? I work with athletes from all sports and at all levels and ages. My clients have ranged in age from 12 to 65 and from recreational athletes to national champions. I also work with teams, including one national championship team in 2008. I consult to several golf, tennis, and training facilities in New Jersey and Connecticut.

In one sentence, tell us why customers should consult with you? I have been an athlete, I understand athletes, and I love the work of helping athletes develop their full potential.

