

## **ATHLETES USING SPORT PSYCHOLOGY TO PREPARE FOR SOCHI PARALYMPIC GAMES**

CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio – February 2014 – Sport psychology consultant Aaron Moffett knows that mental preparation for the Sochi Paralympic Games will be as important as physical training, and many athletes have already been working with sport psychologists to prepare for the challenge. Moffett was selected to attend the Beijing Paralympic Games as a coach/leader with the US Paralympic Academy due to his experience working with Paralympic athletes from Wounded Warriors to collegiate athletes without disabilities.

“U.S. Paralympians will face mental challenges like any other Olympians because they are competing in the most elite competition in their sport,” said Moffett. “Thus, their dedication, work, and energy needed to succeed at the highest level are similar.”

### **Learning Lessons from the Beijing Games**

During the Beijing Games, Moffett and his peers conducted a study of athletes, and found that 27 percent of Paralympic athletes reported they felt mentally unprepared for the Games although about half reported using sport psychology to prepare. Some of the issues they faced were unique to the Paralympic Games. “The issues they dealt with included accessibility concerns in a foreign country, especially in relation to their disabilities and medical concerns; disability classification; team cohesion, especially since many athletes train on their own or with local teams versus their Olympic counterparts; confidence; concentration/focus; motivation; and staying positive,” said Moffett.

With the spotlight on the upcoming Paralympic Games, Moffett added, “American athletes also have to be prepared for media and sponsor time more than ever. Many athletes have never conducted an interview or met with sponsors prior to being selected to the Paralympic team.”

### **Sport Psychology Resources**

American athletes preparing for Olympic and Paralympic competition can take advantage of a valuable referral service, the USOC Sport Psychology Registry. Sport psychologists listed on the USOC Registry have a doctoral degree in psychology or sport sciences and are AASP Certified Consultants. Sport psychology professionals like Moffett can help athletes prepare by teaching skills such as goal setting, focusing on process versus outcome, team camaraderie, and cohesion.

Aaron Moffett is an Associate Professor of Kinesiology and the Director of Disability Sports Festival Programs at California State University, San Bernardino. He heads the AASP Special Interest Group on Disability in Sport and Exercise and has been the swim coach and a consultant for the US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Air Force Wounded Warrior programs for the Warrior Games Team.

**The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)** promotes ethical practice, science, and advocacy in sport and exercise psychology. Founded nearly 30 years ago, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals. With more than 1,900 members in 47 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader and shares research and free resources for athletes, coaches, and parents via [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org). The online “Consultant Finder” helps individuals locate a Certified Consultant to assist athletes of all levels and ages.