

## **DISAPPOINTMENT IS FAIR GAME** *Champions Face Adversity and Turn it into a Victory*

MADISON, WI – February 2010 – Every Olympic athlete envisions the end result – standing on a platform with his or her national anthem playing while accepting a medal. But not every athlete will have that experience at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

“Part of the mental preparation for the Olympic Games or any sport is preparing yourself for the possibility that you may come home disappointed,” said Dr. Karen Cogan, a licensed psychologist and a member of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). “Successful athletes pursue excellence, not perfection. When they are disappointed, they focus on what can be learned and how to improve or refocus for the next event.”

If athletes win every competition, Cogan said they eventually look for a new challenge, such as a new sport. In the Olympic Games, athletes compete with only the best in their sport and they must be mentally prepared to win or lose.

So what do athletes do after falling short of their original goals? The important piece of advice for Olympians to remember is that sometimes events that happen during performances are unplanned and require the ability to quickly cope and move forward. At times, the athletes themselves make mistakes. Other times, the environment, a competitor or even an official can knock an athlete off track. Successful athletes learn from their mistakes and quickly move past them.

Resilient athletes limit the effect of adversity on later performances, allowing them to return to their potential. Successful athletes are able to embrace emotions, such as anger or frustration, and find ways to quickly bounce back.

Mental skills can be the distinguishing factor between an athlete and a champion. To bridge that gap, many athletes enlist the assistance of a sport psychology consultant. Consultants interact with coaches, athletes and teams to help prepare athletes to give their best performance in the venue that is packed with the pressures of the most elite level of competition in the world.

### **AASP**

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org).

###