

Sex and athletics are both performance issues, says the founder of sports psychology, who discovered a method of freeing the bodies of elite athletes to surpass even their own personal bests

INTERVIEW

BRUCE OGILVIE

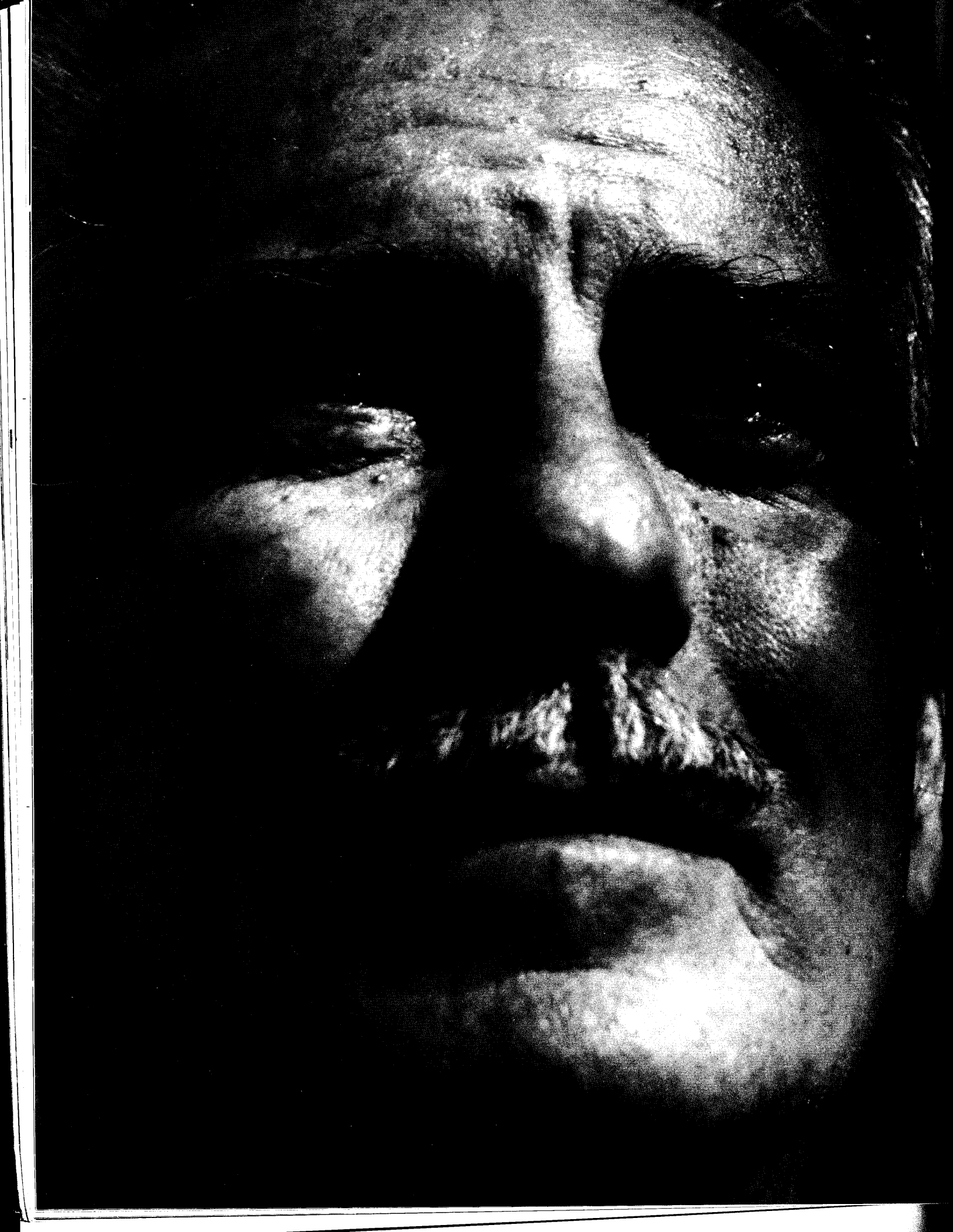
One story Bruce Ogilvie loves to tell is of his first experience working with professional athletes. In the mid-Sixties, he recalls, he was smuggled late one night up the steep back stairs of the San Francisco 49ers' training complex. Pro teams had occasionally sneaked a problem player or two off to a psychologist before, but the 49ers actually planned to sign a year-round pact with Ogilvie that would have him working right in the team's training camp. The first pro club to make such a move, the 'Niners sure as hell didn't want anyone to know about it. Nonetheless, a well-known sportswriter found out and blasted the team for calling in a "jock shrink." "Don't they know," he wrote, "that they could get better advice from any bartender in the city?"

In those early days, Ogilvie says, sports psychology had to fight for every inch to gain equal footing among other sports sciences. Today, since athletes at the highest levels are so evenly

matched in physical skills, many experts agree that the mind-set is the key factor separating good from great performers. There's not a pro team today that hasn't sought psychological services for its players. In the last Olympics, psychologists were assigned to dozens of American athletes and several teams. Ogilvie himself worked with the figure skating team and men's and women's volleyball teams, which took gold and silver medals, respectively.

The original jock shrink, Ogilvie is today acknowledged as the man who generated the entire field of sports psychology. His book *Problem Athletes*, published in 1966, was the first to apply psychotherapeutic principles to understand and help college and Olympic competitors. His landmark studies of National Football League players in the Sixties provided the first in-depth portrait of the inner lives of professional athletes. In the late Sixties and early Seventies, combining elements of behavior modification

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM ZIMBEROFF



and Eastern mysticism, he developed a series of "performance enhancement strategies" to help top athletes improve concentration, build confidence, decrease tension, marshal energy and increase motivation. Variations on these techniques are at the heart of every sports psychologist's repertoire today.

Ogilvie has counseled 38 professional sports teams. In the Los Angeles Olympics alone he coached a total of 48 elite athletes, 36 of whom won medals. In the three decades since he entered a totally unexplored arena, he has studied nearly 12,000 of the world's finest athletes.

A clinical psychotherapist who received his Ph.D. from the University of London's Institute of Psychiatry in 1953, Ogilvie originally specialized in abnormal psychology and sexual dysfunction. Frustrated with the failures of the convoluted and highly biased Freudian-based sex therapy then holding sway in the United States, he treated sexual inhibition as a "performance" issue. Sexual dysfunction, his practice showed, was the result of a "disconnect" between mind and body—an intrusion into an individual's emotional "script" that blocked the body's natural responses. Ogilvie discovered he could eliminate the disconnect by literally rehearsing with his patient a better script for performance. The controversial "imaging" technique he developed for mental rehearsal became the germ of his athletic-enhancement strategies.

At sixty-seven, Ogilvie claims he has reduced his schedule to working with "only about eighty-seven athletes a year." The sweeping view from the cliffs atop his 40-acre estate, overlooking the lush Santa Cruz Mountains in California, indeed bespeaks a life of expanding leisure. But the waterless Jacuzzi outside his small wood-and-glass office contradicts such ideas. Filled with leaves, it suggests he's not quite ready for a long, hot soak. When he's not doing therapy, Ogilvie's either up in his bedroom alcove writing, or flying to Paris to teach mental strategies to the French Olympic team.

Listening to Ogilvie's gentle but emphatic voice did wonders to relax the psyches of interviewers Pamela Weintraub and Mark Teich. After a hard day of answering questions, Ogilvie escorted the pair to a restaurant run by his wife, Diane, just a javelin's throw outside the gates of his estate. One of his clients, a golfer from the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour, greeted Ogilvie and his wife with open arms and promptly joined the group for dinner. The standard distance psychologists keep from their clients, notes Ogilvie, protects only the therapist. And he doesn't want any protection. "Everyone I work with," he says, "ends up a friend."

Omni: You're generally regarded as the father of sports psychology. How does that sit with you?

Ogilvie: A lot of my colleagues see me as the grandfather. I don't call myself any-

thing, though I've been around so long I've worked with more elite athletes than anyone in the world. I go back to Rome.

Omni: A.D.?

Ogilvie: Yeah, thanks. I'm talking about the Rome Olympics in 1960.

Omni: You yourself were an athlete. Was that significant in opening doors for you?

Ogilvie: It was very important. You can't appreciate what little credibility psychologists had among coaches. Who needed the goddamn flaky shrink? They saw us as effete and intellectual—not too masculine. But I've always been an athlete; I was a high-school wrestler and football player, and I guess I'm the world's oldest weight lifter. During my hitch in the Air Force I wrestled and taught hand-to-hand combat. I became interested in judo and was at the gym whenever I wasn't working.

So here I was, Bruce the jock, who hammered heads and slammed bodies when he wasn't playing basketball or volleyball. The physical-education staff at San Jose

Some athletes were depression-prone. Some had developed phobic reactions to performance, some were immobilized by fear of failure, and some were deeply afraid of success.

State, where I taught, started to take me seriously. Some coaches began to ask questions. Within a few years two track coaches started sending me young athletes in crisis. Word spread to other coaches in the Bay Area, who assumed that because I'd been and remained an athlete, I had rare insights into the conflicts of athletes. But I really had no particular basis for presuming I could understand the great variety of problems I was going to encounter. We knew nothing about the inner life of the athlete. I felt the way Freud might once have felt: I was seeing problems I'd never heard described.

Omni: What kinds of problems?

Ogilvie: The athletes' inability to achieve their potential reflected a whole range of conflicts. Some were depression-prone. Some had developed phobic reactions about performance. Some were immobilized by a subconscious fear of failure. And some were deeply afraid of success.

We'd recognized the fear-of-success syndrome in humans without fully understanding it. But in athletes I saw it so plainly. I barely had to do any interpreting. I worked with a young pole-vaulter at Stanford who

was equaling the National Collegiate Athletic Association record in practice. Yet after two years he'd never scored a single point in competition. We eventually discovered that he was terrified that if he achieved his goals and dreams, he'd have to meet the expectations of others for the rest of his life. He found this unbearable.

Another young man who came to see me had once been a marvelous shortstop, a potential number-one draft choice in the major leagues. We started going back in his mind, trying to find out when and where it all came apart. When he was seventeen, he was being examined by the head scouts from a top National League team. He was fielding, showing the scouts his skills, when suddenly he bobbled the next ten or so balls. I said, "Stop. I want you to relive that entire experience with me." I sensed that we'd reached the key event. So next we re-created the whole visual field he'd been exposed to—the color of the grass, the lights on the poles, the stands and where the scouts sat in them. Then I said, "Now, put a tape in your head, and run that precise experience for me." So he went along, describing every ball he'd fielded successfully, until he said to me, "Oh, Christ, there's that son of a bitch!" "What are you seeing?" I asked. "There's my dad, sneaking down into the stands on the right. There's that son of a bitch!"

His dad had never related to him except in terms of his athletic performance, so his only need was to act out the rage at him. The young man utterly destroyed his life to get even with his rejecting father. But at least his little, hurt childhood self got even. He could see clearly after we finished reliving the situation: If he'd fulfilled his own ambitions, he'd also have fulfilled his father's needs. And he couldn't abide that. I can tell a thousand stories like this. I've got a father story from every city in America.

Omni: Were you surprised to keep seeing athletes with such problems?

Ogilvie: I was shocked and truly concerned. They were exhibiting blatant pathological reactions. I found far more irrational fears and far more clearly manifested neuroses than I'd seen in the normal student population. I came to believe that most top athletes were overcompensating psychoneurotics. I began to question seriously the value of high-level competitive sports. I thought we'd done the students a disservice by encouraging them to pursue such intense goals.

Omni: Didn't you write about this in your first book?

Ogilvie: Yes. *Problem Athletes* introduced clinical psychology to athletics. It also projected me as a specialist around the world. I lectured throughout Europe, where interest surpassed that in the United States. But even before the book was published, I began to question my conclusions. I realized that just as Freud had erred by basing all his conclusions on a select population of Viennese, Jewish women, I was seeing only athletes who'd collapsed in competition.

But what I'd seen didn't jibe with my own athletic experience. What I'd taken away had been so rich; it had made a magnificent contribution to my life. So I decided to see if I'd find a different psychological profile in elite athletes, those who'd attained the highest levels. In 1964 I approached an old friend, Lou Spadia, then president of the San Francisco 49ers. I said, "Lou, would it ever be possible to study your team?" I told him that Tom Tutko, my colleague at San Jose State, and I would need only a day out of his preseason training camp to administer psychological inventories to the entire team. Like all businessmen, he said, "What do I get out of it?" I said, "We'll give you an entire year of our services. We'll use the test data to help you understand each athlete more fully and to identify rookies who might bolt camp. We'll be there for crisis intervention whenever an athlete isn't performing." Then he asked me if I'd like bigger numbers, and I said, "Great!"; so he had me meet the owners of the L.A. Rams and the general manager of the Dallas Cowboys. We ended up making a three-year deal with all of them. In 1965 the New Orleans Saints joined in.

Omni: When you analyzed your data from these players, did your ideas change?

Ogilvie: It buried my notion of athletes as overcompensating psychoneurotics once and for all! NFL players were well-put-together human beings. Compared with the general population, only half as many of these athletes were compensatory or prone to pathological reaction. You've never seen a more ambitious group of men; they were significantly higher in their achievement needs. They tended to be more tough-minded. They were far superior to most university-educated men in emotional integration, self-control, self-confidence, and ability to handle stress. And these findings held up over the years when I studied other elite amateur and professional athletes.

Omni: What about your claim to predict and prevent rookies from bolting camp?

Ogilvie: This is what really nailed down my credibility! At every camp I'd pick the five or six guys who were going to bolt. One or two of them would invariably be the team's third or second or even first draft choice. One night at eleven P.M. I was on the phone to Tom Fears, head coach at New Orleans. I said, "Tom, let me give you feedback on these six athletes whom I see as most prone to run." The moment I finished naming the athletes, he says, "Wait a minute, Bruce, someone's banging on the goddamn door." I hear some mumbly, and when he comes back he tells me one of the six is standing there, still taped up from the workout, suitcase in hand. I told Tom to have him sit down and to ask the boy specific questions, like "What exactly are you feeling?" The boy said he was lonely and scared about making it. He came from a small town and just knew he was going to let down his mom and dad and everybody. So then I had Fears say to him, "Look, son, that's what we're here for. You're taking on some-

thing that's not yours. Give us time." Then Tom talked about all the times he'd wanted to run when he was younger. Finally the kid decided to stay. He wound up playing in the league for six years and was an outstanding defensive back. This same kind of thing happened with the Cowboys, with the San Diego Padres baseball team, and it's happened countless times in the seventeen years I've worked with the Portland Trail Blazers basketball team. In those first days with the NFL, it made the coaches believe I was someone they could place their faith in. It opened the door for me to approach them with performance-enhancing strategies.

Omni: You've said the magic words. How did you begin to develop your new performance-enhancement methods?

Ogilvie: I'd begun to develop these techniques in my previous work on sexual dysfunction. Nothing traditional could be applied to help an athlete achieve his or her particular goal, so I began to explore new

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approaches. My graduate training was strongly shaped by Professor J. Wolpe, one of the pioneers in behavior modification. But treating people like rats violated my sensibilities. I couldn't get into all that scheduling and programming of human behavior. I knew athletes didn't belong in Skinner boxes; I'd die if you did that to me. If you even threaten to take away my control, I'm not a very nice animal to be around. Because the psychology literature was barren of references to sports, I took what I liked from Eastern literature and merged it with my own training.

Omni: Where did you begin?

Ogilvie: With the principle that people have many, many levels of awareness and that our goal should be to seek the means for getting in touch with all of them. While Western culture had failed to develop authentic strategies for generating awareness, I was convinced that training people to do so would be a profoundly freeing technique. What convinced me were my own rummagings in psychoanalysis during my training. I'd never felt that my own analysis had really gotten me in touch with the Bruce underneath. For example, not

one of my therapists sufficiently presented me with one of the most profound influences of my life—father separation. My father left us, and I never knew him; so I had to go back and deal with that to get free of a lot of things that were hanging me up.

In high school, for example, I'd been an athlete twenty-four hours a day. This was clearly tied in to looking for a dad. I never found a father substitute, but I looked for one in every coach I had.

When I was sixteen I was on the football team, playing linebacker on defense and quarterback on offense. We were playing a tough team, and on defense I was matched against a young man who eventually became a great star at fullback. I was determined he wouldn't get any yardage. After one tackle he nailed me in the face with his foot. We didn't wear face masks then, so his cleats split my lip and broke my nose. I was lying on the ground, hurting so bad, my face just destroyed. I got up and ran slowly toward my coach, a big, fat man named Piggy. I was frightened as shit. I just wanted him to say my face was going to be okay and to hold me. Instead he looked at me and said, "Can you still call signals, Bruce?" I said yeah, and he sent me back to quarterback. With my mouth filling with blood and blood running down my nose, I turned around and went back into the huddle. I couldn't talk because of the blood in my mouth, so I asked our fullback to call the signals. I stayed in, bleeding, and the coach never said a word, like "Good game" or "Thanks for putting out." And I wanted it so bad. I think I decided then and there that no one was going to give me what I needed. I was going to have to find it within myself.

None of these analysts had me relive any of this. Had someone taken my experience and projected it on the wall so I could see all its ramifications, I might have been freed thirty-five years earlier. This is why I embrace the idea of reliving the experience—re-creating the event by using what we've come to call guided imagery. It wasn't called anything then. I just thought of it as reinforcing the reality of a situation.

Omni: Why is guided imagery more effective than free association?

Ogilvie: Because you re-create the actual living and vibrant world in which the experience occurred. People have a tape in their heads, see. You tell them to run the tape, and it's all there. We're like two detectives in pursuit of the experience. As your guide, I try to help you in the search. I might say, "What was the house like?" "Did you have a dog?" "Did you look in the corner?" "Lift up the rug."

Omni: You initially developed this technique to treat sexual dysfunction?

Ogilvie: In the Fifties we were dismally ignorant and really had no legitimate strategies for tracking sexual inhibition. We just brutalized women, telling them exactly how to respond and what they should respond to. We almost condemned them. And we had no legitimate strategies.



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Sexual inhibitions are really performance issues. Like an athlete in crisis, the turned-off person suffers a disconnect between cognition and neuroanatomical function. With guided imaging I could have a preorgasmic woman relive herself, "re-script" herself as an active, functioning sexual creature. Initially, as she shares her tape of her experience, I could observe the point in the process where the inhibiting thought patterns interrupted her physiological harmony. You see where the blocks come up, where mama's voice suddenly says, "You're dirty" when she touches herself. There can be thousands of negative inputs in the unconscious.

Omni: How do you eliminate those inputs?

Ogilvie: As we roll the tape, we write the negative cognitions out of the script, replacing them with positive images complimentary to her eroticism and aesthetics. I tell her I want her to develop a script of a successful, self-loving experience. Then we rehearse the script again and again until she has an appropriate model for the sensitive, self-accepting side of her nature. I try to get her back to her personal best—back to her spinal cord, so to speak—and fully in tune with the moment.

Omni: How did your colleagues take to this new sexual treatment?

Ogilvie: I got killed, professionally. At one staff meeting, we were discussing the issue of sexual transference. This was cer-

tainly an issue of concern to me because, well, I was a good-looking young man then. You get into a trusting, true, open, and free communication with a woman who feels terribly frustrated and unloved; she feels your caring and the protection you afford her. Then the transference phenomenon is vital to the psychotherapeutic process. But somehow it was often very difficult for me to redirect it to the appropriate source: a husband or lover, for instance. My colleagues said, "Well, you son of a bitch; you're reinforcing it." I said maybe my ego sometimes used to allow such a thing, but I was way past that now. I didn't need sexual titillation from my patients.

Then I told them I'd been working on a strategy so powerful I wanted to share it with them. I'd been counseling this very prominent dancer. She was a very physical woman who had great problems relating sexually in any continual way—and was confused about why. The more we explored her feelings, erotic nature, and adventures, the more aggressive she became. The only resolution almost seemed to be for her and me to have intercourse. I told her what a beautiful woman she was and that I couldn't be more honored. But, I asked, Is that what you really want?

Then I suggested that we use guided imagery to take ourselves through a copulative experience together. After I had her close her eyes, I asked her to imagine we

were down on the floor; I don't know why. Then I said, "Let's turn our chairs away from each other." Then we went through an entire imaging experience, keeping up an open dialogue about what she was experiencing. When she believed she had achieved physical satisfaction, I said, "Now, lying back in your arms, looking into your eyes, I ask you, Is this what you wanted?" God, was that powerful!

Omni: What did she say?

Ogilvie: She said no. She wanted a male to accept her totally, to care about her innermost feelings. She wanted someone to provide absolute protection when she was most vulnerable. The next session, she was completely different. Now the transference had evolved into a force for her growth. I became a trusting male, a brother who loved her, the father she never had.

My colleagues, of course, were outraged. I never described the technique to any of them again.

Omni: How did you begin to carry this and other imaging techniques over to athletes?

Ogilvie: The key event, the therapeutic experience that showed it could be done, happened in 1962. Hammer thrower Ed Burke, a true great who had been in four Olympics, had a tragic accident right in front of *Life* magazine's photographers, who had come to San Jose State to film him for a cover story. His wife, Shirley, who just happened to be in one of my psychol-

ogy classes, had parked her old VW in the field way off to the right to watch the filming. She seemed to be completely out of range, but damned if he didn't lose control early in one throw. This sixteen-pound bomb flew and smashed through her windshield. He ran to the car, expecting to find her dead. The hammer had crushed her face around her eye, an incredible wound. Everyone gathered around her, then Ed carried her off to the first-aid room and eventually to the hospital.

It was actually just a glancing blow, and she healed very well after lots of treatment and plastic surgery. When she was out of the hospital, she approached me and said that Ed wouldn't throw anymore. And the Olympics were coming up that following year. So I asked if he would come see me. Soon after he started seeing me, he was able to practice again but didn't approach the distances he'd thrown before. Something had obviously changed.

It seemed that whatever was inhibiting his return to his former national level of performance had not yet been uncovered. From the study of his personality it had been apparent that he was an athlete possessed of extraordinary conscience. The guilt that the unfortunate accident had generated was an obvious negative emotional force that had to be understood. I asked him if we could go back and re-create the entire traumatic event. Ed said he thought that would be too painful. I then asked him if we could re-create the scene of the practice setting through guided imagery. My clinical interest was in generating an increased awareness of all performance-relevant behavior. Rather than attending to the possible intrusive guilt feelings, the search was directed to the behavioral changes that such feelings had produced. I asked Ed to stand and prepare to throw. We envisioned the practice setting, the cage, the throwing ring, the expanse of green extending from the ring, and even the visual targets that Ed had set for himself. Due to the confined space—my office—I asked him to practice his throws in slow motion. I had Ed complete about three practice throws, and then I tried to elevate his level of arousal. "Okay, Ed, we are now getting ready to go for distance; let's think in terms of personal bests," I said. When I felt intuitively that he had reached something close to his ideal performance state, I said, very simply, Go into your motion now. As I watched Ed begin his ritual, swinging the imaginary 16-pound hammer, flexing and extending his arms, grasping and regrasping the handle, he began to demonstrate in slow motion his classic performance style. As he hit the middle of his second turn he called out, "Look, Doc; look at my hands." I didn't have the background to judge motor requirements for his event, so I said, "Tell me what you are seeing." He said, "Look at my fingers; look where they are on the handle." It wasn't until that moment that one of the most significant causes of his perform-

ance decrement was illuminated.

He saw himself changing his hand grip for safety, shortchanging the style that would extend the arch and eventually the trajectory of the hammer. "We got it, Ed, we got it," I said. As we reprocessed this critical moment, it seemed to us that his distrust in his hands had blocked his motor gifts. Within two weeks his confidence had returned and he was throwing at his NCAA championship level.

Omni: Why did this approach work?

Ogilvie: Because it gets the human right down to focusing on causality. There is no interpretive bullshit, no supershrink going through some analytic voodoo. I got to the raw data of experience. What was really going on in his body and mind? The consensus was that the cognitions weren't complementary to performance. You can't have reservation and fear and expect your body to release the hammer at ideal performance levels. The imaging makes the athlete see himself in terms of neuromus-

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cular requirements, performance, and body mechanics. He becomes aware.

Omni: What about athletes who haven't suffered a trauma but just want to improve their game?

Ogilvie: One of my most important strategies is that of changing what I call self-talk. It emerged during my first year in the Dallas Cowboys' rookie camp. They were screening twenty-eight flanker backs and ends because they were desperate for talent in those positions. After a while, I noticed the only three blacks on the team just weren't catching the ball. It struck me that they were suffering from performance anxiety, that they were too aroused for optimum neuromuscular coordination. Finally, during a short break, I approached them on the sidelines and said, "If you'll just listen to me, I think I can give you something you can use right now." Then I asked, "How do you speak to your lady when you're moving toward her and you want her?" Finally one guy said, "Okay, I'm moving toward her and I say, 'Hey, sweet loving baby, wait till I get you in bed.'" Each player had his own language or form of communication for loving feelings. So I said,

"Okay, now you're going to go back out there and run those patterns again for another hour. When you turn your back to the ball, I want you to say, 'Sweet loving baby, come to me; this is your big daddy,' or whatever words work for you." Well, I'll be a son of a bitch; they went back out, and they all did beautifully.

They changed their relationship with the ball, from an adversarial to a receptive one. They did what they do naturally when they are at the appropriate level of arousal—for either romance or performance in sports. Frightened of not making the club, they were trying too hard. They were overaroused and they were fighting themselves. But by using the self-talk to alter their cognitions about their situation, they achieved harmony. Two of them made the team; one became sensational.

Omni: Do individual performers have different optimum levels of arousal?

Ogilvie: While reliable parameters of physiological tension exist for each sport, there are great differences among performers. In the locker room before a game, some athletes crave total silence, while others need verbal release. We tell coaches not to give the characteristic Knute Rockne-like fight talk because it will drive forty percent of the kids out of their skulls, to the point where they're out of control. Some relatively lethargic athletes may be helped by such coaching, but it's best to take them aside individually.

Dick Bass of the San Diego Chargers football team was a coach far ahead of his time. He wrote poetry on the side. Before one big game he took his whole defensive backfield into the locker room, turned on a boom box, and let it rip. The kids were moving and swinging. I can't tell you what a violation of coaching philosophy that was! We're all supposed to huddle by our lockers, think intense thoughts, and wait for the commander to come. But this guy got his players ready to go by getting them in contact with the feelings they needed for harmonious preparation. They didn't want to think about the game; they wanted to get lost in feelings that were elevating and enriching. These players told me that no coach in their experience had been this permissive. And he was recognized as one of the outstanding defensive coaches.

Omni: How do you work with an athlete to get him to the right level of arousal?

Ogilvie: First, you have to be very sure that the athletes are not actually underaroused. If they are, and you proceed to lower their arousal further, you'll only hurt their performance. If they are truly overaroused, I'll generally start with deep relaxation to get all of the here-and-now garbage out of the way so the athletes can move into subconscious levels. I let them be their own hypnotists by means of a drill that takes them into the deepest states of relaxation in ten minutes. I often use a strategy, which I call the Ogilvie psychological erasure effect. I say, "I want you to go back inside your mind and lose total visual and emotional contact

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with the present. To do this comfortably, select a beautiful scene having personal meaning for you." I want the reality of the experience to be as vivid as possible. Then I count to ten and bring them back.

At that point, if I'm working with a pitcher, say, I ask him to think about the batting lineup. "You're in Houston," I say. "Feel yourself in the Astrodome; feel the temperature; feel the direction of the breeze." I'm reinforcing the sensual world he's going to experience. Then I ask him to mentally stand on the pitcher's mound and envision himself releasing each pitch to his fullest potential to each batter in the lineup. It takes three or four minutes to go through all nine batters. Then I say, "Did you like your performance? Was it close to your personal best?" The athlete says no; so I tell him to return to the point at which his performance fell off and again go through the scenario in his head. Finally I bring him out of the tranquil state; and he tells me, with far more clarity than he's ever had before, what he's been doing wrong with hitter number four. You cannot tell such highly developed athletes how to improve their performance. You can only help them perfect their performance by moving in the continuum of feelings and associations that have gotten them there in the first place. Whatever the pitcher's basic script is, we go back to it, constantly reinforcing what's worked best for him in the past.

Omni: Your method seems so serene. How does this jibe with the notion that aggression is invaluable for success in sports?

Ogilvie: I have no enthusiasm for generating aggression or anger in sports. These emotions dissipate so quickly. The better stance is one of mastery and control.

Omni: Would that hold true even for, say, prizefighters? Marvin Hagler, defeated by Sugar Ray Leonard for the middleweight championship, always convinces himself before a fight that he hates his opponent.

Ogilvie: It's a very, very unfaithful emotion. It betrays you. Once you release it in that first burst, it's as if you've vomited. There's nothing left. I myself fought in the service, and the only time I ever lost it in the ring was when someone literally tried to kill me. Then I became so irrational I tried to kill him. As a natural human being, you can reach a level of self-sustaining rage due to what an opponent actually does to you. But if you're trying to generate that rage yourself, it's hard to sustain. One defensive end told me he used to pretend that the offensive tackles he matched up against on Sundays had raped his wife. He felt he had to generate that hate to start every game. He was one of the meanest men around. But as soon as he made one hit, the artificial energy seemed to fade.

Omni: Do male and female athletes differ psychometrically?

Ogilvie: Our profiles show that elite female

and male athletes are virtually identical. They're tough-minded and emotionally healthy. Because their emotions are more open, however, females often find it easier to use such performance-enhancement techniques as visualization to improve.

Omni: You've studied such high-risk performers as Grand Prix race drivers, parachutists, and aerobatic pilots. Are these athletes driven by a death wish?

Ogilvie: Well, Grand Prix drivers turn out to be some of the healthiest people around. We studied about thirty drivers, including Graham Hill, one of the finest who ever lived. In their psychometric profiles they scored even higher than NFL football players. Very naturally aggressive men, they set the standard in our studies for self-control and tough-mindedness. They don't mess around with emotional interpretations of things. They want to get down to bedrock: Give me the facts, show me the data. They most fear boredom. The thing most stressful to them is a life not lived,

More and more athletes are coming to grips with, and using, the emotional legacy that's so deeply bound up with determining how they will perform.

where aptitudes and abilities are not expressed or acted upon.

Omni: Do they want to stay alive?

Ogilvie: Oh, yeah. I was sitting with Graham Hill reviewing the findings of his psychometric test. After pointing out all the remarkable strengths I'd found, I said, "Because risks are everywhere and friends of yours have died, what goes through your mind when you're waiting to start?" He said, "I focus on the first turn, where there's the highest probability for injury and death." Then he took me for a walk around the track. "Walk around the edge," he told me. "This is where I'll be. Now I'm turning into the straightaway. That turn has an incline, then drops off two and a half degrees. Now it's sloping again. The three feet of gravel on the inside of the asphalt track is death. If I get out with no engine disturbance, I'm going to hit that turn fast. Supposing, on the other hand, there's a mechanical disturbance and I don't accelerate fast enough and someone on the outside gets to the curve first? I'll have to move to the right. . . ." He went on and on. It was a dissertation on all the contingencies. He took every conceivable possibility into account. He

knew every rock and piece of gravel. These are not careless, fly-by-night characters—not the men the Air Force looked for when it wanted pilots to fly with abandon, not reckless kids who'd hot-rodged and gone up mountains on motorcycles. This population would have been well suited to fly bombers with all of the technical gear. They're better suited for that. Fear is a reality to these people, although they have the true ability to inhibit its intrusion upon their performance.

Omni: What happens to retired Grand Prix race-car drivers and other stress addicts who no longer get the stress they need?

Ogilvie: They may suffer adjustment problems. When their lives become routine, they may become anxious. A good example from another profession is the surgeon. He also thrives on stress but now just does six routine arthroscopic knee surgeries a day. Now he's a plumber. My advice to him is to find some new area of challenge so he can sense risk again. So many of them would love to change places with the race-car drivers. Instead, they drive exquisite Italian cars across the desert at one hundred sixty miles an hour—just for the thrill of emotional release.

Omni: How would you extend this notion to athletes who may lose their sense of emotional release when they leave their sport?

Ogilvie: In general, there's no provision for these people after they leave their sport. Many athletes go through four years of college reading at ninth-grade level. Some don't even receive their degrees. Coaches wrongly emphasize only the sport. The careers of pro basketball and football players average three and a half to four years. For maybe forty percent of the players, it's over after one year. Anxiety over the situation hinders performance even during the athletic career. When the career ends, these players feel like it's the end of a dream. After having it all—the acclaim and adoration—suddenly they step into crowds and become ordinary persons. It can be devastating. The incidence of alcoholism in former hockey pros is epidemic. They go through grief and engage in all kinds of dangerous escape behavior.

Omni: You describe the phases of an athlete's termination almost as if it were some kind of fatal illness.

Ogilvie: For some of them it's more terrifying than that. Death would be easier than becoming a nonentity. You should hear the wives describe the syndromes of the NFL players who played ten or twelve years. All that time he's been programmed to get ready for the Sunday game. By Friday he's restless, he can't settle down. Saturday morning he paces, and the crescendo builds. At eleven o'clock that night he wants to get to bed but tosses and turns. Sunday comes, and the game begins, but he's not there. He still needs the body contact and the stimulation of the sixty-five thousand roaring people. So he gets up at seven and runs until he's exhausted. Only when he returns home does he become moder-

ately human. This is the characteristic withdrawal. These men know no other world. Where can they turn to get the charge, the challenge, the acclaim they're used to? Nowhere.

Omn: What do you suggest?

Ogilvie: We must prepare these people in advance for a challenging life after sports. It's a problem for the coaching staffs, the teams, and the schools.

Omn: Have you any other gripes against the sports structure in America?

Ogilvie: Yes. I'm disappointed with the Olympic hierarchy. You have to work through a maze of authority figures, each with their own turf. Because there's insufficient respect for the basic service person in sports psychology, the result is that the athletes don't get the service when the need is greatest. At the Mexico City Olympics, a Czechoslovakian study determined that forty percent of their athletes needed some form of psychological intervention. My colleagues in East Germany estimated the figure at thirty-four percent.

Omn: Did they have psychologists there?

Ogilvie: Yes, as did the Soviets and all the Eastern Bloc nations. In fact, the last time I was in Europe, their sports scientists wined and dined me while seeking to discover whether we had developed better performance-enhancing strategies. But I had to get them drinking before they'd talk about their own work; and I didn't sense anything more advanced than what we're doing here, except for their superior organization and structure, which brings psychologists into their entire Olympic development movement. The U.S. Olympic committee is now issuing credentials to psychologists. How soon they will be integrated into the total Olympic development movement remains to be seen.

During the 1984 Olympics I was called back by Ari Selinger, coach of the women's volleyball team. The group had to smuggle me into the locker room in women's sweats. I even wore a towel around my head. I spent an hour and a half working with the players one-on-one and then worked with the entire team, mentally rehearsing the entire match. And then, each time, the officials would throw me out. But I got the job done first and had a ball! *I'll show these sons of bitches they can't keep this old bastard out*, I thought. Their stupid restriction worked to the disadvantage of the team.

Omn: Where have you made your greatest impact in the world of sports?

Ogilvie: I've shown the sports establishment, including coaches and management, that the athlete must be understood as a total individual. Everywhere I go, I talk about the athlete's needs and uniqueness and I fight the negative stereotypes he's bound to run into in his career. I've helped the athletes themselves develop a respect and sensitivity for what's in their own minds. More and more they are coming to grips with, and using, the emotional legacy so deeply bound up with determining how they will perform. ∞



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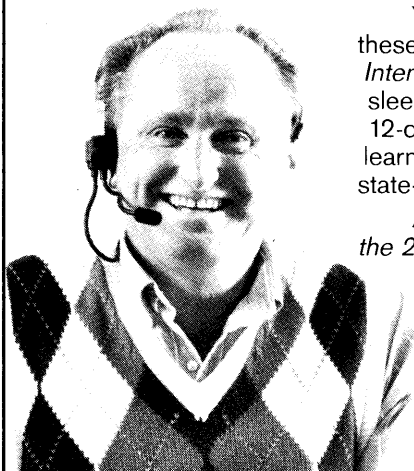
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