

May 2016


Volume 18 Number 2

ISBN 978-1-907549-27-4

 dx.doi.org/10.12781/978-1-907549-27-4

AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry



Feature Choice: Patterns
of Sense-making and Learning

Bettering Sport Through Appreciative Lenses and Practices

Edited by

Tony Ghaye and Sarah Lee



www.aipractitioner.com/subscriptions 




Sign up for our free AIP eNews 

May 2016

Volume 18 Number 2

ISBN 978-1-907549-27-4

 dx.doi.org/10.12781/978-1-907549-27-4

AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Bettering Sport Through Appreciative Lenses and Practices

Welcome to May 2016 issue of *AI Practitioner*

Thank you for renewing your subscription and/or for downloading this *AI Practitioner* on Appreciative Inquiry and sport. I would like to welcome you to this new *AI Practitioner*. You may notice that it looks a bit different. So does the new webshop. Over the last couple of months some, people have been working night and day, weekends included, to give *AI Practitioner* a fresh look:

- Floor Masee, a graphical designer based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands;
- Go@People, the website developers;
- Nathalie van de Loo, the project manager who made this all happen.

And I also want to thank Anne Radford, for inspiring us and helping us to make this transition as smooth as possible, together with Mickey Lee and Shelagh Aitken. Mickey and Shelagh have always worked behind the scenes to produce the best possible articles and issues.

When, a couple of years ago, my knees were getting too old to keep playing indoor soccer and my overall health started to be wobbly, I decided to become a triathlete. Transforming my body and mind from a soccer player into a full-distance triathlete was an appreciative inquiry in itself.

In August 2014, two weeks after attending a workshop on appreciative facilitation, I finished, in just over 13

hours, in my first Iron Man triathlon in Louisville, Kentucky. And in 2015 I concluded my second triathlon in Vichy, France, two weeks after conducting a workshop on AI.

You can imagine how thrilled I was when Tony Ghaye and Sarah Lee asked us whether they could be the guest editors of an *AI Practitioner* devoted to improving all kinds of different sports through appreciative lenses and practices.

Here's the result, I'm sure you'll like it.



Wick van der Vaart
Editor-in-Chief
AI Practitioner

Inside this issue

04 Bettering Sport Through Appreciative Lenses and Practices

Tony Ghaye and Sarah Lee

8 **Feature Choice**
Patterns of Sense-making and Learning

Hans Uijen

25 From Models to Moments:
Towards an Appreciation of Coach–Athlete A.U.R.A.

Dean Clark

33 Which Numbers Count?
An Appreciative Conversation of Discovery and Design Within Sport Science Support

James McCarron and Ben Drury

40 The Journey from Competent to Innovator:
Using Appreciative Inquiry to Enhance High Performance Coaching

Pierre Trudel, Wade Gilbert and François Rodrigue

47 The Human Side of Sport:
Three Conversations

Wick van der Vaart

52 Empowering Professional Golfers Through
Appreciative Inquiry

Paul McCarthy

56 Football as a Process for Guided Self-Actualisation

Harry Varley

59 Using Appreciative Inquiry to Create High-Impact
Coach Learning: Insights From a Decade of Applied Research

Rachael Bertram, Diane Culver and Wade Gilbert

66 An Appreciative Approach to Sports Coaching

Matthew Scholes

70 The Donkey in the Well, Revisited: Using Golf to
Overcome Injuries, Illnesses and Challenges

Rich O'Brien

73 **Nourish to Flourish** Voices from the Field
Keith Storage, Whitney Fry, Petra van Leeuwen and Enrique J. Zaldivar

Nourish to Flourish Creative Practices
Birgitta Schomaker

Nourish to Flourish Book Review

Sarah Lewis

85 **Appreciative Inquiry**
Research, Review & Notes

Byrad Yyelland

91 **Appreciative Inquiry Resources**

Matthew R. Moehle, Ph.D.

Roopa Nandi

Hardik Shah, Ph.D.

95 **What's in AIP 2016**
Research, Review & Notes
Feature Choice

96 **Advertisement**
Lincoln Workshop Series:
Upcoming AI workshops

97 IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner
Subscription Information



Tony Ghaye

Tony is the founder and director of a social enterprise called Reflective Learning-International and a professor in applied positive psychology. His work focuses upon building positivity and the utilisation of strengths in sport and high performance environments. He has published 16 books and over 125 articles and chapters on using strengths-based reflective practices. Contact: tonyghaye@gmail.com



Sarah Lee

Sarah is Head of Department for Sport at Hartpury University Centre, Hartpury College, UK. She is completing her professional doctorate in Elite Performance, investigating the impact of positive psychology in high performance sports environments. She has written and co-edited books and published many journal articles. Contact: sarah.lee@hartpury.ac.uk

Bettering Sport through Appreciative Lenses and Practices

This is the first issue of AI Practitioner devoted to the topic of Appreciative Inquiry and sport. In it you will find articles about positive and strengths-based approaches to sports training at all levels, from children to high-performance individual sports and professional-level team sports, from coaching individuals, groups and teams to self-coaching strategies.

The notion of winning is central to many who participate in sport. This involves at least two things. A winning mind and a winning group of people. Central to winning is the idea that we should always strive to try to do better in order to achieve, to get ahead of the opposition and stay there (Campbell, 2015). Sometimes what motivates us to “be better” is not a desire for success but an absolute dread of losing and then facing the consequences. When thinking about winning, one key question that arises is, “what do we need to do to be better than others?” How far is this a positive and compelling question? Can we think of others? Better ones, like, “what do we need to do to scare the hell out of the opposition?” What kinds of questions give life, energy and enthusiasm to those in the specific sporting contexts described in this special issue?

The questions we ask reveal habits of thinking and feeling. In sport, if we ask questions like, “Why did we lose? Who is to blame? Why didn’t we execute what we rehearsed in training? Who let whom down?”, and so on, we are constructing a world, for players and coaches, that have problems at the centre. This inevitably forces those involved into ways of thinking that fragment, divide and that try to fix failings. It is thinking that focuses on people’s deficiencies, not on what their strengths are and what they can do well.

A 'small' club has to stop thinking small and start dreaming big.

2016: Leicester City's dream comes true

We venture to suggest that if we want to improve performance there comes a time when we have to work hard to change the conversations we normally have. Or more precisely, to have conversations that we have not had before. Of course this is not an easy task because it means that we need to change our relationship with our past. For example, a “small” club has to stop thinking small and start dreaming big. This is exactly what happened to the English Premiership football side Leicester City when new Italian boss, Claudio Ranieri, arrived in 2015. He invited everyone to dream. He gave everyone “permission” to dream of a future for the club that was very different from the past, which was a club fighting against relegation from the league. In May 2016, Leicester City won the Premier League title.

Arguably, this set a new standard for the whole of football and, in the words of the club's Thai vice-chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, provided “inspiration for the whole world”.

Reportedly, Ranieri asked one key question of his players and followed this by one game-changing action. At the start of the season, and then repeatedly throughout, he asked his players, “what can we achieve together?” The action that followed was to create more than a collection of individuals with longings, desires, hopes and possibilities. He organised everything in an appreciative way, where accountability was a willingness to “care for the whole” (Block, 2008). This flowed out of questions and conversations about creating a new history for the club, a new story from which they wanted to take their identity.

Co-creation, learning and dynamic relationships

So what is the reason for saying all this? For us, it provides a gateway into this special issue and its twin processes of “bettering” and “appreciation”. This is the first Appreciative Inquiry (AI) journal issue that has focused on sport. In part, it has been a process of discovering and illuminating some of the dynamic relationships (Stavros & Torres, 2006) between AI and positive psychology. It has also been a process of co-creation and through that a process of learning. One thing that repeatedly asserts itself throughout this issue is the significance of the positive in human performance and how this relates to bettering (getting better). For example, in this issue can be found illustrations of the potency of positive affect, of positive cognitions and emotions, and the affirmative and appreciative interchange between coaches and athletes. One of the deep challenges, therefore, that any reading of this issue brings is the challenge to reflect on words like *bettering*, *positive* and *appreciative*, and try to constructively align them to words like *coaching*, *performing* and *winning*.

Four themes permeating this issue:

*Appreciative knowing
Appreciative relations
Appreciative actions
Appreciative organising*

Appreciative knowing

One of the themes that permeates this issue is something we might call *appreciative knowing* (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999). One way this surfaces is in the questions that the different contributors ask. For example some questions focus on “what is” or “what might be”; others on “what isn’t”. One question that captures the flavour of this is found in McCarthy’s article. In relation to his golfing work he poses a question that golfers may ask of themselves: “If I am not playing well, then I must be playing badly. And if I am playing well, then how long before I start playing badly?”

McCarthy goes on to elaborate thus: A golfer might learn to ask, “How can I best contribute to my practice today?” or “What will I do today that will push me out of my comfort zone toward better performances?” or “What is the one thing I am going to achieve today to make me a better putter?” Wick van der Vaart refers to the questions posed by ice skating coach Fedde Germans. “I always ask my skaters to go back to their best race ever, and tell me exactly what happened before, during and after that race. What did they do? Who was involved? What went well? What did they have to let go to get to this result? And ... can they visualise what the perfect race will look like?” And the question posed by McCarron & Drury from a sports science perspective – “What are we doing now that is having a positive impact on athlete performance?” – is essential to the bettering process.

Appreciative relations

Another theme is that of *appreciative relations*. Throughout this issue we hope that you will feel the energising force of such relations to be found within each contribution, particularly with regard to the nature of coach-athlete relations, which evidences itself in relations of shared responsibility for action, deep bonds of shared interest, a sense of mutuality and joint meaning-making through reflective conversations (Lee, Dixon & Ghaye, 2015). This appreciative stance toward relating in sport is the active process of valuing and affirming the worth of others (e.g. athlete, coach, physiotherapist, nutritionist, conditioner etc.) via interaction and conversation. Put another way it is about caring for growth-promoting and performance-enhancing relationships.

Appreciative actions

A third theme is what might be called *appreciative actions*. In this issue we can find evidence of the richness and diversity of such actions. Some of the things we can find are:



Appreciative relations: Read more about this in ‘An Appreciative Approach to Sports Coaching’ on page 66

What appreciative questions and practices lie at the heart of your work?

1. (1) the positive intentions from coaches and athletes to better themselves and others.
2. (2) through better ways of knowing and relating, to explore fundamental questions in sport such as, “what is working well and why?”, “what is the right thing to do now and in these circumstances?” and “ how can we achieve our greatest dreams?”

Appreciative organising

A fourth theme might be described as *appreciative organising*. In this issue there are examples of both one-to-one organising (e.g. coach-athlete training sessions) and how performance can be constrained or liberated within the sports club or the sports organisation as a system of espoused values and values-in-action. One way of coming to know something of the essence of appreciative organising is through the way we see sporting processes that serve to empower all those involved to push the boundaries of their own potential. It is organising training and competition because someone (e.g. the athlete) and/or something matters (e.g. winning). It is deliberately creating supportive sports contexts where this is made possible.

So, what appreciative questions and practices lie at the heart of your work?

REFERENCES:

Block, P. (2008) *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler,
Campbell, A. (2015) *Winners and How They Succeed*. London: Arrow Books.

Lee, S., Dixon, M. & Ghaye, T. (2015) *Improving Performance: Coaching Through Positive Reflection and Action*. Gloucester, UK: New Vista Publication.

Srivastva, S. and Cooperrider, D. (1999) *Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thought and Action in Organization*. Euclid, Ohio: Williams Custom Publishing.

Stavros, J. and Torres, C. (2006) *Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry in Daily Living*. Chagrin Falls, Ohio: Taos Institute.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

What's in AIP 2016

www.aipractitioner.com/subscriptions

Research, Review & Notes

FEBRUARY 16

Can a Leader Be Too Appreciative?



Freddie Crous
Professor of Industrial Psychology,
University of Johannesburg

MAY 16

Seven Years of Appreciative Inquiry
in the Arab Gulf, 2008-2015



Byrad Yyelland

AUGUST 16

Appreciative Inquiry and its Impact
on United States Municipalities



Dr. Anthony H. Schmidt Jr.

NOVEMBER 16

Using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach
to Support Intrinsic Motivation in Higher
Education Courses



Betty McQuain

Feature Choice

FEBRUARY 16

Communication and Generativity in
Appreciative Inquiry Practice: A review of
recent peer-reviewed research



Kevin Real, Ph.D.
Associate professor of Communication at the University of Kentucky
and director of the Center for Appreciative Research

MAY 16

Patterns of Sense-Making
and Learning



Hans Uijen

AUGUST 16

Using Quantum Storytelling to Bridge
Appreciative Inquiry to Socio-Economic
Approach to Intervention Research



David M. Boje
Regents Professor, New Mexico State University

Hank Strevel
New Mexico State University

NOVEMBER 16

Lessons from the Field: Appreciative
Inquiry in the US military



**Captain Chase Lane, Dr.
Dave Levy, Lieutenant
Colonel Pat Heflin, and
Major Paul Prosper**

AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

IAPG Contacts

The International Advisory Practitioners Group works with AIP to bring AI stories to a wider audience.

Dhruba Acharya, Nepal
Ilma Barros, Brazil
Anastasia Bukashe, South Africa
Gervase Bushe, Canada
Jeannie Cockell, Canada
Freddie Crous, South-Africa
Mille Themsen Duvander, Denmark
Sara Inés Gómez, Colombia
Claudia Gross, Egypt
Sue James, Australia
Mette Jacobsgaard, Denmark
Joep C. de Jong, Netherlands
Dorothe Liebig, Germany
Sarah Lewis, UK
John Loty, Australia
Mark Lough, Scotland
Robbert Masselink, Netherlands
Joan McArthur-Blair, Canada
Maureen McKenna, Canada
Liz Mellish, Australia
Dayle Obrien, Australia
Anne Radford, UK
Jan Reed, United Kingdom
Daniel K. Saint, United States
Marge Schiller, United States
David Shaked, UK
Jackie Stavros, United States
Neema Verma, India
Jacqueline Wong, Singapore
Margaret Wright, United Kingdom

Subscription and Contact information

Disclaimer: Views and opinions of the writers do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy but all details are subject to alteration. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies.

AIP Subscriptions

Individuals
Small organisations
Large organisations
<http://www.aipractitioner.com/subscriptions>

Issues and Articles

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/issues>
<http://www.aipractitioner.com/articles>

Change of subscriber details

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/customer/account/login>

Publication Advertising/Sponsorship

For the advertising rates, contact Nathalie van de Loo,
Instituut voor Interventiekunde
nathalie@instituutvoorinterventiekunde.nl