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PERFECT GAZE

Insight into what elite athletes actually see when they perform



by Doug Rappaport

Have you ever wondered what you look at when you perform a skill—when putting in golf, for example, or when shooting a basketball, or when trying to get open on the soccer field?

Have you ever wondered whether you see the game differently than your teammates and competitors? Perhaps they see critical cues quicker than you do, or for longer periods of time, or at just the right moment.

Is it possible that elite athletes see their sport differently than non-elite athletes? And, if so, does it matter—does control of gaze affect how well an athlete performs? And, if it does, is it possible to understand how elite performers control their gaze and to then train lower-skilled athletes to control their gaze in a similar way?

All of these questions and much more are answered in a new book published by Human Kinetics titled, *Perception, Cognition, and Decision Training: The Quiet Eye in Action*. The book, authored by Dr. Joan Vickers, presents three vision training concepts which are solidly based in research and provide the foundations behind an innovative decision-training system that has been used successfully for years in training high-performance athletes. The concepts are:

- **Vision-in-Action.** The first concept is the vision-in-action method of recording what athletes actually see when they perform.

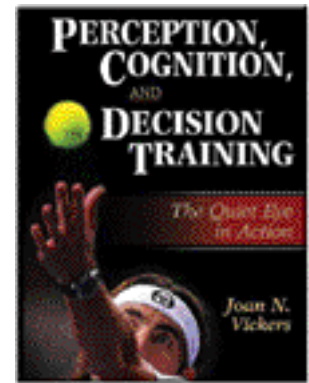
- **Quiet-Eye Phenomenon.** The second concept is the quiet eye phenomenon used by athletes to gain critical information in the final moment before executing a skill.
- **Decision Training.** The third concept is decision training to identify not only how athletes make performance decisions but also how to facilitate visual perception and action to enhance performance.

Vickers, who discovered the quiet eye and developed the vision-in-action method, outlines how these three concepts are integrated into a system for helping athletes improve their performance.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I introduces the visuomotor system and two processing systems that work together to permit the great range of actions humans perform. Eye-tracking technology is reviewed along with new possibilities for measuring what athletes really see when they perform.

In part II, Vickers presents a unique framework of gaze control. Readers learn how skilled athletes control the gaze to gain optimal control of their attention and decision making. The quiet eye phenomenon, measurement, and training are also addressed.

Part III describes a decision-training model and its application to how coaches



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design practice, provide feedback, use questions, and give instructions. Decision training is designed to improve athletes' attention, anticipation, concentration, memory, and problem-solving skills, leading to extraordinary long-term gains.

The research presented explains the growing importance of cognition, vision, and decision making. It also explains how to apply this knowledge to sport training and coaching.

— Doug Rappaport