

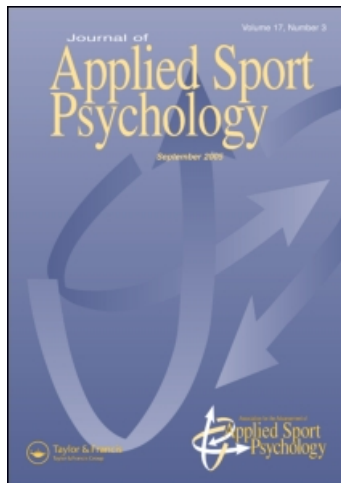
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Collegiate Coaches' Perceptions of Their Goal-Setting Practices: A Qualitative Investigation

ROBERT WEINBERG, JOANNE BUTT,
BETSY KNIGHT, AND NICOLE PERRITT

Miami University

The purpose of the present investigation was to assess the perceptions of coaches regarding the process of goal setting using a qualitative methodology. Participants were 14 NCAA collegiate coaches from the American Midwest representing both team and individual sports. All participants were head coaches and were asked to respond to the interview questions in relation to their current head coaching position. Results revealed that coaches employed goal setting extensively for both individual and team goals in practice and competition. In addition, many interesting findings regarding the process of goal setting emerged including (a) coaches tended to set short-term goals although there were some nebulous long-term goals; (b) coaches only inconsistently wrote down their goals; (c) goals were both dictated by coaches and set in collaboration with players with a focus on collaboration; (d) the primary function of goals was to provide direction and focus; (e) goal commitment was related to enjoyment/fun; (f) process, performance, and outcome goals were set but coaches focused on performance and outcome goals; and (g) physical, psychological, and time barriers impeded goal attainment. These findings are discussed in relation to the current empirical/theoretical goal-setting literature and suggestions for best practice by sport psychology researchers are offered.

One of the most popular and widely researched motivational strategies for enhancing performance and productivity in industrial-organizational, sport, and educational settings is goal setting. The acceptance and use of goal setting to enhance performance and productivity has come in response to overwhelming evidence for the motivational and performance-enhancing effects in the organizational and industrial literature. For example, of the 201 studies reviewed by Locke and Latham (1990a) with over 40,000 participants, goal-setting effects were evident in 183, a 91% success rate. In addition, five meta-analyses of general goal-setting research have strongly supported the contention that specific, challenging goals lead to

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Address correspondence to Robert Weinberg, Department of Physical Education, Health, and Sport Studies, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056. E-mail weinber@muohio.edu

higher levels of task performance than do-your-best goals, easy goals, or no goals (see Locke & Latham, 1990a; 1990b for reviews). Specifically, in the 192 studies reviewed in these meta-analyses, 175 (91%) provided support for harder goals producing higher levels of task performance than easy goals with effect sizes ranging from .42 to .82, as well as performance increases of 8-16%. Finally, Locke and Latham's (1990a) review of over 500 studies documented the consistency and magnitude of goal-setting effects across a wide variety of tasks, settings, performance criteria, and types of participants.

GOAL SETTING IN SPORT AND EXERCISE

As briefly reviewed above, the consensus of goal-setting research in industrial-organizational psychology (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990a; 1990b) clearly indicates that goals are extremely effective in enhancing performance and productivity. Goal setting research in sport and exercise contexts has also demonstrated consistent and powerful performance-enhancement effects, although the magnitude of results have not been as robust as those demonstrated in industrial-organizational settings (Burton, Weinberg, Yukelson, & Weigand, 1998; Kylo & Landers, 1995; Weinberg, 1996; Weinberg, Burton, Yukelson, & Weigand, 2000).

To help clear up some of the inconsistencies in the goal-setting literature in sport and exercise, Kylo and Landers (1995) conducted the first meta-analysis in this area using 36 studies. Results revealed that the mean effect size was .34, demonstrating that goal setting can be a successful technique for enhancing performance. In addition, moderately difficult, absolute (all goal-treatment participants received the same goal), and combined short- and long-term goals were associated with the greatest increases in performance. However, a number of moderator variables such as competition, goal acceptance, participants' participation in the goal-setting process, previous experience with the task, and public versus private nature of goal setting were also noted. Finally, other analyses of the goal-setting literature in sport and exercise have revealed positive performance-enhancement effects in approximately two-thirds of all studies.

The recent meta-analysis and other empirical reviews of the goal-setting literature has helped our understanding of the goal-setting process in sport and exercise. However, practitioners are still left with a void in terms of how to actually administer an effective goal-setting program. In essence, although we have learned a great deal about the relationship between setting goals and sport performance, few of the more than 50 empirical published studies have been conducted with athletes or athletic teams (Anderson, Crowell, Doman, & Howard, 1988; Kingston & Hardy, 1997; Swain & Jones, 1995; and Weinberg, Sticher, & Richardson, 1994, are some notable exceptions). Rather, most competitive goal-setting studies have been conducted in laboratory settings or employed motor or sport tasks with non-athletes or recreational sport populations. Therefore, the empirical, mostly laboratory-based studies that have filled the literature over the past 15 years have not significantly helped us understand how, when, and why athletes set goals,

what goals they perceive as most effective, and what barriers impede goal attainment, as well as what kinds of goals are most important.

To start to better understand the process of goal setting from the athletes' point of view, Weinberg, Burton, Yukelson, and Weigand (1993) gathered preliminary information via an extensive questionnaire concerning collegiate athletes' perceptions of the frequency, effectiveness, and importance of different types of goals to enhance performance and personal growth. Descriptive results revealed that virtually all athletes practiced some type of goal setting to enhance performance and that they found their goals to be moderately to highly effective. Athletes also reported that improving overall performance, winning, and fun/affiliation were the three most important goals.

More recently, Weinberg, Burke, and Jackson (1997) replicated and extended the above study by investigating goal-setting practices of youth tennis players and their coaches. This was one of the first studies investigating coaches' goal-setting practices. Along these lines, many significant differences between coaches and players were found with coaches generally more frequently using different goal-setting strategies and finding them more effective. The notion that goal setting is an important part of coaches' approach to competition is highlighted in the research of Cote, Salmela, and Russell (1995a; 1995b). Specifically, results from qualitative interviews studying the training and competition behaviors of elite gymnastic coaches revealed that goal setting was a central aspect to the mental training of gymnasts.

Along these lines, most recently, qualitative data were gathered regarding goal-setting practices of high school coaches (Weinberg, Butt, & Knight, 2001). Although there were some very interesting findings regarding the process of goal setting in high school coaches, this needs to be extended to other levels of coaches. Therefore, the primary purpose of the present investigation was to extend the very limited data base on coaches' perceptions of their goal-setting practices by gathering qualitative data through in-depth interviews with collegiate coaches. There is a great amount of research in the intrinsic/extrinsic motivation literature to suggest that the context for athletes to perform is much different in college (especially American Division I) than in high school (Amorose & Horn, in press; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Fredrick & Ryan, 1995). More specifically, with the possibility of scholarships in college, many athletes' motives can become more extrinsic than intrinsic in nature from high school to college. In fact, changes in intrinsic motivation have been documented from the beginning to the end of one season at college (Amorose & Horn, 2000).

These changes in intrinsic motivation may be the result of coaching behaviors changing from from high school to college. In fact, research by Chelladurai and Carron (1983) has documented the fact that preferred coaching behaviors of athletes do change from high school to college. In addition, the developmental literature suggests that there appear to be differences between the high school and college age groups (Andersen, 1996), although no studies have directly investigated coaches' perceptions of coaching these two different groups through qualitative analysis. Furthermore, Andersen (1996) notes that the transition to college can be

difficult for athletes for a variety of reasons (e.g., going from being a star in high school to having to earn a starting position in college), thus highlighting the developmental differences between high school and college athletes.

As noted above, most of the studies have focused on the types of goals athletes' set, yet in most competitive athletic situations, coaches are the main ones in charge of setting up formal (or informal) goal-setting programs. Along these lines, the focus in this study is on the process of goal setting since we know very little about how coaches actually go about setting both team and individual goals for their players. An additional focus of the present study was to investigate how coaches set goals for themselves, since this has been a totally neglected area in previous research except for the recent research of Weinberg et al. (2001).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 14 (9 males and 5 females) NCAA Division I school coaches from an American midwest university, ranging in coaching experience from 8 to 21 years and in age from 27 to 47. The coaches represented both team and individual sports including baseball, basketball, American football, field hockey, track and cross-country, volleyball, swimming, tennis, and wrestling. Besides wanting to include a variety of sports and both men and women, coaches were selected based on their initial response indicating that they did use some sort of goal setting. All participants were head coaches and were asked to respond to questions in relation to their current head coaching position. All coaches were assured that their responses would be strictly confidential, as only group data would be reported. In the case of individual quotes, no coaches were specifically identified, as quotes were only noted by sport.

Interview and Interview Guide

All of the coaches participated in an in-depth interview ranging from 45 to 60 minutes in length. All interviews were tape-recorded and conducted by the same individual, a graduate student in sport psychology, who took classes in sport psychology (which included coursework in goal setting), and was trained in interviewing techniques. The training included pilot testing of the interview protocol, reading the literature on effective interviewing techniques, and training by the lead investigator, which included in-depth discussions and practical tips regarding the specific interview process. All interviews were conducted in person.

An interview guide was developed to standardize all interviews and minimize bias. The lead-in to the interview guide asked coaches to provide demographic information (e.g., age, years coaching, gender, sport, present coaching position). The interview guide was divided into three sections. One section focused on team goals, another section on individual athlete goals, and a final section on coaches' own goals. In addition, the interview was divided to focus on goal setting in prac-

tice versus goal setting in competition. Within each of these three sections across practice and competition, the same types of questions were asked. The goal-setting topics included in the interview were based on empirical/theoretical goal-setting research that has found these areas to be important in relation to goal effectiveness (Burton et al., 1998; Weinberg et al., 1997). In addition, in order to facilitate the specific areas included in the interview format, informal interviews were conducted with coaches (not those included in the present investigation) highlighting their practice of goal setting. The specific areas of these questions included the following: (a) process of setting goals; (b) barriers to goal achievement; (c) reevaluation of goals; (d) perceived frequency and effectiveness of setting different types of goals (i.e., outcome, performance, process); (e) measurement of goal achievement; (f) short-term versus long-term goals; (g) goal commitment; (h) goal purpose; (i) goal difficulty; (j) relationship between team and individual goals; and (k) disadvantages in setting goals, including if goals can cause pressure. Follow-up probes were employed where appropriate depending on the specific responses of each of the coaches.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using hierarchical content analysis similar to the procedure outlined by Gould, Eklund, and Jackson (1993) and Patton (1990) with one important difference. In their research, lower-order themes identified by the athletes within each section of the interview were logged and then grouped into higher order themes thus establishing a hierarchy of responses moving from the specific to general levels. In the present investigation, however, general content areas of goal setting were already established by the nature of the questions making up the interview format (e.g., purposes of setting goals, goal difficulty, goal barriers, goal commitment) and then coaches' responses within each of these preexisting categories were logged and grouped into common themes where appropriate in an inductive manner similar to the procedure adopted by Gould et al. (1993) and Cote, Salmela, Baria, and Russell (1993). These raw data themes consisted of quotes or paraphrased quotes that captured the major ideas conveyed, which were then grouped into higher order themes if they logically fitted together. Thus, instead of moving solely from the specific to the general as done by Gould et al. (1993), the present study started with the general dimensions (goal categories) being identified, and then moved in an inductive manner from the specific (raw data themes) to more general lower and higher order themes. The specific step-by-step procedure to analyze and reduce the data is described below. This procedure generally attempted to provide reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness to the data by employing previous qualitative methodologies and by obtaining triangular consensus using three independent researchers.

1. All tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, which resulted in 147 pages of single-spaced text.

2. Three investigators read and reread all transcripts until they became completely familiar with them. The investigators all had background and knowledge in sport psychology and the specific area of goal setting.
3. Independently, each investigator identified raw data themes characterizing each athlete's responses within each subsection of the interview. Using suggestions from Cote et al. (1993), the data were appropriately tagged to produce a set of concepts that adequately represented the information included in the interview transcripts. In addition, this open coding (Tesch, 1990) helped define the appropriate content taken from the interviews. Subsequently, through extensive discussion, consensus was obtained. In essence, agreement, or triangular consensus, was obtained on all raw data themes as all three investigators engaged in dialectic exchanges or discussions to make explicit the reasoning guiding content and thematic analysis (Gadamer, 1989). Both idiographic and nomothetic analyses of the data were subjected to this form of in-depth critique and discussion. It is important to note that when disagreements among investigators emerged, the investigators restudied the original transcripts and rediscussed the points under contention. These procedures along with those developed by Cote et al. (1993), Eklund, (1996), Strauss (1987), Tesch (1990), and Miles and Huberman (1994) were all incorporated into the data analysis to ensure reliable, trustworthy, and credible data.
4. After establishing raw data themes (under the different goal-setting content areas/categories specified by the interview format) for all coaches through the extensive discussion noted above, each investigator took a section of the interview (i.e., either team goals, individual goals, or coaches' own goals) and attempted to group the raw data themes into higher order themes or categories that fit together. In this regard, following the general procedures first outlined by Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza (1989), and subsequently followed by other researchers employing a qualitative methodology (e.g., Bianco, Mayo, & Orlick, 1999; Eklund, 1996; Gould et al., 1993), an inductive analysis was conducted to identify common themes of greater generality emanating from the raw data themes. Contact summary sheets were consulted during this phase for additional information or insight on the relationships among data themes. Similar to Step 3, triangular consensus was reached for these higher order themes.
5. Finally, in addition to identifying these common themes, a tally was conducted across all coaches to determine the consistency with which the different themes were noted by the different coaches. In essence, the more frequently a specific theme was mentioned across the coaches, the more universal that particular theme would likely be across coaches. Along these lines, a chart was developed to reflect the range of individual goal-setting experiences described in the interview.

RESULTS

The results are presented to correspond with the interview format. However, due to redundancy and space considerations, the material on team and individual goals, as well as practice and competition goals, were combined, followed by results relating to coaches' own goals. So that the reader can get an overall look at the different higher order themes that emerged from the data, Table 1 presents these higher order themes by individual, team, and coach goals, including the number of raw data themes forming these higher order themes (as well as the total number of raw data themes found within each overall category). Before presenting the analysis of the specific goal-setting categories, some overall observations based on the qualitative analysis for the entire sample seem appropriate. It is important to note that all results relate to coaches' perceptions of goal-setting practices because actual observation of goal setting in matches and practices was not conducted.

Were Coaches Good at Goal Setting?

Despite the many discussions of basic goal-setting principles, we know little as to what extent coaches are using the principles in setting up goal-setting programs with their athletes and teams. Because we know little about this question, it would seem instructive to begin the results with an overview of how coaches utilized goal-setting principles in working with their athletes and teams. In essence, were coaches systematically employing goal setting principles with their teams based on the extant literature?

In examining the 14 verbatim transcripts, one point that was readily evident was the divergence in how sophisticated or systematic the use and implementation of goal setting was among this sample of collegiate coaches. However, it should be noted that this variability did not include differences due to individual/team sport or gender. There was a good deal of variability, however, as to how sophisticated each coach was in implementing their goal-setting programs. Specifically, two coaches really did not exhibit a clear understanding of goal-setting principles and the goal-setting process. Rather, their interviews tended to be "shallow" with little specifics about the process and implementation of a goal-setting program. This typically resulted in a very non-systematic use of goals which often were not written down, not measured in a formal sense, and not reevaluated, with little time set aside for actual goal setting with the teams (but note that these coaches' interviews were kept in as part of the study).

Twelve of the coaches were fairly to extremely knowledgeable regarding the principles of effective goal setting. This knowledge translated into coaches' typically planning some goals in the off-season, meeting with the team, as well as individual athletes, at the beginning of the season, setting specific goals for the season including both short- and long-term goals, setting both individual and team goals, writing these goals down, keeping records of goal progress, and systematically reevaluating the goals.

Table 1
Higher-Order Themes for Team, Individual, and Coach Goals¹

Team Goals	Individual Goals	Coach Goals
<i>For practice</i>	<i>For practice</i>	<i>For practice</i>
<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 42) - dictated or initiated by the coaching staff (n = 8) - derived with player input (n = 10) - practice to practice (n = 7) - based on previous performance and standards (n = 5)	<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 47) - dictated by the coach (n = 8) - input from the players (n = 11) - practice to practice (n = 4) - goals set as needed (n = 4)	<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 23) - goals were set at the beginning of the season (n = 3) - looks at player/team needs (n = 7) - tried to meet player needs (n = 6)
<i>Goal Areas</i> (N = 37) - physical (n = 27) - psychological (n = 10)	<i>Goal Areas</i> (N = 27) - performance of skills (n = 7) - conditioning (n = 8) - psychological (n = 7)	<i>Goal Areas</i> (N = 34) - player related (n = 5) - personal development (n = 11) - administrative/organizational (n = 6)
<i>Measurement</i> (N = 30) - objective (n = 8) - subjective (n = 22)	<i>Measurement</i> (N = 20) - objective (n = 8) - subjective (n = 16)	<i>Measurement</i> (N = 21) - observation (n = 10) - feedback (n = 7)
<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals</i> (N = 10) practice to practice (n = 8)	<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals</i> (N = 14) - practice to practice (n = 9) - short-term leading to long-term (n = 3)	<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals</i> (N = 14) practice to practice (n = 8)
<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals</i> (N = 8) short-term leading to long-term (n = 3)	<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals</i> (N = 9) general references of getting better and improving (n = 6)	<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals</i> (N = 5) personal development of coaches (n = 3)
<i>For competition</i>	<i>For competition</i>	<i>For competition</i>
<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 45) - dictated by coaches (n = 10) - player/coach collaboration in goal setting (n = 9) - based on opponent ability (n = 5)	<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 32) - set with player input (n = 9) - coaches dictated goals (n = 6) - timing (e.g., as needed, beginning of season) (n = 8)	<i>Goal Process</i> (N = 22) - objective (n = 7) - subjective (n = 14)

Table 1 (Continued)

Team Goals	Individual Goals	Coach Goals
<i>Goal Areas (N = 36)</i> • psychological (<i>n</i> = 15) • playing hard (<i>n</i> = 5) • strategies/tactics (<i>n</i> = 5) • performance of skills (<i>n</i> = 6) • conditioning (<i>n</i> = 5)	<i>Goal Areas (N = 26)</i> • strategy/technique (<i>n</i> = 5) • psychological (<i>n</i> = 10) • conditioning (<i>n</i> = 4) • performance of skills (<i>n</i> = 4)	<i>Goal Areas (N = 28)</i> • player/team development (<i>n</i> = 6) • personal development (<i>n</i> = 8) • administration on-court (<i>n</i> = 6) • administration off-court (<i>n</i> = 5)
<i>Measurement (N = 35)</i> • objective (<i>n</i> = 15) • subjective (<i>n</i> = 20)	<i>Measurement (N = 25)</i> • objective (<i>n</i> = 7) • subjective (<i>n</i> = 18)	<i>Measurement (N = 24)</i> • objective (<i>n</i> = 7) • subjective (<i>n</i> = 17)
<i>Written (N = 16)</i> • posted in locker room (<i>n</i> = 6) • written on paper (<i>n</i> = 8)	<i>Written (N = 9)</i>	<i>Written (N = 5)</i>
<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals (N = 15)</i> • competition to competition (<i>n</i> = 9)	<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals (N = 16)</i> • game to game (<i>n</i> = 7) • short-term leading to long-term (<i>n</i> = 4)	<i>Goal Proximity: Short-term goals (N = 10)</i> • game to game (<i>n</i> = 5)
<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals (N = 12)</i> • championship goals (<i>n</i> = 5) • short-term leading to long-term (<i>n</i> = 3) • enjoyment (<i>n</i> = 3)	<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals (N = 7)</i> • end of season (<i>n</i> = 4)	<i>Goal Proximity: Long-term goals (N = 6)</i>
<i>Goal Barriers (N = 39)</i> • psychological (<i>n</i> = 17) • physical (<i>n</i> = 10) • social (<i>n</i> = 6)	<i>Goal Barriers (N = 34)</i> • physical (<i>n</i> = 6) • psychological (<i>n</i> = 14) • other distractions (<i>n</i> = 5) • coaching style (<i>n</i> = 6)	<i>Goal Barriers (I = 25)</i> • administrative factors (<i>n</i> = 5) • perceived lack of time (<i>n</i> = 7) • coach factors (<i>n</i> = 5) • athlete factors (<i>n</i> = 4)
<i>Goal Reevaluation (N = 39)</i> • how often (<i>n</i> = 12) • why (<i>n</i> = 3) • how (<i>n</i> = 18)	<i>Goal Reevaluation (N = 23)</i> • how often (<i>n</i> = 9) • why (<i>n</i> = 5) • how (<i>n</i> = 9)	<i>Goal Reevaluation (N = 18)</i> • how often (<i>n</i> = 7) • why (<i>n</i> = 5) • how (<i>n</i> = 6)

Table 1 (Continued)

Team Goals	Individual Goals	Coach Goals
<i>Goal Types</i> coaches set goals across the three goal areas (process, performance, and outcome) but focused on performance and process goals	<i>Goal Types</i> employed all three fairly evenly with emphasis on process and performance	<i>Goal Types</i> all coaches used both outcome and performance goals, with the focus being predominantly on performance goals
<i>Goal Commitment (N = 28)</i> - success/achievement (<i>n</i> = 9) - love/enjoyment of sport (<i>n</i> = 4) - team responsibility/loyalty (<i>n</i> = 6)	<i>Goal Commitment (N = 21)</i> - improvement/success (<i>n</i> = 4) - psychological (<i>n</i> = 3) - responsibility to team (<i>n</i> = 4) - effort (<i>n</i> = 6)	<i>Goal Commitment (N = 29)</i> - love of the sport (<i>n</i> = 10) - facilitating athletic success (<i>n</i> = 7)
<i>Goal Purpose (N = 27)</i> - providing direction and focus (<i>n</i> = 13) - improvement/success (<i>n</i> = 5)	<i>Goal Purpose (N = 27)</i> - player improvement/success (<i>n</i> = 11) - staying focused (<i>n</i> = 7) - motivation (<i>n</i> = 7)	<i>Goal Purpose (N = 23)</i> - providing direction and focus to both themselves and the players (<i>n</i> = 8) - achievement (<i>n</i> = 6)
<i>Disadvantages (N = 25)</i> - undermine performance if they were unrealistic and thus not attainable (<i>n</i> = 10) - too much pressure (<i>n</i> = 8)	<i>Disadvantages (N = 22)</i> - goals too high/unrealistic (<i>n</i> = 7) - too much pressure (<i>n</i> = 7)	<i>Disadvantages (N = 22)</i> - many did not perceive any real significant disadvantages (<i>n</i> = 6) - too much pressure (<i>n</i> = 4) - if goals set to high (<i>n</i> = 6)
	<i>Individual vs. Team Goals (N = 29)</i> - individual goals lead to team success (<i>n</i> = 16) - team goals are more important than individual goals (<i>n</i> = 4) - both equally important (<i>n</i> = 9)	

¹ Only the most often given themes are noted in the table, so not all categories add up to the total.

Consistent Findings/Differences Across Individual, Team, and Coach Goals

A perusal of the transcripts also revealed a great deal of similarities in the results across individual, team, and coach goals, with more overlap between individual and team. For example, in the process of setting goals, 13 coaches set individual and team goals by either dictating them to the team or eliciting input from

the athletes. However, there was great variability as to exactly how these goals were set, such as whether they were written, whether the coaches and athletes met, or how the data were gathered to set the goals. An example of the use of athlete input and coach dictating the goals is illustrated in the following quote by a swimming coach:

We set both team and individual goals. My coaching staff and I draw up the team goals and place them on a blackboard. These are discussed during our first meeting but these goals are not open to change from the athletes. On the other hand, athletes' individual goals are decided upon through a negotiation process between the athlete and coaching staff. They suggest some goals and then we react to these and come to an agreement.

Another consistent finding across team and individual goals occurred in the areas in which goals were set with the emphasis being more physically-based (e.g., performance of skills, conditioning) or more psychologically-based (e.g., emotional control, mental skills). Interestingly, coaches' goal areas were very different than for teams or individuals with their goals either being more self-focused (e.g., promptness, communication) or more athlete-focused (e.g., athlete emotional control, winning). Results also revealed that team and individual goals tended to be measured both subjectively and objectively with a little more emphasis on subjective assessments. However, coaches' own goals were measured almost totally subjectively, relying a great deal on observation, feedback from both players and coaches, and personal reflection.

In examining short- and long-term goals, they were both employed for teams and individuals, with short-term goals seen as taking small steps to reaching the long-term goals. Although coaches' ($n = 9$) set both short- and long-term goals for themselves, they tended to focus more on short-term goals with the focus being on each practice or each competition, rather than looking down the road to the end of the season. Writing down goals has been encouraged in most goal-setting chapters to help increase player commitment. However, six of the coaches did not write their goals for either individual or team goals. Coaches did this even less when setting their own goals, with only four coaches systematically writing these goals down. This goes against standard practice but was evidenced several times in the interviews. As an example, a basketball coach noted, "I just don't have time to write my goals down. I have them and they are important to me, but they're simply not written down."

Some interesting findings appeared across areas when coaches were asked about the types of goals that they employed. Specifically, when setting individual goals, coaches felt that both performance and process goals were most important, whereas outcome goals were seen as equally important as performance and process goals when setting team goals. Although this practice is not necessarily consistent with current goal-setting principles, it may be effective (or at least standard practice) for some coaches. As a tennis coach said, "The bottom line for a collegiate tennis team is win-loss record, therefore, the players are always focused on the outcome

when it's time to play matches." When coaches ($n = 11$) set goals for themselves, however, performance goals were by far the most utilized and important.

Team and Individual Goals for Practice and Competition

As noted previously, due to the similarity across the responses to individual and team goals, as well as practice and competition goals, these areas will be combined in the upcoming results section. However, they are broken up in Table 1 to provide the reader a view of the specific goals set under team and individual conditions, as well as during practice and competition. Although team/individual and practice/competition goals were combined in the results section, it should be noted that questions regarding goal process, goal measurement, goal proximity, and goal areas were asked both for practice and competition, whereas the other remaining areas only asked for competition (as this made more sense based on the goal questions asked). In addition, all questions were repeated for both team and individual goals.

The first, and probably most fundamental question to answer was if collegiate coaches actually use individual/team goal setting. Results revealed that 13 of the 14 coaches used some sort of individual goal setting in both competition and practice and 12 of 14 coaches employed team-related goals. However, it should be noted that there were large individual differences in the emphasis placed on individual versus team goals by the coaches.

Goal process. Coaches were asked "how they set team and individual goals for practice and competition." The most consistent higher-order theme identified by the coaches for both practice and competition indicated that the goals were derived in some manner "with player input" or having "player/coach collaboration in goal setting." This meant that the players provided the coaching staff with input or suggestions regarding goals, the players themselves actually set the goals, input from the captains was received, or the coach set the goals but these were modified by player input and feedback. Although the process of collaborative goal setting sometimes varied, the general process followed is emphasized in the following quote by a softball coach:

The players sit down as a group (led by the captains) and the team tries to come up with criteria they think are important for practice so they can be good in competition. They usually talk about things like keeping focused, working hard, and playing together as a team. We try to make these somewhat measurable, but otherwise the goals comes from the players themselves.

Although coaches definitely used player input, another theme revealed that goals were also "dictated by coaches." However, the raw data themes revealed that there was wide variability as to exactly how these goals were set (e.g., set before each competition, team meeting at beginning of the season, based on ability of the opponent). This would appear contrary to the previous theme, but coaches tended to somewhat compartmentalize these goals, noting that some types of goals should have more player input, while others should be under the auspices of the

coach. However, the particular situations where goals were more appropriate for the coach to dictate versus receiving player input was different across coaches.

In determining when these goals were set, a higher-order theme for practice that was consistent across team/individual goals was that coaches set goals “practice to practice” and continued setting goals as needed throughout the season. Similarly, for competition, coaches revealed that goals were set “at the beginning of the season,” “competition to competition,” or “if the athlete is struggling.” Thus, whether in practice or competition, goals were set throughout the season.

Goal areas. The most often cited area across practice team/individual goals was termed “physical” with coaches noting that they set practice goals in the area of “performance of skills,” “conditioning,” and “tactics/strategies.” Similarly, the most often given physically-oriented higher-order theme for competition was termed “strategies/tactics,” and included raw data themes that focused on how to actually perform the skill(s) in competition. Close behind was the higher-order theme for competition termed “physical skills,” where the focus was on the successful performance of actual skills within the competition. Another physically-oriented theme for competition was “conditioning,” which included a wide variety of aerobic and anaerobic drills aimed at improving physical conditioning. The other major area where coaches set practice and competition team/individual goals was termed “psychological” and included such things as staying focused, keeping a positive attitude, leadership, developing mental skills, controlling emotions, and having fun.

Measurement. Although many different measurement strategies were employed for individual/team and practice/competition, they all could be classified under the higher-order themes of “subjective” or “objective.” The two most often employed subjective measures included coach observation (including use of video analysis), and feedback from players (written and oral). On the objective side, the outcome (e.g., winning/losing), as well as game statistics were the two major indicators of goal attainment.

Goal proximity. Regarding short-term goals, the predominant theme was that they were set “practice-to-practice” or “competition-to-competition. In addition, another common theme was “short-term goals leading to achievement of long-term goals.” Long-term goals were not employed as often as short-term goals and tended to be more competition focused. The theme identified was termed “end of season/championship goals” with the focus on achieving some desired outcome at the end of the season such as winning or going to conference tournaments. But at times, the long-term goals had little to do with sport performance as noted by this tennis coach:

Long-term goals generally have something to do with just enjoying tennis in the future, since most of these players won't go very far in tennis, but they will be recreational players. So if they can get a good basis and have some positive experiences in tennis, that would be the long-term for them.

Written. Eight coaches wrote down their goals, although a number of them did so in a sporadic fashion. Specifically, four coaches reported that they only some-

times had athletes write down their goals or at times it simply depended on the specific situation. In addition, when they did write goals down, it often took a number of different forms. For example, goals were sometimes put in the locker room, on a chalkboard, or on a piece of paper (the most often used technique). But some coaches were more serious about writing their goals down and then evaluating them as seen by the following quote from a volleyball coach:

We always wrote down our goals so that it's visual and they understand it. The next day we meet to talk about our goals. We always go over whether we accomplished it or not, because I don't believe in setting goals unless you can see it to the finish, or know why you didn't finish.

Goal barriers. The most often cited barriers, mostly in competition, were termed "psychological barriers" and "physical barriers," although there were a great many different raw data themes within these two broad categories. For example, psychological barriers included such things as lack of focus, lack of team confidence, lack of commitment, lack of cohesion, mood swings, and selfishness. Physical barriers included such things as injury/illness, limited athletic ability, lack of experience, and lack of conditioning. In general, psychological barriers were seen as more amenable to change, whereas physical barriers tended to be seen as more out of the control of coaches.

Reevaluation of goals. Results revealed that most coaches reevaluated the goals (mostly for competition), although this reevaluation varied greatly as to how often, how, or why these goals were reset. For example, regarding "how/why" the goals were reevaluated, coaches most often discussed it first with athletes, although, at times, these were either dictated or initiated by the coach. In addition, goals were reevaluated based on the opposition. However, most typically, it was an athlete (sometimes a team) having a specific problem that initiated a reevaluation. An example of how a volleyball coach reevaluates her team's goals is provided below:

As a team, we actually have team meetings on this. We have the written form down and we look at it. If we failed, obviously the goal is useless. So what other goal do we want to set that can get us back on track? Or if we accomplished the goal, what higher goal will help catapult us into the conference championship, which would be the main goal at the end of the season?

In terms of "how often" team/individual goals were reevaluated, time frames ranged from every practice/competition, to weekly, to monthly, to the end of the season, with some coaches simply reevaluating as needed. As noted above, in most cases, this re-evaluation was prompted by some performance difficulty, although some coaches simply reevaluated goals periodically, regardless of performance outcomes.

Goal difficulty. In terms of the level of goal difficulty for team/individual goals, the main higher-order themes were "coaches' previous experience" and "player ability/experience." What appears to occur is that coaches use their own experi-

ence with previous teams and athletes, as well as taking a close look at the talent and experience level of their current group of athletes in helping to set the level of goal difficulty. Although they tend to set goals higher (rather than lower), coaches generally try to find out what is realistic, but it is difficult for the athletes. This delicate balance is seen in the following quote by a precision skating coach:

Because we have such high performing athletes anyway, our goals tend to be very high. But, for example, if I put a pretty specific piece of footwork in that's difficult, I'll say, okay if they don't have it in a week, I need to change it to make it more realistic for them. We continually try to change our goals and assessing them to make them difficult, but realistic.

Goal types. Results revealed that coaches set goals fairly evenly across the three goal types. However, coaches tended to stress performance and process goals as evidenced by the following quote from a swimming coach:

I think that teams forget about the process too often. They look at the outcome and they look at the performance and you forget that the process gets them to the outcome and gets them to the performance. So the ladies on our team keep a process-oriented outlook and that's what we are promoting as a team to be successful. The kids that do not focus on the process are more worried about the outcome and the performance and, thus, do not get what they want.

Goal commitment. Goals were somewhat different for goal commitment based on whether they were team- or individual-based. Specifically, the most often cited higher-order theme relating to team goal commitment was "success/ achievement." In essence, seeing them improve, and actually achieving success, helped athletes stay motivated and committed to their goals. In addition, another higher-order theme seen in relation to teams was termed "team responsibility/loyalty." Here, the responsibility athletes had for themselves, and their teammates, was critical.

The other higher-order theme mentioned by several coaches relating to both team and individual goal commitment was the "love/enjoyment of playing the sport." This is more of an intrinsic reason for goal commitment as opposed to achieving success and meeting certain standards, which is more external in nature. Finally, a higher-order theme only seen in individual goals was termed "effort." Here, the focus on goal commitment was on doing your best and taking pride in what you were doing.

Purposes of setting goals. The most prevalent higher-order themes relating to team/individual goal purposes was "providing direction and focus." In essence, goals were perceived as helping to keep athletes on track and moving forward in the right direction. In addition, coaches reported that one of the other main purposes of setting goals was to focus on "player improvement/success" which indicated that the setting of goals somehow helped see their progress and achieve success. Moving toward one's goals provided feedback that they indeed were improving and getting better.

Disadvantages of setting goals. The most often cited higher-order theme re-

lated to goal disadvantages was that goals could undermine performance if they were unrealistic and thus not attainable (however it should be noted that several coaches indicated there were no negative consequences to setting goals). Coaches noted a number of negative consequences when setting goals too high such as undermining confidence, becoming distracted, getting discouraged, and losing self-esteem. This is seen in the following quote by a track and field coach:

The problem was that by them not reaching their intermediate goal, they gave up. Not all of them, but several of them. So they didn't believe they could run well in the conference championship and they didn't. In essence, people really became discouraged when they didn't reach their goals; particularly if they are outcome goals. This is one of the reasons I don't set goals as much.

Coaches' goals for practice and competition. The final section of the interview asked coaches to discuss the goals they set for themselves in practice and competition, instead of focusing on athletes' goals which has been typically done in the literature. All coaches indicated that they set competition/practice goals. It is interesting to note, that coaches' responses to specific questions often revealed that the goals they set for themselves often had to do more directly with their teams rather than strictly about themselves. Thus, coaches' were defining their goals as actions they could take to improve, whether it is themselves or their players/teams.

Goal process. In setting up goals, there were a wide variety of strategies employed by the coaches for practice and competition. Regarding practice, the principal higher-order theme under goal process noted by 13 coaches, was that goals were set "based on players' needs." In essence, coaches did an evaluation of their existing talent and tried to match the goals to what the players needed to improve and become successful. But as noted above, these goals tended to be player-based and not really coach-based. For competition, one higher-order theme was termed "subjective," and included things such as assessing the mood of the team, using past coaching experience, understanding the needs of the team, and providing expectations to the members of the team. The other higher-order theme was labeled "objective," and included such things as using competition performance data, reviewing tapes and scouting reports of other teams, and data gathered in practice. Here is how a volleyball coach attempted to set goals for herself:

Before matches, I would try to make sure I had a specific goal. Of course, this might depend on the quality of the competition. For example, one day it would be to focus on having the right substitution pattern. Another day it would be to try to stay positive, no matter what the situation. I use feedback especially from my assistant coaches to decide upon my goals for different competitions.

Goal areas. Unlike the process of setting goals which focused on the athletes, the goal areas identified by coaches tended to focus more on themselves and what they could do to help athletes have a more positive experience and be more successful. For example, regarding both practice and competition, the most often noted goal area was related to "personal development" and "self/personal improvement,"

focusing on the development/improvement of the coaches themselves, such as staying more positive (which was identified most often), controlling emotions, being prompt, being available to athletes, communicating more effectively, and having a good work ethic.

Another area, related to administrative issues, had higher-order themes labeled as “administrative/organizational,” “administration on-court” (e.g., game management/substitution, talking with players coming out of the game, game preparation) and “administration off-court” (e.g., recruitment, time management, punctuality). These themes generally related to tasks involving coaching duties, such as setting up recruitment meetings, management of time, and paperwork.

Measurement. The raw data themes for practice fell primarily under two higher-order themes. The first was termed “observation” and focused on the coach observing both the progress of the team, as well as the mood of the team. The second theme focused on “feedback” from the other assistant coaches and the players. Both of these themes might both be considered subjective in nature rather than relying on objective statistical data.

The data themes for competition were both “subjective” and “objective.” Objective measures included the outcome of the competition, game statistics, and performance of specific skills. Subjective measures included coach observation of player performance, feedback from coaching staff/player, self-reflection by the coach, and coach satisfaction with the players.

Goal proximity. Coaches set both short- and long-term goals for practice, but the emphasis was clearly on the short-term goals with all coaches setting short-term practice goals and 10 coaches setting short-term competition goals. The focus on short-term goals tended to be day-to-day, practice-to-practice, or competition-to-competition, depending on the specific needs of the team or individuals. Responses to long-term goals for both practice and competition were more diverse and focused more on getting players ready for end of season tournaments, or for competition, “personal development/ improvement” such as controlling emotions better, being more understanding, and simply continuing to become more educated as a coach.

Written. Interestingly enough, the majority of the coaches did not write down their goals. This goes against the recommendations of sport psychologists to write down goals to enhance motivation, commitment, and focus. Thus, it appears that coaches set their own goals without the help of actually writing them down. Or as some indicated, they just did not have time (or take the time) to write them down.

Goal barriers. The most often cited barrier by coaches was the “perceived lack of time” which attests to the myriad of responsibilities college coaches have to perform in today’s environment. Three additional higher-order themes were identified under goal barriers. Specifically, the other themes were labeled “coach factors” (e.g., lack of coach caring, coach-team conflicts, being too emotional, balancing family obligations, procrastination), “athlete factors” (e.g., lack of motivation, relationships, injury/illness), and “administrative factors” (e.g., need to raise money, lack of financial aid). A softball coach summarizes many of these barriers in the following quote:

It's sometimes hard to find the time to set goals with all the responsibilities that are thrown your way. Then you have things that you might need to change, such as being more organized, or balancing family and work responsibilities. And then there's the athlete who sometimes is not motivated or is into relationships that take away from focusing on the goals of the teams and themselves.

Reevaluation of goals. All coaches re-evaluated their own coaching goals throughout the season. The major higher-order theme that emerged was "how often" they reevaluated their goals, and this ranged from daily to weekly, to once a year, to every 2–3 years, to as necessary (although most re-evaluated daily or weekly). At times, coaches used feedback from the players and assistant coaches to re-evaluate goals, but most of the time it was initiated by themselves.

Goal types. Although coaches employed both outcome and performance goals in relation to their own coaching goals, the focus was most definitely on performance goals. In essence, the focus of coaches was on how they were doing, rather than on the outcome itself. An illustration of this focus is seen in the comments of a swimming coach:

To me, performance goals are probably more important than outcome. In other words, how did I perform? Did I do my job? Did I do the best I could? Did I achieve what I was trying to accomplish? I guess that's how I would evaluate myself. I mean outcome is important, but my performance is probably more important because it will affect people's lives more.

Goal commitment. By far, the two most often cited higher-order themes for goal commitment were termed "love of the sport," and "facilitating athlete success." In terms of their love of the sport, coaches spoke about the enjoyment of the sport itself, the enjoyment of seeing their players have fun and become successful, or the enjoyment of actually coaching the players. The higher order theme "facilitating athlete success" focused on coaches' desire to help athletes' become more successful and actually seeing them reach their goals. Coaches reported that although they strive for and enjoy winning, it is seeing their athletes become successful in life that is particularly fulfilling.

Goal purpose. Although a number of raw-data themes emerged regarded goal purpose, the major higher-order theme was "providing direction and focus," both to themselves and their players. A second higher-order theme was termed "achievement" and focused on helping players achieve success and providing and enhancing paths for excellence. The following quote from a baseball coach illustrates that goals can provide focus and direction:

The purpose of goals for me is to make sure I stay online and stay on track. I don't want to just muddle around, but I want to have something to work for and toward.

Disadvantages of setting goals. The major theme that evolved regarding the disadvantages of setting goals was that "goals set too high cause frustration." But some coaches felt that "setting goals too low" also was a disadvantage. So, for a

number of coaches, the key was trying to set goals that were in the middle (i.e., moderately difficult). If this could be accomplished, then goal setting was seen as a positive activity. The other higher-order theme that emerged from the data was termed "too much time" as several coaches noted that setting goals took up a lot of their time as other responsibilities (e.g., teaching) competed for their limited time.

When asked if goals could put too much pressure on them, most coaches said that it could put pressure on them (but did not have to) if the goals were only outcome-oriented because of the focus on winning or if they were unrealistic (as noted above).

DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of the present investigation was to replicate and extend the findings of the goal-setting practices of high school coaches by investigating the goal-setting practices of collegiate coaches in the three broad areas of team goals, individual athlete goals, and personal coaching goals. Due to the large amount of qualitative data generated from the extensive interview and accompanying lengthy results, the discussion will focus on the important qualitative findings relating to previous quantitative/qualitative goal-setting literature on team and individual goal setting rather than trying to discuss all the voluminous findings.

Process of Goal Setting

Most collegiate coaches in this sample set goals in all three areas underscoring the important role that coaches feel goal setting has within their programs. This is consistent with previous research on the goal-setting practices of high school coaches (Weinberg et al., 2001) who also found coaches consistently set team, individual, and self goals. In addition, research using collegiate athletes has found that the vast majority of them (96%) set individual goals (Weinberg et al., 1993). Furthermore, Brawley, Carron, and Widmeyer (1993) found team goal setting of collegiate athletes was also very prevalent with 75% reporting at least one team goal for competition and 82% reporting at least one team goal for practice. It is unclear whether this goal setting by athletes was prompted by coaches or conducted on their own as this waits empirical attention.

Although similar to the high school data (Weinberg et al., 2001) in that both input from the athletes, as well as coaches dictating goals, were major themes regarding the process of setting goals, the focus with the college athletes was a little more on gathering input from the athletes rather than merely dictating goals. There were certain types of goals, however, that coaches felt more compelled to dictate, but they also sought out captains, the entire team, or trusted individuals (e.g., seniors) to help in the setting of goals. With the greater maturity generally evidenced by college athletes (Gould & Finch, 1991), more emphasis is placed on collaborative goal setting. The notion of having input into the goal-setting process has long been espoused in both the organizational psychology literature (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990a, 1990b; Zander, 1971), as well as the sport psychology literature

(Widmeyer & DuCharme, 1997). More specifically, it has been argued having input on goals enhances the individual's (or group's) acceptance and commitment to the goal which will in turn increase effort and performance. This appeared to be the case with these college athletes.

Another important part of the process in setting effective goals, emphasized in both the sport/exercise and industrial psychology literatures, is that goals should be written down (Locke & Latham, 1990a; Weinberg, 1996). Results revealed many of the coaches ($n = 8$) did not have athletes write down their goals, and a majority of them did not write down their own coaching goals. Therefore, coaches were going against common suggestions by sport psychologists that goals should be written down to increase commitment. Several coaches did report lack of time for not writing down their goals but this would appear to be a perception rather than a reality. This would be similar to the exercise adherence research which has found that the people who report lack of time to exercise have, in fact, the same amount of time as those who did exercise on a regular basis (Dishman & Buckworth, 1996). But the key point is many college coaches do not write down their goals, although this could partly be explained by written goals serving as a source of potential pressure for the coaches. Further research would need to investigate this possibility.

Although researchers and practitioners in both the organizational and sport literatures have argued a combination of both short- and long-term goals is most effective in changing behavior and enhancing performance (Locke & Latham, 1985), this was not really the case for these college coaches. Specifically, results from the present investigation found most coaches set predominantly individual and team short-term goals, not only to focus attention on immediate practices and games, but also because the short-term goals provided feedback toward achievement of long-term goals. The short-term goals were very specific (e.g., what they needed to do in practice today), whereas the long-term goals were much more general (e.g., trying to get better or improving over the course of the season).

Goal Purpose and Commitment

Consistent with the results from the high school sample, the reason most often given for college coaches setting individual, team, and personal coaching goals was to provide focus and direction. This is consistent with Locke's (1968) original mechanistic goal-setting theory and more recent qualitative research using a collegiate sample of athletes by Yukelson, Weigand, Burton, and Weinberg (1992) which stated providing direction was one of the major mechanisms by which goals operate.

Goals regarding commitment were somewhat different based on whether they were set for the team/individual, or whether set for the coach. When set for the team, the goals were concerned with achieving team success and improving performance, or with loyalty and responsibility toward the team. Thus, the sense of teamwork was critical, as coaches felt these team goals helped keep themselves, as well as the players, committed to what they needed to accomplish to be successful.

This notion receives empirical support from the literature, which has found that group goals do not only increase athlete commitment, but also they can also increase cohesion and performance (Weingart, 1992; Weingart & Weldon, 1991; Widmeyer & DuCharme, 1997).

However, the most consistent responses across individual and coaches' personal goals relating to goal commitment were the enjoyment/love of the sport. This emphasis on fun/enjoyment in enhancing commitment is really more of an intrinsic motive, and is especially potent when coaches discuss their own goals. With anecdotal and empirical reports of coaching burnout (e.g., Dale & Weinberg, 1990; Kelley, 1994; Kelley & Gill, 1993), the importance of coaches emphasizing the love of the game, as well as the enjoyment of working with the athletes, appears to be a critical aspect of maintaining a sense of commitment to their sport and to their goals. As a result, this intrinsic aspect needs to be emphasized so coaches can maintain a high level of commitment and motivation over a long period of time.

Types of Goals

Collegiate coaches in the current sample employed all three different types of goals in their goal-setting programs. However, there was a definite trend (especially for individual player goals) for coaches to focus on performance and process over outcome. Many coaches noted that outcome goals were basically out of one's control, so their focus was on what they could control. This focus made performance and process goals more appealing.

Along these lines, Kingston and Hardy (1997) found focusing on process goals not only led to enhanced performance, but also improvement in important psychological factors such as concentration, cognitive anxiety control, and self-efficacy. It was encouraging to see that coaches are including more process and performance goals into their goal setting programs, although Kingston and Hardy note the best mix of process, performance, and outcome goals for maximum effectiveness needs to be determined. Along these lines, more recently, Filby, Maynard, and Graydon (1999) found that multiple goal strategies clearly enhanced performance when compared to single goal strategies. The authors thus argue that process goals are most beneficially used within a hierarchy of goals, which should also include both performance and outcome goals. In essence, it is the need to combine effectively, and subsequently, prioritize goals that should be stressed to performers.

Measurement of Goals

Results indicated that coaches used a combination of objective and subjective measures to assess both team and individual goals, while typically relying mostly on subjective measures to assess their own individual goals. The use of both objective and subjective assessments to measure goal progress and achievement is consistent with recommendations from sport psychologists, as well as empirically found in the recent study with high school coaches (Gould, 1998; Weinberg, 1996). The measurement of goal progress and achievement is also evidenced in coaches'

willingness to periodically reevaluate goals. This typically occurred when there was a problem perceived with an athlete's performance, and this was either initiated by the coach or the athlete. However, little research was found to help coaches with reevaluating goals, and this should be a priority for future research.

Goal Barriers

Results revealed that goal barriers differed based on whether the goals were for the athletes (individual/team) or for the coaches. Specifically, coaches perceived the most significant barriers to setting individual/team goals were psychological or physical in nature. In general, the psychological barriers were more amenable to change than the physical barriers. However, unlike the high school coaches who did not report lack of time as a consistent barrier, college coaches felt lack of time was the most compelling barrier in setting goals. In addition, coach factors (e.g., balancing family obligations, being too emotional), athlete factors (e.g., lack of motivation, relationships), as well as administrative factors (e.g., lack of financial aid, recruiting) were seen as getting in the way of achieving their goals. It is interesting that the focus was on the athletes when speaking about team/individual barriers, but on the coaches themselves when discussing coaches' personal goals. Here, the context (i.e., high school versus college) seems to be important as college coaches perceive a lot of barriers inherent in the system (Andersen, 1996).

Practical Implications

The present investigation attempted to examine college coaches' perceptions of the goal-setting process using a qualitative approach. Some of the findings that might relate directly to practitioners include the following information. First, there was a good deal of variability on the understanding of goal-setting principles and implementation of goal setting into actual practices and competitions by these collegiate coaches. Particularly, it was noted that goals were, in many cases, not written down or not implemented in a systematic fashion and, thus, applied sport psychology consultants should highlight these areas. In addition, coaches tended to set goals that were very difficult (as opposed to moderately difficult) and this also needs to be addressed in practical settings. Furthermore, coaches used goals primarily to provide focus and direction, and then emphasized the enjoyment of coaching as a key to goal commitment. Therefore, we need to be sensitive to the enjoyment aspect of coaching so that we try to avoid premature coaching burnout. Furthermore, there were both similarity and differences in goal-setting practices between high school and college coaches (Weinberg et al., 2001). This underscores the notion that the context is different between these two settings, and these conclusions cannot be made across different levels of sport coaching. Finally, sport psychology researchers should continue to conduct empirical research examining the situational and individual difference variables that influence goal effectiveness so that we can inform coaches of the best ways to set goals for their teams and themselves. For example, the present investigation focused on the formal goal setting process. Perhaps, as noted in some previous laboratory-based empirical

investigations (e.g., Weinberg, Bruya, & Jackson, 1985), athletes tend to set goals on their own if they are not given specific goals by the coach (and they may even change coach-set goals if they feel these are inappropriate or unrealistic). This informal goal setting process was not discussed in the present study but is most certainly worthy of future investigation.

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