

COACHING SCIENCE

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Chapter 1

The coaching process

This chapter introduces the concept of coaching. It provides a framework for modelling the role of the sports coach. It also discusses the more general roles of the coach and the coaching philosophy. By the end of this chapter you will have:

- explored and evaluated coaching roles and responsibilities;
- considered the nature of the coaching process;
- discussed the association between knowledge and coaching competence;
- considered the philosophy of coaching philosophy and its impact on the athlete and coach/athlete relationship;
- critically considered the real world application of an understanding of the subject.

Introduction

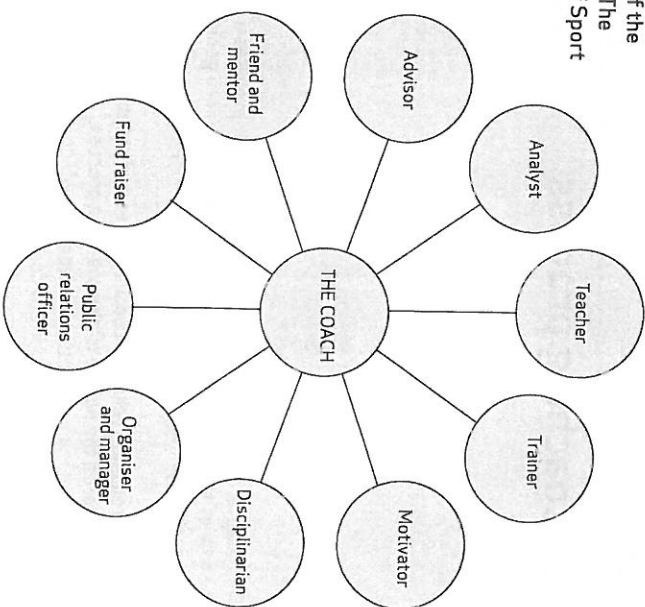
The lay view of coaching shows that it is seen as a domain of sport constructed by the coach, constituting a series of episodic activities conducted on a week by week basis, with the aim of improving, and thereby enhancing, performance.

Coaches, however, tend to see the process quite differently. Coaching may be seen, not simply as a series of discrete actions, but rather as a complex model of overlapping scenarios, ranging from training supervision to liaison with fellow coaches and peers. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, the coach acts not only as a traditional sports-based supervisor but also as a mentor and pillar of support.

It can be seen that modern advanced coaches have to take responsibility for their athletes, both inside and outside of competition. This is where our understanding of what makes a coach becomes more complex: no longer can we view a coach simply as the individual with a stopwatch barking out lap times, or just as the mentor who offers training advice to groups of athletes. The role of the coach has become still more complicated and diverse.

Let us consider each of the roles that make up 'coaching'. The most obvious ones are those of teacher and trainer. Clearly the role of trainer – the person who facilitates the training sessions and the physical development of the athlete – is the one that most people equate with coaching. The role of teacher is also apparent in that the coach instructs the athlete in the ways of the sport, whether through teaching new skills or

Figure 1.1: The roles of the coach. Adapted from: The Australian Institute of Sport



tactics or imparting knowledge on specific aspects of the sport. Many top coaches are not only trainers but real aficionados of the sport.

Associated with the teaching and training components of the role is that of analysis. A good coach will study the performance of an athlete during both competition and training, generating information from which comments can be made, focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of the performance. The coach's analytical role is crucial to the development of the athlete, as it provides feedback on performance and can be used to frame training and competition goals.

Two roles, apparently opposed to each other, are those of disciplinarian and friend/mentor. The disciplinarian role could be viewed as negative and stereotyped as the overpowering coach who controls the athlete at all times. However, it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that the athletes reach their full athletic potential. To do this, the coach has to instill discipline. The coach/athlete relationship can be extraordinarily close. It is, therefore, important also for the coach to be able to act as friend and mentor – someone to whom the athlete can turn in order to discuss problems or concerns.

A further role is that of motivator. One could argue that athletes should be self-motivated, however, the coach has to be able to pick the athlete up when suffering a 'low', either due to poor performance or from monotony of training. For example, swimmers generally have early morning training sessions for which they have to be motivated enough to attend, but who will often go through the 'motions' of training, rather than actually training hard. At this point the coach (as motivator) needs to step in to drive the athletes on.

The final three categories are perhaps the least recognised, but are just as important to the athlete. Many coaches, especially at amateur level, act as fundraisers for their athletes, generating funding for equipment or competition entry fees. In the early stages of the athlete's development they also act as organisers, arranging everything from training schedules to punctual attendance at a competition. The final role is that of public relations officer. The coach becomes the voice of the athlete, communicating with the press and sponsors rather than putting the athlete under undue pressure. Some of these roles will remain with the coach and some will become less important as the athlete matures and develops.

Recipe for success

When considering the nature of coaching, we need to be aware of the layers of skills and competencies required and how these interact with each other and consequently impact on the athlete as a performer. To do this we need a model of coaching, one that includes both the artistic and scientific aspects of the profession. One model that effectively describes the intricate nature of coaching was developed by Côté et al (1995), as illustrated in Figure 1.2. Think of a model as a construction where we attempt to fit all the key elements into a structured format that best describe the nature of the discipline; in this instance, coaching.

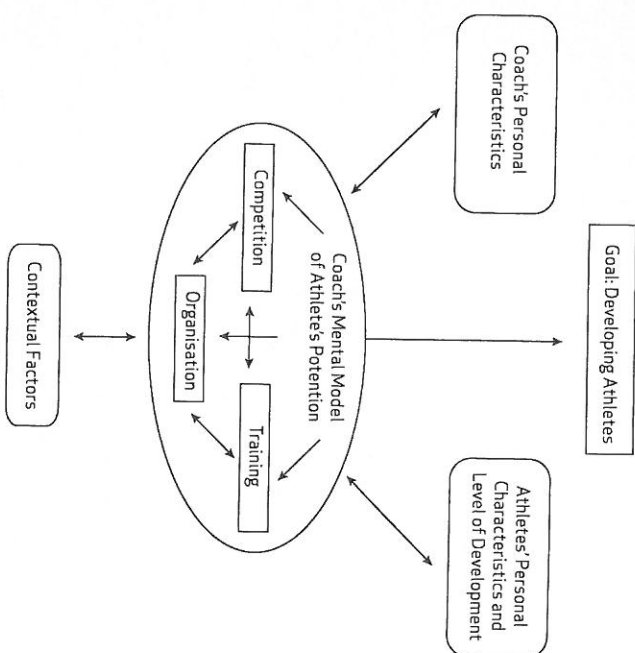
According to this model, the primary aim of both the coach and athlete is the production of a developed athlete: the model shows this as the goal of the whole process. The model seeks to indicate the factors that contribute to the coaching process and shows how each factor can have either a positive or negative influence on the attainment of the athletic goal. The central theme of the model is the coaching process. This theme encompasses the components of training, organisation and competition, which would generally be viewed as the primary responsibilities of the coach.

Central to the coaching process is the coach's mental model of athletic potential. According to the model, the coaching process can be affected by the coach's personal characteristics, the athlete's personal characteristics, and the level of athletic development. It also encompasses an extra category, perceived as being integral to the overall coaching approach: that of contextual factors. We can refer to these variables as peripheral components to the coaching model. The final component is the goal of the athlete and coach. We will now consider each of these separately.

The coaching process

This is the relationship between training, organisation and competition, thereby including the 'nuts and bolts' of coaching. Within this process there is one overarching factor, namely knowledge. Often it is the coach's knowledge that marks the difference between the novice and experienced coaches. For more details on the spectrum of coaching, refer to the *Concept box*.

Figure 1.2: The coaching model. This schematic shows the factors that contribute to the process of coaching and how they interlink with each other, with the overall aim or goal being the development of the athlete. Adapted, with permission, from: J. Côté et al. (1995) The coaching model: A grounded assessment of expert gymnastic coaches' knowledge. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17: 1-17



Concept 1.1: Categorising novice and advanced coaches

We can classify levels of coaching according to such criteria as years of experience, qualifications, quality of athlete worked with, overall knowledge base of the coach and whether they used to be an elite athlete themselves.

A high level of knowledge, although crucial, may not directly relate to the quality and ability of an individual to coach. Can we classify a coach as being advanced just because they have the requisite qualifications associated with that sport? The answer has to be a cautious 'no'. Just because someone has the qualifications does not mean that they can convey knowledge and expertise to the athlete. Similarly we may ask, can a coach be described as advanced just because they have worked with high calibre athletes in the past? Generally, the more advanced and developed coaches are able to work with the best athletes. However, caution should be employed here in that some coaches work with the best athletes by chance or through their association with others.

Concept 1.1: Continued

If we apply Côté's model of the coaching process, we can begin to understand the spectrum of coaching expertise. An advanced coach will have a well-developed mental model of athletic potential through both education and application. Furthermore, they will be comfortable in their personal development of coaching characteristics. Conversely, the novice coach will not have a well developed mental model of athletic potential, either because of lack of experience or lack of knowledge and may not have developed to be comfortable with their own characteristics.

As the coach develops, knowledge base will increase in relation both to the process and the needs of the particular athlete. It is the coach's responsibility to impart to the athletes the knowledge that they have obtained from either experience or through practice. This is why it has sometimes been suggested that coaching is in fact a form of teaching (Drewe, 2000).

The transference of that knowledge is a rather complex process that depends on a number of key factors. To understand more about the levels of knowledge, refer to the Concept box below.

Concept 1.2: Knowledge

There are many models and theories which have been proposed as descriptors of knowledge (Schön, 1987; Shulman, 1986; Carr, 1989). However, if we wade through these theories we begin to recognise that there are some broad themes which we can apply to our understanding of what is knowledge.

There are two broad forms of knowledge which we can relate to the 'coaching process': these are first, theoretical knowledge – that which is learnt or acquired perhaps through education, such as coaching qualifications and courses. The second form is that which is developed in response to actually coaching, we could view this as 'on the job' experience or knowledge. The literature refers to theoretical knowledge as professional knowledge (Martens, 1987) but although important to the overall development of the coach, it is perhaps too rigid in its structure and does not allow for the acquisition of knowledge through experience.

On the job or experience-acquired knowledge has been termed in the literature as 'knowledge-in-action' (Schön, 1987). This model suggests that knowledge is composed of many inter-related factors such as ethical, personal, aesthetic and empirical knowledge. These four classes of knowledge are underpinned by social norms, prejudices, values and other sources of knowledge (Anderson et al, 2004). What makes the knowledge-in-action approach is that it recognises the requirement for both theoretical and that which could be classified as 'artistic development', i.e. knowledge which can be quantified and non-quantified. As a coach though, something that is crucial to the development of this knowledge base is the ability to continue the learning process and a

Concept 1.2: Continued

powerful tool that is at the disposal of all coaches is the use of 'reflective practice'. Reflective practice is the process whereby the coach examines issues that have occurred during the process of actually coaching and conceptualises them and so helps to bridge the gap between theoretical and on the job experience. This is very much a self-driven process of reviewing both the positive and negative aspects of the coaching process and addressing those through the development of an action plan. An approach that is often adopted in reflection is that of Gibbs' (1988). This approach has six stages which begin with describing what happened during the coaching session. The second stage involves the coach listing their own thoughts and feelings that occurred during the session, i.e. listing both the positive and negative responses. This is followed by the third step which requires the coach to evaluate the coaching session and examine what were the strengths and weaknesses there. Upon completion of the evaluative process, the coach is asked to analyse the session, which constitutes stage four. Within this stage, the coach must draw upon the information gathered from stages two and three and attempt to make sense of it all. Once the coach has made sense of the issues through analysis, a conclusion to the process is then encouraged. This is stage five and encourages the coach to consider what could have been done to facilitate a stronger coaching session. The final stage is the development of the action plan which, as stage six, asks the coach a single question: 'if you were to conduct that or a similar coaching session again what would you now do?'

Thus, through reflection, the ability of a coach can be developed and knowledge-in-action widened.

The model in Figure 1.2 showed us that the ability to train an athlete is a fundamental component of coaching; this will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 8. However, we should consider training in terms of the process rather than simply outcome. In this respect, the coach applies knowledge to the need of the athlete to acquire the essential elements of fitness, skill and tactics in relation to their sport. The coach also trains the athlete's mental capacity for performance.

The ability of the coach to implement training methodologies is dependent on organisational skills.

A coach might have a wonderful scientific understanding of training principles and responses, yet be unable to organise sessions efficiently within a coherent training plan. As a result, the athletes would almost certainly fail to reach their true athletic potential, despite the knowledge base that the coach possesses. Therefore the coach must have the ability to implement and establish optimal conditions for training and competition. The coach's ability to organise also relates to the ability to work with other coaches and in some cases, even parents.

The final piece of the coaching process is the competition component. This strand of the model allows us to differentiate coaching from teaching; teaching is not considered to be truly competitive, certainly within the classroom environment, whereas the coach has to apply knowledge in order to allow the athletes to compete at their optimal level.

An understanding of competition rules and the responsibilities of the coach under competition conditions can be of utmost importance to the success of the athlete. When considering the rules of the game we tend to focus on those rules established by National/International Governing Bodies of Sport and which should be considered as doctrine by the coach. An advanced coach is expected to know these rules and how to apply them in order to get the best out of the athlete, especially in competition.

Coaching processes are best seen as fluid. The coach will need to constantly monitor each of the components and when required, make appropriate adjustments. How the monitoring and adjustments are determined depends upon the interaction between the three process variables, the coach's acquired knowledge and resultant mental model of athletic potential.

All these 'processes' are aimed at producing or attaining an end-product – the goal.

The goal

This is the fundamental aspect of the coach's role: the ability to develop an athlete in order to reach and maintain a pre-determined level. All athletes wish to 'develop', no matter what their current performance level, be that elite, club or novice athlete – the end-point is the same: 'I want to improve'. Let's consider how this goal can be attained.

First, note that the term 'development' is fluid; it may be adapted to meet the needs of the athlete to whom it is being applied (Côté et al. 1995). Second, the goal within each of these groups may differ. Two Olympic 800m runners under the guidance of the same coach may have different goals, despite the event being identical. Third, we need to consider what we actually mean by the 'goal' and how this is derived by the coach.

The coach's mental model of athletic potential (MMAP)

This represents the coach's mental interpretation of what needs to be completed in order for the athlete to reach the desired goal (Côté et al. 1995). What becomes apparent from discussions with coaches is that their MMAP is determined primarily by their evaluation of the peripheral components of the coaching model. It is also determined in part by the coaching philosophy that has been adopted, as this will help to drive the direction and style of the coach.

Peripheral components

The model proposes that there are three peripheral components that can interact with the coach's MMAP. Each of these peripheral components may have either a positive or negative effect, depending on the specific circumstances.

Coach's personal characteristics

Here we have to consider any of the coach's personal characteristics that could have a positive or negative influence on the coaching process. These could include the coach's philosophy, style, beliefs, perceptions and even personal life. Each of these can impact on the coaching process and therefore directly affect the attainment of the goal.

Athlete's personal characteristics and level of development

The athlete's character and level of development can have a direct effect on the attainment of the goal; indeed the nature of the athlete will have a direct bearing on the coaching process adopted by the coach. Within this component, we need to consider such issues as the athlete's learning style, stage of learning, motivation, personal abilities, identity and acquisition of skills.

Contextual factors

A saying often applied to sport is 'control the controllables'. Many aspects of the coaching process may be controlled. Some, such as illness and environmental conditions, may not be fully controllable but can still be addressed by both the coach and the athlete. Those factors that neither the coach nor athlete can control are termed contextual factors. An example of a contextual factor would be losing a competition as a result of a poor ruling from an official or referee. The athletic component may have been controlled, but the decision of the official is not controllable, and may be something that has to be accepted without necessarily agreeing with it.

Contextual factors can have a profound positive or negative effect on the coaching process and the attainment of the goal. (Goals will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.)

Activity 1.1: Controlling the controllables

A key facet of the coaching process is the ability of the coach to deal with all eventualities and to attempt to control as much of the competition environment as possible. Either in the classroom or in the field, consider how you would do this.

Start by stating the goal of the session or competition for the athlete or team.

Now make a list of all the variables that contribute to the session. For each variable decide if you can control it and if so how this will be achieved. For those variables that you feel are not controllable, decide why this is the case and more crucially how you can minimise their impact.

This should be an approach taken to all training and competition sessions.

Coaching philosophies

A variable that always arises in the coaching process is the philosophy and beliefs of the coach.

We can view a coaching philosophy as a set of principles, beliefs and personal practices that help to guide the coach and are used to construct their MMAP. The philosophy developed by the coach will form the framework by which the athlete will be coached and guided.

At this stage, we should not judge a coach's philosophy, but rather consider the reasons behind the philosophy. A coach's philosophy provides a series of boundaries to which both the coach and athlete can agree and participate within; it also helps the

athlete to appraise the coach – something which is important when trying to develop a successful coach/athlete relationship and working partnership.

The primary source forming these beliefs and driving the philosophy is the coach's education and prior experience as either coach or athlete. Although the coach's philosophy is rooted in prior experience, it is a dynamic construction and hence one that can be influenced by new experiences and pressures.

The pressures that affect a coach are complex. Typically, they comprise peripheral components of the coaching model: an athlete's personal characteristics and development and the contextual factors. Although the beliefs of the coach may not change due to these pressures, they may change the boundaries within which they operate. This is an important consideration that will help us to discriminate between advanced and novice coaches.

The seasoned coach who has formed a well-honed philosophy should recognise that in order to best serve the needs of their athlete, they need to be flexible in their coaching style and philosophy. In so doing they may well continue to work within their constructed belief system, but will 'bend the rules' in order to accommodate the influencing contextual and athlete-based factors.

A novice coach, on the other hand, is generally less sure of their knowledge base and has less coaching experience from which to frame this philosophy. So although their belief system (morals, ethics, etc.) may be identical to the advanced coach, their ability to interpret these beliefs in relation to pressures and expectations will be less developed. Their approach is therefore likely to be more formulaic (Côté et al, 1995).

Coaches should be encouraged to articulate their attributes and values. As with goal setting, writing down the philosophy helps to formalise the whole process.

Defining a coaching philosophy

The literature base (Lyle, 2002) suggests that by using reflective practice in relation to the coach's present MMAP and their own characteristics, a coach's current philosophy can be honed further to become deeper and more fluent. In order to develop effectively and maintain a balanced athlete/coach relationship, the coach needs to establish a philosophy reflecting their ethos and values.

What makes a good coach?

Thoughts and reflections of elite athletes

This opening chapter has helped us define what constitutes a coach, in terms of roles and responsibilities and also the factors which contribute to the overall coaching process. However, it is also interesting to know what athletes feel constitutes a good coach and how important they are to their ability and pursuit of success. To do this, we will reflect on a document produced by the United States Olympic Committee (Gibbons et al, 2003).

The information provided is based on the responses of 2,100 US Olympians who competed for their country between 1984 and 1998. When asked what they perceived to be the top ten most important factors that contribute to success,

athletes indicated that the most important factors were dedication and persistence, followed by support of family and friends, with excellent coaches considered to be the third most important factor. Interestingly, when asked what were the ten most crucial obstacles to success, lacking coaching expertise or support was the third most critical factor behind conflict of roles in their lives and lack of financial support.

When the same athletes were asked what factors contribute to the value of a coach, they identified the ability to teach, motivate and to be able to demonstrate training knowledge, skill development and strategic knowledge (Gibbons et al, 2003).

The data from the report of Gibbons et al (2003) becomes more pertinent when viewed in conjunction with that of Greenleaf et al (2001) which examined the factors perceived to contribute to successful coaching. These athletes reported that an effective coach was someone who did not over coach, who had a clear performance plan, who kept things simple, who were fully committed to their profession, who had realistic expectations but at the same time showed belief in their athletes and who athletes felt they could trust.

Given these indications, it is perhaps not surprising that the report of Gibbons et al (2003) highlights that the second largest component of the budget spent on PODIUM (elite) athletes was for coaching and support (23 per cent), just behind athlete stipends (25 per cent), which are the funds used to support the athletes' day-to-day expenses.

Take home message

Understanding the coaching process against the backdrop of a theoretical framework allows us to appreciate both the roles of the coach and the way in which coaching is a complex series of factors. If we consider the factors that contribute to the overall process, we begin to appreciate how to construct individual sessions and also the whole training plan.

The process is governed by the knowledge of the coach and the way in which they convey this knowledge to the athlete. Remember that the ability of the coach to impart this knowledge is governed by their own philosophy and belief systems. Coaching involves both scientific and artistic attributes which, when controlled and focused, can lead to the development and attainment of the athlete's goal.

Further study

In order to assist your learning and understanding for the coaching process, the following literature base has been compiled. It contains resources related to coaching styles, athlete preferences, coaching models and the roles of the coach in the coach athlete relationship.

Australian Sports Commission (2006) *Beginning Coaching General Principles*, pp3-54 Cote, J and Salmela, J H (1996) The organisational tasks of high performance gymnastics coaches. *The Sports Psychologist*, 10: 247-60

Drewe, S B (2000) An examination of the relationship between coaching and teaching. *Quest*, 52: 79-88

Knowles, Z, Borrie, A and Telfer, H (2005) Towards the reflective sports coach: Issues of context, education and application. *Ergonomics*, 48: 11-14

Lyle, J W B (1993) Towards a comparative study of the coaching process. *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport*, 15: 14-23

Price, M S and Weiss, M R (2000) Relationships among coach burnout, coach behaviours and athletes' psychological responses. *The Sport Psychologist*, 44: 393-409

Samela, J H (1994) Learning from the development of expert coaches. *Journal of Coaching and Sport Science*, 1: 1-11

Shulman, L (1986) Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15: 4-14

Terry, P C and Howe B L (1984) Coaching preference of athletes. *Canadian Journal of Applied Sports Sciences*, 9: 188-93

Timming, R (1982) Improving coaches' instructional effectiveness. *Sports Coach*, 4: 37-41

Turman, P D (2003) Coaches and cohesion: The impact of coaching techniques on team cohesion in the small group sport setting. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 26: 86-104

Woodman, L (1993) Coaching: A science, and art and emerging profession. *Sports Science Review*, 2: 1-13

www.ausport.gov.au/coach/tools.asp - Australian Institute of Sport: Massive website devoted to the promotion of elite performance and sport within Australia. This specific link takes you to articles related to coach education and knowledge.

www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/coachofficial.asp - Australian Institute of Sport: Massive website devoted to the promotion of elite performance and sport within Australia. This specific link takes you to articles related to ethics in coaching.

www.athleticscoaching.ca/default.aspx?pid=7&spid=80 - Canadian Athletics Coaching Centre: Site containing information relating to coaching and sports science. This link relates to coach education and development.

www.mysport.net - My Sport: An online community for coach education and discussion.

www.sportscoachuk.org - Sports Coach UK: National body responsible for regulating and overseeing coach education within the UK. Site contains information relating to coaching courses and contacts through to coaching resources and support.

www.ukspor.gov.uk - UK Sport: National body supporting elite world class performers.

Useful resources related to coach education and drug free sport.

Leadership and the coach/athlete relationship

A question asked by coaches, athletes and the media is what makes a good coach? We recognise that there are some extremely successful coaches and others who, despite their best efforts, are not productive. Why should this be the case? And how crucial is a positive coach/athlete relationship to the success of the athlete? This chapter will address these questions, therefore upon its completion you will have:

- explored the difference between traits and behaviours;
- addressed the main theories relating to leadership and their application to the sporting environment;
- considered the coach/athlete relationship and its implications to the success of the athlete and the partnership;
- applied the knowledge gained to the role of the coach.

Introduction

There is little doubt that a significant portion of the England rugby team's success in winning the World Cup in 2003 can be attributed to Sir Clive Woodward, the then head coach of the team. Woodward was described in the press as a coaching genius and an individual who appreciated how to get the absolute best from every player in the team and squad. When we sit and reflect on that World Cup, the role of Woodward will come to the fore. We can recognise that Woodward was a great leader and an individual who pushed the boundaries of professional rugby in England and who led from the front. Some may disagree with the manner in which Woodward approached his tasks, but few could argue that he was not effective.

In order to recognise a successful leader, we need to address what makes a leader and how to distinguish good leaders from poor leaders. This is where our understanding becomes clouded, because although we recognise the greatness of a coach like Woodward, it is hard to define and quantify their contribution. We have a clear understanding of the coach's interface with the athlete and role, but what makes an effective coach is a much more complicated question. There is also the question of what may be learnt from good coaches such as Woodward.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine coaching in terms of leadership and examine the coach/athlete relationship.

Constructing a leader

Understanding the coaching process (Chapter 1) has helped us to define the role of the coach and, perhaps more significantly, the way the coach reacts to the needs of the athlete and the environment in which they are working. Given that the coaching process is a framework from which all coaching strategies should begin, we will use this as our starting point for examining leadership.

The coaching process model of Côté et al (1995) recognises that the coach requires specific knowledge and skills in relation to both the athlete and sport, but also needs to be an effective practitioner in implementing those skills. These tenets of the coaching process have been defined as traits and behaviours. We will consider each in turn, before examining some of the theories that surround leadership.

If we consider great leaders from sport (or business) we can, no doubt, compile a list of characteristics that help to define these individuals, e.g. intelligence, persistence, assertiveness and independence. These characteristics are termed 'traits'; i.e. qualities common to all leaders (coaches) under all conditions. When we think about the people we went to school or university with, we can often recount individuals who were described as having leadership potential because they possess these underlying traits. This informs us of an important consideration relating to traits: that they remain stable over time and within situations. Reflect on this for a moment, for it would be unusual for an individual to lose those traits that we have highlighted.

There is however a recognised difference between what we classify as a *trait* and what we term as a *behaviour*. Indeed we generally accept that there are a set of traits which all coach's need and these are defined as being *universal*. However, we also appreciate that coaches display differing behaviours when faced with changing scenarios and as a result, we can describe these as being *situational* or *environmental*.

This distinction is important: it suggests that a behaviour or trait used in one condition may not apply to another, therefore implying that coaches need to be flexible in their leadership style.

Activity 2.1: Great leaders

Construct a list of the traits and skills that you consider are required of a great coach within your chosen sport.

Universal traits

There is a set criteria of traits that can be used to identify and thereby distinguish 'great' leaders from their less successful counterparts (i.e. universal traits for all occasions).

The universal trait theories suggest that we take our 'great' leader or coach and because they possess all the required traits, they could lead/coach in any situation or

sport. This is the ideal: we can understand what makes a great coach simply by studying their traits, which must be universal to all 'great' coaches.

This conception is highly attractive in that it attempts to explain what makes a great coach. When studying the literature base however, the support for such a universal theory is less compelling. Indeed most academics and coaches would agree that there is no universal set of traits that can be used to define 'greatness'.

Does this mean we discount universal trait theories altogether when discussing leadership? It would be unfortunate if we did, for there must be combinations of traits that when combined together help to define leadership.

Universal behaviours

Another leadership option prescribes the notion of a set of behaviours which allow the coach or leader to be effective in any situation or environment. As with trait theories, these are a generic set of values universal to all 'great' coaches and leaders.

Note the difference between trait and behaviour theories: universal behaviour theory predicts that, once generic behaviours are identified, they can be learnt and mastered by any individual – hence any individual can become a 'great' coach or leader.

What are these behaviours that best describe a leader or coach? Not surprisingly, given that we have already identified that behaviours are the characteristics of the coach that define style and approach to coaching, these behaviours are reflections of the basic underlying traits and also the environment in which the coach or leader is currently working. Behaviours mentioned in the literature include: trust, respect, communication and organisation. Again, think back to Chapter 1 and you will recall that the 'coaching process' is made up of many factors, one of which is the coach's personal characteristics, a component being the behaviour of that coach.

As an athlete myself, I used to encounter many different coaches, some with whom I worked well and some with whom I worked less well. A primary reason for this was the behaviour (approach) of the coach in the session and their interaction with me. Some of my past coaches were very good at interacting with me as an athlete, whereas others were more interested in my performances and less interested in me and my personal development. Indeed a coach once told me that we did not have to get on with each other to be successful; he was very much driven by performance outcomes rather than what is often defined as being athlete-orientated.

When we consider coach behaviours then, it could be suggested that there are a series of almost opposing behaviours which we have all seen in coaches and leaders. The task below is designed to help you to consider these more carefully and appreciate the 'behaviour game'.

Activity 2.2: Universal behaviours

This task is designed to address the various forms of behaviours that exist within the realm of coaching and leadership. Using the list of terms below, you need to provide the opposite term and also the relevant meaning. For example:

Activity 2.2: Continued

'Athlete centred' would have an opposing behaviour to 'performance centred' (meaning that the coach is more interested in the performance than the athlete and their own personal development).

Selected terms:

- 'Laissez faire';
- Authoritarian;
- Democratic;
- Hierarchical.

The above list of behaviours prompts a number of questions. For example, which of these behaviours are best for coaching? and can we learn or adopt these behaviours? Let us consider the first question. The ideal scenario would be to have a coach who possesses all of these behaviours and can initiate a particular behaviour pattern when either engaging a particular type of athlete or when exposed to a particular environmental condition such as their own response to their athlete winning or losing. This poses a problem for, if the ideal solution is to have a coach/leader possessing all the behaviours highlighted in the task, they may find themselves suffering from internal conflicts due to their being comfortable with one set of the behaviours and not another. The literature base suggests that a more profitable and effective solution would be to have two coaches each providing opposing sets of behaviours (Small and Smith, 1989). Remember that the process of coaching aims to extract the best performance from an athlete and therefore the coach requires the ability to be both outcome and athlete orientated, which is not always the case. There are many great examples within sport, e.g. Clive Woodward and Andy Robinson when they guided England Rugby to World Cup success in 2003 of having two coaches with different styles who together made an ideal coaching philosophy. This approach of combining different styles to generate the most profitable outcome for the athlete has been termed the 'functional model of leadership'.

We should now be able to appreciate that there are different behaviour traits that contribute to the make-up of the coach and that although they appear independent of each other, some convergence may be acceptable and indeed encouraged.

The second question posed above was whether these behaviours can be learnt. To a certain degree we have addressed this previously in recognising that, although the ideal would be to have a coach possessing all the recognised leadership behaviours, this could prove problematic for the coach as it may not feel comfortable to apply them. The behaviours may, for example, conflict with a coach's personal ethos and coaching characteristics. Thus, the answer is, 'Yes, these behaviours can be learnt'. This is something which is evident in the business world (Lei et al. 1999) where management courses are held to develop and foster more effective and productive managers/leaders.

We can now conclude that there are no universal traits and behaviours, applicable to all situations and environments. In contrast, therefore, let's now examine theories of situation-specific leadership styles and conditions. Before we do so, however, we should acknowledge that many of the models that follow have developed from the earlier work

of Fiedler (1967), which provided the initial insight into leadership behaviour and the association between the situation and the personality trait.

Path Goal theory

A key component of the coaching process is the coach/athlete relationship and principally the goal of the athlete. Path Goal theory defines how the coach facilitates the athlete in attaining this goal. In order to achieve the goal, the coach must accomplish two principle tasks: first, they must emphasise realistic and achievable goals and second, they must facilitate the path that the athlete will take in reaching these goals. Some research in relation to Path Goal theory (Terry and Howe, 1984; Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978) suggests that there is some evidence to support the use of a Path Goal orientated approach as a preferred leadership style by athletes.

Lifecycle theory

One component that should be considered in any of these theories is that of the developmental stage of the athlete (see Chapter 14). We all recognise that there has to be a different approach taken by coaches, teachers and leaders when working with athletes at different developmental stages; in other words the behavioural approach taken by the coach has to be adapted to meet the demands of the athlete/population group. This is the premise that forms the basis of the Lifecycle theory. This theory recognises that, as athletes develop, they mature and therefore start to become more capable of setting their own goals; they become more responsible as both the learner and the practitioner and will have developed a greater experience base on which these processes can be established.

What we see is that the task-orientated behaviour of coaches is lower with less mature athletes, while at the same developmental stage, the relationship behaviour of the coach is high. As the athlete starts to mature as a performer, however, the need for a more task-orientated approach from the coach is required, with less desire for a relationship-orientated approach. There is however, an interesting twist to this theory, in that as athletes mature (in relation to their sport) they desire a decrease in the task-orientated approach of the coach but an increase in behaviour orientation.

Multidimensional model of leadership

Two key components of the athlete's progression in their sport are their performance outcome and level of satisfaction. This model defines an association between these athlete outcomes and the behavioural approach adopted by the coach. The behaviours exhibited by the coach are highlighted in Table 2.1.

We should think of this as a mixing pot, whereby the athlete's desired outcomes for the session (performance/satisfaction) are directly affected by the leadership behaviour that is adopted by the coach. Imagine a spectrum of response from the athlete (performance/satisfaction) in relation to the behaviour displayed by the coach. At the opposing ends of the spectrum would be either high performance outcomes and high satisfaction or poor performance and poor satisfaction. According to the model, the former would be associated with a behavioural pattern from the coach where they

Table 2.1: Leadership components associated with the multidimensional model of leadership

Component	Description
Prescribed leader behaviours	A team or organisation has an ethos which is taken as being the template on which all coaching approaches and thereby behaviours are based.
Preferred leader behaviours	From the behavioural package that the coach possesses, the athletes in the team or individuals will have preferred approaches and styles.
Actual leader behaviours	These can be defined as the difference between what is actually expected by the team/organisation/athlete and what behaviour/approach the coach actually exhibits.

exhibit a positive overlap between the leadership components displayed in Table 2.1. Of course the opposite extreme of poor performance and satisfaction would be associated with almost no positive overlap between the leadership components.

Where this model becomes more interesting is when it predicts what happens with overlap between two of the components. An athlete would display a high level of performance but poor satisfaction if the coach were to exhibit positive prescribed and actual behaviours but these were opposed to the preferred behaviour.

Activity 2.3: Multidimensional model of leadership

The purpose of this task is to develop your understanding of how the Multidimensional model of Leadership predicts athlete outcomes in relation to the displayed behaviour of the coach. Using the analogy of the spectrum discussed previously, you should consider the following two scenarios and state what the athlete outcomes (performance/satisfaction) would be in relation to those displayed behaviours.

- *Scenario 1:* The coach displays a positive overlap between the preferred and actual behaviours but they are directly opposed to the prescribed behaviour.
- *Scenario 2:* The displayed actual behaviour of the coach is directly opposed to both the prescribed and preferred behaviours.

Once you have considered the spectrum of responses and also worked through the tasks, you will begin to appreciate why the Multidimensional model of leadership has been suggested to be a solid descriptor of coaching behaviours (Bean et al, 2004; Shields et al, 1997).

Leadership behaviour model

In Chapter 1, we discussed the nature of the coaching process and how the coach's philosophy is affected by personal beliefs, those of the athlete, personal knowledge and the goals of the athlete/group. The leadership behaviour model (LBM) (Smoll and Smith, 1989) is the closest example that fits with the coaching process model proposed by Côté et al (1995).

The LBM attempts to knit together the coach's behaviour to the athlete's perception of the coach's behaviour, resulting in the athlete's responses to these perceptions. This approach is very similar to that proposed in the multidimensional model of leadership. There are, however, some striking differences. The LBM suggests ways in which the 'central process' can be affected by various factors, all playing a role in the coach/athlete relationship and thereby athlete performance. The contributing factors include: coach and athlete individual differences; the coach's perception of the athlete's ability; and specific situational factors.

Activity 2.4: Leadership behaviour model

From your understanding of leadership qualities and the coaching process, discuss the factors which could contribute to the aspects of the LBM affecting the central process. In particular, consider what factors would fall into the following categories:

- Athlete individual differences;
- Coach's perception of the athlete;
- Situation-specific variables.

Having viewed a number of models of leadership and coaching behaviour, we have identified several key principles, the most fundamental of which is the importance of the coach/athlete relationship.

Quite often in the media we hear of athletes splitting from their coaches on mutual terms because they did not get along. The coach/athlete relationship has been described by one leading coach in the UK as being akin to marriage, in that there are a number of possible outcomes. The coach and athlete can generate a highly compatible relationship that is a 'match made in heaven', or they initially fall for each other but soon realise that they are not suited but do not know where else to turn, so the relationship becomes one built on mutual gain. Another is where the coach and athlete initially fall for each other but then drift apart, ending in 'divorce'. There is of course another group that we should mention: those coaches and athletes who just never fall for each other; there just isn't that spark!

The coach/athlete relationship

A strong coach/athlete relationship is associated with high levels of athlete performance and satisfaction. If we look at a poor relationship or incompatibility between the coach and athlete, we will begin to appreciate the characteristics associated with strong relationships.

The two primary variables associated with poor relationships are lack of communication and lack of rewarding behaviour from the coach. Poor coach/athlete relationships are associated with lack of mutual respect, no real appreciation for either person's role and perhaps the most serious of all, lack of honesty between both parties when communication does occur. Think again of the marriage analogy and you will see why the two kinds of relationship are similar.

An interesting point here is that there is no mention of the coach and athlete actually liking each other. As mentioned above, when I was an athlete I was once told by a National coach that we did not have to like each other – we did however have to respect each other. I had to respect his abilities and credentials as a coach and he had to respect my abilities and credentials as a performer. This is a working relationship and as such both coaches and athletes need to ask themselves the question, 'what is this relationship for – to get results or get another friend?'

Given that it is clear what makes a poor relationship, it should be clear what makes a strong relationship: good communication, mutual respect, rewarding behaviour from the coach and a strong appreciation for each other's role. This is easier said than done, but they are fundamental to the coach/athlete relationship.

Communication – the key to success

Open dialogue between the coach and athlete is associated with greater degrees of athlete satisfaction and better performances. Good performances should be praised, with the coach providing insightful information on that performance. A poor performance should not be openly criticized; instead, the coach should highlight any good aspect of the performance, no matter how minor and praise that. They should then use communication skills to apply constructive criticism to the performance, allowing the athlete to learn and theoretically correct mistakes that were made. This praise and criticism approach to coaching can only come about through a solid coach/athlete relationship built on mutual respect.

Activity 2.5: Constructive criticism

Coaches need to be strong and assertive communicators. Constructive criticism is founded on the knowledge of the appropriate language to use to convey mistakes but at the same time not alienating the athlete. In this task you should discuss and list terms and phrases that could be used under the challenging conditions listed below. Try this as a role-playing exercise. Remember that you need to be highlighting weaknesses but not criticising without support. The suggested scenarios are:

- An athlete who no-jumps three times at their opening height in a high jump competition and is therefore eliminated;
- An athlete who drops the ball/misses all the passes during a field game and is substituted;
- An athlete who despite all their efforts cannot master a specific skill in a training session.

CASE STUDY: COACHING LEADERSHIP Ken Kelly

... it's a people thing...!

Getting someone to go where they may never have been before is never easy. Some exceptional individuals achieve this through sheer force of personality. For other, mere mortal individuals, the task can be somewhat more challenging. In disability sport, the challenge facing both athlete and coach in their pursuit of excellence is in many ways the same as for any other aspiring high achievers, while at the same time presenting its own unique set of challenges.

The quality of the athlete/coach relationship is crucial in determining the extent to which the athlete's identified, latent or even dormant potential is ultimately realised. Without an open and honest relationship between athlete and coach, lasting success at the elite end of sport is rarely achieved. Coaches who are leading exponents of their craft will, over time, carefully and sensitively nurture what they see and know to exist within a performer. Sadly, those less enlightened often try to 'shoehorn' skill and capacities into performers ill equipped to accept due to their innate abilities.

All top quality coaches who are masters of their craft have one eye on the future. They continually seek to clear a path along which the athlete can travel and for some the road is in better shape than for others. The result is that potential trainwrecks spotted by coaches in their forward planning are no longer there once they and the athlete arrive at that point along their performance pathway. Good coaches always plan for what comes next and seek to minimise being caught by surprise, but as coaching is a far from exact science, being caught by surprise can happen from time to time. The quality and strength of the athlete/coach relationship will determine ultimately, how rough the waters are that they will be required to negotiate.

Coaches must always be flexible in their approach to their work and by being so are able to ensure that the athlete/coach relationship – itself a continually evolving association – remains a healthy one. Within teams, both inside and outside sport, the extent to which leaders are able to empower other individuals and make them feel a genuine part of the decision-making process is a key component of high levels of achievement. In sport, this happens when coaches, without consideration or thought, place those who have entrusted them with their sporting futures at the centre of each and every activity.

In disability sport this is an evolving process, for some athletes have rarely been encouraged to offer their view or opinion about anything, including their own involvement in sport. Coaches who aspire to achieve such degrees of trust and understanding must be patient and support the development of confidence and self-esteem, both in themselves and the performers they work with. In the arena of elite sport, most performers have to operate on their own, with no time to seek counsel over the split-second decisions they are so often required to make.

CASE STUDY: Continued

There is a saying that:

Success has a thousand fathers – but that failure is an orphan.

Over time and either through observed or actual experience, most coaches will have contemplated the situation implicitly described in the saying above. It should be the aspiration of all good coaches to ensure that they do what they can to minimise the occurrence of the message it seeks to convey. Here again, we return to the nature and strength of the relationship between athletes and those people who advise and guide them.

High performance is about living on the edge, it is the world of no compromise. Coaches and athletes are able to create this environment together by expertly cultivating an ethos of collective responsibility, implying choice and encouraging freedom rather than selective accountability, implying judgement and apportioning blame.

Throughout the continually changing life-cycle of an athlete/coach relationship that leads to high performance and may well extend over a number of years, successful coaches initially lead but later support their charges through a range of experiences that are appropriate at certain points along the performance pathway. They repeatedly prepare the way and continually equip the performer and themselves with the necessary range of skills required to operate effectively in an extremely complex and stressful environment.

Many performers succeed at the highest level because, to begin with, someone believed in them, and made them believe in themselves – often a coach, perhaps more than one – who was then able to go on and bring out the best in them.

Good coaching?

It's not difficult. If it is – you're not doing it right!

Ken Kelly

Coaching Officer

British Paralympic Association

UKA Level 4 Performance Coach

UKA Technical Director Disability Athletics – 1999 to 2005

Athletics Team Leader Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Paralympic Games

Take home message

Are leaders born or made? It is for you to decide. However, what we do know is that good coaches need to be effective leaders. There are many theories of leadership, some of which we have studied in this chapter, none of which gives us the definitive answer as to what makes a great leader, although all lend aspects that should be adopted and respected when coaching. Remember that coaches and athletes both have a set of

universal traits and behaviours and it is the behaviours that can be manipulated and moulded to generate the coach/athlete behaviour. The coach should always be aware of the needs of their athletes; of their goals and desires.

Question the perceptions of the athlete of the relationship and the process of coaching and how these marry up with the philosophy adopted by the coach. Is the relationship built on mutual respect and open to communication in both directions? There is little doubt that the role of the coach as a leader is fundamental to the success of the athlete as a performer.

Further study

The material listed below has been selected to assist you in developing a wider understanding of the role of a coach as a leader and the coach/athlete relationship. As such, there are publications related to leadership models, the role of the coach in the coach/athlete relationship and the preference of athletes in terms of coach behaviour.

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www.ausport.gov.au/coach/tools.asp – Australian Institute of Sport: Massive website devoted to the promotion of elite performance and sport within Australia. This specific link takes you to articles related to coach education and knowledge.

www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/coachofficial.asp – Australian Institute of Sport: Massive website devoted to the promotion of elite performance and sport within Australia. This specific link takes you to articles related to ethics in coaching.

www.athleticscoaching.ca/default.aspx?pid=7&spid=80 – Canadian Athletics Coaching Centre: Site containing information relating to coaching and sports science. This link relates to coach education and development.

www.eis2win.co.uk/gen/news_copingpressure230603.aspx – English Institute of Sport: National organisation who support and work with elite athletes in England. This link is directly related to coping with pressure.

www.sportscotland.org/ – Sports Coach UK: National body responsible for regulating and overseeing coach education within the UK. Site contains information relating to coaching courses and contacts through to coaching resources and support.

www.uksport.gov.uk/ – UK Sport: National body supporting elite world class performers. Useful resources related to coach education and drug free sport.