Coaching Theory

This will provide you with some of the coaching theory which underpins our approach to educating volleyball coaches. Many of you will be familiar with the themes and concepts; coach athlete relationship, game based approaches, self-reflection and social learning. We will share some information in these newsletters so that we have a common understanding when we meet for the tutor training in September. Please take time to familiarize yourself with this knowledge.

To be a technically and tactically good coach is one thing, but what gives the coach the “edge” (i.e., the extra effectiveness) in this unforgiving and relentless competitive sport environment is the connection developed between the coach and athlete. It is this relationship that makes a difference to coaching because it supplies coaches with the key to opening the door to their athletes’ capabilities, capacities, and potential.

1. UK Coaching and Coach-athlete relationship example videos

Coaching is changing: [https://youtu.be/UmzeUbMo6DA](https://youtu.be/UmzeUbMo6DA)

Beth Tweddle and Amanda Reddin OBE: [https://youtu.be/Z5PitQq6uYM](https://youtu.be/Z5PitQq6uYM) (Notice the nuances of their relationship and how it has evolved over the years).

2. The Power of the Coach-Athlete Relationship

This video workshop discusses the role of the coach-athlete relationship and in particular the importance of power and the different ways to gain power as a coach. The workshop is delivered by Senior Lecturer Ben Ives from Bucks New University who has a specialist background in the sociology of sport.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO67sOepPzQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO67sOepPzQ)

3. Obtaining respect with the Coach-athlete relationship:

Independently of how success is measured within different coaching contexts, it depends on the athlete’s willingness to listen and cooperate with the coach. Coaches may rely on a wide variety of ways to obtain respect from athlete and others (for example, assistant coaches, parents, managers, etc). In this sense, we believe it is useful for coaches to learn about the bases of power, a sociology theory developed by Raven (1992), that presents different sources of respect. Power is simply “the capacity to produce, or contribute to, outcomes by significantly affecting another or others” (Lukes, 1993). Coaches may obtain respect from:
• Legitimate Power: Respect that derives solely from a person’s position within the organisation. Due the nature of the role, a coach is expected to tell athletes what to do, when to do it, and how to do it; in turn, athletes are expected to listen and collaborate; but this reason may not be enough to actually achieve this partnership.

• Expert Power: Respect that derives from the recognition of coaches’ status, qualifications, experience, achievements, reputation. The greater the athletes’ perception, the greater the coach’s influence and respect (i.e. power).

• Informational Power: Respect that is determined by the information (e.g. technical, tactical), or logical argument, that the coach is able to present. It may also be the result of athletes appreciating and understanding why the coach is engaging them in certain activities and tasks.

• Coercive Power: Derives simply from the coaches’ ability to punish or remove rewards from another. When applied on its own, and if not balanced, it may ‘explode’ at some point.

• Reward Power: The respect that derives from one person’s ability to provide others with rewards. Coaches will need to understand how much of which reward, delivered how frequently and for how long a time is best for each athlete.

• Referent Power: Respect that accrues through an athlete’s identification with his/her coach and/or his/her desire to be like him (role model). It is the person and not the position or ability that is respected. It usually relies on aspects such as friendship, liking, or/and loyalty.

4. How to Create a Relational Coaching Environment:

Dr. Sophia Jowett, termed this unique partnership or relationship developed between a coach and an athlete, ‘relational coaching’. Relational coaching is the ways coaches and athletes connect to bring about performance success and personal satisfaction.
Closeness reflects the affective bond developed between coaches and athletes and is manifested in mutual trust and respect, emotional caring and support, as well as interpersonal liking and appreciation. It is the bedrock of the sporting partnership.

- Be open – offer information, show you have nothing to hide, don’t omit, mask openness is ridiculed
- Keep confidences – keep secrets imparted to you. No gossip is allowed. NEVER blab someone else’s story
- Display loyalty – protect your athletes, be on their side both in their presence and absence
- Be competent – display your skills to gain your athletes’ admiration and respect
- Be neutral when placed in difficult situations – don’t choose sides until you have all the facts
- Be reliable/consistent/predictable – if you cancel or fail to follow through it will create cracks in your trustworthiness
- Honour your promises – if you make promises you cannot keep, your athletes will think you are not dependable
- Do not bawl the promise – however small you think it is your athletes may think it to be significant
- Be honest – not always easy

- Speak from the heart – focus on the person, by doing this you make clear you don’t judge the other
- Speak your feelings – people who only convey facts come across as cold and distant (be compassionate/understanding)
- Pay attention and notice your athletes doing good things – give/receive recognition (purposeful appreciation)
  - Focus on individual accomplishment – it is much more powerful than acknowledging the whole group. Acknowledge an athlete in the team or squad who has done a good job in front of others
  - Be as specific as possible – when you offer appreciation, describe the impact of what has been done. (For example, “You did a great job – getting the team together, organising the equipment in ways that can be more effectively used by all. I appreciate you took the lead on that. It is making a difference in...”)
  - When you see it, say it – timeliness is important...don’t wait
  - Be sincere – don’t fake it

Read Sophia’s full blog about how to create a relational coaching environment at www.connectedcoaches.org

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Creating a Relational Coaching Environment

How to build commitment in the coach-athlete relationship
by ConnectedCoaches Content Champion Dr Sophia Jowett

Commitment reflects the intentions of coaches and athletes to maintain a bond or a connection that is both close and long-term. This long-term orientation toward the relationship is considered important as it takes time to develop skill and bring about success.

- Map out individual developmental plans for each athlete in your team or squad (they need to feel there is a plan for them) - it motivates them to stay and to work hard
- Have a programme of performance based on well-defined and mutually agreed goals
- Ensure athletes are committed to the team's goals
- Create opportunities for development/advancement
- Involve them in the coaching process by:
  - asking them what they need to be more effective
  - asking them what will make them more committed
- Communicate - make effort to continually exchange information
  - Be open; openness is reciprocated
  - Offer information; show you have nothing to hide, don't omit, mask
- Listen and learn from your athletes
- Need to be seen to take action, making changes to improve, prioritising
- Ensure responsibilities (roles and rules or expectations) are clearly defined
- Spell the benefits of staying with you (coach)
- Make sure everyone knows is valued and understood
- Commitment and responsibility are associated - it is both the coach and athlete's responsibility to make things better/resolve issues - this can be achieved with continuous dialogue and working hard for improvement

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For individual and team coaches

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Creating a Relational Coaching Environment

How to build complementarity in the coach-athlete relationship by ConnectedCoaches Content Champion Dr Sophia Jowett

Complementarity reflects coaches and athletes' behaviours that are complementary or cooperative. These behaviours determine the efficient conduct of interactions between coaches and athletes.

- Work together through well-coordinated actions
- Lead/follow by example
- Improve communication
- ‘Simple communication’ is best and more impactful
- Ensure all members in the team/squad know one another (group spirit)
- Clarity roles and reinforce rules
- Explain consequences if rules are not met
- Meet regularly
- Address issues quickly
- Be well prepared for training/competition (mentally and physically)
- Create an environment that is positive, engaging, motivating, creative and innovative
- Make an impression by showing your competency and expertise
- Create a friendly and supportive environment
- Provide structure, challenge and organisation – instil a hard work ethos
- Show flexibility and adaptability (adopt a flexible management style)
- Display responsiveness
- Clarity and recap the goals each individual wants/needs to accomplish
- Promote individual goals
- Promote team goals and make sure everyone knows
- Celebrate every success (large and small)
- When there is ‘failure’, don’t see it as a liability, but as a learning opportunity
- Exhibit, and expect from each athlete, responsive, patient, determined, driven, ambitious, enthusiastic, disciplined and focused behaviours.

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