

UNDERTAKE A SELF ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFY WHERE YOU ARE IN TERMS OF YOUR SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSPECTIVES/PHILOSOPHY

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Skills.

In order to define my coaching skills successfully, it would be useful to have a clear understanding of what the coaching process is. This is very important as, through having a well defined role, we can be very clear as to what we are trying to achieve and be free of any ambiguity (Gilbert, Trudel & Haughian, 1999; Bergman-Drewe, 2000; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000; Lyle 2002).

"The coaching process is the contract/agreement between athlete and coach and the operationalisation consists of the purposeful, direct and indirect, formal and informal series of actives and interventions designed to improve competition performance. The most evident part of the process is normally a planned, co-ordinated and integrated program of preparation and competition." (Lyle, 2002: 40)

In order to undertake a self analysis it would be a good starting point to identify the skills I already have and how I am currently operating as a coach. I will do this though a self and peer profile evaluation of the current United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) coaching standard for rugby union. This, however, presents a problem. How do I go about evaluating and developing my own behaviours and knowledge on coaching? Abraham and Collins' (1996) research into the nature of the problem-solving suggests a process called the 'forward reasoning approach'. The forward reasoning approach means you start with the problem and then, based on the information in the problem, you sequentially work towards a solution.

My starting point will be to identify the coaching competences I think I have already achieved, and then compare these to the views of a peer and an athlete under my supervision. Coaching profile will be based on a summary of the UKCC coaching competences for rugby union (see identifying and evaluating coaching skills pro-former Appendix 1 and UKCC level descriptors Appendix 2).

The results of the self-evaluation puts me operating at the UKCC level three mark and can be cross-referenced with the formal and informal coach education I have had to date (see Appendix 3).



Cushion, Armour & Jones (2003) argue that coaches go through an unusual informal coaching apprenticeship as a player. This serves as an opportunity to learn about coaching and to learn the skills that are needed in order to be a successful coach. This theory is reinforced by Bell (1997), who goes on to point out that beginner coaches have already learnt the ropes through their commitment as a player. It is the richness and quantity of this informal education that develops coaches to higher levels (Gould et al. 1990).

The next part of my self-evaluation will focus on the knowledge I have already gained through formal and informal coach education and how best to develop it.

Knowledge.

Abraham et al. (2006) ask a very important question that relates closely to me at this point in my development; unless you know and understand the process, how can you optimally develop it? This is a very complex question and to try to answer this I will need to examine my coaching knowledge closely.

I have examined my coaching knowledge by splitting it into two sections, coaching specific and domain specific (Abraham and Collins, 1996). The coaching specifics are the details of coaching, the process of coaching and the different models of and for coaching (Cushions et al. 2006). The second part will be based around the details of rugby union that I will face as a coach (see Appendix 4). This assessment method of my knowledge is based on Martens' (2006) athlete profiling; a score of 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. I use this method when profiling my athletes, so it is only appropriate to do the same on myself when profiling my own knowledge.

As a result of this profiling the following findings have become apparent; first, the biggest deviation came from my knowledge of tactical options available; second, the lowest scores came from my knowledge on strength training; and third, the highest score I had was on the knowledge of team strategy (see Appendix 4).

A possible reason for having the highest score on the team's strategy could be that I helped design, implement and develop this in the first instance. A surprise to me is the deviation in the tactical knowledge available. This could come down to my inexperience as a coach, possibly because beginner coaches get caught up in managing athletes instead of looking at the wider variables and digging deeper into the problems they encounter (Abraham and Collins, 2006; Schempp, McCullick and Mason, 2006; Bell, 1997). Finally my lowest score was of no great shock to me. I have had no formal strength training education and, with the constant dominance of the physical side of rugby union at all levels, it is definitely an area for concern.

Characteristics.

Earlier I identified my skill as a coach operating at the standard of UKCC level three (see Appendix 2 and 3). Profiling in this way is effective in determining my skills, but does not give me an insight as to how far I have developed along the novice/expert continuum. In order to do this I need to investigate the specific characteristics of coaching expertise. Schempp et al. (2006) and Bell (1997) divide these in to four areas; beginner, competence, proficiency and expert; each of these will be discussed in turn.

A common trait in beginner coaches is that they are more concerned about student behaviour than



the process of learning. This is because coaches can get caught up in managing athletes while overlooking more important instructional tasks, such as practising and progressing skills. Often, they abdicate responsibility for athletes' poor behaviour, putting this down to personal characteristics instead of their instructional technique (Schempp et al. 2006; Bell, 1997 (see level 1 in Appendix 2)). It will be the drive to inspire athletes to their full potential that propels coaches to higher coaching status. The more the beginner coach is engaged with, and learns from his coaching practice, the faster he will progress onto the next stage (Bloom, Durand-Bush and Salmela, 1997; Gould et al., 1990). During this learning process it is important to monitor the quality and richness of experience as this will form the base for future actions and behaviours (Schempp et al., 2006).

Coaching competence begins to emerge when a coach examines the changing situation he faces and finds solutions to these from his previous experiences (Bell, 1997). This is where I find myself, with 3,843 hours of coach education (see Appendix 3). I have enough experience to reflect on, but am still guided by circumstances and context. It is only through trial and error that my experience will grow and move towards competency (Schempp et al., 2006; Bell, 1997; Irwin, Hanton and Kerwin, 2004; Siedentop and Eldar, 1989). Schempp et al. (2006) suggest that coaches must revisit the purpose behind their coaching practice and begin to adopt other styles and behaviours.

Proficient coaches start to detect subtleties in a learning environment that have significant importance to the events taking place and can anticipate likely events, thus responding to shifting conditions in a player's or players' performances appropriately (Schempp et al., 2006; Bell, 1997). Proficient coaches can move into the expert stage through continuing self-development and experience (De Marco and McCullick, 1997)).

Experts reach a high degree of atomicity in their behaviour. Schempp et al. (2006) argue that coaches at this stage look at situations as typical or atypical, then process information accordingly. Siedentop and Eldar (1989) refer to this information processing as 'knowing in action'. Through monitoring situations until something seems out of the ordinary, the components in athletes' performances can be looked at and information can be supplied back accordingly (Schempp et al., 2006; Bell, 1997).

Philosophy/Perspectives.

The fact that coaches' behaviour reflects their philosophy is a notion that underpins much of the current coach education literature (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004).

Articulating our philosophies accurately has become a sign of good coaching practice. However, in a study of twenty two youth sport coaches, McCallister et al. (2002) asked them to identity the philosophy they implemented into their youth sport programme, but the responses were generally limited in scope. Clear articulation enables direction and focus as to how you go about doing your job. There is no right or better philosophy to have, but every coaching element is affected by the coach's personal beliefs. A well-developed philosophy encompasses this and guides an individual practice (Cassidy et al., 2004. Lyle, 1999).

It is not easy, or sometimes even a possibility, for an inexperienced coach to develop and refine a clear philosophy. This is because the contextual pressures and constraints need to be taken into account when defining a philosophy. If this is not done it will become static and have little relevance to the coaches or athletes involved. Schempp et al. (2006) and Bell (1997) pointed out to us earlier that it



is not until the coach has reached the proficient stage of expertise that this context becomes apparent. This will result in the author having little confidence in the validity of its worth (Cassidy, et al. 2004). As a coach I will have to be careful not to let this philosophical statement be the limitation of my performance, acting only within its constraints. Rather, I will maintain flexibility, using it as a principle to guide my actions and behaviours (Lyle, 1999).

The research of Cassidy et al. (2004) identifies that coaches should find their deep-rooted beliefs though a method of reflection on previous experiences. This suggests that a philosophical statement would change over time as new experiences become apparent. These would then guide and change the coach's views. I will look at reflection in more detail below.

Learning Outcomes.

The Rugby Football Union's (RFU) model of characterising the coaching process at the level three stage is planning for a session, doing or conducting a training session and, finally, reviewing and reflecting on what happened within it as a whole (UKCC, 2005). Abraham et al. (2006) criticise this model as being too simplistic, although good for beginners. It is not representative of the full process that coaches go through. Knowles et al. (2005) single out a specific element of this process and explore it in finer detail. Their findings on reflection stress its importance and point out that experimenting, and the consequent reflection of this, is the primary determinate for coach development (Cushion et al., 2003). However, reflection alone does not guarantee coaching competency. Due to the highlighted importance of reflection in the coaching domain, it can be viewed as an important skill to have. Like all skills, reflection needs to be refined and mastered. This does not come with experience alone but with commitment to constant personal development through the aid of external sources (Knowles, Borrie and Telfer, 2005; Gilbert and Trudel, 2001).

It is seemingly pointless to reflect on every aspect of the session a coach has just performed. Gilbert and Trudel (2001) conducted research into model coaches and found that coaches can frame their roles by creating and investigating the boundaries in which to operate. This role-framing helps coaches select the issue that are appropriate to them. Some common boundaries that coaches have are winning, age-group, competitive level, discipline, fun and personal development (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004; McCallister et al., 2000).

The above findings set up reflection as a primary way for developing coaching expertise. To become a successful coach, Cote (2006) concludes that it takes three thousand coaching hours. To become an expert in coaching, it takes ten years of deliberate practice. It is through this self-monitoring process that experts are able to identify areas of improvement and set up strategies to achieve their goals, which we stated at the beginning are to improve competition performance (Schempp et al., 2006).

This is not the only way we can pass through the novice/expert continuum. We are able to accelerate this process through observing expert coaches, asking questions about their actions and extracting key characteristics, while implementing them into are own coaching behaviours (Abraham and Collins, 2006; Gilbert and Trudel, 2005; Knowles et al., 2005; Cushion et al., 2003; Gilbert and Trudel, 2001; Bell, 1997; Bloom et al., 1997; De Marco and McCullick, 1997). This evidence is hard to ignore but must be followed with caution as there is no set criteria for a good coach. Simply, coaching is contextual and copying model behaviours will not relate to your own individual situation. Abraham and Collins (1996) agree good coaching behaviour relates more to correct decisions made at the correct time than to how much of a certain behaviour a coach has



exhibited during a session. This suggests that coaching could be more of a cognitive skill, relying less on personality and behaviour and more on the coach's context-specific expertise (Schempp et al., 2006).

To facilitate my learning and progress through the evolution of novice to expert continuum, it is important to pull resources from a mentor. Irwin, et al. (2004) and Gould et al. (1990) published findings that imply this will allow me to initiate a level of understanding that will translate my knowledge and skills to a higher level of expertise.

Reading List.

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Appendix.

1.

Identifying and Evaluating Coaching Skills Performer					
	Self	Player	Peer		
Level Competences	<i>O</i> ₁		H		
Level One Competences					
Safely organise and supervise rugby union activities	X	X	X		
Working relationships and high standards of behaviour	X	X	X		
Understanding of generic coaching skills	X	X	X		
Identify and adapt rugby union activities and sessions for a variety ages	X	X	X		
Level Two Competences					
Appreciation of the ethical coaching process	X	X	X		
Plan, conduct and evaluate a series of rugby union coaching sessions	X	X	X		
Coach the basic skills and techniques of rugby union	X	X	X		
Promote and establish positive working relationships and high standards			ı		
of behaviour	X	X	X		
Ensure the health and safety of players and others	X	X	X		
Develop greater responsibility for their own learning and development	X	X	X		
Promote the sport of rugby union in a positive and constructive manner	X	X	X		
demonstrate an understanding of the principles of attack and defence	X	X	X		
Level Three Competences					
Analyse participants' current and potential performance needs and			i		
aspirations	X	X	X		
Plan a coaching programme according to agreed goals	X	X			
Manage a safe and effective coaching environment	X	X	X		
Use a range of coaching styles and interventions to meet participants'			ı		
needs	X				
Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of coaching programme	X	X	X		
Manage and develop personal coaching practice					
Coach techniques & tactical concepts of rugby union		X			
Understand the units & sub-units and their contribution to team play	X				
Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of attack and defence	X	X	X		
Level Four Competences					
Develop a culture of excellence where learning and development can					
take place					
Manage change consistently in a dynamic environment					
Review and self reflect on their coaching planning and practice	X				
Use integrated approaches within their coaching process					
Manage change within specialist environments					
Be creative when problem-solving and decision-making					
Enable personal development to occur and further develop the coaching					
process			i		
Level Five Competences					
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Demonstrate an open-minded approach and a willingness to adopt					

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change where appropriate		
Seek, evaluate and apply new information from non-rugby sources	X	X
Develop cutting edge knowledge and skills		
Find innovative and creative solutions to coaching problems		
Demonstrate self-reflection, take responsibility for their own CPD	X	
Adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to problem solving		

2. UKCC level descriptors

Level	The coach will be qualified to:		
	Generate, direct and manage the		
5	implementation of cutting-edge		
	chancing solutions and programs		
	Design, implement and evaluate the		
4 process and outcome of long			
	term/specialist coaching programs		
3	Plan, implement, analyse and revise		
3	annual coaching programs		
2	Prepare for, deliver and review		
2	coaching session(s)		
	Assist more qualified coaches,		
1	delivering aspects of coaching		
1	sessions, normally under direct		
	supervision		



3. Coach Education

Formal Education				
Description	Total Hours			
Level 1	15			
Level 2	30			
Level 3	32			
Sport Coaching Bsc Level 1	1200			
Sport Coaching Bsc Level 2	450			
Total	1727			

Informal Education					
Club	Coaching Hours				
1	282				
2	32				
3	30				
Total	344				

Player	
1	Hours
2	684
3	608
4	240
5	240
Total	1772



4.

Rugby Specific Coaching Skills Assessed 1-5						
Skills Identified	Self	Player	Peer	Average	ST Dev	
Technical Skills						
Passing	4	4	3	3.7	0.6	
Tackling	2	3	3	2.7	0.6	
Off Loading	4	3	5	4.0	1.0	
Attack	2	3	2	2.3	0.6	
Defence	3	4	3	3.3	0.6	
Tactical Knowledge						
Ability to read the situation	3	2	2	2.3	0.6	
Knowledge of the rules	2	2	2	2.0	0.0	
Knowledge of team strategy	5	4	5	4.7	0.6	
Knowledge of opponents	3	2	1	2.0	1.0	
Knowledge of self	4	4	2	3.3	1.2	
Knowledge of tactical options	4	5	2	3.7	1.5	
Decision-making ability	3	3	3	3.0	0.0	
Physical Training Knowledge						
Strength	1	1	1	1.0	0.0	
Speed	2	3	2	2.3	0.6	
Power	1	3	1	1.7	1.2	
Endurance	2	3	2	2.3	0.6	
Flexibility	2	3	2	2.3	0.6	
Quickness	3	3	2	2.7	0.6	
Balance	3	3	2	2.7	0.6	
Agility	3	3	2	2.7	0.6	
Mental Abilities						
Controlling Emotional - anxiety	4	5	5	4.7	0.6	
Controlling Emotional – anger	4	5	5	4.7	0.6	
Self-confidence	2	4	4	3.3	1.2	
Motivation to achieve	4	5	5	4.7	0.6	
Ability to concentrate	4	5	3	4.0	1.0	
Communication skills						
Sends positive messages	4	3	4	3.7	0.6	
Sends accurate messages	3	4	3	3.3	0.6	
Listens to messages	3	5	5	4.3	1.2	
Understands messages	4	5	5	4.7	0.6	
Receives constructive criticism	4	4	5	4.3	0.6	

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Receives praise and recognition	4	4	5	4.3	0.6
Credibility with team-mates	3	4	5	4.0	1.0
Credibility with Coaches	3	5	3	3.7	1.2
Character					
Trustworthiness	4	5	5	4.7	0.6
Respect	4	5	5	4.7	0.6

Responsibility	4	5	5	4.7	0.6
Fairness	4	5	5	4.7	0.6
Caring	4	5	5	4.7	0.6
Citizenship	4	5	5	4.7	0.6
Maturity and Experience					
Physical maturity	2	1	2	1.7	0.6
Emotional maturity	4	5	3	4.0	1.0
Social maturity	2	4	3	3.0	1.0
Playing maturity	2	3	1	2.0	1.0