To what Extent are Men’s NCAA Distance Running Coaches Humanistic?

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Purpose
The goal of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men’s NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach were humanistic.

Review of Literature
What is a coaching philosophy?
• A set of values or basic principles that guide a coach’s behavior in practical coaching situations, and human relationships in general (Hargreaves, 1998). Why do you need a coaching philosophy?
• Provides program direction (Mar honor, 2003).
• Guides in decision making (Mar honor, 2003).
• Given the coaching staff a framework to base coaching decisions (Paris, 2007).
• Provides expectations for athletes and parents (Paris, 2007).
• Reduces chances of surrendering to external pressures (Mar honor, 2003).
• Increases the likelihood of success (Mar honor, 2003).
• Positively impact athlete experiences in the sport (Hargreaves, 1998).

What is a humanistic coaching philosophy?
• Collaborative, non-manipulative process between athlete and coach.
• Takes into account individual differences and abilities.
• Aim to develop: emancipated, self-regulated, adaptable, and self-confident athletes (Lyle, 1998).

Gap in the Literature
• Few studies have methodically investigated coaching philosophies - none with distance running coaches.
• All used self-report techniques – questionnaire, interviews, written statements, or online survey – with no triangulation.
• Stated philosophy might not correspond to actual coaching practices.

Significance
• Worthwhile to study the approaches taken by successful coaches to assist others in developing an effective coaching philosophy.
• This is the first known study to use training session observations and artifact collection in the research of coaching philosophies.

Guiding Questions
1) What is the coaching philosophy of the participant men’s NCAA distance running coach?
2) To what extent is this coach’s stated coaching philosophy humanistic?
3) To what extent are this coach’s coaching methods congruent with a humanistic philosophy?

Findings & Implications

Primary Themes Generated
• Theme 1: Coach/Athlete Interpersonal Communication and Relationships
• Theme 2: Coach/Athlete Decision-making
• Theme 3: Coach’s Definition of Success

Summary of Conclusions
The coach’s stated philosophy and methods were humanistic in regards to:
• Having close interpersonal relationships.
• Open communication.
• Collaborative decision-making with athletes.
• An athlete-centred process-oriented definition of success, but not humanistic in relation to:
• Communicating more with the best (i.e., top eight) runners on the team at all times.
• Employing dictatorial methods in planning interval and tempo workouts independent from athletes.

Theme 1 Findings
Humanistic
• Coach accessibility for communication.
• View of coach/athlete interpersonal relationship.
• Less communication with “new” runners to the program.

Theme 2 Findings
Humanistic
• Opportunities for athlete free expression.
• The goal setting process.
• The process of planning the training program.
• On-the-spot training decisions based upon athlete input.
• Warm-up/cool-down routine, resistance training, when to run, contact support.
• Perception of who is in control of the process of athletic development.

Theme 3 Findings
Humanistic
• The process of planning the training program.
• Athlete dependency on the coach.

Methodology
Pilot study
• Methods were first validated through a pilot study.
Participant selection
• 1 Coach – Purposive Sampling
• 5 Athletes – Random purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007)
• 1 previous season (n=1)
• 2 previous seasons (n=1)
• 3 previous seasons (n=1)
• 4 previous seasons (n=2)

Participant Coach’s accolades
• Led 15 teams (9 men’s, 6 women’s) to the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships between 1998 and 2011 – all but 2 squads earning top-25 finishes.
• National Men’s NCAA Division I Cross Country “Coach of the Year” – 4 times.
• 4-time Region and 25-time Conference Men’s or Women’s Cross Country Coach of the Year.
• 2-time Men’s Conference Indoor Track Coach of the Year.
• Coach 17 Men’s and Women’s Distance Running NCAA Division I All-Americans.

Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007)
• Coach – 2 interviews (45 minutes to 1 hour each)
• Athletes – 1 interview each (40 to 60 minutes each)

Observations
• 8 training sessions (2 weeks)
• Team located in the west region of the United States
• “Observer as Participant” during 3 sessions (Mar honor, 2003)

Artifacts
• Training session planning schedules
• Team Handbook
• Coach Emails

Data analysis (Creswell, 2007)
• Data was triangulated using Atlas to generate themes and conclusions via open, axial, and selective coding procedures.

References

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