The Importance of Mentoring in the Development of Coaches and Athletes

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Mentoring has been considered an increasingly important element of coaching development programs. It occurs when a teacher willingly invests time in the personal development of a student or athlete, when a trusting relationship evolves, needs and interests are fulfilled, and imitation of behavior takes place. The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring experiences of expert team sport coaches. More specifically, the intent was to determine if any of the coaches were mentored through their development as athletes and subsequently as coaches, and if in turn they mentored other athletes and coaches during their careers. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 coaches. The data were analyzed inductively using qualitative procedures outlined by Côté and colleagues (1993, 1995). Results revealed that most coaches were mentored by more experienced coaches during both their athletic and early coaching careers. As a result, they gained valuable knowledge and insights that helped shape their coaching philosophies and enhanced all facets of their performance. Once they reached a level of expertise in their field, they themselves began to mentor athletes and younger coaches. The benefits of establishing structured mentoring programs for developing coaches and athletes are highlighted throughout the article.

KEY WORDS: Coaching, Mentoring.

Mentoring is a process that requires further research and is believed to lead to high levels of success in both personal and professional endeavors (Merriam, 1983). In sport, it is evident that the role of the expert coach entails more than teaching individuals how to shoot correctly or how to dribble

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assisting athletes to develop new skills. using evaluation tests to monitor training progress and predicting performance. advising athletes on their nutritional needs. understanding and knowing how to develop the athlete's energy systems. The art of coaching comes when the coach has to analyse the scientific data and convert it into coaching and training programs to help develop the athlete. This analysis process relies heavily on the coach's experience and knowledge of the event/sport and the athlete concerned. This role accepts the athletes' long-term interests as of greater importance than short-term athletic considerations. To fulfil this role the coach must behave in an ethical manner respecting the following points: Coaches must respect basic human rights.