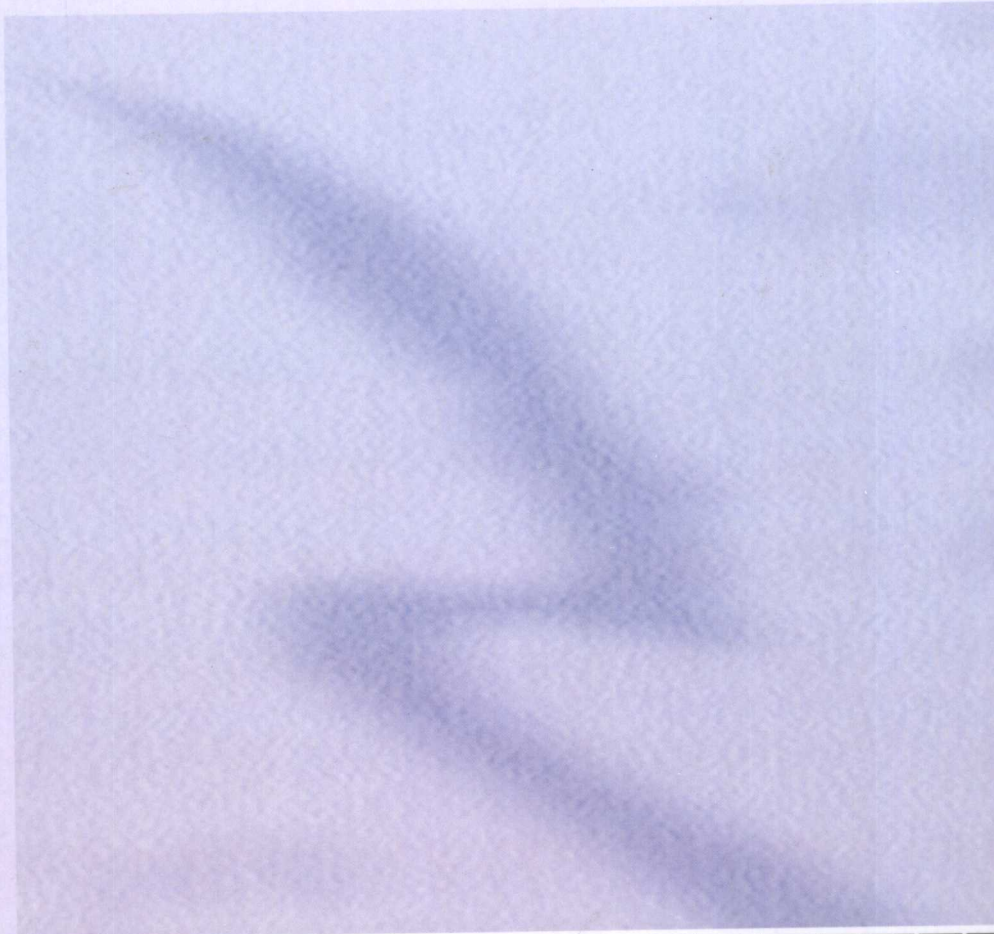


Sports Coaching Concepts

A framework for coaches' behaviour

John Lyle

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A FRAMEWORK FOR COACHES' BEHAVIOUR

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▼ PREFACE

The academic treatment of sports coaching in the UK has focused largely on the science of performance, with much more limited attention given to coaching behaviour and practice. The consequence of this has been a lack of conceptual and theoretical development, resulting in a poor research framework and an incomplete appreciation of the role and effectiveness of the coach. This is somewhat surprising, given two particular trends. The first is the much increased attention to the contribution of the performance coach now that National Lottery funding in the UK has greatly improved the resourcing of high-performance sport. The second concerns the expansion of coaching-related courses in higher and further education. There are more and more courses and routes in sports coaching, coaching sciences and coaching studies at all levels, including Master's degrees. These are complemented by much more substantive governing body awards than was previously the case.

The resourcing of courses at all levels is problematical, because there are few non-sport-specific textbooks available to support teaching. Even more so, there are few attempts to deal in detail with the conceptual issues that underpin coaching practice and that should form the basis of education, training, evaluation and research. This book is intended to provide such a resource.

There is a central theme, which informs the core of the text. Sports coaching is a process when it is implemented in a systematic, constraint-supportive context. That is, it is an integrated, interdependent and serial accumulation of purposeful activities that are designed to achieve a set of objectives centred on improved competition performance. This has to be understood in the context of the normally much less intensive participation coaching, which is focused on the single coaching episode and is to be found with young persons, in education contexts, in recreation and development stages, and also (and at high levels of performance) in the 'instructor' mode. The distinctions between these forms of coaching determine the relative significance of skills and knowledge, appropriate measures of effectiveness, professional development, and education and training. Most importantly, however, this conceptual understanding of the coaching process is necessary to analyse coaching practice and coaching behaviours. In particular, it provides a basis for understanding the relationships between performer and coach, and increasing professionalisation and career structures.

This book is not simply a distillation of the existing literature, although this is drawn upon as necessary. It is the outcome of a considerable period of writing, researching,

experiencing and reflecting on the coaching process. The author has fulfilled coaching roles at all levels from school teams to international sport, and has experienced these as a performer. He was instrumental in driving forward the UK's first higher education Diploma in Sports Coaching, and the first Master's degree in Coaching Studies. He has extensive experience of working with undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition, the author has contributed extensively to the National Coaching Foundation's education and development work, and directed the National Coaching Centre in Edinburgh. The outcome of this considerable involvement in coaching and coach education was a questioning, critical approach and dissatisfaction with the existing analyses of coaching practice. The ideas that developed over that period of time form the basis of this text.

The book presents a coherent attempt to construct a framework with which to delimit, describe and analyse the coaching process, coaching behaviour and coaching practice. It is designed for students of sports coaching at all stages but will have particular value for undergraduate students and as a resource for postgraduate students in generating research ideas and clarifying research assumptions. Insofar as this is a resource text, one of the objectives has been to bring some order to the material available and to the ideas that have stimulated its writing. Nevertheless, the book is written from a critical and questioning perspective and often acknowledges that it is setting an agenda and fostering debate and further academic study rather than providing all of the answers.

Each chapter identifies critical concepts and further questions as the text progresses. At the conclusion of each chapter, there is a short summary, a selection of potential projects and a guide to suggested reading. The 'question boxes' are designed as an aid to students and tutors, and can be used to stimulate critical enquiry. For easy reference, the questions have been collated in Appendix 1.

The contents are divided into five parts. The chapters in Part 1 provide an historical perspective, make the case for a conceptual framework and deal with the issue of how coaching is defined and bounded, and the ways in which the coaching role differs from other sports leadership roles. Part 2 examines coaching practice: what do coaches do and how can this be modelled? A conceptual framework for the coaching process is proposed as an aid to analysis and an integrated picture of the coaching process is created from the available evidence. Part 3 focuses on the extremely important relationship between the performer and the coach, the factors that influence this and the challenges of implementing a more humanistic approach to coaching. The relevant chapters adopt a critical approach to the literature. The chapters in the fourth Part deal with the implications for the coach and the coaching profession of the social context within which coaches operate. This is built around key themes – motives, recruitment, gender and ethics. Part 5 asks how we evaluate coaching and coaches, and focuses on coaching effectiveness and coach education. This Part attempts a future perspective on sports coaching and includes a chapter on setting a research agenda.

The book is written with the strongly held belief that the quality of sports coaching is the most important environmental factor in determining performance improvement and success. It is also a contribution to debunking the belief that sports coaching is a mystical process that is dependent on the vagaries of the coach's personality and is an intuitive artistic process capable of neither inspection nor introspection. Sports coaching continues

to strive towards professionalisation, and this process is dependent on the profession's capacity to identify a body of knowledge and skills, to educate its initiates, to promote its distinctive values and to defend its boundaries. In this context, coaching practice and behaviour must be subject to purposeful analysis and explanation. This text is a modest contribution to this end.

▼ **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Some of the concepts in this book were originally explored by the author in The Coaching Process. This resource supported the National Coaching Foundation's (NCF) BSc (Hons) in Applied Sports Coaching, validated by De Montfort University. SportsCoach UK (formerly the NCF) offers a wide range of services. For further details telephone 0113-274-4802 or visit <www.sportscoachuk.org>.



▼ CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
PART 1 WHAT IS COACHING ABOUT?	1
Chapter One	
Historical and Developmental Context	3
Introduction	3
Historical Roots	5
Physical Education	8
Higher Education and Academic Development	11
Overseas Influences	12
Recent Developments	13
Concluding Comments	16
Summary	18
Projects and Reading	18
Chapter Two	
Developing a Conceptual Framework	20
Introduction	20
Contemporary Sport and Conceptual Questions	22
Building a Conceptual Framework	24
Coaching and Theory Development	28
The Contribution of Literature on Sports Coaching	31
Sport as a Concept	33
Summary	34
Projects and Reading	34
Chapter Three	
The Coaching Process	35
Introduction	35
A Definition of Coaching	38



Definitions	40
Coaching as a Process	43
Boundary Markers	46
Process Skills	50
Participation and Performance Coaching	52
Summary	57
Projects and Reading	58
 Chapter Four	
The Role of the Coach	59
Introduction	59
Role Concepts	61
Purpose and Function	63
Role Complementarity between Coaches and Support Personnel	67
Organisational Impact on the Coach's Role	70
The Uniqueness of the Coaching Role	72
Summary	75
Projects and Reading	76
 PART 2 HOW DO COACHES BEHAVE?	77
 Chapter Five	
Modelling the Coaching Process	79
Introduction	79
What is Meant by a Model?	80
Problems in Model Building	84
An Evaluation of Existing Models	85
Models: Application, Constraints, Implementation	91
Summary	94
Projects and Reading	94
 Chapter Six	
A Proposed Model for Coaching	96
Introduction	96
Prior Assumptions for the Proposed Model	97
Identifying the Building Blocks	99
The Model	106
Operationalising the Model	107
Summary	115
Projects and Reading	115
 Chapter Seven	
Coaching Practice	116
Introduction	116
Systematic Coaching Behaviours	119



The Picture from Research	125
Planning the Process	125
Implementation Behaviour: Explaining Coaches' Expertise	131
Coaching Practice: A Condensed Description	142
Sport Specificity in Coaching Practice	144
Summary	146
Projects and Reading	147
PART 3 COACHING AS AN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP	149
Chapter Eight	
A Question of Style and Philosophy	151
Introduction	151
Coaching and Interpersonal Relationships	153
Coaching Styles	156
Philosophies of Coaching	165
Summary	172
Projects and Reading	173
Chapter Nine	
A Humanistic Approach to Coaching	174
Introduction	174
Basic Assumptions	176
Humanistic Coaching Practice	178
Discussion of Issues	183
Summary	186
Projects and Reading	186
PART 4 COACHING IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT	189
Chapter Ten	
Coaching and Social Context	191
Introduction	191
Sports Coaching and Social Enquiry	193
Social Issues	195
Status and Professionalisation	198
Commentary	206
Summary	207
Projects and Reading	207
Chapter Eleven	
Motivations and Recruitment in Sports Coaching	209
Introduction	209
Review of Evidence	212
Conceptual Issues	216

Summary	219
Projects and Reading	219
Chapter Twelve	
Where are All the Women Coaches?	221
Introduction	221
Women's Participation in Sport	223
Review of Evidence	224
Possible Explanations	226
Conceptual Issues	229
Commentary	232
Summary	232
Projects and Reading	233
Chapter Thirteen	
Coaching and Ethical Practice	234
Introduction	234
Ethical Issues	235
Problem Areas	239
Conceptual Framework Issues	241
Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct	242
The Legal Dimension	244
Professional Sport: A Suitable Case for Treatment	245
Summary	247
Projects and Reading	247
PART 5 A BASIS FOR PROFESSIONALISATION – THE WAY FORWARD	
	249
Chapter Fourteen	
Effective Coaching and the Effective Coach	251
Introduction	251
What is Meant by Effectiveness?	253
Coaching Effectiveness Literature	260
Further Conceptual Issues	262
Alternative Approaches to Effectiveness	263
Commentary	270
Summary	272
Projects and Reading	272
Chapter Fifteen	
Coach Education and Coaching Practice	274
Introduction	274
Education and Training	275
Historical Development	277



Conceptual Lessons	279
Coach Learning and Coaching Practice	281
Principles of Coach Education and Training	282
Delivery Issues	285
Reflective Practice	288
Summary	289
Projects and Reading	290
Chapter Sixteen	
Setting a Research Agenda	291
Introduction	291
The Research Process	292
The Coaching Process and Research Issues	294
An Expert System	298
Suggestions for a Research Agenda	299
Implications for the Researcher in Coaching Studies	302
Summary	304
Chapter Seventeen	
Springboard to the Future:	
A Short Essay on Developments in Sports Coaching	305
Appendix 1 Study Questions	312
Appendix 2 Useful Websites	318
References	320
<i>Index</i>	333

▼ LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Percentage of coaches trained as teachers, by country	9
2.1	Elements of a conceptual framework for sports coaching	25
2.2	The relationship between conceptual framework elements and application issues	27
2.3	Factors arising from the complexity of interaction of athlete, coach and performance	28
3.1	Process characteristics and coaching practice	45
3.2	Boundary markers for the coaching process in sport	47
3.3	A typology of sport leadership roles and organisational contexts	49
3.4	Coaching process skills	50
3.5	The relationship between forms of coaching and boundary criteria	53
3.6	A diagrammatic representation of the balance of performance and participation coaching roles	57
4.1	The functional roles of the coach	64
4.2	The support and replacement roles of the coaching role-set	68
4.3	Support team roles and role function	68
4.4	Organisational role determinants	71
5.1	Common types of models	82
5.2	Process components and coaching issues	85
5.3	Coaching process model (adapted from Franks <i>et al.</i> 1986)	86
5.4	Coaching process model (Fairs 1987)	88
5.5	Coaching process model (Cote <i>et al.</i> 1995a)	89
5.6	The future of model building in sports coaching	93
6.1	The building blocks of the coaching process	99
6.2	The coaching process	109
6.3	The control box of the coaching process	110
6.4	Threshold responses by coaches in three sports	111
6.5	Coaches' responses to performance deficit	112
6.6	Principal model phases	112
6.7	Generalised competition phase	113
6.8	Upgraded model of the competition phase	114
7.1	Factors influencing the likelihood of systematic practice	119
7.2	Quality control stages	121
7.3	Potential barriers to systematic practice	122
7.4	Coaches' responses to systematic coaching criteria	123

7.5	Selected research studies on coaching practice	126
7.6	Training theory principles	128
7.7	Planning issues related to competition cycle	129
7.8	Potential models of non-deliberative decision making	135
7.9	Results of the allocation of decision making incidents to potential models	135
7.10	Coaches' mental models	141
7.11	Sport-specific factors in coaching practice	145
8.1	The relationship between the coaching framework and interpersonal characteristics	155
8.2	Factors impinging on interpersonal relationships	156
8.3	The distinctions between autocratic and democratic coaching practice	158
8.4	Coaching styles	160
8.5	Factors influencing leadership practice	162
8.6	Potential linkages between values	165
8.7	Criteria for evaluating coaching values	168
8.8	Evaluation criteria for coaching philosophies	170
8.9	Identification of values by Meaning Unit	171
8.10	Steps towards constructing a coaching philosophy	172
9.1	Simplified model of humanistic practice in sports coaching	179
9.2	Illustration of a shift in coaching paradigms	181
10.1	An evaluation of sports coaching in relation to criteria of professionalisation	205
11.1	Factors involved in the recruitment and maintenance of performance coaches	210
11.2	Motivations for UK coaches in the four-country study	213
11.3	Motivations for UK coaches in the ESC 1993 survey	213
11.4	Coaches' responses to selected recruitment motives	214
11.5	Motives expressed by coaches in the TOYA study	214
12.1	Male and female participation in sport by participation category	223
12.2	Percentage of women coaches by level of coaching award	224
12.3	Type of NGB award by gender	225
12.4	Percentages of female coaches in the UK Summer Olympic squads	225
12.5	Low expectation model of preparation for coaching	226
12.6	Factors influencing the engagement of women coaches	230
13.1	Examples of ethical issues	236
13.2	Four elements of the coach's practice and associated ethical concerns	241
13.3	Coaching style and ethical practice	243
14.1	Factors involved in the 'effective equals goal-achievement' approach	258
14.2	Potential coaching process competences	264
14.3	Simplistic representation of the evaluation of value added	268
15.1	Summary of findings of Coaching Review Panel (1991) on coach education	278
16.1	A research typology related to the coaching process	293
16.2	Simplified model of the coaching process as an expert system	298
16.3	Simplified coaching process, competition phase	300
16.4	Refined model of the competition phase	301



PART 1
WHAT IS COACHING ABOUT?

CHAPTER ONE

▼ HISTORICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

■ Introduction	3
■ Historical Roots	5
■ Physical Education	8
■ Higher Education and Academic Development	11
■ Overseas Influences	12
■ Recent Developments	13
■ Concluding Comments	16
■ Summary	18
■ Projects and Reading	18

INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of this book is to devise and elaborate upon a conceptual framework for sports coaching. The historical and developmental context and frame of reference within which this conceptual treatment emerges clearly impacts on the substance of the chapters. The historical development of the role, the place of coaching studies in higher education, the status and professionalisation of the role and the level of academic support available on which to base the framework will all combine, with other factors, to situate this conceptualisation in a particular time and place. Although it may be tempting to launch immediately into the substance of the conceptual framework, it is important to describe some of this historical background. What this chapter does not attempt, however, is a fully fledged treatise on the historical development of sports coaching, although it is worth noting in passing that this is long overdue. The purpose of the chapter is merely to give sufficient historical context to provide an explanation of the need for the book and the factors that have shaped the practice of sports coaching on which the book is based. There is a dearth of material to illuminate each of the themes within the chapter. To some extent, therefore, there is a focus on the immediate past to which I am able to bring a personal perspective.

The distinction between participation coaching and performance coaching receives considerable emphasis in the chapters that follow. The precise distinctions between these

