

An evaluation of a coaching session with referencing to coaching concepts

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Anyone who plays sport will have been coached at some stage, and most will say how important a good coach is. Coaching can be defined as, 'Giving technical information in an organised manner to improve and develop a practical performance by individuals or groups.' (Galligan et al, pg 322)

This assignment will look at the various approaches to coaching and teaching. I will then describe and evaluate a coaching session I did, as well as looking at the styles and approach I adopted.

A coach will perform, and take up many roles, as coaching can be a lot more complex than many people believe.

One role a coach does take up is to be an instructor. This is a fairly obvious role, but it is essential it is done correctly in order for the players being instructed to learn. When a coach is instructing they should be clear and concise, in order for the players to understand the task set for them. A coach needs to be concise, as if a coach gives out too much information, it may become too much for the players to take in, and the task maybe done incorrectly.

Another role often taken up by a coach is to be a performer. Whilst coaching, coaches often have to step in and perform an example. When a coach does this, it is essential the skill is performed correctly, or else the players may not understand the appropriate technique which is required. If a coach was to perform an example poorly, they should either perform the example again, or get one of the more confident performers in the session to perform an example in front of the group. It is essential that a coach never finishes

with a bad example, or else the performers maybe unsure what is required to complete the skill.

A coach must also take up the responsibility of being a role model. This is because players, particularly youngsters, will look up to the coach with great respect, therefore coaches should set a good example. An example of a coach not setting a good example is by shouting at the officials during a match. This will, without directly telling them, make that particular coaches players believe they can, or should do the same.

Another essential role a coach must undertake is to be an organiser. A good coach will always be organised and punctual. This will again set an example to the players, making sure they arrive on time. A good coach will also have organised and planned out a coaching session in advance. This will ensure the coach has the session all organised, and will help the coach get the best out of the players. An organised coach will have also checked all the facilities before the players arrive to ensure safety and to ensure the facilities are appropriate.

A coach may also have to take up the role as a psychologist. This can become very important, particularly in game situations, where it is essential to get across a winning mentality to the players, as well as to know what is best for them psychologically. This would include knowing whether to shout at a player to get them going, or to keep quiet. Different players have different psychological needs, and it is essential for coaches to understand this.

A coach must also be a first aider, or at least have some knowledge of what to do in case of an emergency. A coach also has a responsibility to try and prevent accidents before they occur. This includes factors such as checking the facilities in order to make sure they are safe and hazard free. When checking the facilities it should also include checking the ground in order for hazardous objects to be cleared. A coach should also ensure that all the players are wearing appropriate clothing, for example wearing shin pads in football. This should also include ensuring that no jewellery is being worn, or anything that could cause an accident.

It is clear to see that a coach has many different roles and many great responsibilities, making it an extremely hard and responsible position to be in.

As well as having many roles, coaches also have very different styles and approaches. Many experts have an opinion on coaching styles and many different names have been given for the different styles suggested. It is also very rare that a coach will possess just one particular style. Instead they will tend to adapt little things from all the different coaching styles which people have described and stated.

The two styles which are most recognised are the autocratic and democratic coaching styles, which are two completely different coaching styles.

The autocratic style of coaching involves a coach who completely dominates all situations. Feedback will more often than not be negative, as an autocratic style coach believes that by having a go at their players, the best

will be got out of them. An autocratic coach will also be very direct when communicating with a group of players, not letting them have any say or the opportunity to make any decisions. An autocratic style will also have one main goal which is performance related. To these types of coaches it is all about winning competitive matches.

The autocratic style tends to be used by a performance coach. A performance coach is a coach who has only one goal which is to win competitive matches. A performance coach will have specific competition goals set. They are characterised by intense preparation. They will also make a more obvious attempt to influence and control performance variables, as well as having a more intensive commitment to a preparation programme.

The democratic style is in complete contrast to the autocratic style. A democratic style coach will be friendlier to players, and much less dominating. The feedback given by a democratic style coach will most of the time be positive, and they will only criticise players in a constructive and kind manner. The democratic coach will also allow interaction when communicating to the players. This will allow a lot of the decision making to be made by the players rather than just by the coach. The goal orientation of a democratic coach will focus on the progress players make, and not only winning in competitive games.

The democratic style tends to be used by a participation coach. A participation coach isn't concerned about winning, but more on enjoyment and getting more people participating. A participation coach will initiate

people into sport with basic skill teaching. They are also often less intensively engaged with the sport.

As already stated, autocratic and democratic are the two main coaching styles. However (Woods 1998) identified what he thought were the four main coaching styles. Links to the autocratic and democratic styles can be seen in these four styles.

The first style he identified is the command style, which is very similar to the autocratic style. This style puts the coach in a role of dictatorship, where performers do exactly what the coach says. This style is said to work with some people, but not with others. It is vital that this style of coaching is not used on young children, as it may scare them away from sport all together. A coach wishing to use this style must be well respected, otherwise orders being given may not be taken seriously.

The second style identified was the reciprocal style. This is completely different to the command style, as the learner is required to participate in the process of learning. This style of coaching is very similar to the democratic style. It has its advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include the fact that it can improve self confidence, by giving players a chance to take responsibility for their own learning. However, a disadvantage is that the skill could be learnt incorrectly, as a player may become accustomed to a bad technique which the coach doesn't demand be done correctly. In addition, if a performer lacks confidence, they may not enjoy this style of learning.

The third style identified is the problem solving style, which is where the learner has to solve problems set by a coach. This type of coaching skill is better suited for skilled performers rather than amateurs, due to the greater perception possessed by skilled performers over amateurs. It can help players make big decisions in game situations. It also tends not to work if performers aren't that confident in their own ability. This type of coaching style is more linked to the democratic style, as the players have a major say in what happens in a session.

The final style identified by Woods is the guided discovery style. This is where performers are given the opportunity to decide what they would do in certain situations, whilst being given some guidance by the coach. The coaches role here is just too basically guide the performer through what they have to do. This is linked more to the democratic style of coaching as well, as the performer still gets to give some input.

After looking at information on coaching, I planned a ten minute session on ground control in football where I would be coaching a group of twelve amateurs. Ground control is an essential part of football, and is one of the first things that need to be taught to youngsters and amateurs.

The session began with a warm up. This consisted of two laps around the football pitch which had been set up by me before the session began. This was in order to warm up the players muscles, in preparation for them to be stretched. The muscles stretched were the ankle, calves, hamstring, quads, back, and the neck. The warm up is essential as it helps to prevent injury and also helps to prepare the players mentally.

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After the warm up, the players were put into pairs, and placed ten yards apart. They then were told to pass to each other. The emphasis was then on their ground control, particularly concentrating on cushioning the ball, and ensuring that the ball is got out of the players feet, in order to be able to pass it back on to their partner.

Once the players had mastered the basics of ground control, the session was progressed. This time the players were split into groups of three, with one feeder, one receiver, and one defender. The idea of this exercise was that the feeder passed the ball to the receiver, the defender then ran in to close the receiver down. This then put the receiver under pressure, making it a more game like situation, as the emphasis was then not only on control, but controlling the ball to get away from the defender. The receiver could then either aim to go to the left or the right where a cone was positioned.

The session finished with a cool down, which consisted of a gentle jog and light stretches. This, like the warm up, would have helped to prevent injury, and also have prevented soreness.

During the session I undertook many of the roles that were mentioned earlier.

I took up the role of instructor, as I was instructing the group by telling them what they had to do in each practise.

I also had to be a performer in the session, as I performed an example in front of the group to show them visually what their task was.

I was also an organiser before and during the session. I had planned and organised the session in advance. Also whilst taking control of the session, I had to organise the players into groups, as well as making sure the session went to plan and that it was kept within the time limit that had been provided. I also ensured that I checked the facilities and I ensured that none of the players were wearing any jewellery.

During my session, I used some concepts of each style. I was certainly more of a participation coach rather than a performance coach. This is because the session had no emphasis on competitive performance, and was more concerned with the group learning a basic skill, than be prepared to play a game.

I'd say that during my session I used more of the autocratic coaching style rather than the democratic style. This was because I told the players what to do in their practises in a command style way as they had no say in what practises were performed, and what the session involved.

I wasn't totally command style however, as I did allow some interaction between me and the players. I allowed them to ask questions, as well as me asking them questions to ensure that they had learnt what I'd tried to put across to them. This was an example of me using certain concepts of the reciprocal style. I also used a little of the problem solving style in the session, as in the progression task, the players had the opportunity to turn left or right to get away from the defender.

After the session had finished I was quite pleased with the way it went, and believe that there were many positives about the session.

One positive is that I was good with the timing, meaning that I kept to the time limit I had been provided, and managed to fit in everything that I wanted to.

Another advantage is that I made sure I was clear when speaking to ensure everyone could hear the instructions. I also positioned myself in a place where everyone could see me and I could see them. I believe this helped ensure that the group was concentrating. I also kept my instructions concise, so that the group were playing football for the majority of the session rather than just listening to me.

I also think that the practical examples were a success, and they made the practises easier for the group to understand, as by seeing the practise, the group were sure what was required of them. I also made sure that I never finished on a bad example.

The actual skill practises were also a success in this session. The first practise was very basic, but I believe this was a good start as it is essential to start with the very basics when working with amateurs.

The progression onto the next practise was also a success, as it was appropriate to do a practise which put the skill in a more game like situation.

Another positive was that I was also able to put across key terms that the players were able to understand, such as, 'opening up the body to get away from the defender' and 'cushioning the ball.'

Despite all these positives, there were also some negative factors about the session which could have been improved.

Although I've already said that the progression was a good one, the session was maybe moved on to quickly, as some people maybe hadn't mastered the basics of the skill yet. Doing this progression quite early on could have lowered peoples confidence as they were not ready to move on.

The fact that I used to much command style could also be a negative, as maybe by using the democratic style, the session could have been better as the players may have found the skill easier to learn.

Another negative was the facilities, as the space we had was quite small. With better planning this could have been organised in advance in order to get a larger playing area.

Another negative about the session was the time available in which to conduct the session. As this was only ten minutes, it was blatantly not enough time to do a detailed session. This is another reason why the session was maybe progressed to quickly. There was also not enough time for a match at the end, where the players could have practised the skill in a proper game situation.

The equipment available was also quite poor, in particularly the footballs, as they were not pumped up very well. This could be put down as a negative against my planning, as I should have ensured that the balls were appropriate and good enough for the session.

This proves that despite me being relatively happy with the session, there are still some areas where it could have been improved.

My main recommendation to improve the session would be more time. With more time, the skill could have been looked at a lot more intensely in order for the correct technique to be learnt. More time would have also enabled there to be more progression. Progressions such as using the weaker foot or the outside of the boot could have been used. Another progression could have been just extending the distance that the pass comes from on the first practise. This would probably have benefited the players better, rather than just jumping to the progression with a defender, as I believe many were not ready for this progression. Also with more time, there could have been a game at the end which would have enabled the players to test out the skill of ground control in a game situation.

One recommendation would be to use the democratic coaching style a little more, and create more group interaction. Although I feel the command style worked quite well, with more group interaction, they may have learnt more. A more democratic style session may have also made it more enjoyable as well.

Another recommendation would be better or appropriately pumped up balls. This was because quite a few of the balls were flat. This could not only have been a hazard, but could have also affected the players ability when performing the skill.

Splitting players into ability groups could also have been done. This is because while some people picked up the basic skill immediately, others didn't. By splitting the players into ability groups, this would have made sure no one was being held back, but also that no one was being moved on to fast. This would probably only work with larger group numbers however.

Overall, I am happy with the way my session went, and with the coaching styles I adapted. If I follow the recommendations I have made on this session, then I could make the next session I coach even more of a success.