Elite athlete to high-performance coach in men’s rugby union and soccer: a cohort longitudinal study

ICCE, 2015, Vierumaki, Finland

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Phenomena under investigation

Martin Johnson – Rugby Union

Ryan Giggs - Football
Context - literature


‘**Fast-tracked**’ (Rynne, 2014)

**Socialisation into club culture** (Blackett, Evans & Piggott, *in-press*)
Study design

- Longitudinal cohort design (Johnson, Plumridge & Holland, 2003)
  - Level 3 ‘senior professionals’ formal coach education qualification
  - 2x Semi-structured interviews, 10-12 months apart
Figure 2. FA coach pathway (FA, 2015)
Sample characteristics

Billy
Premiership Rugby
Scrum Coach –
senior team
Ex-int. player

Kieran
Championship Academy
Coach
Ex-EPL player

12 months
Results

Acculturation Process From Athlete To Coach

Transition Commencement

Output

Coaching Pathway Access Routes

‘Aspirational’

or

‘Reluctant’

Club values - drawing athletes through

Reflecting on a Coaching and Playing Philosophy

Direct & Indirect Coaching Experiences

Significant Others

Negotiation/Consolidation of a Coach Identity

Honest and True to Personal Values/Character

Coaching Practice

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Coaching Pathways

Informal - Intermittent
- Club community departments
- Academies
- Usually non-paid
- Always instigated by club directives/athletes ‘obliged’ to fulfil these roles

Formal - Committed
- Club community departments
- Academies
- Affiliated local amateur clubs
- Supplemented athletic career
- Instigated by athletes

Formal
- Variable context (senior/elite/pro; senior/amateur/semi-pro; junior high-performance)
- Full-time or part-time

Point of retirement from competitive play

‘Reluctant coach’ pathway (n=6)

‘Aspirational coach’ pathway (n=9)
Discussion – Clubs drawing athletes through

13 / 15 participants attained their first coaching role with either their *first* (n=5) or *last* (n=8) club they represented as athletes.

“Well I retired in the summer through injury, so May time, and (current Championship Football Club 1) have *offered*, well they *offered* me a coaching role, because my contract was expired with them…”

(Kieran, interview one)
Coaching & Playing Philosophies

“I think a coaching philosophy is what formation is and or what team did I like playing in most and what way did I enjoy my football; and to be honest…”

“…I’ve watched games, I’ve watched the players, I’ve watched other managers’ philosophy, and I’ve looked at their principles in how they see the game.”

(Owen, interview one)
Discussion – Philosophical development

• Conflict between ‘club philosophy’ and ‘individual philosophy’

“...It comes back to if I have to live a front, I have to carry on with that, so I can’t copy you the whole time and live like you or coach like you all of the time. I want to be myself so I don’t have to turn a switch on every time I come to training…” (Greg, interview two)
Discussion – Coach identity

“Players are smart, players will see through you if you aren’t honest with them...” (Conrad, interview one)

Knowledge of self the most important feature

Necessity of sustaining player respect (Blackett, et al., 2015; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002)

Future considerations...

• How much impact do structural mechanisms (e.g. ideological, cultural and political) have on individual coach development?

• How are coaching philosophies ‘negotiated’ over an extended period of time? – Balance between formal and informal mentors

• When does a coaching philosophy become a coaching ideology?
Theoretical Discussion (Bourdieu, 1977)

- Coaches = *arbiters of taste* when identifying playing talent (Christensen, 2009)

- Arbiters of taste = the club hierarchy (Blackett et al., 2015, *Sport, Education & Society*)
  - Board members act as ‘*cultural custodians*’ of club values when making head coaching appointments with the candidate being required to *embody* the club values = *Hexis*
  - Head coach appointments largely remain within the field and *in-house* which perpetuates a *fast-tracking* culture of appointing elite athletes to elite coaching positions

= *Doxa* → *Symbolic Violence*  
*(the cultural norm) → (discriminates - BME & women?)*
Thank you.

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