A longitudinal study examining elite soccer and rugby union players’ transitions into elite coaching

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Context - literature

Elite coach pathways
(Christensen, 2013; Gilbert et al., 2006, 2009; Irwin et al., 2004; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Saiz et al., 2009; Schinke et al., 1995)

‘Idiosyncratic’ (Werthner & Trudel, 2009)

‘Fast-tracked’ (Rynne, 2014)

Socialisation into club culture (Blackett, Evans & Piggott, in-press)
Sensitising Concepts

- **Study 1 – Senior Club Directors**
  - Bourdieu
  - Athletic symbolic & cultural capital conversion into coaching symbolic & cultural capital = coach respect
  - Coach ‘philosophies’ matched the club values

- **Study 2 – Academy Club Directors**
  - Bourdieu & Foucault
  - Valued formal sources of coach learning… but…..
  - Valued internal CPD programmes more so
  - Governed academy philosophies/identity & coaching practice
  - Surveillance (panopticism), technologies of power & self = docility
Study design

Level 3 ‘senior professionals’ formal coach education qualification

2x Semi-structured interviews, 10-12 months apart

(Deek, Werthner, Paquette and Culver, 2013; Leduc, Culver & Werthner, 2012)

Retrospective and prospective questioning

Figure 1. RFU coach pathway (RFU, 2005)
Sample characteristics

Rugby

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

Soccer

Kieran
Championship Academy
Coach
Ex-EPL player

12 months
Results

Acculturation Process From Athlete To Coach

Transition Commencement

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

Output
Coaching Pathways

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

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

Post-Athletic Coach Role
- 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)
“It wasn’t like when I was still playing and you know readying myself for retirement to go straight into coaching… I start working and then it’s right do you want to coach? I’m like, not really, I’ll give it a go and finding actually that I quite like it, I think I’m quite good at it.” (Casper, 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 – ‘Philosophy’ development

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

• Brought upon by reflexive practices – formal mentors

“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 regarded as the most important feature for developing a coach identity

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

Future considerations...

• How much impact do structural mechanisms (e.g. ideological and political) have on individual coach development?
• How are coaching philosophies ‘negotiated’ over an extended period of time by individuals? – Balance between formal and informal mentors
• When does a coaching philosophy become a coaching ideology?
Thank you.

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