



Coach behaviours and youth sport experiences. This summary describes the findings of a study examining the relationship between coach behaviours and the experiences of junior football players.

Introduction

How coaches behave is one of the most important determinants of whether sport is a positive or negative experience for junior athletes. Not all coaches are aware of the influence of their behaviour or what particular behaviours contribute to more positive or more negative experiences. However, research has identified behaviours that coaches should use and behaviours that coaches should avoid. In addition, research has also identified some of the most important indicators of positive experiences in junior athletes.

Experiences in youth sport

Positive experiences can be seen among junior athletes when they believe in their ability (confidence), want to spend time playing sport (dedication), report feelings of excitement and enjoyment (enthusiasm), and find sport participation invigorating (vigour). If promoted, these five features can ensure junior athletes remain motivated, continue to participate in the sport, and are protected from stress related outcomes such as burnout.

Coach behaviours and “achievement climates”

Coach behaviours can be classified as creating either a “mastery climate” or a “performance climate.” A mastery climate is created when athletes are encouraged to learn together and from each other, everyone is given important roles in the team, and effort and personal improvement is promoted. In contrast, a performance climate is created when athletes are encouraged to compete against each other when on the same team, only the better athletes are recognised and rewarded, and mistakes are punished. Research has found that a mastery climate is associated with higher motivation, better performance, and better athlete wellbeing in the long-term than a performance climate.

The study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships between a mastery climate, a performance climate (created by coaches), and positive sport experiences (confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and vigour) among junior footballers. To address this purpose, 260 male and female junior footballers from recreational clubs (age ranged from 11 to 16) completed a questionnaire to measure perceptions of their coach and their experiences in football..

The results

The study revealed that:

When junior footballers reported that their coach created a mastery climate, they reported higher confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and vigour.

When junior footballers reported that their coach created a performance climate, they also reported higher confidence and dedication but this was to a lesser degree than in a mastery climate. In addition, perceptions of a performance climate were not related to enthusiasm or vigour.

Practical implications

A mastery climate offers the best means of promoting a positive experience in youth sport as it promotes both motivation and positive emotions. Therefore, coaches should consider the following:

- Design tasks that require athletes to teach each other skills.
- Share important team responsibilities among all athletes.
- Treat all athletes the same regardless of ability.

This summary is based on the article below:

Curran, T., Hill, A. P., Jowett, G., & Hall, H. K. (2015). Relationships between the coach-created motivational climate and athlete engagement in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 37, 193-198.

Other useful readings on the topics discussed are:

Duda, J.L. & Balaguer, I. (2007). Coach-created motivational climate. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social psychology in sport* (pp. 117-130).

Duda, J.L., & Hall, H.K. (2001). Achievement goal theory in sport: Recent extensions and future directions. In R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas, & C.M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of research in sport psychology* (pp. 417-434). New York: John Wiley and Sons.

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