

The Final Hour: Coach-Athlete Interactions Immediately Prior to Performance in
Basketball

By

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STUDENT DECLARATION

“I, Scott Fletcher, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *The Final Hour: Coach-Athlete Interactions Immediately Prior to Performance in Basketball* is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.”

Signed

Scott Fletcher

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A wise man once told me that a PhD is not about the research it is about the journey. Before I started, I had been thinking how can it not be about the research? After, two years for a Master's degree and then four years for a PhD, I think the wise man may well have been right. During the past 6 years, I spent almost two years in New Zealand studying and the four years in Melbourne. Throughout this time, I met an incredible amount of people that have helped me get to this point. The experiences, the highs, lows, and in-betweens that I have encountered in the past 6 years have been incredible. Furthermore, the support that I received from all corners of life has been overwhelming. It truly has been a journey. Over the past 6 years, I been through a Masters degree, a PhD, 2 accidents, months of physio/rehab and medication, had my computer stolen, to moved house to many times (13 at last count...I think), flown all over the world, experienced the highs of life with wonderful friends and colleagues, and had the best family a man could ever want.

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Scott Fletcher

ABSTRACT

Pre-competitive preparations in elite sport have been shown to be important to performance. In particular, mental preparation and mental readiness have been shown to be important determinants of successful performance. For example, Orlick and Partington (1988) highlighted that mental preparation in Olympic athletes was perceived to be important to successful performance. In the search for understanding of performance excellence researchers (e.g., Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002, Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; McCaffey & Orlick, 1989; Orlick & Partington) have highlighted the role of the coach in the development and maintenance of elite performance. Above all, the coach has been found to be a critical element of performance and has been perceived to be influential to athletic performance in both a positive or negative manner. In addition, researchers have highlighted that coaches and the coaching processes/practices that they adopt are influential in constructing a performance environment that could aid or hinder athletes preparing for and performing in competition (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). In particular, coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance are suggested to be an important determinant of mental preparation and performance (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). There is limited information, however, on coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance and the influence on mental preparation and performance.

In this thesis, I investigated coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance in semi-elite basketball teams. The participants in the study were four single sex (2 male and 2 female) coach-athlete dyads competing in Australian Basketball Association (ABA) conferences. I applied a multi-method study comprising the following four linked phases for each dyad. Phase 1, involved a semi-structured interview with the coach focused on their coaching intentions/practices immediately

prior to a game. Phase 2, involved observation of training and of the final hour prior to a game. Phase 3, involved a semi-structured interview with a targeted player on their perceptions of the coach prior to performance. Phase 4, involved a Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview (VCSRI) with the coach. The VCSRI was focused on the coaches' explanations and reflections on their actions and communications immediately prior to the game recorded in Phase 2. The data were analysed using ground theory methods and constant comparative analysis.

Overall, I found that the four coaches aimed to construct a pre-performance environment that fostered players' physical preparation, mental preparations and readiness, and reinforced the game plan and tactics practiced during the week. In addition, coaches were also found to spend time focused on personal preparation in order to ready themselves mentally for their role in the pre-game period and in the game. Coaches suggested that a key aspect of mental preparation was the use of pre-game routines. All four coaches proposed that pre-game routines either individual or team based aided their own and athletes' mental preparation for competition. In particular, pre-game routines facilitated athletes into a game centred focus and narrowed their attention onto the game, the team, and their individual role within the team.

Coaches' were found to have structured the pre-game preparations differently depending on the preferences of the team or their own preferred coaching style, giving players more or less free time to complete their own pre-game routines. A number of external factors mediated the structure and style of the pre-game routines. These factors included the time of the season, the level of development, player experience, and the coaches' assessment of player preparations prior to the game.

To aid players' mental preparation coaches were found to apply a combination of motivational strategies (praise, positive reinforcement, and confidence). In

particular, coaches stated that they used individual interactions to focus players and aid the players in mentally preparing for the game. The coaches achieved this through structured warm-ups, individual interactions and individual coaching, motivational strategies, player assessment, and the pre-game talk.

I also found that coaches monitored their players throughout the pre-performance period and used their background knowledge of the players' personality, preferred coaching style, game state, current form, and body language to assess the progress to assess the mental readiness of players before a match. Coaches applied this mental framework to players' pre-game preparations to assess their progress. If coaches perceived one of their players to be unprepared they would take them aside and speak individually to the player and try to refocus them by showing confidence in their ability, praise, encouragement, and individual goal setting.

A key finding related to the players perception of their coach. The majority of players perceived their coaching to be a positive influence on their preparations, a source of motivation, and confidence. Players', however, did not always agree with their coach's decisions and style of coaching before a game. Specifically, players' were found to have perceived coaches as organisers and facilitators, whom aided them to reach their optimal preparation for performance.

The interactions between coach and player were found to differ depending on several mediating factors. The mediating factors included players' level of development, time of the season, player's form, opposition, the teams place on the ladder, and players' preferred coaching style. The mediating factors determined the content and focus of the pre-game talk and the interactions with players.

The results depicted in the Pre-Performance Coaching Model (VRICPP). The VRICPP model depicts the processes and interacting factors that influence coaches and athletes during the pre-game preparation, in particular mental preparation and

performance. The model highlights the interaction between coach and player personal variables, the coach-athlete relationship, mediating factors, mental framework of players, coach intervention, preparation, and performance.

In conclusion, coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance are focused on the optimal mental and physical preparation, player mental readiness and game focus, positive reinforcement of team plan/strategies, team cohesion, and coach preparation. Coach-athlete interactions were focused on motivation, confidence, positive reinforcement, and game focus. Importantly, coaches needed to be aware of all aspects of their players' behaviour and personality in order to be an effective coach. Furthermore, coaches' interventions were a compromise between players' needs, what was best for the team, and what coaches perceived to be best for the player. In addition, a key aspect of coach-athlete interactions before a game was open and honest communication. Coaches and players needed to be able to openly communicate important information under pressure and with limited time available.

The results from this study have important implications for coaches and athletes. In particular, knowledge of players preferred coaching style and knowledge of players' form, mental state, and preparation before matches are important skills for elite coaches to know. In addition, coaches need to know how to effectively intervene with each player in order to aid players' mental and physical readiness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Understanding the factors that are related to superior performance in elite sport is a primary goal of sport psychology research. To investigate peak performances in sport, researchers have focused on understanding the factors that contribute to the achievement of these above average performances. From peak performance research, it is widely recognised that an athlete's psychological state, based on mental preparation, is a contributing factor (Eklund, 1994a, 1994b; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992a, 1992b; Mahoney, Gabriel, & Perkins, 1987; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Orlick & Partington, 1988). An important finding identified in peak performance research is the link between mental preparation and pre-game routines. In particular, the combination of optimal physical and mental readiness prior to competition has been perceived by Olympic athletes to be an extremely important factor influencing performance (Orlick & Partington, 1988). In particular, Orlick and Partington, concluded that the quality of athletes' mental preparation prior to performance was an important determinant of success in Olympic athletes.

Sport psychology researchers have also highlighted that the success of world champion and Olympic athletes is linked to psychological characteristics, such as mental toughness, confidence, competitiveness, attentional focus, pre-competitive preparations, and psychological development (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Eklund, 1994a; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). Specifically, researchers have highlighted that successful and less successful athletes differ significantly in terms of their mental preparation (e.g., Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Mahoney et al., 1987; Orlick & Partington, 1988), demonstrating the important role that athletes' psychological states have in the achievement of peak performance.

An important factor identified by researchers, in the pursuit of peak athletic performance, is the influence of coaches' behaviour. In particular, coaches are perceived to be central figures in all aspects of athletes' career's, as well as in training and competition (Lyle, 1999). Coaches are perceived to have an important influence in all aspects of athletes' preparations for competition and in determining athletes' success and development (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). The relationship between coach and athlete is critical to success in elite sport and is viewed as being related to athletes' psychological development and mental preparation. In particular, a primary goal of coaches is to aid players' psychological states for performance and aid players in attaining their ideal pre-game psychological state. There is a limited understanding, however, of how coaches and coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to competition, affect pre-performance preparations, mental readiness, and athletic performance.

In many sports, coaches work very closely with athletes immediately prior to performance. In particular, coaches aim to get athletes physically and mentally ready to perform at their best. The high number of interactions between coach and athlete, at training as well as before, during, and after competition means that coaches are often in a central position to influence athletes', preparations, including their psychological state or more specifically their mental readiness¹. Indeed, researchers have argued that the coach is essential to athletic preparations across all aspects of an athlete's career, including preparations on the day of performance (Bloom, 1996; Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995;

¹ Note: Throughout this thesis the term "athletes' psychological state" will refer to all athletes psychological traits while "mental readiness" will be used to relate to athletes game specific mental readiness to perform. In addition, the term Ideal Performance State (IPS) will be used to refer to athletes' optimal pre-game psychological state. The IPS is the psychological state that athletes perform best in.

Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995a). Furthermore, researchers have shown that coaches are also perceived as being performers in their own right and their performance at competitions can directly influence athletes' preparations, in either a positive or negative manner (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). These noteworthy findings highlight the relevance of the claim that coaches' own performance and behaviour could potentially influence not only athletes' psychological state, but also their actual performance.

On the day of competition, athletes aim to reach their ideal performance state, where they attain their optimal physical and psychological preparation and compete at or close to their performance potential (Keating & Hogg, 1995; Loehr, 1984; McInman & Grove, 1991). Researchers have highlighted that prior to competition coaches aim to construct a positive environment that will facilitate athletes' preparations (Cote & Sedgwick, 2003). Coaches' are suggested to facilitate preparation by setting up pre-game routines and structures, involving physical warm-ups, team talks, and time for mental preparation. Researchers have proposed that the pre-competitive rituals and routines of coaches and athletes are important elements of performance. In particular, how a player engages their cognitions, emotions, and behaviour prior to performance is proposed to often represent the difference between success and failure (Keating & Hogg, 1995). Further to this point, Bloom (1996) argued that, during preparation for performance, coaches play an important role in athletes' mental and physical preparation.

Despite the suggested importance of coaching, at this time there is limited information that has elucidated the factors that contribute to athletic preparations prior to performance. Although there is evidence in the sport psychology literature that relates

coach-athlete interactions² to performance (e.g., Gould et al., 1999; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003), there is limited understanding of how coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance affect athlete psychological preparations. The research that has been conducted has primarily been uni-directional and focused on the coach (e.g., Chelladurai & Salah, 1980a, 1980b) or on observing the coach (e.g., Lacy & Darst, 1985) or on athletes' perceptions of the coach (e.g., Pelletier & Bower, 2001). There have been few multi-method studies that have investigated all aspects of the coaching process (e.g., Jones, R.L, Armour, & Potrac, 2003; Potrac, Jones, R. L., & Armour, 2002). It is suggested that this limits the depth of information being collected. Furthermore, the importance of athletes' mental preparation to athletic performance highlights the need to further investigate and understand the dynamics of coach-athlete interactions close to performance. Understanding the factors and elements that affect athletic preparation close to performance could provide detailed information for coaches, athletes, and sport psychologists.

The purpose of the research reported in this thesis was to investigate how coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance in basketball influence athletes' preparation for performance. In this thesis, I focused on the influence on athletes' mental preparation. In this thesis, I investigated the pre-performance environment from four different perspectives. Using, a multi-method approach, I examined coach-athlete dyads by triangulating; (a) coaches' intended behaviours and practices prior to a match; (b) observed coaching behaviour prior to a match; (c) athlete perceptions of coaching

² Note: Please note that, the term "interaction" or "interactions" was used to refer to specific interactions between coach and athlete that occurred throughout the data collection, whilst "relationship" referred to reports or indicators of the overall relationship between coach and athlete.

behaviour prior to performance and the influence on athletes performance states; and (d) coaches' reflections and explanations of their own behaviour. The four methods in this study were combined to allow comparison between coach, player, and observer perspectives. The four methods will be used to elucidate the influence of coach-athlete interactions on athletes' mental states prior to performance.

CHAPTER 2: COACH-ATHLETE INTERACTIONS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO PERFORMANCE IN BASKETBALL. A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I examine the literature relating to coaching behaviour, coaching immediately prior to performance and the relationship to mental preparation. I briefly examine the existing research on coaching behaviour, leadership style, and coach-athlete interactions in sport. I focused on reviewing the different approaches that researchers have taken to investigate different aspects of coaching. In particular, I examine how they have shaped the field and the current research project. I have focus on examining research on leadership, coaching behaviour, coaching knowledge, and the relationship between coaching and athletes' performance states. In the leadership section of the literature review, I outline the evolution of research on coaching and leadership styles. In the second part of the theoretical review, I focus on the analysis of coaching behaviour and the different methods used. In the third section of the literature review, I examine research focused on the cognitive aspects of coaching. In each of the behavioural and cognitive approaches, I present and discuss the underlying principles of the different research methods used to examine coach-athlete interactions. In the next section, I examine research aimed at understanding the link between coaching behaviour and athlete performance states with a focus on the link to mental preparation. I present and discuss research findings on the coach-athlete relationship, mental preparation, peak performance, and coaching immediately prior to performance. In the final section of the literature review, termed "The present thesis", I describe the original research question and the research approach I use in this dissertation.

Evolution of Research on Coaching in Sport Psychology

Early research on understanding how coaches influence elite athletes has been credited to Griffith (1925; 1926; 1928). Griffith was recognized as being the first author to research the psychology of coaching and the psychology of athletics and is widely regarded as the father of sport psychology. Griffith was the first to write about the psychological aspects of sport and coaching, putting forward the case for the uses of psychological research in athletic competition. Using the first sport psychology lab in the USA, Griffith wrote of the psychology of coaching methods and the problems regarding coaching pedagogy and teaching (Green, 2003). After Griffith left the field of sport psychology in 1938, there was a considerable time gap until further publications emerged on leadership and coaching in sport psychology (Weinberg & Gould, 1999). It was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's when further research on the psychology of coaching re-emerged. During that time, researchers began to focus on the personality traits of leaders, (e.g., Ogilvie & Tutko, 1966) and on different models of leadership behaviour (1967).

Research on coaching behaviour and leadership styles received more detailed attention in the 1970's and early 1980's, when researchers began adopting models and theories from general psychology and management literature. During this time, leadership researchers focused on (a) situational theories, e.g., Hersey and Blanchard (1969); (b) interactionist theories, e.g., House (1971) and Fielder (1967) , and (c) normative models of leadership, e.g., Vroom and Yetton (1973), Vroom and Jago (1974). A major contributor to leadership research was Chelladurai (e.g., Chelladurai, 1980; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980a; 1980b). Chelladurai adopted management theories and applied them to sport. Chelladurai and Saleh (1980a) developed a model of leadership for sport settings, the

Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML), and an accompanying questionnaire, the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS). Chelladurai, in particular, sought to identify, develop, and enhance our understanding of leadership in the sporting domain.

In the mid-late 1970's, research on coaching received a dramatic increase in interest through the work of Tharp and Gallimore (1976) and Smith, Smoll, and colleagues (Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978, 1979; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Smith, Zane, Smoll, & Coppel, 1983; Smoll & Smith, 1980). On the back of observation research by Tharp and Gallimore, researchers began adopting research methods from education and pedagogy to study coaching. Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt (1978) developed the Mediation Model of Leadership (MM) to understand how coaching behaviour affected youth sports. Smoll et al. (1978) then developed a systematic observation instrument, termed the Coaching Behavioural Assessment System (CBAS) to assess the behavioural component of the mediational model. The application of systematic observation and questionnaire research pushed research on coaching in sport psychology to new heights.

Reviews by Kahan (1999), Gilbert (2002), and Gilbert and Trudel (2004a) highlighted the growth and extent of coaching research, as well as the limitations and needs for future research. In recent years, there has been a growth in qualitative research on coaching behaviour in sport. Researchers, such as R.L Jones, Potrac, and colleagues (C. J. Brewer & Jones, 2002; R. L. Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003; R. L. Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002) used qualitative and multi-method studies to investigate different aspects of coaching behaviour. In addition, Côté and colleagues (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Cote & Salmela, 1996; Cote, Salmela et al., 1995a; Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995b) used an in-depth qualitative framework to develop the coaching model. While

Gilbert, Trudel, and colleagues (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999, 2000, 2004b; Gilbert, Trudel, & Haughian, 1999; Trudel, Cote, & Bernard, 1996; Trudel, Gilbert, & Trochon, 2001; Trudel, Haughian, & Gilbert, 1996), applied a variety of research methods, including in-depth interviews and video-based observation, to assess coaching in sport. Currently, a wide variety of different methods is being used to elucidate the complexities of the coaching process. This section of the literature review outlines the predominant research approaches and findings focuses on the influence of coaching immediately prior to performance and the link to athletes' psychological states.

Leadership Research in Sport Psychology

The Multidimensional Model of Leadership

Chelladurai and Saleh (Chelladurai, 1990, 1993; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980a) developed the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML, see Figure 2.1) to assess leadership in sport. In contrast to previous leadership models that focused on single entities, such as the coach or the situational context, the MML comprised multiple aspects of the coaching process, the leader, the situation, and the group. Chelladurai's MML conceptualised leadership as an interactional process where group performance and satisfaction were considered to be functions of the congruence among the three states of leader behaviours: required, preferred, and actual. Chelladurai proposed that the greater the congruence between these three states the greater the levels of athlete performance and satisfaction. Furthermore, Chelladurai (1990, 1993) stated that the characteristics of the situation, the leader, and the members of the group influence the three states of leader behaviour. These factors then interact to influence the group's performance and the degree of satisfaction.

In addition, individual athletes' preferences were suggested to influence how leaders actually conducted themselves within the group (Chelladurai, 1993).

The strength of Chelladurai's (1990) MML is that it incorporates the conceptual frameworks of trait, behavioural, and situational leadership theories (e.g., Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971) to address the interactions of the coach and athlete in an athletic situation (C. A. Sherman et al., 2000). Previous leadership theories had focused independently on the leader, the group, and the situation. Chelladurai's MML focused on all three elements and their interactions or interdependence within the confines of a sporting environment (C. A. Sherman et al., 2000).

The Leadership Scale for Sport and the MML

The Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was developed in conjunction with the model to measure constructs of the MML (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980a). The LSS contains five dimensions including: training and instruction behaviour, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support behaviour, and positive feedback. The LSS has been divided into three versions that can be used to evaluate (a) athletes' perceptions of the coach's behaviour, (b) athletes' preferred coach behaviour, and (c) the coach's perception of their own behaviours.

Researchers have primarily focused on investigating the relationship between: athletes' perceived and preferred leadership styles (e.g., Dwyer & Fischer, 1990), between leadership style and athlete satisfaction (e.g., Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995), and differing patterns of leadership (e.g., Serpa, Patco, & Santos, 1991). For example, the MML has received support in the sports literature with youth soccer coaches (Liukkonen, 1999), gridiron players (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995), baseball players (Bennett & Maneval,

1998), leadership and satisfaction in tennis (Riemer & Toon, 2001), and wrestlers (Dwyer & Fischer, 1990).

Some examples of research focused on leadership in sport include a study by Dwyer and Fischer (1990) study on wrestlers. Dwyer and Fischer found that the wrestlers perceived their coaches to be high on positive feedback, high on training and instruction behaviour, and low on autocratic behaviour. The high level of satisfaction the wrestlers had with their coach and the proposed interaction between athlete satisfaction and a democratic style of leadership supported the principles of the MML. Another example of leadership research is a study by Serpa et al. (1991), who investigated the leadership styles evident in international Handball teams. Serpa et al. found that, in both athletes and coaches, the training and instruction dimension of the LSS was predominant, whereas the democratic dimension was exhibited the least. Serpa et al. showed that athletes' perception of coaching behaviour can influence athlete satisfaction. Serpa et al.'s findings, however, should be viewed with caution, because they involve the application of two self-report measures and no actual measure of behaviour.

An example of leadership research focused on examining the preferred leadership patterns of athletes is seen in a study by Chelladurai and Carron (1983). Chelladurai and Carron examined athletic maturity and preferred leadership patterns and found that more experienced athletes preferred less training and instruction behaviours than less experienced athletes. In addition, Chelladurai and Carron found that the need for social support from coaches, as measured by the LSS, increased as the level of competition increased.

Perceived, Preferred, and Coach Perceptions of Leadership

The LSS has been used to examine the discrepancy between athletes' preferred and perceived leadership styles and athlete satisfaction. Using the LSS and a self-report measure of athlete satisfaction, Chelladurai (1984) examined the discrepancy between preferred and perceived leadership styles and the athlete satisfaction of college basketball players, wrestlers, and track and field athletes. Chelladurai found that the discrepancy between athletes' preferred and perceived leadership styles was associated with decreases in athlete satisfaction in the following areas: team performance, leadership, and overall involvement in the team. The study highlighted the link between perceptions of leadership and athlete satisfaction.

Salminen and Liukkonen (1996) conducted a multi-method study on 68 Finnish coaches and their 100 athletes, the athletes' perceived leadership style of their coaches was combined with observations of coaching behaviour. Salminen and Liukkonen found that coaches demonstrated a democratic style of leadership most often. In particular, the democratic style of leadership was found to significantly correlate with observed coaching behaviour. Salminen and Liukkonen also found that there was a discrepancy between coaches' and athletes' perceptions of leadership style. Coaches were found to evaluate their behaviour in a more positive manner than their athletes. Liukkonen (1999) supported this result in a study on Finnish coaches and athletes, highlighting that a coach's behaviour can be perceived or interpreted differently by athletes. The limitations of these studies lay in the instrument used to assess the observed coaching behaviour. The observation instrument was not described in full in the study. As a consequence, the results in this study must remain questionable, despite the potentially important findings.

The perception of leadership has been linked to group cohesion. Gardner, Light Shields, Light Bredemeier, and Bostrom (1996) found that coaches perceived as high in training and instruction, democratic behaviour, social support, and positive feedback, and low in autocratic behaviour, had teams that were perceived to be more cohesive. Gardner et al. also found that there were significant differences between male and female coaches and between athletes from different levels of high school. Gardner et al. highlighted that coaches were perceived to have more positive coaching behaviours produced more cohesive team.

There has been a wealth of research into leadership styles in sport. One aspect of leadership research has been the comparison of athletes' perceptions of leader behaviour and coaches' perceptions of their own behaviour. Researchers, such as Liukkonen (1999), have found that there is often a discrepancy between coaches' perceptions of their behaviour and athletes' perceptions of the behaviour of these coaches. Furthermore, coaches' perceptions of their own behaviour has been found to disagree with observation of actual behaviour (Salminen & Liukkonen, 1999). Research focused on the LSS has highlighted the predominant leadership styles of elite and semi-elite coaches. There is, however, limited evidence that relates leadership styles to actual performance.

Measurement Issues and the LSS

The LSS has been widely criticised due to the inconsistent results and the poor internal consistency of the subscales. For example, the autocratic behaviour subscale has continually shown poor internal consistency with reported Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients ranging between .11 and .79 (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). Furthermore, the LSS has been criticised for being a narrow and restricted measure of leadership behaviour, as it focuses on a limited number of pre-determined behavioural categories. Chelladurai

and Riemer raised several issues regarding the use of the LSS and the MML. First, they questioned whether the LSS captured all the relevant coaching behaviours. Second, they cited that the LSS was based on existing scales drawn from business and industry. Although business and sport leadership share some similarities, the athletic context is unique, meaning that the adoption of non-sport scales may not be applicable to sport settings. To further support this point, Potrac et al. (2000) and C.J. Brewer and R.L. Jones (2002) cited that the unique context of coaching is a key measurement issue for researchers assessing coach/leader behaviour. The LSS is a general measurement instrument that fails to assess the unique aspects of sport and can only give a general guide to leadership patterns. Third, Chelladurai and Riemer stated that the dimensions of the LSS are not comprehensive, when compared to other instruments, such as the CBAS, or other models of leadership, such as the Mediation Model of Leadership (Smoll & Smith, 1989). The validity and reliability of the LSS have been demonstrated, but, the results are inconsistent, and as such, conclusions drawn from studies using the LSS should be viewed with caution, particularly with regard to the autocratic behaviour dimension (Chelladurai, 1993).

The Revised Leadership Scale for Sport

Due to the criticisms of the LSS, Jambor and Zhang (1997) and Zhang, Jensen, and Mann (1997) constructed the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS). Using a three-stage process, Zhang et al. interviewed coaches from different sports and accumulated 240 new items that were added to the original 40. In the second stage, three linguistic experts and 17 expert coaches reviewed and revised the list, focusing on the consistency of the added items to the original. Through this process, the 240 items were subsequently reduced to 120. The 120 items were then administered in a questionnaire to 696 athletes and 206 coaches. Zhang et al. conducted a factor analysis of the 120 items, applying different

extractions and rotations and found that six common factors emerged, containing 60 items. The RLSS, was found to include the following factors: democratic behaviour, positive feedback behaviour, situational consideration factor, social support, teaching and instruction, and autocratic behaviour. The RLSS has been found to have a high internal consistency, reporting alpha coefficients of .70, and above, however, the scale has only been applied in a limited number of situations (Zhang et al., 1997).

Jambor and Zhang (1997) completed one of the few studies published using the RLSS. Jambor and Zhang investigated the leadership behaviours of 162 high school and college coaches. Jambor and Zhang compared the responses from the coaches and found that there were no significant gender differences. There were, however, significant differences between the different levels of coaching. Jambor and Zhang reported inadequate low internal consistency for the RLSS reporting alpha coefficients that ranged from .52 to .84 for the six subscales. Due to several of the alpha coefficients being below .70 the reliability of the results must be questioned.

Beam, Serwatka, and Wilson (2004) used the RLSS to examine the leadership preferences of student-athletes and compared the results, based on gender, competition level, task dependence, and task variability. Beam et al. found that significant differences occurred between gender, with female athletes preferring situational consideration and training and instruction behaviours, while male student-athletes showed significantly greater preferences for autocratic and social support behaviour. Furthermore, Beam et al. found that independent sport athletes preferred more democratic behaviours, positive feedback, situational consideration, and social support behaviours when compared to team sport athletes. Beam et al., however, failed to assess the reliability and validity of the RLSS. Further evaluation and more detailed research in sport settings are required before

the merits of the RLSS can be determined. The RLSS, however, is a viable alternative to the often-criticised LSS.

Summary of Leadership in Sport

The MML and the LSS have detailed athletes' preferences and perceptions of leadership styles in many different settings (Dwyer & Fischer, 1990, 1998; Liukkonen, 1999; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; C. A. Sherman et al., 2000). In particular, there has been a wealth of information regarding the antecedent variables of leadership, for example: gender (Liukkonen, 1999; C. A. Sherman et al., 2000), age, experience, and maturity (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983), and intrinsic motivation (Amorose & Horn, 2000). In assessing the MML, questions must be raised, concerning whether performance and satisfaction are indeed the only outcomes of coach-athlete interactions. Furthermore, there is limited evidence for the relationship between leadership and performance. Chelladurai's (1990) MML, despite its predictive ability, is restricted by the limitations of the LSS. A key factor in reviewing research conducted with the LSS and the MML is the inherent problems with the internal consistency of the LSS. Repeated low internal consistency for subscales means that support for the findings derived from the use of the instrument must be queried. In particular, the LSS is restricted to five aspects of leadership and only two distinct leadership styles, autocratic and democratic, and the autocratic scale has shown inconsistent reliability. Consequently, alternative research methods or multi-methods should be applied to restrict the limitations of this leadership measure.

The Behavioural Approach to Research on Coaching

An Introduction to Research on Coaching Behaviour

In this section, I first introduce the behavioural approach to coaching. Next I review the primary theoretical model used in behavioural assessment, the Mediation Model of Leadership, and the accompanying measure, the Coaching Behavioural Assessment System. In this section of the literature review, I then consider the major research findings focused on the behavioural assessment of coaches. I will also examine research focused on athlete perceptions of coach behaviour, the use of video recording to enhance coach observation, and the limitations of the behavioural approach to coaching.

The traditional approach to assessing coaching has focused on categorising the overt behaviours displayed by coaches during training or competition. Abraham and Collins (1998c) described the behavioural assessment of coaching as being the quantitative tally of a specific target, such as a verbal behaviour displayed by a coach during training or competition. The primary aim of behavioural assessment is to categorize the instructional behaviours of coaches and identify the specific instructional behaviours used in the practice/competition environment (Abraham & Collins). Previously, the primary method of behavioural assessment in coaching has been to categorise behaviours of coaches through questionnaire administration. The predominant role of systematic observation stemmed from the efforts to improve the quality of coach education (e.g., Gilbert & Trudel, 1999) and athletic training programs (e.g., Lacy & Darst, 1985, 1989; Lacy & Goldston, 1990). C.J. Brewer and R.L. Jones (2002) stated that the goal of observational research was to obtain a more holistic understanding of the coaching environment and the development of a conceptual model of effective coaching behaviours.

Gilbert (2002) reviewed the methods used to investigate coaching behaviour and found that 83.1% of the research was conducted using questionnaires or systematic observation. Some examples of observational instruments include: the Coaching Behavioural Assessment System (CBAS; Smith et al., 1977), the Arizona State University Observational Instrument (ASUOI, Lacy & Darst, 1984, 1985, 1989; Lacy & Goldston, 1990) and the Coaching Analysis Instrument (CAI; Partridge & Franks, 1996). The questionnaires used to investigate coaching issues include the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), the Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport (CBS-S; Côté et al., 1999), and the Coaching Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ; Kenow & Williams, 1992; 1999; Williams et al., 2003).

van der Mars (1989) and more recently Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, Hoff, (2000) stated that systematic observation research has contributed more to the understanding of coach effectiveness than any other approach. The benefits of behavioural research revolve around the use of actual observable field data that is collected in a scientifically reliable manner. The analysis of coaching behaviour via observation has allowed for the identification and categorisation of coaching behaviour across different ages, sports, genders, and levels of experience. Furthermore, observational research has provided rich data and aided in our understanding of coaching practices in training and competition.

The diverse nature of coaching, however, has limited the findings. For example, van der Mars (1989) cited that observation research has often lacked objectivity, reliability, and specificity. In addition, questionnaire research on coaching behaviour is limited, as the rating scales often lack reliability and the subsequent measurement of coaching behaviours can be viewed as narrow and ill defined. Observational research

instruments are often narrowly defined and restricted to a selected list of behavioural categories that can force observed behaviours into irrelevant categories. Furthermore, the instruments often do not reflect the unique aspects of the sport being observed. Indeed, Potrac et al. (2000) stated that even though behavioural assessments have provided a description of coaches' instructional behaviours they do not provide an insight into why coaches act or behave as they do.

In recent years, there has been a move away from direct description or categorization of behaviours through observation and the use of questionnaires, because of the inherent limitations of each approach. For example, the narrow range of categories in the observation instrument(s), the observer's bias and training, and the unique aspects of each sport limit coach behaviour research with systematic observation instruments and questionnaires. Potrac et al. (2000) proposed that a range of different methods or multi-methods should be employed to enhance the effectiveness of coaching research. C.J. Brewer and R.L. Jones (2002) proposed the application of a five-stage model (observer training, amending an existing observational instrument, establishing face validity of instrument, determining inter-observer reliability, and establishing inter-observer reliability and test-retest reliability) to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the data being collated through systematic observation and behavioural assessment.

The Mediation Model of Leadership

The importance of the coach in the leadership position led Smoll, Smith, Curtis, and Hunt (1978) to propose a model of leadership behaviours. The Mediation Model of Leadership (MM, Smith & Smoll, 1991; Smoll & Smith, 1989, see Figure 2.2) evolved from the proposition that adult leaders occupy a critical role in youth sports. In particular, Smith and Smoll (1991) suggested that how coaches structure the athletic situation, the

goal priorities they establish, the attitudes and values they exhibit, and their behaviours all influence youth athletes. The MM was constructed to reflect the importance of interpersonal relations, social cognition, individual differences, and the need to examine person-by-situation interactions in the sporting context (Smoll & Smith, 1989).

Smoll et al. (1978) initially proposed a mediational model comprising three components (coach, athlete, and situational variables). Smith and Smoll (1989) proposed an expanded theoretical model (see Figure 2.2), based on an interactional perspective and the hypothesised relationships among the following factors: individual difference and personality, situational, cognitive, and behavioural variables. Smoll and Smith (1989) expanded the original three-element model to delineate between the characteristics and processes that influence adult leadership behaviours and mediate the effects on children. In the MM, Smoll and Smith, proposed that the effects of coaching behaviours are mediated by athletes' perceptions and evaluative reactions. The coaches' behaviours are then mediated by the meaning that players' attribute to them (Smith, Smoll, & Christensen, 1996).

Smith, Smoll, and Christensen (1996) proposed that the complex cognitive and affective processes that are drawn from the perception of the coach's behaviours, as well as the child's age normative beliefs, expectations, and personality characteristics combine to influence the sporting experience and shape the coaching process. The cognitive and affective processes are suggested to serve as filters between overt coaching behaviours, youngsters attitudes toward their coach, and their sport experience (Smoll & Smith, 1989). The coach's perception of the player's attitude mediates the relationship between a coach's behaviour and the evaluative reactions of a player (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998).

Smoll and Smith (1989) further proposed that the inherent individual differences of each coach influence or mediate each coach's goals and their behavioural intentions. The reciprocal interactions, among the components or variables in addition to the casual relationships are suggested to mediate the behavioural intentions of the coach. Smoll and Smith's MM integrates all aspects of coach-athlete interactions, including the actual behaviour, the reasons or thinking behind the actual behaviour, the player's characteristics, the player's evaluative reactions, and the situation variables.

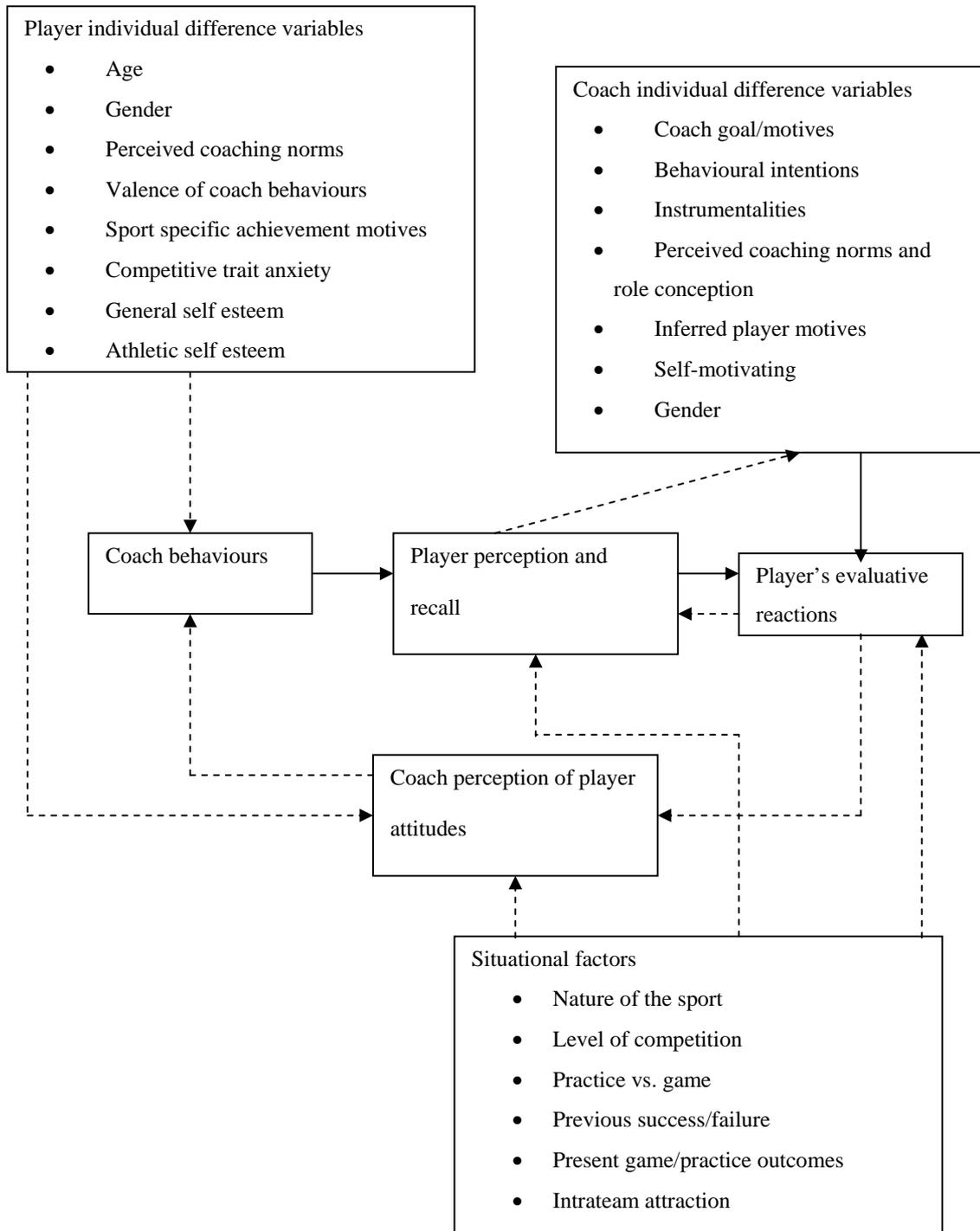


Figure 2.2. A model of coaching behaviours, their antecedents, and their effects, with hypothesised relations among situational, cognitive, behavioural, and individual difference variables (Smoll & Smith, 1989)

The model is comprehensive in the evaluation of the coach-athlete interactions and importantly takes into account the varying situational variables that are inherent in different sporting contexts. This allows for the unique aspects of certain sports to be accounted for in the assessment of coaching behaviour.

Much has been written about the MM, however, as Chelladurai and Riemer stated, the latest version of the model has not been empirically tested. It has only been in recent years, that researchers, (e.g., Kenow & Williams, (1992; 1999); Williams et al., (2003), have constructed the Coaching Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ) to assess components of Smoll and Smith's MM. Specifically, Kenow and Williams (1992, 1999) focused on athletes' perceptions and evaluative reactions to coaching behaviour components of the MM, in conjunction with coach-athlete compatibility and anxiety. Kenow and Williams (1999) found that the CBQ supported Smoll and Smith's model. In a further test of the CBQ, Williams et al. conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to test whether the subscales measured the components of the MM. Williams et al. concluded that the subscales of the CBQ support and expand upon Smoll and Smith's model. Furthermore, Williams et al. found that the CBQ supported Smoll and Smith's argument that "the ultimate effects of coaching behaviours are mediated by the meaning that players' attribute to them" (Smoll & Smith, 1989, p. 1527). There has been limited research using the CBQ and more is warranted to investigate how effectively the CBQ can measure the components of the MM.

The Coaching Behaviour Assessment System

Various systematic observational instruments have been designed to analyse the instruction and learning context provided by youth sport coaches. The most prominent of the observational instruments developed specifically for sport was Coaching Behaviour

Assessment System (CBAS; Smith et al., (1977). The CBAS was designed to examine the influence of the coach on the psychological development of children through sport (Abraham & Collins, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c), with a view to providing intervention recommendations, and to test the behavioural component of the MM. The CBAS was developed over a number of years through the observation and recording of youth soccer coaches' behaviours during practice and game sessions. Smith et al. developed the set of categories through the content analysis of the behavioural categories from previous studies. The resulting behavioural categories were then used as the basis for the observational instrument and applied to basketball, baseball, and American football coaches. Smith et al. concluded that the results of the scoring system were sufficient to incorporate a large variety of different coaching behaviours.

The application of the CBAS required observers to be trained and competent in assessing the different behaviours of the coach. Each independent observer must agree on how a particular behaviour is to be categorised to ensure reliability. Smith et al. (1977) developed a training program that was aimed at achieving high inter-rater reliability. The main purpose was to overcome the individual biases evident when different observers directly observe the same individual and, consequently to increase the reliability of the research and the observational instrument.

Coaching behaviours in the CBAS are classified categorised into 12 categories, including eight reactive behaviours and four spontaneous coaching behaviours (see Figure 2.3). Definitions of the 12 categories are presented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Smith et al. (1977) distinguished between the two types of behaviours with reactive behaviours having an identifiable stimulus and spontaneous behaviours having no identifiable or clear-cut antecedents. Actual leader behaviour was described as a measure of the frequency of the

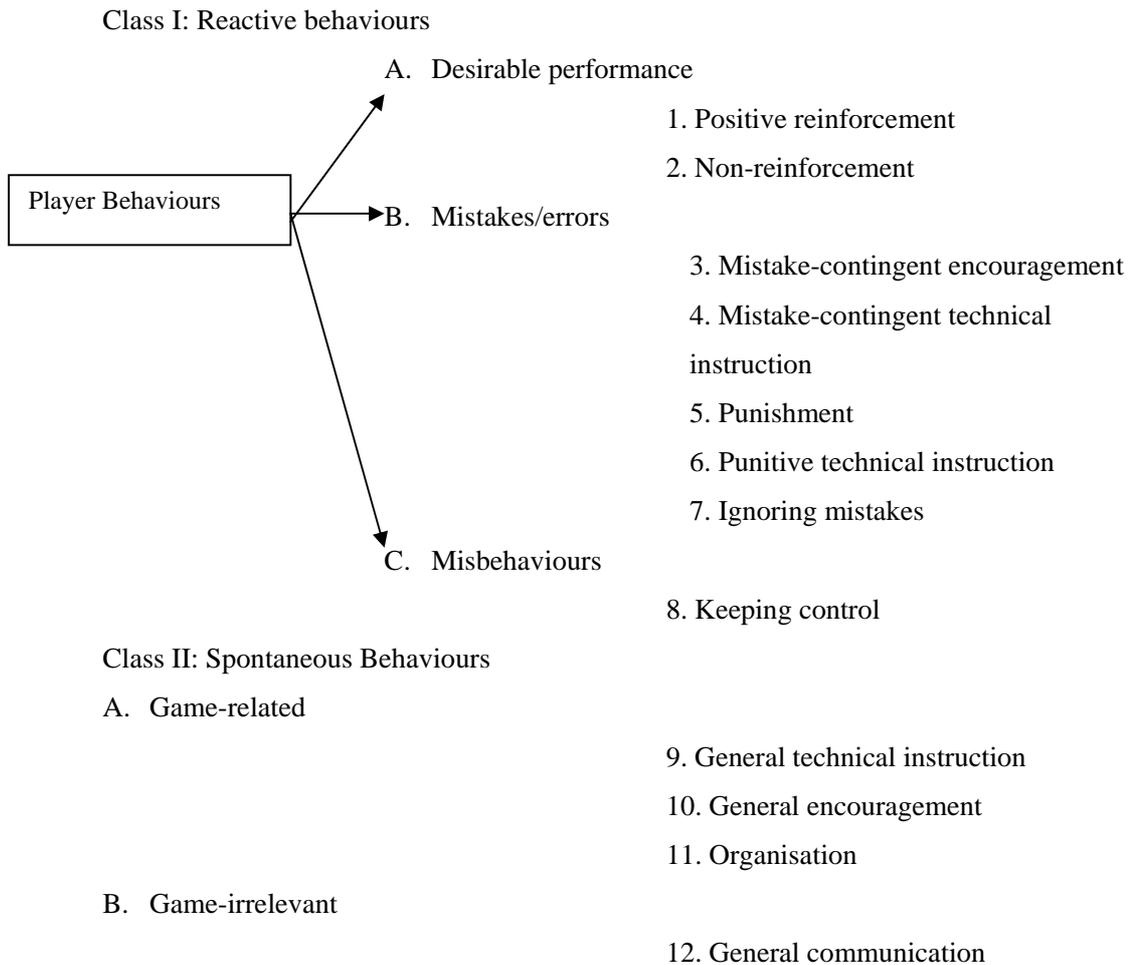


Figure 2.3: CBAS response categories (Smith et al., 1977)

12 behaviours that the coach exhibits during training or competition (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998).

The reliability of the CBAS has been questioned despite the effort by Smith et al. to examine and improve the reliability of the coding system. Smith et al. (1977) developed several procedures to improve the reliability of the CBAS. These procedures included a training manual for extended study by observers, group instruction in the use of the scoring system through video tape, written tests that require the defining of the 12 categories and scoring of behavioural examples, scoring of videotaped sequences, and extensive practice and reliability checks in field settings (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998).

Table 2.1.

CBAS response categories, Class I: Reactive behaviours (Smith et al., 1996, p. 9)

CBAS response categories, Class I: Reactive behaviours	
Response Category	Definition (Smith et al. 1996, p. 9)
Class 1: Reactive (elicited) behaviour	Reactions immediately preceding player or team behaviours.
1. Positive reinforcement	A positive rewarding reaction (verbal or non-verbal by the coach to a good play or good effort.
2. Non-reinforcement	A failure to reinforce a good performance.
3. Mistake contingent encouragement	Encouragement given to a player following a mistake.
4. Mistake-contingent technical instruction	Instructing or demonstrating to a player how to correct a mistake.
5. Punishment	A negative reaction (verbal or non-verbal) following a mistake.
6. Punitive technical instruction	Technical instruction following a mistake given in a punitive or hostile manner.
7. Ignoring mistakes	Failure to respond to a players' mistake.
8. Keeping control	Reactions intended to restore or maintain order among team members.

Table 2.2.

CBAS response categories, Class II: Spontaneous behaviours (Smith et al., 1996, p. 9)

CBAS response categories, Class II: Spontaneous behaviours	
Category	Definition (Smith et al. 1996, p. 9)
Class 2: Spontaneous behaviour	Behaviours initiated by the coach that are not a reaction to events occurring in the game/practice environment.
9. General technical instruction	Spontaneous instruction in the techniques and strategies pertinent of the sport. The purpose of these communications was to foster the learning of skills and strategies for dealing with game situations.
10. General encouragement	Spontaneous encouragement that does not follow a mistake.
11. Organisation	Administrative behaviour that sets the stage for play by assigning for example, duties, responsibilities, positions.
12. General communication	Interactions with players unrelated to game/practice.

The purpose of these measures was to ensure that trained observers were observing and interpreting behaviours in the same manner. Despite Smith et al's. measures the protocol associated with the model have not been consistently followed. Chelladurai and Riemer (1998) stated that, in practice, acceptance as a coder varied considerably, as the accuracy range for observers between the written and proficiency training tests could vary

from 95% (Horn, 1984) to 80% (M. A. Sherman & Hassan, 1986). This raised the question of the accuracy of the observations being made. Furthermore, Chelladurai and Riemer stated that the original record of the instrument's development remains a mystery, because the first article by Smith et al. (1977) provided only a vague description of the methods involved. The exact nature of the methods employed, including the time sampling procedures employed were not included in the report of the study.

Chelladurai and Riemer (1998) concluded that the CBAS has shown content validity, however, after running a principal components analysis, they were unable to make a definitive statement regarding the construct validity. Despite the measures to ensure that the CBAS was a reliable instrument, Smith and Smoll (1990) stated that the CBAS is a broad coding system that does not make the distinction between important aspects of coaching behaviours, including verbal and non-verbal responses, the magnitude of the reinforcement, and quality and duration of instructions.

Summary of the MM and the CBAS

The CBAS and the MM have provided a detailed description of coach/leader behaviours and the factors that mediate or influence the delivery of coaching behaviours. The MM has provided a solid foundation in coaching research that has spurred interest in researching the effects of coaching behaviour in youth sports. The MM is a broad model, encompassing detailed components of the coaching process. The main drawback of the MM is the lack of a comprehensive measuring instrument to test the model. The CBAS only focuses on the behavioural component of the model, whilst the CBQ, despite showing promise, needs further validation. The CBAS, however, does provide information on the consistency of coaching behaviour and identifies a range of results for interventions or coach development (e.g., Smith & Smoll, 1996).

Coaching Behaviour Research in Sport Psychology

C.J. Brewer and R.L. Jones (2002) stated that the psychology of coaching is linked with the coach's ability to effectively influence the behaviours of their athletes or with their coaching effectiveness. In this sense, coaching effectiveness refers to a coach's ability to react to the characteristics and needs of players'. Douge and Hastie (Douge & Hastie, 1993) stated that effective coaches must provide feedback frequently, show high levels of correction and reinstruction, use high levels of questioning and clarifying, predominantly be engaged in instruction, and manage the training environment. The assessment of coaching behaviour has been wide and varied with the dominant method being systematic observation or questionnaire administration with a recent increase in the application of multi-method studies and qualitative methods. In this section, I review the findings on the systematic observation of coaching behaviour, athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviour, and the qualitative evaluation of coach behaviour.

Research Findings from the Systematic Observation of Coach Behaviour

In a review of all systematic observation research, Kahan (1999) found that coaches engaged in far more positive than negative behaviours. The review showed that in studies assessing coaching behaviour via the Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI) and CBAS coaches on average spent between 30% and 40% of their time instructing athletes. Kahan reported that the majority of the instructional behaviours were given before or during the event. The next highest categories included silence, hustle, and praise. Kahan concluded that most coaching behaviour could be described as a sequential cycling of spontaneous and reactive behaviour that takes the form of initial instruction, including demonstrations, silent observation, concurrent feedback, and hustle/praise statements.

Lacy and Darst (1989) concluded that even though researchers have adapted the categories of observational instruments to suit different contexts, such as youth or professional coaches, high levels of instructional behaviour dominate the coaching process. This is reflected in studies on coaches in soccer (Potrac et al., 2002), basketball (Bloom, Crumpton, & Anderson, 1999), and rugby (C. J. Brewer & Jones, 2002). Coaching behaviour has, however, been found to differ depending on the time of season, situation, and level of coaching (Claxton, 1988; Lacy & Darst, 1984, 1985). Furthermore, Lacy and Darst (1985) found that coaching behaviour varied as a function of the segment of practice and that instruction was used more often than any other category of behaviour.

The dominance of general instruction as the most frequent coaching behaviour has been found to differ between genders. Lacy and Goldston (1990) examined the coaching behaviours of female and male high-school basketball coaches and found that there were differences between the genders. Female coaches were found to exhibit post event instruction behaviour most often (21.3%). In comparison, the dominant behaviour of males was concurrent instruction (21.8%). In addition, Lacy and Goldston's findings suggested that the primary behaviour of coaches focused on instructions aimed at skill execution during a game, encouraging hustle and praising players, and the management or organisation of practice.

Coaching behaviour and youth sports. Coach behaviour has been found to be a significant influence on young athletes' psychological profiles (Chelladurai & Reimer, 1998; Smith & Smoll, 1991). Smith et al. (1978) and Smith, Zane, Smoll, and Coppel (1983), for example, compared little league baseball coaches' CBAS profiles to player measures/interviews and found that players responded more favourably to coaches who engaged in high frequencies of supportive and instructive coaching behaviours. In

addition, players' were found to respond negatively to coaches who responded in a disciplinary or punitive manner to mistakes. A supportive environment was linked to a higher level of self-esteem and team cohesion (1983).

The findings from the CBAS studies led Smith et al. (1983) to conclude that coaching behaviours are highly related to young athletes' perceptions of their coach, suggesting that coaches' behaviour can affect a child's enjoyment of sport. Black and Weiss (1992) supported these conclusions in a study on swimmers. Black and Weiss found that coaches were perceived more favourably, if they provided information more frequently after a desirable performance. Black and Weiss concluded that young athletes' perceptions of themselves and their motivation are significantly related to the quantity and quality of coach feedback received on performance and errors.

Coaches' perception of their own behaviour. The correlation between coaches' perceptions of their own coaching behaviours and how their athletes perceived them was a critical issue that has been highlighted in a study by Smith et al. (1978), using the CBAS. Smith et al. had coaches complete a series of questionnaires, including a modified version of the CBAS. Coaches were asked to rate their own behaviours on the 12 CBAS categories. Smith et al. compared coaches' ratings of their own behaviours with their players' assessment of coach behaviour and independent observers' assessment of coach behaviour. Generally, Smith et al. found that the correlation between the coaches' self-perception and the observed behaviours was low and non-significant, whilst player ratings correlated more closely to observed behaviours, thus demonstrating that coaches' perception of their behaviours may not relate to how the behaviours are perceived by their players/athletes. This creates a contentious issue. If coaches are unaware of how their behaviours are perceived by their players potential areas of conflict arise. Furthermore, if

coach's perception of their own behaviour does not correlate with actual behaviour, then their intentions and practices may not necessarily match, clouding achievement of the coaches' goal.

CBAS research summary and results from review articles. Research conducted with the CBAS has provided detailed knowledge of coaching behaviour in a variety of settings, including little league baseball (Smith et al., 1978), youth basketball (Rejeski, Darracott, & Hutslar, 1979), and youth athletics (Horn, 1984, 1985). Kahan (1999) reviewed the results of studies examining coaching behaviour assessed by the CBAS. Kahan found that the dominant behaviour of coaches was instructional (general technical instruction, technical instruction after mistakes, and technical instruction after mistakes with punishment) and accounted for 36.8% of all coaching behaviours. Kahan argued that the dominant role of instructional behaviours indicated that youth coaches spend around a third of their time providing directions, instructions, and corrections for players. The next highest categories were reinforcement and encouragement. Kahan theorised that, as the CBAS focused more on youth coaches, youth sport coaches gave more reinforcement to their players' and hustled them more often than coaches of older or more advanced athletes.

Tharp and Gallimore revisited. One of the first coding systems applied to sport was used by Tharp and Gallimore (1976) in a case study on John Wooden, a famous UCLA basketball coach. A 10-category coding system was used to observe 30 hours of practice sessions. Tharp and Gallimore found that the most dominant behaviour was instruction (50.3%), followed by hustle (12.7%), scold/reinstruction (8%), and praise (6.9%). Furthermore, Wooden was found to use positive modelling (2.8%) more often than negative modelling (1.6%). Tharp and Gallimore's study has been recognised as the

stimulus for focusing sport psychology research on the observation of coaching behaviour (Smith et al., 1996).

Gallimore and Tharp (2004) recently reviewed and reflected on their 1976 study, and concluded that “lacking the context of Wooden’s instructions, we could only note with admiration the nature and tone of his pedagogical practice, but we could not interpret it” (p. 124). Essentially, Gallimore and Tharp suggested that their original study lacked depth, due to the limited information on the situational context and the content of the instructions Wooden gave. Consequently, Gallimore and Tharp reanalysed the data they had collected and their field notes. They also conducted interviews with former players’ of Wooden to triangulate the data. After reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data from the original study, Gallimore and Tharp stated that Wooden was an intense and well-organised coach. His instructions were described as informative, direct, positive, involved modelling, praise, and feedback. Gallimore and Tharp found that each coaching session was planned down to the minute and worked in clock like precision, with a high intensity and a demanding pace.

The data from the original Tharp and Gallimore (1976) study showed that the dominant behaviour was instruction. Gallimore and Tharp suggested that this conclusion was limited and did not represent the coach’s instructional philosophy accurately. Furthermore, Gallimore and Tharp proposed that there was no information representing the subject matter and coaching knowledge applied in the instructions. They suggested that the use of the term instruction was too general to represent the complexity of the teachings in the coaching process. Upon reviewing the material, Gallimore and Tharp described the teaching comments as short, punctuated, and numerous, there were no extended lectures or harangues. The comments were technical in nature, what to do and

how to do it, or aimed at increasing the intensity of the play or praised good work.

Gallimore and Tharp categorised the behaviours in combinations, indicating that Wooden would scold a player then use positive modelling to correct the player's mistake. In addition, in Gallimore and Tharp's interviews of former players of Wooden, the ex-players' described the practice sessions as non-stop, demanding, and supercharged. Furthermore, the ex-players' commented on the informative nature of the instructions and praise as being the agent that promoted behavioural change.

Gallimore and Tharp described the detail of Wooden's planning and organisation as a key element of his coaching style. Notes were kept on all practices for every minute of every session. Wooden could track the practice routines of every single player for every minute of every practice session allowing him to review the progress of each player. The personal knowledge Wooden had of each player allowed him to individualise each and every comment during practices, resulting in effective coaching practices and interactions that were direct, succinct, and beneficial to the individual. Gallimore and Tharp concluded that the meticulous planning, attention to detail, personal knowledge of each player, and the intensity of the information conveyed were key aspects of Wooden's coaching style.

Gallimore and Tharp's (2004) reanalysis of their original study showed how different approaches to the investigation of coach behaviour could lead to more in-depth analysis and more detail findings. It is evident that systematic observation alone cannot provide all the information from the coaching process. The use of triangulated methods including, observation, interview, and player interviews was the strength of Gallimore and Tharp's study, because the results from the observations were contextualised by the interviews with players' and the interviews with Wooden himself allowed for more in-depth data to be recorded.

A five-stage process for the development of a systematic observation instrument.

The inherent problems with systematic observation led researchers, such as C.J Brewer and R.L Jones (2002), to adapt observational measures to assess the unique aspects of different sports. C.J Brewer and R.L Jones proposed a five-stage process for establishing both validity and reliability in new systematic observation instruments. Due to the limitations of previous systematic observation instruments and the question of reliability and validity, C.J Brewer and R.L Jones proposed a five-stage process that would ensure the development of a valid and reliable instrument that would provide an enhanced picture of coaching behaviour.

Stage 1 is focused on training the researcher to become familiar with the procedures and concepts inherent in systematic observation research through an understanding of the processes involved. In Stage 2, C.J Brewer and R.L Jones stated that the focus was on the researcher developing a rationale for selecting and amending an existing observational instrument, based on the chosen sporting context. In this stage, the researcher follows a procedure for carrying out amendments to an existing instrument (or initiating the creation of a new instrument). This is achieved through pilot observations and the assessment of content validity of the instrument for the chosen sport. C.J Brewer and R.L Jones used the ASUOI to develop an observation instrument specific for Rugby Union. Using the ASUOI, C.J Brewer and R.L Jones observed elite rugby union coaches. During the data collection process, uncodable behaviour that was beyond the scope of the existing instrument was recorded qualitatively in short hand to be categorised later. C.J Brewer and R.L Jones wrote that this process ensured the instrument had items accurately representing the specific behaviours of the situation being observed, which, in context of observational research, increases the content validity of the instrument.

The third stage involves ensuring the instrument has logical or face validity. This was achieved through the items being assessed by a panel of experts. In their work, C.J Brewer and R.L Jones asked the experts to consider all aspects of the developed instrument from the perspective of their own personal expertise (e.g., coach, researcher, player, or referee). The fourth stage proposed by Brewer and Jones focused on inter-observer reliability. In this stage, of their own research, C.J Brewer and R.L. Jones asked the expert panel members were asked to view video footage of coaching behaviours, and classify the behaviours according to an index contained in the instrument. The final stage involves test-test reliability of the researcher's assignments when using the instrument.

Overall, C.J Brewer and R.L Jones concluded that this process provides a means of establishing a valid and reliable observational instrument that is sport specific. They proposed that the resulting instrument would be more accurate and have a higher face and content validity than a generic observational instrument applied to the same sport or situation. Furthermore, Brewer and Jones stated that instruments developed in this way would be able to record the situationally-unique behaviours that arise from the nature of the sport.

The five-stage process has not been utilised in further research and the observational instrument has not been crosschecked with different populations or had validity or reliability assessments completed. Before any further conclusions are made regarding the appropriateness of the five-stage process or the suitability of the rugby union observational instrument, for research in other contexts, further testing should be completed. The five-stage model has potential for addressing the unique and contextual aspects of sport which previous observational instruments have been unable to do.

Furthermore, the five-stage model could be beneficial to research on coaching behaviour by assessing sport specific behaviour.

Athletes' Perceptions of Coach Behaviour

The perception of coach behaviour by athletes has been investigated via the LSS (see previous section) and through systematic observation and interviews. Researchers have shown that athletes' perceptions of coach behaviour may influence how athletes perform or prepare for competition. For example, Williams et al. (2003) found that high trait anxious athletes were more likely to perceive coaching behaviour as threatening or in a negative manner. Williams et al. concluded that high-trait anxious athlete may be more likely to interpret coach behaviour as threatening and as a consequence experience higher levels of worry, distracted attention, elevated physiological arousal, and poorer performance. The Williams et al. findings contradicted those of Vealey, Armstrong, and Comar (1998), who concluded that perception of leadership behaviour did not predict anxiety.

Kenow and Williams (1999) investigated the compatibility between female basketball coaches and their players'. Using measures of anxiety and the Coaching Behaviour Questionnaire, Kenow and Williams found that athletes who perceived themselves to be more compatible with their coach experienced fewer negative cognitive/attentional and somatic effects from their coach's behaviour in competition. In addition, Kenow and Williams found that athletes who perceived themselves to be more compatible with their coach also felt more supported by the coach and evaluated his/ her communication ability more favourably, when compared to those who perceived themselves to be less compatible. This study highlighted the positive benefits of a perceived compatible coach-athlete relationship.

The perception of the coach and the effect on athletes' mental state is clearly evident in a study by Pelletier and Bower (2001). In this study, Pelletier and Bower examined the perceptions of coach behaviour and coaching expectations using purposely designed questionnaires to examine female high school soccer players'. Pelletier and Bower found that female high school soccer players' whom reported negative perceptions of coaching behaviour and expectations could construct negative perceptions of their own ability. Pelletier and Bower concluded that athletes' perceptions of coaching expectations can cause negative affect. Even though this study used a gender specific sample, the researchers highlighted that athlete perceptions of coach behaviour and the expectations placed on athletes by the coach can lead to negative consequences and potentially affect performance. Further research on different populations is warranted to confirm the influence of an athlete's perception of coach behaviour.

In summary, how athlete perceive their coach's behaviour and communications has been found to lead to negative sporting experiences, such as negative affect and high anxiety (Kenow & Williams, 1999; Pelletier & Bower, 2001; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). This is reinforced in a study by Salminen and Liukkonen whom highlighted that there was a discrepancy between athletes' perception of coach behaviour and coaches' perception of their own behaviour. In particular, coaches were found to evaluate themselves in a more positive manner when compared to the perceptions of the athlete. From these studies, it is evident that coaches need to be aware of how their behaviours and communication are perceived and interpreted by their athletes. It is suggested that a more insightful awareness of the implications of coaching behaviour can be obtained through the examinations of how athletes perceive coach behaviour and the influence of such perception on performance in training and competition. Further research examining the

influence of athlete perceptions of coach behaviour on the athletes' behaviour and the relationship of athlete perceptions to performance is needed.

Examining Coaching Behaviour Through Qualitative and Multi-Method Studies

The use of qualitative methods to investigate coaching behaviour has been sparse. Researchers, such as Potrac et al. (2000), have advocated the use of interpretative interviews in conjunction with observation to aid in the understanding of coaching practices in sport. In addition, Potrac et al. and Abraham and Collins (1998c) suggested that qualitative research and multi-method studies could provide a more holistic view of the coaching process and address some of the methodological limitations of observational and questionnaire approaches. Multi-method studies and the application of video recorded observations have also been applied in recent years to help researchers to investigate coach behaviour.

An example of a multi-method investigation can be seen in a study by Cushion and R.L Jones (2001) on the coaching behaviours of professional youth soccer coaches. Each of the eight elite soccer coaches (5 premier league, 3 nationwide leagues) were observed using the Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI), for intervals of 15 mins three times during a typical practice session. Cushion and R.L Jones found that the most dominant behaviour was concurrent instruction, which accounted for 29.7 % of the frequency of all behaviours, followed by praise and silence. A comparison of the elite coaches to the sub-elite coaches revealed that the elite coaches used practices that did not require large amounts of explanation and were more team oriented (Cushion & R.L Jones, 2001). The differences in instructional behaviours were attributed to effective coaching behaviour being situation specific. Cushion and R.L Jones concluded that the high level of instruction (almost 30%) in professional soccer coaching indicated that it is an essential

element for coaching effectiveness. Cushion and R.L Jones proposed that top-level performers preferred high levels of instruction. In addition, it was concluded that a favourable coaching climate resulted from coaches adapting their coaching behaviour to meet player preferences. The results from this study support those of De Marco Jr and Mancini (1997), who found that effective coaching related to the quality of instruction, rather than quantity alone. From these studies, it can be concluded that effective coaching is task specific and highly related to performance. Furthermore, the results from the Cushion and R.L Jones study were found to be consistent with previous research emphasising the predominant use of instructional behaviours, praise, and silence (Kahan, 1999).

Another multi-method study was conducted by Potrac et al. (2002). Potrac et al. carried out a case study on an elite soccer coach. A major finding from this study was that instruction accounted for the majority of the behaviours recorded in the observation period. The two predominant categories of instruction were post instruction and concurrent instruction. These findings supported the previous results pertaining to the importance of instructional behaviours in soccer coaching. The case study participant, “Brian”, was quoted as saying that the purpose of the instructional process was the development of a successful team and the improvement of individual players(1997). Specifically, Potrac et al. found that Brian believed that gaining the respect of the players, not only as a knowledgeable and professional coach, but also as a person, helped him to coach more effectively. The conclusions drawn from this study provided a more detailed understanding of the how and why of the coach’s instructional behaviours, rather than simply documenting or categorising the behaviours used in training and competition.

R.L Jones et al. (2003) used a total of five interviews and observed coaching behaviour of an elite soccer coach (Steve) over an entire season. The observations and interviews indicated that the coaching philosophies and knowledge that drove Steve's behaviours were influenced by his own experience as a player, the changing circumstances of the current coaching situation, player characteristics, and maintaining a distance from the players' (R. L. Jones et al.). In particular, R.L Jones et al. concluded that the cognitive functioning of expert coaches that drives their behaviours in training and competition was not reasoned or planned, but flexible. Coaches' decision-making may be a continuous process that is influenced by dynamic situational factors and the individual coach's experience as a player.

The findings from R.L Jones et al. (2003) study reinforced the belief that mutual respect between players' and coaches' and the construction of a positive learning environment enhanced the effectiveness of the coach-athlete relationship. The study by R.L Jones et al. suggested that the power commanded by coaches in relation to players are determined through good relationships and a strong social bond between coach and athlete. The importance of positive relationships in sport is not a new idea; psychologists have advocated the benefits of a positive learning environment for many years. Indeed, Goffman (1969) said that cooperation between leader and team member, for example, revolved around the humanistic concepts of equability and respect. Similarly, R.L Jones et al. reported that players' responded favourably to Steve's coaching style, enabling him to gain the players' respect, trust, and confidence. R.L Jones et al. attributed this to the establishment of a positive climate, with corrective feedback and positive input. Furthermore, the cooperative philosophy helped to establish a strong relationship between the coach and the players.

Côté and Sedgwick (2003) conducted a qualitative study focused on the perceptions of coaching behaviour. Côté and Sedgwick interviewed 10 elite rowers and 10 elite coaches with questions based on the coaching model (see, Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). Côté and Sedgwick found the following themes emerged, regarding effective coaching behaviours: (a) plan proactively, (b) create a positive training environment: (c) facilitate goal setting, (d) build athletes' confidence, (e) teach skills effectively, (f) recognise individual differences, and (g) establish a positive rapport with each athlete. Côté and Sedgwick (2003) concluded that the results provided dimensions of coaching behaviour that have not yet been tapped into by systematic observation or questionnaire designs. The study revealed that rowing coaches spend time establishing knowledge of their athletes' individuality and focus on creating a positive environment that develops and fosters athletes' specific talent, needs, and individual ability. In addition, Côté and Sedgwick showed that coaches' organizational work and personal relationships with their athletes were areas of significant importance to both coach and athlete. Côté and Sedgwick reported that there was a high degree of agreement between coaches' and athletes' responses, suggesting elite coach-athlete dyads had a high level of compatibility.

Video Observation and Coaching Behaviour

The use of video as a source of feedback and as a research tool provides an in-depth and innovative way to explore the cognitive aspects of a person's behaviour. Systematic observation research has provided insight into the coaching process, however, the findings have been restricted due to the limited nature of the observational instruments being used. Furthermore, D.F Jones, Housner, and Kornspan (1997, p. 455) concluded, "to understand fully the phenomenon called coaching, it is imperative that direct observation techniques be supplemented by methods for exploring the thought processes of coaches."

Non-traditional approaches, such as Self-Confrontation Interviews (SCI, d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, & Durand, 2001; Von Cranach & Kulbermatten, 1982) and Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interviews (VCSRI, Trudel, Haughian et al., 1996; Wilcox & Trudel, 1998) are aimed at expanding on the behavioural studies by examining the cognitive processes of the coach and players from the time of the recorded behaviour. The weakness of this approach, however, lies in the retrospective nature of the interview.

Researchers have used the VCSRI technique to examine coaching principles (Wilcox & Trudel, 1998), case studies of coaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000), decision-making during an event (D. F. Jones, Housner, & Kornspan, 1995; D. F. Jones et al., 1997), and the evaluation of a coach education program (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). d'Arripe-Longueville et al. (2001) used SCI to investigate coach-athlete interactions in elite archery competition. Similarly, Wilcox and Trudel examined coaching principles and beliefs in a case study of a youth ice-hockey coach. Wilcox and Trudel found that winning and player development (social and hockey skills) were the primary goals of coaches' coaching practices during training. The coach also suggested that his coaching principles and beliefs were focused on acting as a teacher for young athletes and emphasising effort and performance, physical play or toughness, playing time, and also fun.

D.F. Jones et al. (1997) examined interactive decision-making of experienced and inexperienced basketball coaches. D.F. Jones et al. found that experienced coaches used more technical instruction. Both experienced and inexperienced coaches were found to implement their stated plans during the practice session. In addition, D.F. Jones et al. found limited differences between experienced and inexperienced coaches. Gilbert et al. (1999) examined decision-making through case studies on ice hockey coaches. Gilbert et al. found that coaches typically based their decisions during competition exclusively on

player performance and referred to multiple factors, such as field information and knowledge of their players, to guide their behaviour.

Benefits and Limitations of Video Based Observational Research. The use of video observation and VCSRI methods has provided many benefits for coaching research. Researchers, such as D. F. Jones et al. (1997), Gilbert and Trudel (2000), and Gilbert, Trudel, and Bloom (1995; 1999; Trudel, Cote et al., 1996), have concluded that the VCSRI methods extract more accurate and more detailed information regarding coaching behaviours and decision making in sport than observations or retrospective interviews. Consequently, claims regarding their increased accuracy and reliability, compared to previous interview and observation techniques, must be carefully examined. The VCSRI approach allows researchers to increase the inter-rater reliability of observations and keep an actual record of the observed event to refer to throughout the research process. VCSRI methods, however, have not been compared to traditional interview methods and the claims that they increase the honesty and accuracy of participants' responses have not been empirically tested.

The use of video has played an important role in the study of the teaching-learning process in school-based physical education classes, but remains relatively limited in sports coaching or sport psychology research (Trudel et al., 2001). One explanation for the limited use of video in coaching is that the intrusive nature of video cameras makes athletes and coaches cautious of being filmed. These participants may even behave in a restrained or more socially-desirable manner, when the camera is focused on their actions or movements, thus, affecting the accuracy of the data being collected. Social desirability is a common occurrence in research, but should be particularly considered when collecting data via a video camera. Another explanation for the lack of research using video cameras

could be that, before the advent of digital video technology, the use of video recording in coaching research was limited by the practical constraints of the technology. For example, the size and cost of early recording equipment restricted researchers' ability to access many places. Researchers instead relied on live coding to record and analyse the behaviours of coaches (e.g., Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978), rather than to deal with bulky and expensive equipment.

The retrospective recall of events has always proved to be a contentious issue. B.W Brewer, Linder, Van Raalte, and Van Raalte (1991) stated that retrospective interviews can be biased by the researcher, as well as by the length of time between the event and the interview, and the outcome of the events being studied. Consequently, the retrospective analysis of events through interview may not provide an accurate account of the event. Tenenbaum, Lloyd, Pretty, and Hanin (2002) stated that when the cognitive process is of a long duration, it is likely that an accurate depiction of the cognitive and emotional responses at the time of the event are unable to be retrieved and may be omitted from participants' accounts. A retrospective report, when elicited directly after the task is completed, will draw information from the short-term memory that is directly accessible. After a longer period, the time taken between the event and the verbal recollection may blur the relationship between participants' recollection of the event and the verbalised information (Tenenbaum et al., 2002). To negate the interference of information with the recollection of the event, Tenenbaum et al. claimed that video feedback may cue participants into the event and allow for a more accurate assessment of individuals' cognitions and emotions from the specified time.

Yinger (1986) questioned the validity of the traditional stimulated recall interview based on the principle that, if participants view the videotape before being asked a

question regarding their behaviours, then the videotape acts as a source of information to cue their response. The validity of the response is then questionable. As a result, Wilcox and Trudel (1998) modified the stimulated recall interview to reflect this principle. In the modified version, the researcher provides participants with verbal cues about an event to help stimulate their memory. Before participants view the video segment, they must first discuss the event. As a result, the videotaped segments validate, rather than stimulate, participants' recall. This method of verbally cueing participants limits the possibility of providing new information to the participant. Wilcox and Trudel (1998) suggested that the VCSRI method enables researchers to unveil coaches' beliefs and philosophies regarding their practices in training and competition.

The use of video for shared reflection has implications for research and coaching, because providing coaches with their videotaped behaviours may trigger a process of self-reflection. Cueing the analytical side of coaches allows researchers to gain insight into coaches' behaviours that have previously been inaccessible to researchers. Further refinement of these methods and the accuracy of participants responses need to be assessed before any conclusions can be drawn regarding the validity and reliability of VCSRI methodology and its benefits. Further research using these methods is required to expand our knowledge of coaching cognitions during competition, training, and prior to competition.

Limitations of Behavioural Research

The accuracy of systematic observation instruments has been questioned over the years. A major criticism has been that the limited number of categories in observational instruments may force the observer to place behaviours into categories, which are not accurate. This eliminates the specific and contextual information that is unique to different

situations and different sports. A second criticism of the instruments currently available, such as the CBAS and the ASUOI, is that they are limited by predetermined lists of general behaviours that may not be specific enough to determine the idiosyncrasies of coaching in different sports. These observational instruments are perceived to be too generic to be applied effectively in all sporting domains, and do not assess the unique aspects of different sports. C.J. Brewer and R.L. Jones (2002) stated that the uniqueness of each sport may, in fact, potentially preclude the development of any model of effective coaching practices. Consequently, the specificity of the instrument and the subsequent accuracy of the research may be questioned. This is reflected in the conclusion drawn by Gilbert and Trudel (2000) that coaching is domain specific and the unique aspects of each sport influence coaching practices.

Kahan (1999) highlighted that observational instruments have largely ignored the environmental or situational influences inherent in the coaching process. Gilbert and Trudel (2000) and Potrac et al. (2000) stated that there is a growing belief that the situation-specific context of coaching needs to be addressed when assessing coaching behaviours. This limitation is of great significance because findings in coaching science/literature have suggested that successful coaches adapt their instructional behaviours to meet the unique demands of the local environment (R. L. Jones, 2000; Woodman, 1993).

To gain a deeper insight into the how and why of coaching behaviours, researchers, such as Potrac et al. (2000), Abraham and Collins (1998c) and C.J. Brewer and R.L Jones (2002), highlighted that quantitative analysis from systematic observations should be considered in light of the situational or contextual environments surrounding the observed behaviours. In addition, the adoption of a sport-specific, systematic observation

instrument has been proposed to potentially provide more valid and reliable data. The adoption of these suggestions might enable the construction of a larger, more accurate knowledge database on effective coaching behaviours and practices (C.J. Brewer & R.L. Jones, 2002; Côté et al., 1995c).

Pelletier and Bower (2001) stated that systematic observational research was limited by the lack of information on how athletes perceive their coaches' behaviour and how that behaviour affects the athlete. Understanding how coaching behaviour affects athletes is a key consideration of the coaching process. Pelletier and Bower (2001) stated that research on the administration of the LSS and limited studies using the CBAS have investigated athletes' perceptions of the coach. The limited information on how athletes perceive coaching behaviour restricts our understanding of coaching behaviour and the coaching process. In particular, few studies have triangulated observations of coaching behaviour with athletes' perceptions and evaluations of that coach behaviour.

Summary of the Behavioural Assessment of Coaching in Sport

There has been significant interest in research focused on understanding the influence of coaching behaviour on athlete performance in sport. In a review of the coaching literature, Côté (1998) categorised coaching behaviours into four distinct categories (a) systematic observation, (b) leadership, (c) questionnaires, and (d) qualitative methods. Côté argued that the four categories represent the major trends in coaching research, with the predominant approaches being the application of systematic observation instruments or the administration of questionnaires. In systematic observation studies, general instruction followed by praise, and silence have been found to be the dominant coaching behaviours during training and competition. Coaching behaviour was influenced by the players' level of development, coaching experience, the situation, and the goal of

the coach. Potrac et al. (2000) stated that the increase in systematic and scientific approaches to sports coaching stems from a desire to further understand precisely what happens in the coaching/learning environment. By taking a behavioural approach, researchers can investigate and categorise the overt behaviours of a coach. Observation and questionnaire administration are simple, effective ways of measuring and understanding coaching behaviour and have proven to elicit detailed information. The criticisms of the behavioural approach lie in the limited understanding that observation and self-report questionnaires provide of the rationale behind the coaches' behaviour. Behavioural research alone cannot elucidate the full story of coaching behaviour.

Overview and Theory of the Cognitive Approach

The limited attention focused on understanding the cognitive aspects of coaching behaviour had, until recently, left a gap in knowledge of the coaching process. Researchers, such as Abraham and Collins (1998c) and Potrac et al. (2000), have stated that there is a need to go beyond the simple description and categorisation of behaviour and understand why specific behaviours are acted out and how they influence athletes and performance. Abraham and Collins (1998c) wrote that assessment of expert coaching knowledge is crucial in the development of coaching as a profession and for the development of talent. Abraham and Collins (1998c) proposed that pertinent information from expert coaches could be used to enhance the understanding of the coaching process through the identification of how coaches think and how they make decisions. Furthermore, Abraham and Collins (1998a; 1998b; 1998c) stated that knowledge assessment of expert coaches has been criticised for being ambiguous and further research is required to enhance the understanding of the cognitive processes used by coaches during training and competition.

Researchers have stated that coaching can be described or defined in a multitude of ways, indeed Woodman (1993) defined coaching as an art, a science, a craft, and a process. There has been much debate about how to define coaching; one argument is that it is purely behavioural. Abraham and Collins (1998c) stated that it is reasonable to assume that coaching is predominantly a cognitive skill, however, coaching is still treated primarily as behavioural and the research conducted thus far reflects this perspective. Abraham and Collins argued that understanding the application of expert coaching knowledge is essential, if the enhancement of the coaching process is to continue, because coaching is not just a sequence of behaviours directed at an athlete. In fact, behind every overt behaviour or communication by coaches is a thought process that is influenced by that coach's philosophies, beliefs, strategies, personality traits, tactics, and experiences. The planning of a coaching session or coaching during a competition requires the coach to make a myriad of decisions, regarding the performance of their athletes and to evaluate the situation before making an overt action (Abraham & Collins, 1998a).

Research investigating coaching knowledge is limited at best. Abraham and Collins (1998a; 1998c) cited that this is partially due to the fact that there appears to be no easy way to review the knowledge of expert coaches. Furthermore, several researchers, including Côté et al. (1999) and Potrac et al. (2000), have proposed that expert-coaching knowledge is domain or sport specific, i.e., the technique, tasks, mental skills, and physical knowledge required to coach each sport necessitates the development of sport specific knowledge relevant to that sport alone. It is suggested that the general or surface level knowledge may be transferable between sports or training practices, yet this knowledge may only transfer between ball sports or racquet sports, for example (Abraham & Collins, 1998a, 1998c).

Theory and Development of the Coaching Model

To further advance the literature on coaching, Côté, Salmela, Baria, Russell, and Trudel (1995) developed a theoretical framework termed the Coaching Model (CM, see Figure 2.3). The CM was developed to explain the factors that were most important in the coaching process and to examine the most significant relationships among these factors. Central to the CM were the competition, training, and organisation components, which Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) termed the coaching process.

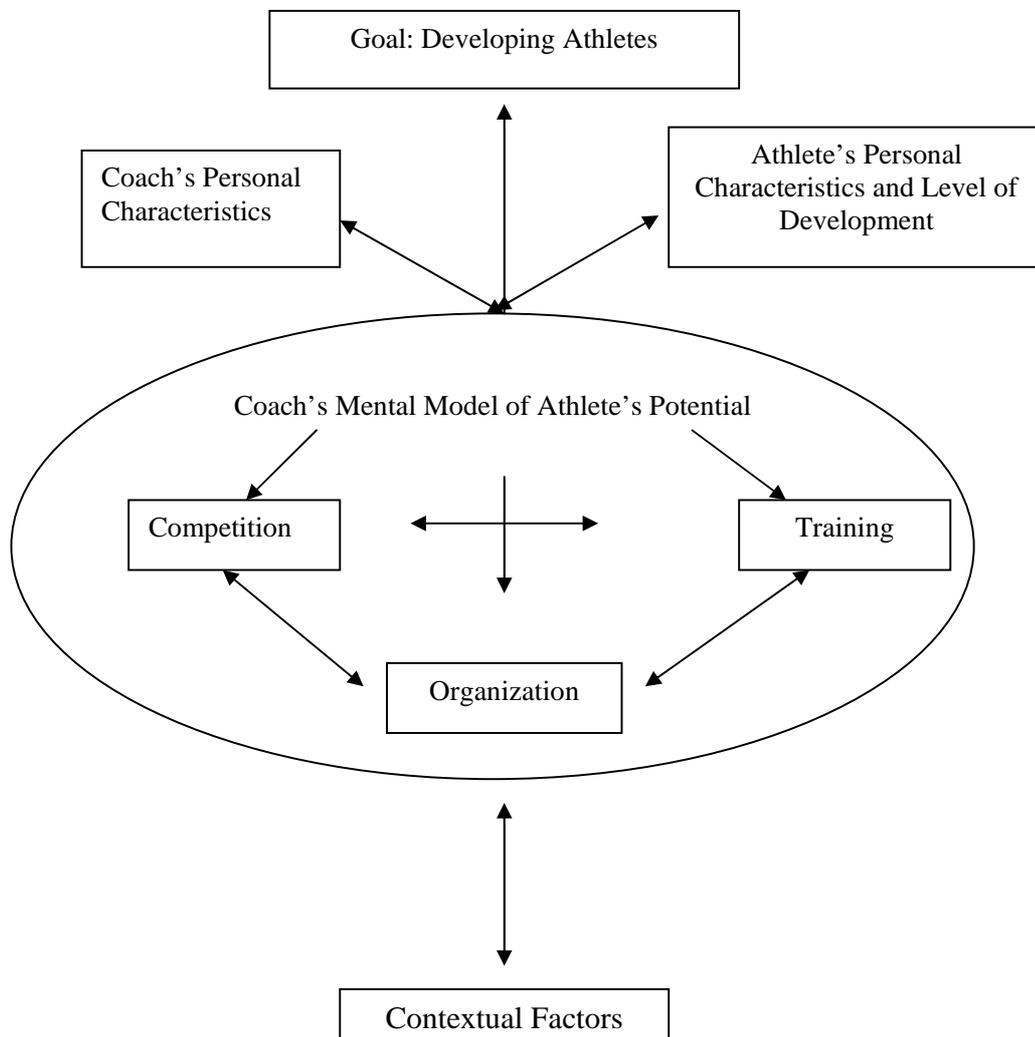


Figure 2.3. The Coaching Model (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995)

The CM focuses on three variables that influence the coaching process, the coach's personal characteristics, the athlete's personal characteristics, and the level of development of the athlete. The components of the CM and the specific relationships between them explain how expert coaches work to achieve their objectives of building mental models for different situations. Côté, Salmela, Baria, et al. also included in the CM are the factors that influence the outcome of the coaching process, including personal and contextual factors. The CM shows how coaches' goals and their mental models of athletes' potential influence the manner in which they coach across the organisation, training, and competition environments.

As Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) stated, the CM was proposed to explain how expert coaches utilise knowledge to develop elite gymnasts. The CM focused on the concept of mental models, that Côté, Samela, Baria et al., described as "specific knowledge structures that are constructed mentally to represent various situations" (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995, p. 13). Côté, Samela, Baria et al. proposed that expert coaches use a 'working model' in their mind for developing elite gymnasts. The working model included the components of the CM and the gymnasts' personal characteristics, their level of development, and the situational or contextual factors at the time. The interaction of these factors combined to form the coaches' mental model of the athlete and aid in the decisions or interventions that the coach made during training or competition. Côté, Samela, Baria et al. concluded that this mental representation allowed the coach to succeed in constructing the best path for the development of an elite gymnast.

Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) used a cognitive approach to explain the components of the CM and the specific relationships, explaining how coaches work toward their objectives. Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. suggested that coaches evaluated

athletes' ability and personal characteristics to develop a mental model of the athletes' potential. The mental model is based on coaches' evaluation of athletes' personal characteristics and any contextual factors. In addition, Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. theorised that a coach's mental model is constructed through the assessment of each athlete's characteristics, contextual factors, and the coach's personal characteristics. The assessment of these variables, then directs a coach's behaviours in the training, competition, and organisational environments. Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. stated that coaches use the mental model as a basis to define the knowledge and behaviours important to apply when interacting with a particular athlete. Furthermore, Côté (1998) stated that the coaches' mental model determines their actions and behaviours.

An important aspect of the CM is that it outlines the contextual factors that affect the overall coaching process. Davies, Bloom, and Salmela (2005) stated that it is important to understand the unique coaching context of each coach and each situation as it enables a more detailed insight into the coaching processes to be examined. Davies et al., highlight that the unique context of the Canadian University coaches is highly different from those of their American counterparts. In particular, the resources, pressures, and focus on student-athlete were seen as being key contextual factors for Canadian university coaches. The coaching context is seen as being a key factor influencing the coaching process.

The context of the situation has been highlighted as being an important determinant of coaching (R. L. Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002). R.L. Jones et al., cited that the examination of the social, cultural, and situational are important aspects of the coaching process that have been left understudied. Furthermore, it is important to note that the subculture of the sport and the broader culture that the sport is embedded has an

influence on the coaching process and the coach-athlete relationship. It suggested that the situational and contextual influences, such as the culture of the sport, are what make coaching unique. Importantly these aspects are included in the CM.

The CM, developed by Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) has aided in the understanding of coaching expertise and knowledge, and has provided a comprehensive framework of expert knowledge associated with the coaching process. Saury and Durand (1998, p. 255), however, stated that the CM is too general “because the actual task of a coach cannot be specified or defined”. Saury and Durand proposed that coaches deal with a great degree of uncertainty and that any model is purely descriptive and does not account for the uncertainty of coaching and the numerous constraints experienced by coaches. Indeed, Saury and Durand suggested that any existing model is imprecise and speculative. In addition, the CM was established with the use of only one sport, it is possible that different individual sports and team-based sports may match the components precisely and variations of the model may need to be constructed. A major limitation of the CM, is the limited validation of the model in different sports and different athletes. To date, there has only been one study that has tested the CM (see Gilbert & Trudel, 2000). To verify the components of the CM further application and validation of the CM is required to test accuracy of the proposed components.

Validation of the Coaching Model

Gilbert and Trudel (2000) conducted a validation study of the coaching model within the confines of a team sport. They stated that the CM was constructed using retrospective data and that the model had not been validated using direct observations of coaches in action. In a single case study of an ice-hockey coach, Gilbert and Trudel (2000) used short, semi-structured, on-site interviews to elicit information on the coach's

knowledge and decision-making. Gilbert and Trudel conducted the interviews after two games and two practice sessions on three separate occasions. One to two days after the game, selected coach behaviours and decisions from the game were discussed in a stimulated recall interview. To validate the CM, Gilbert and Trudel reviewed the interview transcripts and coded each based on the components of the CM.

Gilbert and Trudel (2000) compared the results to those of Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) and found support for the six components of the CM and a new category in the competition component termed intervention style. Gilbert and Trudel cited that the coach was observed giving feedback and consultation to athletes. This category depends on the type of sport being observed or coached, as some sports, such as basketball, baseball, or ice-hockey, allow the coach to interact with the players during competition, whilst sports, such as swimming or cycling, do not allow for such interaction.

There were a number of discrepancies between the CM and Gilbert and Trudel's findings with the ice-hockey coach. The first discrepancy between the CM and Gilbert and Trudel's (2000) results related to the goals of the coaching process. Being an ice hockey coach working in a team sport, the coach in Gilbert and Trudel's study had different goals and objectives from the gymnastics coaches in the original model. This finding should not have been unexpected, because the individuality of each sport and the vast differences that exist between a team sport and an individual sport dictate that coaching goals or objectives will not be represented by a single uniform goal. This also relates to the notion of domain specific knowledge and the generalisability of expert knowledge across unrelated sports.

Overall, the validated model that Gilbert and Trudel (2000) developed matched that of Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) with the addition of one component to the CM, intervention style. Gilbert and Trudel modified several definitions and codes to reflect the

nature of the sport they had investigated. In addition, nine minor categories were not found in Gilbert and Trudel's study that were in the CM. These categories were found to relate to the unique aspects of gymnastics, but not to ice hockey. Gilbert and Trudel stated that the different context, as well as the single-subject research design might have contributed to the discrepancies. Furthermore, Gilbert and Trudel argued that the CM was developed using an individual sport (gymnastics). The unique characteristics of an individual sport may differ from those inherent in team sports and consequently, the model may not be entirely generalisable to other situations. Consequently, Gilbert and Trudel concluded that the differences between the validated model and the original lay in the uniqueness of the sports studied, indicating that expert coaching knowledge may be inherently related to each sport. More research is necessary to further examine the differences found between sports in these studies conducted by Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. and Gilbert and Trudel.

An Integrated Approach

Côté (1998) stated that a critical issue relating to research on coaching is the lack of theoretical frameworks that underline the major variables affecting coaches' work. In a view backed up by Chelladurai and Riemer (1998), Côté stated that the Mediation and Multidimensional Models do not provide a comprehensive outline of the factors that are most important in the coaching process. To provide a comprehensive outline of all the factors affecting the coaching process, Côté proposed that researchers in coaching should develop a general theory of coaching. To achieve this, Côté analysed the material from questionnaire, qualitative, and observational research, and integrated the different research approaches into a more comprehensive framework. The conceptual and operational knowledge established in the Coaching Model was used as a basis for the integrated

model. Côté used the six components of the CM, (a) competition, (b) training, (c) organisation, (d) coaches' personal characteristics, (e) athletes' characteristics, and (f) contextual factors, as a basis for an integrated model. Côté employed these components to explain how coaches work towards their objectives. He proposed that, generally, coaches evaluated their personal characteristics, as well as the athletes' and team's characteristics, and any contextual factors in order to estimate athletes' potential. Côté stated that this integrated mental model was used by coaches to dictate how the, coach interact or behave with their team/athletes in training, competition, and organisational environments.

Côté (1998) proposed that the integrated model differed from the CM in that the operations of the CM, through the use of the mental models, are divided into two levels of variables: those that affect coaching behaviours (ambient) and those that represent actual coaching behaviours (behavioural). The ambient component reflects the factors that affect the coach and includes the coach's personal characteristics (knowledge, personal philosophy, personal life demands), the athletes' personal characteristics (physical, mental, personal, and social demands), and contextual factors (financial, training, competitive environment). The ambient components, their variables, and their interactions, have the potential to facilitate or constrain coaches' work by affecting their mental model of a situation (Côté, 1998). The behavioural components of the CM reflect those variables that represent actual behaviours, such as competition (interactions before, during and after the competition), organisation (planning training/competition, working with assistants or parents, and helping athletes with personal concerns), and training settings (intervention style, technical skills, mental skills, tactical skills, and physical conditioning. Côté (1998) stated that the coaches' role in each of these three settings changes, from athlete preparation or evaluation to planning to teaching skills.

The variables in the ambient and behavioural components of the integrated model were gathered from the different approaches to the examination of coaching, including qualitative methods, leadership, questionnaire, and systematic observation research. Côté stated that an account of the factors mediating the coaching process is the first phase for the development of a comprehensive theory of coaching. The framework of the integrated model was designed to focus on areas that have not been covered by previous research. In particular, the organisational work; interactions with assistants or parents; and coaches' personal relationships with athletes are areas that Côté cited as requiring further research. The development of the integrated model has provided a sound theoretical framework for further research into the coaching process. It builds on the existing CM and integrates components that Gilbert and Trudel cited as being essential for the framework. The integrated model is an attempt to overcome the shortfalls of the previous models and is aimed at providing a sound base for the investigation of every aspect of the coaching process. Due to the complexity of the coaching process, it is apparent that this will be an evolving model that is adapted to the uniqueness of each sporting context. The integrated model has received limited attention and future research is warranted to validate and test the proposed approach. This is especially important given that the integrated model is largely based on the CM, which has not been thoroughly replicated across different sports.

The Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport

Côté, Yardley, Hay, Sedgwick, and Baker (1999) stated that a critical issue that has not been dealt with in coaching behaviour research is the lack of a theoretical framework guiding the development questionnaires. Côté et al. also stated that the previous theoretical frameworks proposed by Smoll and Smith (1989) and Chelladurai (1990)

shared common variables, nevertheless, a comprehensive outline of all the factors that influence the coaching process has not been established. That problem notwithstanding, the measures of each framework (the LSS and the CBAS) have both been criticised for their lack of reliability and validity. To address this issue, Côté et al. (1999) used the CM as a framework for the development of a questionnaire, termed the Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport (CBS-S) to assess coaching behaviour.

Côté et al. constructed the CBS-S from a series of qualitative studies with coaches and athletes. Seventy-five items were derived and drafted into questionnaire format and reviewed for face validity by eight academics and three coaches. Côté et al. then administered the questionnaire to 105 athletes. Exploratory factor analysis of the questionnaire response resulted in 37 items that formed six factors. Côté et al. named the 6 factors in the following manner: (a) Technical skills, (b) Goal setting, (c) Mental preparation, (d) Personal rapport, (e) Physical training and planning, and (f) Negative personal rapport. To validate the questionnaire, Côté et al. then re-submitted the CBS-S to a larger more diverse population of 205 athletes. The results of an exploratory factor analysis extracted the same six factors, but expanded the number of items to 44. Côté et al. concluded that the CBS-S was an insightful research tool that can be applied to examine perceptions of coaches' behaviour.

Despite the claims by the developers of the questionnaire, the CBS-S has received limited attention to date with only published research papers. One example was a study by Baker, Côté, and Hawes (2000) whom examined the relationship between athletes anxiety levels, using the Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS; Smith, Smoll, and Schutz, 1990) and coaching behaviour. Baker et al. found that negative personal rapport was a significant predictor of all measured forms of sport anxiety, whereas competition strategies was a significant

predictor for total anxiety, concentration disruption, and worry. Baker et al., however, did not report reliability or validity data in the study. The failure to validate the CBS-S means that the acceptability of the measures must be questioned. Further research is warranted to assess the reliability of the CBS-S as a measure of coaching behaviour.

Mallet and Côté (2005) used the CBS-S to evaluate the work of high performance coaches at Australian sports institutes. Mallet and Côté suggested that the CBS-S could be used to evaluate the work of elite coaches and provide feedback for interventions and coach development. Mallet and Côté recommended that the perceptions of independent observers and athletes could be used to aid the high performance coaches in understanding their own coaching behaviour and how their athletes perceive their behaviour. This evaluation process was proposed to aid government run sports associations assess coaches key performance indicators and their coaching effectiveness. Mallet and Côté suggested that the key to this process was athletes' perceptions of coaches' performance. In addition, Mallet and Côté also proposed that to gain a deeper insight into perceptions of coaching the key performance indicators of coaches should be used in conjunction with other data such as the performance and progress of athletes working with particular coaches. Mallet and Côté applied the CBS-S to an elite coaching group but failed to provide any information on the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

The CBS-S is an alternative measure to existing questionnaire of coach behaviour. The low number of participants involved in the validation of the questionnaire by Côté et al. and the lack of reliability assessment by studies such as Mallet and Côté means that further testing should be conducted before any conclusions regarding the appropriateness of the measure are made. There is a need for further validation of the reliability and

validity of the CBS-S. To date publishes research using the CBS-S is also limited but it is a new instrument, so further work and confirmation of the reliability may be required.

Summary of the Research and Theory on the Coaching Model.

The in-depth research of Côté and colleagues (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Cote & Salmela, 1996; Cote, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b) has provided detailed information pertinent to the knowledge that expert coaches possess and use to enhance or develop their athletes. The subsequent development of the CM has provided a firm theoretical framework for future research to build upon. A strength of the CM is the grounded nature of its development. Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. constructed the CM using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) ground theory, developing the model through the close analysis of findings from the data, rather than based on the researchers' conceptualisations. Gilbert and Trudel's (2000) validation of the CM, however, showed that further research is required, as the unique characteristics of the identified sport (gymnastics) may have influenced the results. It is evident that the domain specific knowledge inherent in each sport and the different requirements of team or individual sports necessitates that the CM should account for the unique aspects of each sport. Validation of the CM in different contexts or different sports could further develop the model and aid in the understanding of coaching an expert coaches' knowledge. The development of the CBS-S from the CM provides an empirical means of testing the components of the model. The limited use of the CBS-S and the lack of validity and reliability checks means that results using the CBS-S must be viewed with caution.

Research Findings on Coaching Knowledge and the Coaching Model

Abraham and Collins (1998a, p. 69) stated that "...behavioural observation alone cannot provide the whole story of the coaching process, without accessing the thoughts of

the coach." The importance of understanding how coaches impart and construct their behaviours could provide detailed information on the rationale behind overt behaviours. In this section, I identify the research and the findings that have focused on the examination of coaching knowledge and the coaching model.

Côté and colleagues (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Cote & Salmela, 1996; Cote, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b) examined 17 expert gymnastics coaches. Côté interviewed the 17 expert gymnastics coaches using grounded theory methods and was focused on understanding the application of coaching knowledge. Côté, Salmela et al., (1995a, 1995b) found that the expert knowledge was divided into the confines of competition (competition floor, competition site, trial competition) and training (coach involvement, intervention style, technical skills, mental skills and simulation). Côté, Salmela et al. (1995a) found that during competition coaches would not interfere with gymnasts unless they perceived that they were not ready to perform. They concluded that the expertise of the coaches was related to knowing when to intervene and when to leave the gymnasts alone. Prior to performing, the coach's role at the competition site was found to be primarily in ensuring that the gymnasts went through their own preparatory routines correctly. Furthermore, Côté, Salmela et al. found that coaches were active in ensuring that their gymnasts controlled the distractions evident at major competitions.

During training, the coaches in the Côté, Salmela et al. (1995a) study stated that their time was split into five categories, time involved, intervention style, technical skills, mental skills, and simulation. The most prominent of these categories were intervention style, technical skills, and mental skills. It was apparent that expert coaches were aware of different athletes' needs and reactions. This was evident in the four different styles of

interventions that Côté et al. found: being supportive, providing positive feedback, providing instruction, and giving responsibility.

An important difference emerging from the Côté, Salmela et al. (1995a) study was that the coaches of male and female gymnasts differed in their intervention styles. Côté, Salmela et al. concluded that the inherent gender difference between male and female gymnasts was a major consideration. In this case, age and gender were found to be key determining factors, because female gymnasts' age range can often be pre to early teenage, whereas male gymnasts are generally a little older. Consequently, the coaches employed a different approach to the gymnasts based on age, maturity, and other personal concerns that are evident with younger female gymnasts (as seen by the weight concerns of females, which was not an issue with coaches of male gymnasts). The study by Côté, Salmela et al. is limited because only gender specific coaches (i.e., female coaches of female gymnasts and male coaches of male gymnasts) were interviewed. More information is needed to discover if these differences exist primarily in coaches of female athletes or in female coaches.

Furthermore, Côté, Salmela, et al. (1995a) found that coaches were required to have an extensive knowledge of each gymnast's ability to deal with stress, motivation, awareness, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, aggressiveness/intensity, and pain. The coaches also indicated that the development of mental skills and knowing how to develop them was an essential element of coaching. Finally, Côté, Salmela et al. found that expert coaches used a lot of simulation in training, i.e., simulation of world championship conditions. The expert coaches were also found to have used simulation of high-pressure situations of important competitions to ready the athlete for competition. In essence, Côté, Salmela et al. characterised and formulated important information regarding the cognitive

skills that expert coaches use in training and competition. One limitation of the study was that the domain specific knowledge of gymnastics may not necessarily relate to other sports. Nevertheless, the study by Côté, Salmela et al. provided an important starting point for the further development and understanding of expert coaching knowledge.

Côté and Salmela (1996) examined the organisational component of training and competition. Côté and Salmela found that organisation took place before, during, and after training or competition. Côté and Salmela concluded that the organisational component of expert coaches' knowledge highlighted the important interactions that coaches have with athletes, parents, and assistants. Organisation focused on planning, training, working with assistants, working with parents, helping gymnasts with personal concerns, and monitoring weight aesthetics. Côté and Salmela found that only the coaches of female gymnasts reported the latter, whereas male coaches did not report on any weight issues. These findings were consistent with previous research by Côté et al. (1995b), who found that coaches of female gymnasts had different concerns than the coaches of male gymnasts. Côté et al. (1995b) concluded that this was primarily due to age, because the female gymnasts were generally aged from pre-teen to teenage, whereas male gymnasts were generally older and required more strength.

Saury and Durand (1998) analysed the practical knowledge of elite Olympic sailing coaches. Saury and Durand conducted in depth interviews after the observation of five training sessions with coaches in action during training sessions. Saury and Durand used the observations of the coaches in action to provide addition detail for the interviews, with the goal of providing precise description of situations and actions of the coach. During the interview, the observations were used to promote the coaches feeling and memory of the situations being discussed, much like the procedures applied during a

stimulated recall interview. Saury and Durand found that the goals of the training session were limited by a set of interacting constraints (e.g., uncertainty of athletes' activity or uncertainty of associated weather) that generated complex, contradictory, and ill-defined problems. Coaches' operating modes appeared to be based on organization routines, cognitive anticipation, on flexible plans, flexible on-site adaptation, joint control of training with athletes, and involvement in the training situation based on past experiences. Coaching knowledge was mediated by the constraints of the situation and the context of the training session at the time. Saury and Durand stated that coaches "lived" the training sessions vicariously and applied the deliberations and decisions that they thought were appropriate at the time.

Summary of the Cognitive Approach to Coaching

Potrac et al. (2000) and Lyle (1999) stated that, as the central figure in the athletic environment, coaches are required to possess detailed technical knowledge of their sport, as well as the pedagogical skills of a teacher, the counselling skills of a psychologist, the training expertise of a physiologist, and the leadership skill of a business executive. How coaches use this knowledge and apply it to the coaching process has received limited attention. Research by Côté and colleagues (Cote & Salmela, 1996; Cote, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b) and Saury and Durand (1998) has shown how coaches constructed and applied coaching knowledge with elite athletes in the training and competition environments. The construction of the CM from the research of Côté and colleagues has highlighted the process that coaches go through when applying their knowledge to athletes. Future research needs to focus on understanding the thought process underlying coaching behaviours, rather than simply observing or categorising those behaviours.

Coach Influence on Athletes' Ideal Performance State

To achieve the Ideal Performance State (IPS), on the day of competition, athletes must have optimal physical and mental preparation (Williams & Krane, 2001). From the literature, it is apparent that there are a myriad of factors that combine to contribute to athletes' performance states. Sport psychology researchers have highlighted that athletes' psychological state during performance is a critical factor in achieving peak performance (e.g., Williams & Krane, 2001). Researchers have examined aspects of the IPS, such as anxiety, mood, confidence, concentration, and motivation, and a great deal of research has been produced by sport psychologists to help athletes attain flow, IPS, or peak performance (e.g., Jackson, 1992; Jackson, 1995, 1996; Jackson, Ford, Kimiecik, & Marsh, 1998; Privette, 1981, 1982, 1983; Privette & Bundrick, 1997).

In an attempt to understand the psychology of elite performance, sport psychology researchers have focused on understanding the relationship between mental preparation/readiness and performance (e.g., Eklund, 1994a, 1994b; Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1992a; Gould et al., 1999; Gould, Weiss, & Weinberg, 1981; Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Mahoney et al., 1987; Orlick & Partington, 1988). A key finding from these studies is that mental readiness has been perceived as being an extremely important factor influencing athletic performance (Orlick & Partington, 1988). Specifically, pre-competitive states have been found to play a critical role in competitive performance (Gould et al., 1992a). In particular, Orlick and Partington concluded that coaches are important in helping athletes with their mental readiness and with mental preparation for competition. In Orlick and Partington's study, athletes also perceived the coach as being an important aspect of their mental preparation for performance.

In many sports, the coach is a key influence during the final stages of preparation for performance. In particular, coaches have been found to be central figures in all aspects of the coaching process, including the organisational, physiological, psychological, pedagogical, and developmental (Lyle, 1999). Yet there is limited research on how coach behaviour prior to performance affects athletic preparation. The aim of the first part of this section, titled “The Coach-Athlete Relationship and Performance”, is to highlight the intricacies of the coach-athlete relationship and the suggested influence of this relationship on preparation and performance of the athlete. The second section, “The Role of Coaching in Peak Performance” is focused on reviewing the specific relationship between coach behaviour and the achievement of peak performance in sport. The aim of the third and final section, “Coaching Immediately Prior to Performance” is to review research findings related to coaching behaviour during the final hours prior to performance.

The Coach-Athlete Relationship and Performance

Researchers, such as Poczwadowski, Barott, and Peregoy (2002), Wylleman (2000), Poczwadowski, Barott, and Jowett (2006), Jowett, Paull, and Pensgaard (2005), Jowett, (2005), and Vanden Auweele and Rzewnicki (2000), have highlighted that the coach-athlete relationship has not been clearly defined in the sport psychology literature and has been narrowed to athlete-coach interpersonal interactions. In particular, Wylleman, and Poczwadowski, Barott, and Peregoy have suggested that the specific focus on coaching behaviour or coaching knowledge has resulted in the intricacies and the dynamics of the relationship between coach and athlete being largely ignored. Furthermore, Poczwadowski, Barott, and Peregoy described the literature on interpersonal relationships in sport as extensive, but fragmented. They argued that it does not yet constitute an

integrated body of knowledge. Wylleman suggested that more research on the coach-athlete relationship is required to further elucidate our understanding of how coaches and athletes combine to succeed in elite sport.

Athletes develop many interpersonal relationships over the course of their careers, but none is closer than that formed with the coach and/or team-mates (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002). Researchers have shown that the between coach and athlete forms an integral part of the path to successful performance and interpersonal satisfaction in modern sport (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; Wylleman, 2000). Furthermore, Poczwardowski, Barott, and Peregoy (2002) found that the interpersonal relationship formed with the coach had a great influence on athletes' training processes, performance outcomes, and aspects of their private lives.

The exact nature of coach-athlete interactions can be varied, as a study with a French female judo team showed. The study by d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, and Dubois (1998) showed that interactions between judo coaches and athletes bypassed conventional psychological beliefs. Specifically, the interactions were often authoritarian and controlling, had rigid discipline, and involved negative feedback. Despite the negative and authoritarian climate, the athletes succeeded in becoming world champions. d'Arripe-Longueville et al. concluded that these highly successful athletes effectively used coping strategies to counteract the authoritarian climate and did not seem to be affected by coaches' unpleasant decisions and behaviours. R.L Jones et al. (2003) stated that the authoritarian stance in coaching is not unusual, because some coaches use this approach to remain one step away from their athletes, allowing them to direct and organize the situation, whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries. This approach allows coaches to

invest an interest in the athletes personally, whilst acting in a professional manner. There is limited information on how a team sport coach interacts with players in comparison to an individual sport coach. It may be that individual coaches are closer to their athletes, due to the increased personal contact. Further research is needed to clarify this point.

The coach-athlete relationship has been shown to be important in determining the quality and success of an athlete's sporting experience and can be perceived as a positive or negative influence on athletes' careers, performances, preparations, and training processes (Coakley, 1990; Martens, 1987; Poczwadowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002; Williams et al., 2003). For example, research by Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) showed that the coach was an influential element in the development of athletes' careers from the initial years to the career defining moments.

The intricacies of the influence of the coach-athlete relationship on athletic performance states during competition was highlighted by d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, and Durand (2001). d' Arripe-Longueville et al. examined coach-athlete interactions in elite archery and found that the coach's and athletes' collective courses of action were characterized by cooperation within the coach-athlete dyad that was immediate, due to shared perceptions, or was constructed through negotiation. These findings showed that the coach-athlete relationship at the elite level was marked by a combination of social and collaborative interactions aimed at achieving a common goal.

The quality of a coach-athlete relationship has been found to influence the quality of athletic performance. For example, Jowett (2003) conducted a case study with a coach-athlete relationship in crisis and found that the conflict between coach and athlete had a detrimental effect on the athlete's performance. In contrast, the importance of a quality

relationship between coach and athlete was reflected in Jowett and Cockerill's (2003) study on successful elite athletes. Jowett and Cockerill highlighted that a trust, support, respect, and common goals were all aspects of positive relationships and facilitated athletic performance.

To provide the optimal athletic environment for athletes to reach their ideal performance, researchers have found that there must be recurring patterns of mutual care (Poczwadowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002), complementary roles and tasks (d'Arripe-Longueville et al., 2001; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003), and trust (Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002). In addition, there must be a strong positive modelling climate evident (Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001). The relationship must work in a two-way interaction, as coaches have been viewed as performers themselves and how they act or perform can influence athletes (Gould et al., 1999).

The Role of Coaching in Peak Performance

The wealth of research focused on athletes recalling their highest achievements has led to a large amount of descriptive and anecdotal material that has provided a rich description of peak performance (e.g., Cohn, 1991; Jackson, 1992, 1995, 1996; Jackson et al., 1998; Orlick & Partington, 1988). Peak performance has been described as a state of superior functioning that is often characterised by outstanding physical accomplishment, a personal best, and/or outstanding achievements (Privette, 1981, 1983). Cohn (1991) described how peak performance encompasses the uppermost limits of an individual's mental and physical capabilities.

Overall, research on peak performance has pinpointed the characteristics of elite athletes and elite performance (see Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Orlick & Partington, 1988). Williams and Krane (2001) concluded that the following mental skills were associated

with elite athletes in peak performance: thought control strategies, arousal management techniques, well developed plans, well-developed coping strategies, and the use of pre-competition mental readying plans. Detailed information has been gathered on the psychological characteristics of successful athletes, and the factors that are perceived to influence peak performances (e.g., Gould et al., 1992a; 1992b; Gould et al., 1981; Mahoney & Avener, 1977; Mahoney et al., 1987). One characteristic that has emerged as a key factor in this research is the influence of the coach.

Sport psychology researchers have long been interested in the psychological foundations of peak athletic performance. Researchers have highlighted the factors that influence athletes' physical and mental states before and during performance (see Williams & Krane, 2001). An important aspect that is consistently emphasised by athletes is the influence of their coach. For example, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) revealed the importance of the coach in the search for peak performance. Using in-depth interviews, Durand-Bush and Salmela found that coaching was perceived by athletes to be important throughout an athlete's career. In this study, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) identified four distinct stages that defined athletes' sporting careers: (a) sampling years, (b) specialising years, (c) investment years, and (d) maintenance years. During the investment years, coaching was perceived as more important than in the earlier sampling or specialising years. It was during this time that the athletes were immersed entirely in training and competition for their respective sport. The investment years were perceived as more demanding and structured, and involved considerably more hours with a coach than the sampling or specialising years. Durand-Bush and Salmela proposed that coaching was perceived as being more important during these years, because the athletes were pushing harder to achieve their best. During the investment years, athletes' perceived coaches as

being motivating and demanding, but also as instrumental in their achievements. Athletes also perceived their coaches to be critical to their success and development during the maintenance stage of their career.

Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) stated that one defining characteristic of these elite athletes was the special relationship they reported with their coach(s). Athletes' who had the same coach for a number of years, spanning both the investment and maintenance stages, said that they developed a special bond with the coach. The relationship was perceived to benefit their development and career. Athletes cited the coach as someone who provided expert knowledge, feedback, and support. It was evident that this select group of Olympic and world champion athletes benefited from their relationship with their coach during the critical investment and maintenance stages of their career. Consequently, the coach-athlete relationship was perceived as an important part of athletes' success, leading Durand-Bush and Salmela to conclude "coaches play a crucial role in the development of outstanding performance" (p. 169).

Gould et al. (1999) investigated the factors that were perceived to influence Olympic (Atlanta and Nagano) performance. One of the major findings from this study was that coaching issues and coaches were perceived to be both a positive and a negative factor in Olympic performance. Gould et al. compared the responses from four teams that met their pre-Olympic expectations and four teams that had not lived up to pre-Olympic expectations. The comparison of the groups revealed that coaching issues (e.g., negative attitude toward the coach, poor coach-athlete communication, lack of trust between coach and athlete) were perceived to influence performance in teams that failed to reach expectations. In contrast, the teams that had met their expectations in the Olympics, perceived coaching issues as having a positive influence on performance. In addition,

Gould et al. highlighted that coaches and athletes perceived coaches as performers in their own right and argued their performance directly influenced the athletes that they coached. Specifically, if the coach's performance changed noticeably or their coaching behaviours differed from the norm, then the athletes perceived this change in behaviour to be a negative influence to their performance. Gould et al. stated that, like the athletes, coaches need to be prepared for the stress and distractions of the Olympics in order to function as effective coaches and most of all to ensure that they do not influence athletes' performance in a negative manner.

In a follow-up study on the factors that influenced Olympic performance, Greenleaf et al. (2001) found that coaching issues were amongst the factors that positively (e.g., contact, trust, friendship, feedback, and a good plan) and negatively (e.g., coach conflict, inaccurate technical information, lack of coach focus, no access to personal coach) influenced performance at the Olympics. The results from this study supported previous peak performance research that showed the coach and coaching issues to be a positive or a negative influence on athletes' mental preparation and performance. Furthermore, the importance of coach-related issues was evident in the comparison between teams that met their expectations and those that did not. The teams that performed well reported that the coach was a positive impact and was someone who they could trust and treat as a friend, whereas those teams that who had not met their expectations cited that the conflict between the coach and athlete was a negative influence on Olympic performance (Greenleaf et al., 1999).

Gould et al. (2002) supported this finding in a survey of 379 Olympians. In particular, Gould et al. found that the coach-athlete relationship, positive team leadership, and specific coaching variables (trust, the ability to deal with crises, coaching

expectations, and coaches implementing performance plans) were perceived to influence Olympic performance. The coaching variables that were perceived to have a negative influence on performance included: athletes being over coached, or having limited access to personal coaches, the coach holding unrealistic expectations, athletes working with an unfamiliar coach, or having a lack of insight, experiencing conflict with the athlete or parents, athletes perceiving that the coaches' lacked confidence in the athlete, and athletes' lacking social support from the coach. Furthermore, Gould et al. (2002) found that coaching expectations were perceived to influence performance, in particular, if the coach had unrealistic expectations of the athlete or the team, the performance was perceived to have suffered. Gould et al. (2002) also reported that coach commitment to the team/athlete, coach-athlete conflict, the perceptions of fair coaching decisions, and coach-athlete familiarity were major factors affecting performance at the Olympics.

In a survey of US Olympic coaches, Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, and Chung (2002) found that coaches perceived athletic performance to be influenced by the following categories of variables: team, family, environment, media/sponsor, weather, and travel variables. Specifically, the coaches indicated that variables, such as confidence, maintaining composure, adjusting tactically, having a plan and being prepared for distractions, and self-belief, had the most influence on athletes' preparations and performances. Gould, Guinan et al. also concluded that coaches perceived that positive team chemistry and team building influenced coaching effectiveness. Mental skills development, good training facilities, and the helpfulness of organising bodies also influenced coach effectiveness at the Olympics.

The results reported by Gould and colleagues (Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002; Gould, Guinan et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001) are consistent with previous research by Orlick and Partington (1989) and Williams and Krane (2001). Orlick and Partington found that the coach was in a critical position to influence athletic performance, both positively and negatively. In particular, Orlick and Partington reported that coaches influenced mental readiness through confidence, strategies, and how they handled themselves within the Olympic environment. Gould, Greenleaf et al. (2002) supported this finding and concluded that mental variables play an important role in peak athletic performance. Importantly, both athletes and coaches perceived the coach and the coach-athlete relationship as being potentially beneficial or detrimental to athlete performance. Greenleaf et al. found that the interactions between athletes and coaches influenced the mental readiness of athletes and can influence preparation and performance on the day of competition.

Sport psychology researchers from the studies mentioned in this section have emphasised the importance of a positive coaching environment. Achieving the perfect mental state for performance is a multifaceted concept, with a variety of different situational, environmental, personal, and organisational factors affecting performance. The importance of the coach in helping athletes to achieve peak performance and assisting the development of athletes' was reported in a study completed by Gould, Dieffenbach, and Moffert (2002). Ten Olympic champions, their coaches, and their significant others were interviewed to assess the psychological characteristics of champion athletes. One of the major findings to emerge from the study was that the coach is not only a primary influence on an athlete's career, but also on their psychological development. The coach was perceived to be a source of confidence, as well as a source of positive and critical

feedback that guided athletes' development. In addition, the participants in the study by Gould et al. perceived that their coaches had a strong positive coaching style, good communication skills, overall trustworthiness, and a sense of optimism or a positive outlook. This study by Gould et al.'s showed how important effective coaching was in the development of champion athletes. Gould et al. also noted that coaches addressed each athlete in a different manner, because each athlete had different requirements at differing stages of their career and has different requirements psychologically, physically, and socially.

The study by Gould, Diffenbach, and Moffert (2002) an example of the influence of coaches on athletes psychological state is. They found that coaches were prominent figures in the development processes of world and Olympic champion athletes. In particular, the relationship formed with the athlete from a young age was perceived to be important for athletes' psychological development. Gould, Diffenbach, and Moffert concluded that, during the athletes' development, coaches acted as teachers and role models for the elite athletes. Specifically, coaches provided encouragement, gave support without pressure, attended to the athlete individually, emphasized expectations, encouraged hard work, and helped to develop discipline; and the coaches created a positive influence on the athletes' psychological development that athletes perceived as beneficial to them becoming a champion athlete (Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002). In addition, Gould, Dieffenbach and Moffert, stated that one of the more important findings was reflected in the athletes' perception that the coach understood and respected them.

Summary of the Role of Coaching in Peak Performance

Gould (2000, p. 2) stated "...elite athletes compete and train in a physical, social, psychological, and organisational environment that can both help and disrupt their

psychological status.” The prominent role of the coach has been found to extend from the early development years in athletes’ careers to the pinnacle of performance, such as the Olympics. Researchers have also demonstrated the importance of the coach in the development and maintenance of peak performance (e.g., Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Diffenbach, and Moffert, 2002). This was highlighted in studies with elite athletes, who stated that their achievements were, in part, due to their relationship with their coach. Specifically, the coach was found to be influential (positive and negative) on athletes’ preparation for and performance in competition. Furthermore, athletic performance at the elite level was characterised by a combined, co-ordinated effort aimed at achieving a common goal. From the literature, it can be concluded that coaches and their behaviour can influence athletes’ preparations and performance. Researchers have highlighted how the coach and coaches’ behaviour can influence preparation and performance in elite sport. The studies presented in this section, were not specifically focused on the time period immediately prior to performance, rather examining coach influence more generally. It is surprising that limited research has examined the period immediately prior to performance, because coach behaviour at that time clearly has great potential to enhance or disrupt performance.

Coaching Immediately Prior to Performance

Researchers, have focused on mental readiness and pre-competitive performance states to be extremely important factors for athletic preparation and athletic performance (Gould et al., 1992a; Orlick & Partington, 1988). It has been suggested that how coaches and athletes interact prior to performance could affect mental preparation and performance. For example, Orlick and Partington and Eklund (1994a; 1994b) found that mental readiness was a key component of performance and that coaches could play a more

meaningful role in helping athletes with mental readiness prior to competition. To date, there is limited information on interactions between coach and athlete during this time.

Côté, Salmela, et al. (1995a) found that, on the day of competition gymnastics coaches had a number of different roles at the competition site and on the competition floor. On the competition floor, coaches' primary goal was to ensure that they did everything possible to get the gymnasts ready to perform at their best. The coaches in the Côté, Salmela, et al. (1995a) study stated that trying not to give too much technical information and simply observing their athletes were their primary objectives on the competition floor. The coaches stated that they acted as supervisors and organisers at the competition site, controlling for distractions and preparing the athletes (e.g., warm ups, stretches, and practice routines for the competition). Due to the young age of female gymnasts, it was suggested that coaches might spend more time organising and supervising younger athletes than older athletes in other sports where the age of participants is not such a factor. Nevertheless, Côté, Salmela, et al. (1995a) concluded that coaches were heavily involved with their athletes prior to performance.

Bloom (1996) investigated the coaching practices of Canadian university coaches from a variety of sports and concluded that coaches were an important part of coaching on the day of a competition. Bloom interviewed 16 coaches regarding their coaching practices in all aspects of competition including practices before, during, and after competition. Bloom focused on a variety of team sports including basketball, volleyball, hockey, and ice hockey. The purpose of Bloom's study was to examine the characteristics, knowledge, and strategies of expert coaches and to examine how these coaches effectively carried out their objectives before, during, and after competition. Bloom found that the coaches were involved in every aspect of their players' preparations prior to performance

and spent the entire day to prepare the players for performance at night. The coaches were found to organise and direct the majority of the athletes' activities throughout the competition day. Essentially, Bloom concluded that coaches performed an organisational and a managerial role prior to performance.

An important finding to emerge from Bloom's (1996) interviews with Canadian university coaches was that they evaluated players' preparations before a match "they [coaches] concerned themselves with the players' state of mind, are they too boisterous or too quiet, too confident or uncertain (Bloom, 1996, p. 142)." Coaches proposed that a player's mood at any particular time may not reflect how they play that night. Nevertheless, coaches perceived that mental preparation was a key aspect of coaching prior to performance. Bloom reported that at the competition site, coaches ensured that a number of pre-set routines were established for their players', including the exact time and location of every event. The aim was to help the players' focus on the upcoming performance.

Coaches in Bloom's (1996) study reported that mental preparation was important. Accordingly, they set aside time for players' to mentally ready themselves. All coaches in Bloom's study stated that they let their players' complete their own individual mental readiness or pre-game routine. Coaches perceived individual mental preparation as an important part of pre-game preparations, because all players had a unique way of preparing for competition. Furthermore, Bloom reported that the Canadian university coaches spent most of the day preparing their athletes for a game later that night. This involved organising everything from breakfast, to team buses, from warm-ups, to mental preparation/individual preparation time, and team meetings. Bloom found that throughout the day of competition the coaches achieved this by following a set of rituals and routines

designed to let the players' get a feel for the new setting (if the game was away from home). The pre-game routines were all aimed at helping the players to become mentally and physically ready to perform. The level of interactions between coach and athlete in Bloom's study showed how important the role of the coach was on the day of competition.

A key element of the pre-game routines was team meetings. Bloom (1996) found that, as the start of competition neared, all coaches set aside time to discuss team strategy. The majority of coaches were found to emphasise team strengths and aimed to boost players' confidence in their own ability. Coaches suggested that being negative and having a fear of failure was the worst frame of mind to enter the game. Consequently, Bloom found that coaches focused on emphasising the positives during the team meetings with the aim of motivating players.

Bloom's (1996) study was one of the few investigations that had focused on coaching on the day of competition. Bloom's findings highlighted the importance of the coach to pre-game preparations and the role that they play in the organisation and management of players prior to competition. It was evident that coaches perceived themselves to be important to player physical and mental preparation, however, the players' perceptions of the coach during this time period was not investigated. In order to gain an understanding of the influence of pre-game preparations, further research on how players' perceived the coach is needed.

Research by Eklund (1994a; 1994b), showed that the athletes' perception of their coach prior to competition has been shown to influence pre-competitive thought processes of elite wrestlers. Eklund collected data from 6 NCAA division 1 wrestlers across 38 season matches. He focused on the psychological experience immediately prior to match performance. In particular, Eklund suggested that the quality of athletic performance and

competitive psychological state was related to psychological precursors in the precompetitive environment. A key finding from Eklund's study, which is relevant to the current study, was that prior to competition wrestlers thought about how their coach would react to their performance. The perception of coaching expectations related to the athletes anxiety levels and confidence and affected their psychological state prior to the competition. If athletes are to perform at their best, then pre-competition thoughts about how their coach will perceive their performance may not be conducive to attaining the ideal performance state. Eklund also reported that the wrestlers perceived that the uncertainty regarding their coach's decisions influenced their mental preparation prior to a competition. During the pre-competitive preparations, coaches were also perceived to be a source of motivation for the wrestlers.

Eklund's (1994a; 1994) findings contrasted those of Gould et al. (1992a). Gould et al. examined the psychological factors associated with best and worst performances in elite Olympic wrestlers. Gould et al. found that Olympic wrestlers were not concerned about coach evaluation before and during preparation for Olympic performance. Gould et al. and Eklund attributed this difference in perceptions of the coach to the variations in age and experience of the two groups of wrestlers. Pre-competitive preparations and the influence of psychological factors related to the coach may present in younger and developing athletes, rather than elite or established athletes.

Keating and Hogg (1995) investigated pre-game preparations of professional ice hockey players. Keating and Hogg used a single case study comprising participant observation of two pre-season games and six regular season games and open-ended interviews with 15 players from a professional NHL team. Interviews were completed on two separate occasions, the first before the season and the second, more focused interview,

midway through the season. Keating and Hogg found that the precompetitive preparations of players were divided into five phases with distinct time constraints, including: (a) the arrival, (b) dressing, (c) on-ice warm-up, (d) off-ice adjustments, and (e) the team ritual. In addition, they found that there were three components to the preparation, which progress through the five phases. The three components include: (a) getting the body ready (physiological), (b) getting a feel (psychophysiological), and (c) getting the mind ready (psychological).

Keating and Hogg (1995) concluded that coaches were not heavily involved with players' during the precompetitive preparations prior to a match. In particular, they found that coaches were not involved in the on-ice warm up. The coaches were present during all aspects of the precompetitive preparations, but Keating and Hogg observed them to be not actively involved. In addition, the players' in Keating and Hogg's study were found to prefer to be in control of their own preparations and followed a pre-game routine that focused on their individual preparation within the confines of team routines and rituals. This contrasted with Bloom's (1996) conclusions. Bloom investigated Canadian university coaches from a number of different sports, including basketball, volleyball, and hockey (field). Bloom concluded that coaches were highly involved in the organisation and preparation of athletes prior to a match. The difference between the conclusions of the two studies may be attributed to the level of competition (professional versus college) and the different methods (case study versus multiple interviews).

Keating and Hogg's (1995) study showed the value of precompetitive preparations to players and the importance of entering their preferred mental state. Players' were found to have perceived their pre-game routines and rituals to be vital to their performance, highlighting the importance of athletes' psychological state during their preparations for

performance. The importance that the ice-hockey player's placed on mental preparation and the discrepancy between Bloom's (1996) and Keating and Hogg's studies suggests that further research is needed to understand pre-game preparations. In particular, the role of the coach in players' pre-game preparations remains unclear and further investigation is needed.

Bloom, Durand-Bush, and Salmela (1997) and Bloom (1996) investigated the pre-game routines and rituals of college coaches. Bloom et al. and Bloom investigated the pre-game coaching routines of 16 Canadian university expert coaches from four team sports (volleyball, basketball, hockey, and ice-hockey). Bloom et al. found that coaches followed a specific routine and ritual that involved the mental and physical preparation of themselves and their players. The coaches were found to follow set pre-game routines that involved: the mental rehearsal of their game plan, physical activity to maintain a positive outlook, holding a team meeting, and engaging in activities during warm-up to occupy themselves. The coaches in the Bloom et al. study perceived that their pre-game routine was important for their performance in the game and was also important to the players' during the pre-game preparations. In particular, coaches perceived that they needed to be mentally and physically ready for the pre-game preparations and the game.

Bloom et al. (1997) also found that coaches' words immediately before a game were chosen carefully to stress specific points. Furthermore, Bloom et al. found that coaches stressed the importance of controlling their emotions before a game as their behaviour may affect their athletes' perceptions of the situation and consequently their preparation and performance. This study by Bloom et al.'s. study aided in our understanding of coach behaviour prior to a game, but did not include any information on how athletes perceived the coaches' behaviour and how these perceptions affected athletes' preparation. Further

research on the role of coaches and what they aim to achieve prior to performance could aid in our understanding of preparation for performance and the role of the coach during this important time.

To date, there has been limited research focused on coaching immediately prior to performance. The investigations conducted thus far have provided equivocal results. Bloom for example suggested that coaches play an important role in the hours prior to competition, whereas Keating and Hogg suggested that coaches were not an integral part of precompetitive preparations. In addition, Eklund (1994a; 1994b) concluded that psychological factors during the precompetitive preparations were a factor in college wrestlers performance. Eklund also found that the perception of the coach during this time and coaches' expectations could affect a wrestler's psychological state prior to a match. Eklund's research provides further evidence of the influence of coaching on preparation in a study.

The evidence from the studies by Eklund's (1994a, 1994b) and Keating and Hogg (1995) studies have highlighted the importance of mental preparation, pre-competitive preparation/routines, and attaining the ideal performance state before competition, whilst Bloom (1996) showed that the coach is a central figure during the precompetitive preparations. There is limited research, however, that has focused on examining the influence that coaches and coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance have on preparations and athletic performance. In order to aid in the understanding of how coaching behaviour and coaching practices affect athletes prior to competition further research on interactions during this time period are required. Furthermore, the studies conducted so far have not investigated how athletes perceived coaching behaviour and the influence on mental preparation and performance. The equivocal results shown by Bloom

and Keating and Hogg suggest that athletes and coaches may differ in their perspectives on the ideal precompetitive preparations. Further research is needed to aid in our understanding of how coach-athlete interactions prior to performance help or hinder precompetitive mental preparation and athletic performance.

Summary of Research on Coaching in Sport Psychology

The evolution of research in coaching from Griffith (1926) to Chelladurai and Saleh (1980a) to Gilbert and Trudel (2004) has highlighted the importance of coaching to elite sport. Researchers have shown that coaches are perceived as a critical part of elite sport and athletic performance. For example, researchers have highlighted the importance of the coach: to athletes' psychological development (1996); to peak performance (Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002); to athlete satisfaction (Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001); to success and development (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), and to athlete preparation (Bloom, 1996; Bloom et al., 1997). Researchers have also highlighted the importance of understanding how athletes perceive their coach and the potential influence of coaches in determining performance (e.g., Liukkonen, 1999; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). In particular, researchers highlighted that how coaches perceive their own behaviours may differ from how their athletes perceived them. The discrepancy between coach and athlete perceptions has been shown to have a negative effect on athletic performance (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf et al., 2002; Gould, Guinan et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Jowett, 2003). In addition, athletes have been found to perceive coaches having a positive influence to their careers, preparations, and performance (e.g., Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach et al., 2002).

The predominant areas of research in the coaching literature have been the identification and categorisation of coaching behaviour, the examination of leadership

style, and the examination of expert coaching knowledge. The examination of coaching behaviour has shown that the predominant focus of coaching behaviour has been on delivering instructions during training or competition and delivering instructions post event. Kahan (1999) found that the next most frequent coaching behaviours applied to training and competition environments included: praise, hustle, and silence. The application of research to examine coach behaviour has provided pertinent information relating to coaching behaviours from beginner to elite coaches across a wide variety of situations and sports. The limitations of the methodologies used, however, have resulted in researchers adopting new methods or applying multi-method studies to increase the depth of the information being analysed and the potential to cross check information (triangulation).

The increase in research on coaching knowledge and in decision-making in coaching has elucidated the rationale behind coaches' behaviours and their decisions during competition. One example is the Coaching Model (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). In the coaching model, coaches' behaviours were found to be influenced by a variety of factors, including the coaches' mental model of their athletes, the athletes' level of development, and the context (training or competition). The rise in the examination of coaching behaviour has provided information on how coaches develop their coaching practices (see Côté et al.) and the rationale behind coaches' decisions during training and competition. Understanding why coaches' make decisions or behave in a specific manner has important implications for sport psychology. In particular, research that is focused on the application of coaching knowledge during training or competition could provide pertinent information on how coaches construct and execute coaching philosophies, practices, and knowledge.

Research on coaching has however, been limited by measurement issues surrounding the reliability of questionnaires and systematic observational instruments. Researchers have highlighted that a limitation of coaching research is that the questionnaires and observational instruments cannot measure the uniqueness and specificity of the coaching context, resulting in a general description of the coaching behaviour and lacking in-depth knowledge of specific coaching behaviour, for example. A second limitation lays in the notion that questionnaire or observational instruments are limited by lack of depth and the richness of data being collected when compared to qualitative methods. In addition, the use of qualitative methods, such as interviews to examine coach behaviour is limited by the lack of actual observable behaviours and the retrospective nature of the interview. To counteract the limitations, researchers have advocated the application of multi-method studies and the use of qualitative methodologies in conjunction with quantitative measures to address this issue.

In conclusion, it is evident through the wealth of literature on coaching in sport psychology that research on coaching has provided information that has helped us to understand the intricacies of the coach behaviour, coaching knowledge, and the coach-athlete relationship. Despite the wealth of information, however, there are major advancements that are yet to be made in researching the psychology of coaching and the influence of coaches on performance, especially immediately before competition. Methodological issues have limited the depth and richness of the data being collected and the uni-directional nature of the research has restricted our understanding of the coaching process by focusing primarily on the coach and not on the athlete. The adoption of multi-method studies and the use of different methodological approaches are proposed to

provide the opportunity to collect more in depth data and aid in the understanding of the relationship between coaching and athletic performance.

The Present Thesis

The complexity of coach-athlete interactions, before, during, and after performance, can be a critical component for success (Cote & Sedgwick, 2003). Substantial interest has been focused on coaching behaviour in sport psychology research. Researchers have highlighted the key elements of coaching behaviour and coaching knowledge in many aspects of sports performance and across a wide range of different levels of competition. Despite the wealth of research, however, considerable advancements still need to be made in understanding the coaching process. One particular aspect that has received limited attention is the influence that coaches have on the mental state of athletes immediately prior to performance. Understanding how coaches' behaviours and practices affect athletes' preparations, especially psychological readiness, prior to competition could further our understanding of athletes' performance states and benefit the development of coaching practices.

Achieving optimal physical and mental preparation prior to performance is a critical element of elite sport. Researchers have highlighted that coaches play an important part in athletes' preparation for competition and can be influential in athletes achieving their ideal performance state. Understanding how coaching behaviour and athletes' perceptions of this behaviour affect performance has important implications for athletes, coaches, and sport psychologists.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate coach-athlete interactions in the hour immediately prior to performance. Using a multi-method approach, I employed four linked research phases to examine the influence of coaches' on the pre-match mental

readiness of athletes. The aim of first phase was to examine coaches intended behaviours and practices immediately prior to performance. In Phase 1, I interviewed coaches on their intentions and objectives for the pre-performance preparation period. The aim of the second phase, was to examine coaching behaviour during the final hour prior to performance. In Phase 2, I observed the behaviours of coaches in the hour prior to competition at the basketball stadium in the change rooms and courtside with particular reference to selected athletes. The aim of the third phase, was to examine athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour during the pre-game preparations. In Phase 3, I interviewed an athlete regarding their perceptions of their coach's behaviours and interactions prior to the match observed in Phase 2. The aim of the fourth and final phase was to examine the coaches' reflections and interpretations on their own behaviour during the pre-game preparations before the recorded game in Phase 2. In Phase 4, I used a video cued stimulated recall interview with the coach to examine their interpretations of their own coaching behaviour. I used triangulation between the four different phases to identify the relationship between coaches' intentions and actual behaviours, coaches' interpretations of intention-behaviour mismatches, and degree of agreement between coach and athlete perceptions of the influence of coaching behaviour prior to performance.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Introduction

For this thesis, my primary aim was to examine coach-athlete interactions prior to performance. To achieve this, I examined coach-player interactions between four coach-player dyads in sub-elite basketball teams, using a multi-method design. For each coach-player dyad, I completed four linked phases (see Figure 3.1). The four phases included: (a) a pre-match coach interview, (b) observation and video recording of a game, (c) a post-game interview with a key player, and (d) a post-game video interview with the coach. In Phase 1, I interviewed the coach, focusing on his/her intended pre-game preparations for the participating player and the team before a match.

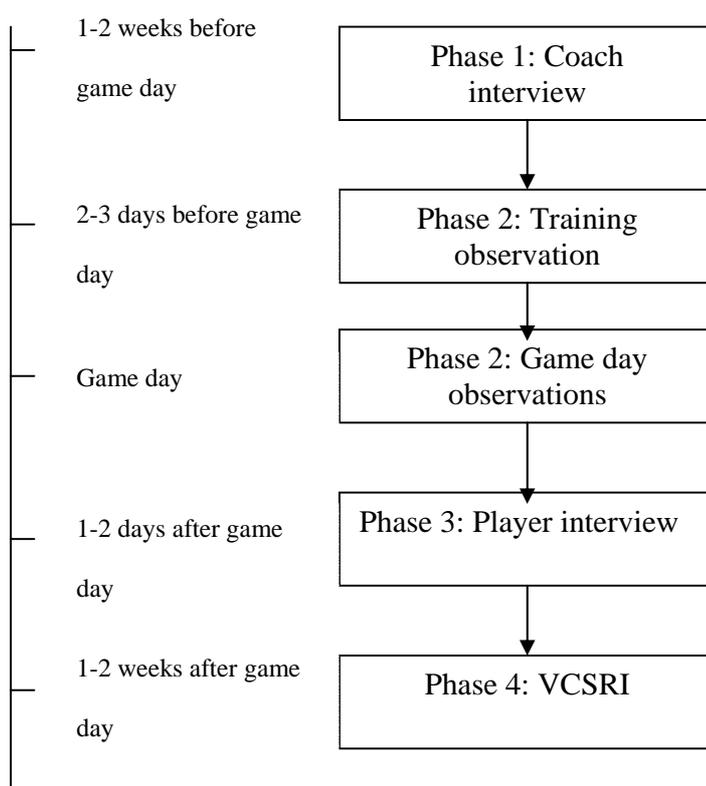


Figure 3.1. Flow diagram and timeline of the four data collection methods.

In phase 2, I observed and recorded the final training session prior to the match and the final hour before a match. I used non-participant observation (see Patton, 2002) to analyse the interactions between the coach and player. For each dyad, to examine the extent of agreement between coaches' previously stated intentions and their observed behaviour. In Phase 3, I interviewed the selected or participating player from each dyad regarding their perceptions of coach behaviour. In the interview, I focused on how the player perceived their coach to influence their pre-game preparations. In the fourth phase, I interviewed the coaches again, using the Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview (VCSRI, Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Gilbert et al., 1999; Trudel, Haughian et al., 1996) technique. In this interview, I presented to the coaches edited sections of the game recorded in Phase 2 and asked them to discuss and explain their behaviours and decisions. I then compared and contrasted the results from each phase to gain a more detailed understanding of coach-athlete interactions prior to performance. Throughout data collection and analysis, I applied grounded theory and the constant comparative method of analysis (see, Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participants

Four teams playing in Australian Basketball Association conferences participated in the study. Team A and Team D were female teams coached by females, whereas Team B and Team C were both male teams coached by males. The age range for the participants was between 19 and 27 years of age ($M = 22.75$) for the players' and between 27 and 46 years of age ($M = 33.75$) for the coaches. To ensure the confidentiality of all participants, I have used pseudonyms. Teams will be known as Team A, Team B, Team C, and Team D. Coaches corresponding to those teams are known as Coach Amy, Coach Bruce, Coach Carl, and Coach Donna. The pseudonyms for the targeted players' for those four teams are

Ally, Brad, Campbell, and Debbie respectively. In order to ensure continuity and clarity throughout the thesis, the names chosen for each team, the coach and selected player begin with the same letter of the alphabet as I have used to identify that particular team, e.g., Team A, Coach Amy, and Ally. Other names and personnel referred to in the study will also be given pseudonyms.

The Competition

The competition that the players competed in, the ABA, is a sub-elite competition that is seen as the feeder league to the national leagues National Basketball League and Women's National Basketball League in Australia. The league comprises a combination of national and international level, professional players. The competition is played in 5 different conferences across Australia with national finals held each year comprising of the conference winners and wildcard entrants. Furthermore, in order, to aid international readers' knowledge of how basketball operates in Australia a section titled "Basketball in Australia" (see Appendix E) is included. In this section, I explain the differences (cultural, financial, and social) between basketball in North America and Australia. In addition, I have included a description of the results of the games in Appendix F.

Theoretical Saturation and Theoretical Sampling

I initially aimed to determine the number of participants through theoretical saturation and theoretical sampling. This means that I would continue sampling and collecting data from coaches and players until no new or relevant data emerge from the data collection and analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In the current study, however, I ceased data collection after four dyads were completed. The number of participants was limited due to the amount of in-depth data gathered from each team, status of the participants, the somewhat intrusive nature of the study, and the difficulty in

gaining access to participants in the pre-performance environment. In particular, the difficulty of gaining access to dressing rooms and the length of time taken to collect and analyse the data limited the number of dyads that could be investigated for this thesis. It is unclear whether theoretical saturation was reached in this study.

In this thesis, I used Theoretical Sampling (TS) to guide my data collection and analysis. TS was used in the process of data collection to aid in the development of the emerging patterns and of a theory or model (Glaser, 1998). Glaser described TS as the conscious process that constantly focuses and delimits the collection and analysis of the data. Specifically, Glaser stated that TS is the process of selectively sampling participants suited to the area of study. In this study, I used the emerging themes and data from the initial dyads to guide my selection of participants and to minimise the collection of large amounts of unrelated data. Glaser suggested that the use of TS results in an ideational sample, not a representative sample and is akin to a purposeful sampling technique. Based on this approach, I identified the coaches of four teams, who agreed to participate. I then identified one player from each team with the aid and advice from the coach. The teams, coaches, and players are described in the following sections.

Team A

This team was a sub-elite women's team based in an Australian Basketball Association (ABA) competition in Victoria. The team comprised players' aged between 17-38 years old, with an average age of 23 years. The coach, Amy, was a 46-year-old female with over 25 years of experience in basketball as a player and coach. Amy was in her second season coaching Team A. The player selected to participate in the dyad was Ally. Ally was a 23 year-old point guard with 11 years playing experience. She had played for three years in the ABA with Team A.

Team B

This was a men's team playing in the ABA with an average of 22 years of age. The coach of the team, Bruce, was a former player. Bruce was a 32-year-old, was in his sixth season of coaching Team B. The player selected to participate in the dyad was Brad. Brad was a 22 year-old centre/forward, who had entered basketball at a later stage, beginning to play in his late teens. Brad had been playing for five years altogether, in the ABA and two years with Team B.

Team C

This was a men's team also competing in the ABA in Victoria. The coach, Carl, was 30 year old and had been coaching for fifteen years. Carl was in his fourth straight season as a full-time coach with Team C. The player selected to participate in the dyad was Campbell, was a 27 year-old point guard and team captain. Campbell had been playing for 20 years in total and for six years with Carl and Team C.

Team D

This was a women's team competing in an ABA competition in Victoria. The average age of players' in Team D was 20 years of age. The coach, Donna, was a 27-year-old player, who was in her first year of coaching at Team D and in her first year of coaching in the ABA. The player selected to participate in the dyad, Debbie, was a 19-year-old player in her first year with Team D. Debbie had also played in the national league (the top level in Australia) with Donna.

Research Design and Grounded Theory Methods

For this thesis, my focus was on understanding coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance. To achieve this, I used a combination of different qualitative methods to aid my understanding of the research topic and to explore the

perceptions of coach and athlete behaviour from different perspectives. In the first phase, I used semi-structured interviews with the coach to explore their stated intentions. In the second phase, I used observation and video recording to examine coaches' actual behaviour and their interactions with their players' in training and before a match. In the third phase, I used semi-structured interviews to examine the players' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour prior to the recorded game to understand how they perceive the coach to have influenced their preparation. Finally, in the fourth phase, I edited the videotape from the second phase and showed selected scenes to the coach to elicit the rationale behind their decisions and behaviours in the pre-match environment. By using four different perspectives and multiple methods, I was able to investigate the coaches' intended behaviours, their actual behaviours, the athletes' perceptions of the coaches' behaviour, and the coaches' reflection and explanation of their behaviour. Patton (2002) stated that multiple methods enhance research by balancing out the strengths and limitations of each method being applied.

I applied grounded theory methods as the procedures are designed to incorporate simultaneous data collection, data analysis, and presentation throughout the research process. In grounded theory, researchers investigate a topic using an inductive approach, where the researcher does not use a preconceived theory or model to drive the research. Instead, the researcher uses simultaneous data collection and analysis to generate concepts and theories that are then used to guide the research questions, until saturation of the data is reached. The premise of grounded theory is to reduce researchers' bias during data analysis and provide a theory/model that is grounded in the data and not interpreted or conceptualised by the researcher on the basis of existing theoretical frameworks (Glaser, 1992; 1998; 2001; 2003). Glaser and Strauss (1967) declared that theory derived in this

manner is more likely to resemble “reality” than theory derived through pre-conceived theory and interpretation. Glaser (1992) stated that the theory that emerges, really exists in the data, when compared to a logically-deduced theory grounded in the researchers’ interpretations of the data.

Eccles, Walsh, and Ingledew (2002) proposed that there are two major strengths of grounded theory methods. First, interviews used in a grounded theory approach yield rich, diverse, and detailed information, focused on generating specific information elicited in the combined data collection analysis process. As data collection continued, the data that I collected became more refined and more topic specific. As there was limited information on coaching immediately prior to performance, I was able to generate information from the coaches, then focus on the emerging themes, and gradually funnel toward topic specific data. Second, in ground theory the elicited information is analysed inductively, allowing the researcher to construct theory that is generated straight from the data. In contrast, a pre-conceived hypothetical-deductive research approach can be limited by the constraints of prior theory and preconceived ideas or beliefs (Glaser, 1998; 2003). Eccles et al., and Charmaz (2005) stated that this process allows a truer or more grounded theory to emerge. In current research, a more grounded theory of coach-athlete interactions prior to performance could be generated through GT methods than through the adoption of an existing theoretical framework such as the Mediation Model (see, Smoll & Smith, 1989). A benefit of this research approach is that, I was able to compare any model/theory generated through GT to the existing frameworks. In addition, I selected GT for this study because it offers a systematic approach for researching significant aspects (e.g., contextual and situational information) of the coaching process that remained difficult to address using previous quantitative and qualitative measures (e.g., systematic observation). Given

that research focused on coaching prior to performance has received limited attention in the sport psychology literature, a grounded theory approach allowed me to examine in depth the themes and categories that emerged throughout the data collection and analysis process regarding coaching behaviour prior to performance.

The primary analytic tool of grounded theorists is to inductively develop theory from the participants' responses through line-by-line coding, memo writing, and the constant comparative method. In the present study, this involved the building of knowledge through the simultaneous collection and line-by-line analysis of the coach interview, observations, player interview, my own field notes, and video recall interview. The progressive data collection and analysis allowed me to complete preliminary analysis phase-by-phase and dyad-by-dyad, allowing the analysis of the data to drive the selection of new participants (theoretical sampling), the questions that I asked, and the emerging theory.

Focus of the Study

The focus of the thesis is to examine coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance, with a specific interest on mental preparation. I designed the study to examine coaching practices and coach-athlete interactions in general because I did not want to eliminate any data by focusing exclusively on a specific topic area, such as mental preparation. Consequently, in the data collection stage of the thesis, to capture all relevant and inter-related concepts I collected data regarding all coach-athlete interactions and coaching practices, not just those focused on mental preparation. I conducted the data collection in this manner to minimise social desirability in the interviews. My purpose was to engage the coaches and players in the study without having them focus on specific areas of mental preparation. By using question such as “can you describe what you do in the

hour before a match?” I could gather more detailed situational and contextual information and then extract the data relevant to my study. Consequently, the data analysis will focus on extracting information relevant to the mental preparation of athletes. Important information regarding tactical and physical preparation was not completely ignored but used to guide and provide pertinent links to mental preparation strategies. The links between mental preparation, coaching practices, tactics, and other data collected will be discussed, however, the primary focus will be on mental preparation.

Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework of the current study is based upon previous research models such as the multidimensional model of leadership (Chelladurai, 1990), the coaching model developed by Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) and the mediational model of leadership developed by Smith and Smoll (1989). These three conceptual models set the theoretical foundation for the study through the knowledge established on coaching behaviour, the mediating factors affecting coach behaviour, the process involved in coaching, and the styles of leadership that are related to satisfaction and performance.

Procedures

The data collection involved four phases (see Figure 3.1) including (a) an in-depth interview with the coach, (b) observation and video recording of a practice session and of the pre-performance period prior to a match, (c) an interview with a player, and (d) a Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview (VCSRI) with the coach. I initially invited basketball coaches and players through Basketball Australia, the Australian Basketball Association (ABA), and Basketball Victoria to participate in the study. The coaching development officers or administrative personnel of the basketball associations forwarded information packages to the coaches. If the coach(s) expressed interest in participating, a

form (see Appendix A1) in the package, was completed and returned. After receiving notification from interested coaches, players' in the coach's team were forwarded information packages (see Appendix A2) regarding the study. Once I had obtained a list of interested coaches, I met with each coach and their team, to explain the purpose of the research and answer questions. Players' were then given the plain language statements) and consent forms (Appendix B1-2) to read. Then they were asked to sign the consent form if they were willing to participate.

I conducted the first interview focused on coaching intentions and objectives prior to a match, with the coach 7-10 days before I observed/recorded the game. Three out of four coaches chose to complete a phone interview. After the first interview, I attended a training session where I observed the players and their interactions with the coach. I attended the training session on the Thursday before the recorded game, as the training session would be related to the game the team was playing on the weekend. I then attended the pre-match preparations of each team. During the final hour or the hour and a half before the start of a game, I recorded all interactions between coach and players with a digital video camera, focusing specifically on interactions between the coach and the potential player participant(s). The videotapes, my observations from both the training session, and before the game were used to aid in the selection of participants for the Phase 3 interview. The video footage of the coaches' interactions with their players prior to the match and during the game were used to guide the selection of potential player participants for Phase 3. Potential player participants were contacted after the game and asked to participate in the study. All four of the players' chose to complete the interview via phone. I conducted the Phase 3 interviews via phone 1-3 days after the recorded game.

I used the preliminary analysis of phases 1-3, the field notes, and video footage of the recorded game to aid in my selection of scenes for the VCSRI session. I selected between 11 and 15 scenes for each coach. The scenes were edited using Studio 9 digital video editing software. I conducted the Phase 4 interviews between 1 to 3 weeks after the recorded game, depending on the coach's availability. Each coach-player dyad completed the four phases sequentially before research with the next dyad began. The four phases are described in more detail in the following section.

Data Collection

Phase 1: Coach Interview

In the first phase, I interviewed the coach, focusing on their coaching practices prior to competition. I conducted the interviews via phone or face-to-face, depending on each coach's preference. In the interviews, I asked the coaches to discuss the intentions behind their specific coaching behaviours and practices prior to matches. The questions (e.g., Can you tell me, in as much detail as possible, what you do in the lead up to a match?) focused on coaches' practices and strategies during the specified time. I recorded the interviews on an audio tape recorder. The interviews were between 45 and 75 minutes in length and were transcribed verbatim. To supplement the interview, soon after each interview session I recorded field notes on that interview and interviewee. The aim of the field notes was to enhance my understanding of the information being recorded. The field notes focused on the main issues and themes that had emerged in the interview. I also recorded my perceptions of the coach and of the interview process to aid in the following phases and dyads.

I used a semi-structured interview technique with an interview guide (see Appendix C) developed around a list of topics without fixed wording or order of

questions. The content of the interview focused on examining the intended behaviours and practices of coaches' in the hour prior to performance. A semi-structured interview allows for greater flexibility than a structured interview and more focus than an unstructured interview (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1999). By applying a semi-structured interview technique, I allowed each participant to express their opinions and knowledge. In addition, I was able to follow up with probes, to elicit further information from the coaches and to enhance my understanding of the coaches' responses. In the development of the interview guide, I conducted pilot interviews with coaches from other sports, who had completed university courses in sport psychology. The aim of the pilot interviews was to review the strengths and weaknesses of the interview guide, and evaluate my interview skills. I used the feedback from the participants to refine the interview guide identifying any questions or probes that should be included, excluded, or modified.

Phase 2: Observation

Training observation. The observation of each training session was conducted shortly after the Phase 1 interview with the coach and in the week before the observed game. I used a non-participant observation (see Patton, 2002) technique and video recording of the coach and player took place during practice sessions. I recorded coach-player interactions from the side of the basketball court with a video camera, focusing on the coaches' behaviours and interactions with players. In addition, I compiled handwritten notes after the training session had finished to supplement the videotape. My purpose in recording the training session was to gain a greater understanding of the coach-athlete relationship and the team dynamics. Furthermore, I observed the training session to help the participants become more comfortable with my presence and to assess players'

reactions to my presence. It is possible that some players may have changed their behaviour due to my presence. This may occur when research is conducted using a video camera or by a person outside of the participant group.

Game-day observation. The main part of Phase 2 involved observation of the coach-player interactions prior to performance in a home game identified by the coach as important to the team's progress for the season. Important games were selected because the interactions prior to the match might have more significance. During this phase, I focused on the coaches' verbal and non-verbal behaviours directed at their players. In particular, I focused on interactions with the participating player throughout the preparation period leading up to performance in the match. To achieve this, I used a digital video camera and a zoom microphone, throughout the pre-performance period. In addition, I recorded field notes, immediately after the pre-match session, to supplement the observations from the videotape.

In the present study, I used non-participant observation (see, Patton, 2002), whereby I observed, the pre-performance environment. The participants were aware of my presence at all times and were able to ask me to stop filming if necessary. This occurred only once during the observation of Team C, further details are described in the results section for Team C. I used the preliminary analysis of the data from Phase 1 to guide the observations and field notes in Phase 2. The application of videotape to the pre-performance environment increased the credibility of the observations, as an actual record of the observed event was available for review. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this as referential adequacy. Referential adequacy allows the video recordings and my observations of coaches and athletes to be critiqued at a later stage and tested for credibility (Lincoln & Guba). This enabled my observations to be checked by my

academic supervisors and reviewed thus increasing intra-observer reliability. In addition to the material recorded by the video camera, I wrote detailed field notes after the observation period had finished. This provided a detailed account of the event through two media video and comments on my observations.

van der Mars (1989) stated that the use of videotape might enhance the reactivity of the participants. It was suggested, however, that due to the increasing use of video cameras in society and elite sport, the participants would be comfortable with the presence of a video-camera (Ives, Straub, & Shelley, 2002; Trudel et al., 2001). In order to reduce participant reactivity, I included familiarisation procedures at training to lessen participant reactivity. Finally, I used a small hand held digital video camera to minimise intrusiveness. To assess the demand characteristics of the observation phase, I recorded the training session to analyse the participants' reaction to the presence of the researcher and the video camera. Despite these steps, I acknowledge that my presence in the pre-performance environment may have influenced coaches and players to act in a more socially desirable manner. It is perhaps inevitable with this research that participants may want to be perceived in a more positive light. Some coaches and players may have acted differently due to my presence.

Within 24 hours of the game, I conducted a short (2-5 minutes) interview with the coach regarding the preparation for that game and the actual game. In this interview, I aimed to identify key players and key incidents to be investigated in the Phase 3 player interview and the Phase 4 video recall interview with the coach. I then reviewed the videotapes and field notes from the game to examine the coaches' behaviours, both verbal and non-verbal, and to identify and code relevant incidents.

Phase 3: Player Interview

In the third phase, I conducted an interview with a key player. In the interview, I focused on the player's perceptions of their coach prior to performance. In particular, I was interested how the player perceived the coach to have influenced their own preparations and those of the team members prior to the game. My observations at training, the interactions before the game, and the player performance in the game guided the selection of the player from each team for the interview. Players' who were regarded as team leaders (see Dupris, Bloom, and Loughhead, 2006) or spent more time on court or interacting with the coach were asked to participate. In the interview, I focused on each player's perceptions of their coaches' pre-game behaviour on the day of the match recorded in Phase 2. I used a semi-structured interview technique and interview guide (see Appendix E) to enable descriptive material to be gathered. Specifically, the questions allowed each participant to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions as much as possible. Each interview was guided by the preliminary analysis of interviews with the coach, in Phase 1, and the observations from training and pre-match, in Phase 2. After the interview, I recorded detailed field notes on the participant and the interview.

Phase 4: Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview (VCSRI)

I conducted a VCSRI session with the coach within 1-3 weeks after the team was observed at training and a game. In the interview, I showed edited video scenes that I recorded in Phase 2. In the interviews, I aimed to elicit additional information regarding the rationale behind the coach's verbal and non-verbal behaviours during the pre-game preparations. Due to the hectic schedules of the coaches, it was not always possible to conduct the VCSRI sessions before another game was held. All VCSRI sessions were held within three weeks of the game that had been recorded and analysed. To check that

coaches remembered the game and the events I asked them to summarise and describe the game, the team's performance, and the preparations for the match. If coaches were unable to remember a scene after my description, then the scene was not included for analysis. I excluded only five scenes in total. I acknowledge that retrospective interviews even with video cues are likely to be influenced by the result of the event, the researcher, the time lag between the event and the interview, and the participant. Yinger (1986) and Wilcox and Trudel (1998) proposed that the videotape acts as visual cue to the participants' actions and may increase the accuracy and honesty of their response, due to the actual event being available for review. This contention, however, is based on anecdotal evidence from participants and researchers and has not been empirically tested or compared with traditional retrospective interviews. In this study, I followed the guidance of Wilcox and Trudel to elicit coaches' comments on a segment of the game, before showing the video of that segment. The coaches were then asked for further comments regarding the event after viewing the video.

The time delay that occurred between observation and VCSRI sessions with elite sports was a result of the lack of time that professional or semi-professional sports persons have. It is important to note that players and coaches at the elite level are completely immersed in their sport and the relative importance of the event to their career and development results in a higher level of recollection. It is also important to note, that the inclusion of verbal descriptions of the event, the game and the opposition are provided to aid in the recollection, furthermore, if the event is not remembered then it is not included in the following interview.

For each segment, I provided a brief description of the event to verbally cue the coach. I then asked the coach to elaborate on the event and to explain their reasoning

behind their actions at the time. After conveying an initial explanation of the selected scene, the coach viewed the video footage of the event and was asked to further discuss their underlying reasons for the decision in question. Wilcox and Trudel (1998) suggested that this process provides a more accurate account of the participants behaviours and thoughts than a retrospective interview. Wilcox and Trudel suggested that VCSRI aids the participant's visual recollection of the event and may increase the accuracy of their response. Yinger (1986) proposed that if participants viewed the video taped segments first and then reflected on the event, the validity of the resulting data may be questionable, because the videotape may provide them with new information regarding their behaviour. Consequently, by verbally cueing the coach, before the videotape is seen, Yinger proposed that the video footage is used primarily to validate the coach's response, rather than stimulate new interpretations. Thus, the verbal cueing prior to display of the video is proposed to reduce the possibility of data contamination resulting from the new information that the coach experiences from the video presentation. I recognise that participants may talk generally and not specifically about the event. In the current study, if coaches began to talk too generally, I used probing questions to ask the coach to reflect on the scene that had been shown, or replayed the scene.

I reviewed each videotape from Phase 2 to analyse coach-player interactions and coach behaviours focused on the key player interviewed in Phase 3. I focused on verbal communications and non-verbal actions, such as hand gestures or shooting simulations, the pre-game routines, and the pre-game talk. I also included any incidents that were directly related to the pre-game preparations to elicit relevant information on the coaches' decision-making process before a game. The identified incidents were coded and compared to the field notes taken in Phase 2. I then used my preliminary analyses of the video recordings

and the interviews in Phases 1, 2, and 3 with the coach and the player, to guide the selection of the video footage for Phase 4. I then showed the selected scenes from the footage recorded in Phase 2 to the coach in full. Criteria modified from a study by d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, and Durand (2001) on coach-athlete interactions were used to aid scene selection. d'Arripe-Longueville et al. stated that (a) the situation must have included coach-player focused interactions, (b) the situation had to be relevant to the player's preparation or performance, and (c) both the coach and player had to be involved in the scene, unless the interaction occurred at a distance, where the player was not in the range of vision. Furthermore, I selected scenes that took into account the responses from the coaches and players in Phases 1 and 3, to enable a comparison of the coach's intentions and their actual behaviours and the players' perceptions of their coach prior to performance. I also included scenes regarding coach preparation, as this theme emerged as a core variable throughout Phases 1, 2, and 3. Interactions with other players that were pertinent to coaches' style of coaching or intentions were also included in this part of the analysis.

I conducted the VCSRI session using an semi-structured interview technique (e.g., Minichello et al., 1999). I presented each coach with a brief description of an event recorded during the pre-performance period. I then asked them to comment on their reasoning behind their actions and why they were using this approach/strategy or intervention. I played the video segments in full once and then rewound to allow the coaches to view the segment again, if required. I instructed each coach that they could pause the tape at a critical point to discuss the intentions underlying their behaviours. I asked coaches to explain the goal and intentions behind their verbal and non-verbal behaviours shown in each segment. I also asked each coach the following questions (see

Appendix C for full interview guide) regarding each segment: (a) Can you describe what was happening during this segment?; (b) Can you describe why you acted/communicated in this manner? I used probing question such as, “What did you aim to achieve through this action/communication? Or “Can you expand on that for me, please?” These questions were used to guide the participants’ responses and aid my understanding of their response.

Data Analysis

The audiotapes from each interview from Phases 1, 2, and 4, were transcribed verbatim for analysis. In addition, the field notes and the observations from Phase 2 were typed in Microsoft Word and included for analysis. I analysed the data using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM). CCM is an integral part of the Glaser and Strauss (1967) grounded theory methodology. With CCM, analysis and coding of data occurred continuously. For example, I used the data and my preliminary analysis from the Phase 1 interview to drive my observations and the subsequent interviews in Phase 2, Phase 3, and Phase 4. I used the preliminary analysis of each phase to aid in the data collection for the next. Furthermore, insights from the analysis of the first dyad drove the selection of the participants in the second and succeeding dyads and the issues addressed in the following data collection.

I coded incidents (e.g., line, or sentence, or paragraph) for categories and their properties, and the theoretical codes that connected them (Glaser, 1992). Using the CCM, I reviewed each line, phrase, sentence, and paragraph from the transcribed interviews and field notes to determine what concepts the data reflected and how to code the data. I then compared each code to all others to check for comparisons, similarities, differences, and general patterns.

Two types of coding were used to generate a grounded theory: substantive and theoretical. Glaser (1978) differentiated between the two types of coding in the following manner "Substantive codes conceptualise the empirical substance of the area of research. Theoretical codes conceptualise how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory (p. 55)." Substantive coding occurs as the analyst begins to code, whereas theoretical codes emerge as the data analysis becomes more in depth. Glaser stated that the two types of coding can occur simultaneously and be brought together in memo writing

I used two levels of substantive coding and one level of theoretical coding in this study. The first level of substantive coding is termed open coding (Level I). Using open coding, I examined the words of the coaches and athletes line by line for incidents in vivo or substantive codes. I also used open coding, to break down the data from the interviews, field notes, and observations into incidents to be closely examined for similarities. Glaser (1992) stated, throughout open coding, researchers should ask the following question, "What category or property of a category does this incident indicate?" I applied this question to the coach interviews, player interviews, and the VCSRI sessions throughout the data analysis process. Glaser (1992) proposed that conceptualising the data and looking for patterns is the first step of grounded theory analysis. In using the CCM, I was able to examine the emerging concepts on coach-athlete interactions prior to performance and generate properties of the categories as the data collection continued.

I continued open coding until the core categories/variables began to emerge from the analysis. The core category accounts for most of the variation in a pattern of behaviour and once established provides a direction for the research to continue as the patterns emerge from the data (Glaser, 1992). Glaser (1978) stated that a core variable provides a

delimiting focus for the study by concentrating the focus of the researcher and to aid theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation. Once the core variable/category has been established, it becomes the focus of the data analysis.

The second level of substantive coding used in this study was called selective coding (Level II). Selective coding moves the data from a general level to a more abstract level. Codes at this level are termed categories. During selective coding, I used the emerging core variables to guide further data collection. Glaser (1978; 1992) stated that the process of selective coding stops open coding and delimits coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable(s). I used selective coding to focus on the emerging concepts generated by the data collection. The core variable becomes a guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling.

The third and final level of coding I used was called theoretical coding. Theoretical coding involves the development of core variables and involves the application of memos. Glaser (1992, p. 108) defined memos as "...the theorising write up of ideas whilst coding for categories, their properties, and their theoretical codes". Memos aid in both the conceptualisation of the categories and their properties. Glaser (1978) stated that the theoretical sorting of memos is the key to formulating the emerging theory. The coding finishes when no more new categories emerge from the data or theoretical saturation has been reached. Glaser (1978; 1992: 1998) stated that throughout the coding process, categories are placed into memos and sorted at the second level of coding. I used the emerging categories in selective coding and memos that I had made regarding the categories and incidents to link and refine the data into more general theoretical codes. The theoretical relationships between the categories emerge from the examination of the theoretical codes linking the categories and form the basis of a model or theory.

Note: I analysed all of the interview transcripts in Phases 1-4 using the CCM, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). I analysed the data dyad-by-dyad and phase-by-phase, allowing a building process to emerge from the data collection and analysis. I describe the data analysis procedures for each phase in the next section.

Phase 1 and 3: Interviews with Coach and Athlete

I applied the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) to analyse the interview transcripts from all coaches and players, to identify incidents and categories that emerged from the data. In conjunction with the interview transcripts, the field notes and the observations that I had compiled after each interview were included in the data analysis. In addition, the information that I obtained from the data collected in Phase 1 was used to drive the collection and analysis of the data in Phases 2 and 3.

Phase 2: Observation

In this study, my aim was to describe the interactions between coach and athlete and to document the type of interactions. To achieve this, I reviewed the video data and field notes from the second phase several times to increase my familiarity with the material and ensure intra-observer reliability, before making observations. I focused on documenting the coaches' behaviours and interactions chronologically throughout the pre-game period. I also used the sound recording of the pre-game period to aid my analysis of the verbal and nonverbal behaviours as well as the interactions of coach and player(s). I analysed the videotapes, observations, and field notes using open coding to organise the raw data (video tape) into interpretable and meaningful themes and categories, using grounded theory and CCM procedures. I observed the videotapes of the training session and the pre-game period to look for coaching behaviours, especially in the interactions between the coach and players, in particular the key player to be interviewed in Phase 3. I

recorded descriptions and observations of the behaviour of the coach in the pre-game talk, during the warm-ups, and away from the team. In conjunction, with the observations and descriptions behaviour taken from the videotape, I compiled my own field notes and observations after the video recording had finished. These notes were then analysed using the CCM described earlier to aid the data presented in the video.

I described in chronological order the coaches' behaviours and intentions during the final hour prior to performance. My purpose was to highlight the coaching practices and behaviours of coaches by describing their actions, communications, and interactions. The adoption of a pre-determined checklist would have limited the contextual and situational information.

Phase 4: Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview

I transcribed all the audiotapes from the VCSRI sessions verbatim and analysed them in conjunction with the edited video segments using the CCM to extract emerging categories. As the VCSRI sessions were conducted, I compared and contrasted the new categories as they emerged from the data and recorded memos for later analysis. The resultant categories reflected the coaches' perspectives and responses to what they saw in the selections of videotape, and how they interpreted my questions. Their responses reflected the underlying cognitions behind the verbal and non-verbal behaviours, recorded prior to the players' performance in Phase 1.

Triangulation of Data

In this study, I used multiple methods to triangulate and cross check the responses for coaches and athletes. By using multiple methods, I was able to compare the responses from coaches and athletes in the interviews with observation and reflection. Patton (2002) wrote that each type and source of data has strengths and weaknesses. As triangulation

can occur within a multi-method study, it increases the validity of the research, because the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another. In this study, I was able to balance the strengths and limitations of interviews from two sources, observational analysis of video, video recall interview, and field notes independently recorded during or soon after in vivo observation. Furthermore, I was able to compare the different perspectives of coach and athlete and to examine their different perceptions of the pre-game environment.

In this stage of the data analysis, I focused on the direct comparison of the four phases to examine the common themes, in the following manner. In addition, the comparisons were made to determine the differences or discrepancies in interpretations of coach-player interactions, arising from the different research methods. I also identified differences between the coaches' perceptions of themselves and their actual behaviours. First, the observations from the videotapes and field notes were compared with coaches' interviews to examine coaches' intended behaviours and their observed behaviours. In this analysis, I compared what the coaches said they were going to do with their actual behaviour. Second, I compared the video observations with the players' interviews to compare the players' perceptions of the coach to the coaches' actual behaviours and the interactions between coach and player. Third, I examined the coach and player interviews to identify points of agreement and disagreement between the coaches' intentions and the players' perceptions of the coach. Fourth, I compared the observations from the videotape to the player interview to compare the players' perceptions of the pre-game preparations to their actual behaviour. Finally, I compared the video interviews to the coach interviews to examine the discrepancy between the coaches' intentions prior to a competition and their reflections on their behaviours as seen on the videotape.

Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

In an effort to establish reliable, and valid representation of the coach-athlete interactions prior to performance, I followed the procedures outlined by Sparkes (1998a; 2002), Patton (2002), and Lincoln and Guba (1985). The procedures that I used are outlined in Table 3.1. Reliability and validity in qualitative research is proposed to be a combination of the researcher, the adopted approach, and the procedures followed. In particular, Charmaz (2005) and Pigeon and Henwood (1997), highlighted that no research is conducted in a social vacuum. Specifically, they suggested that the elicitation of a grounded theory is a combination of both the raw data and the ideas and interpretations of the researcher. Qualitative research is an interactive process involving my past interactions and experiences, with my research area and the emerging themes and patterns in the data. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the presence of the researcher. In this section, I have included a description of my sporting and research background and the procedures that I adopted and followed throughout the research process I have highlighted the measures that I have implemented to ensure a valid and reliable study.

*Table 3.1.**Trustworthiness Criteria* [adapted from Sparkes (1998, p. 367)]

Criterion	Technique	Inclusion
Credibility (internal validity)	Prolonged engagement	Yes
	Persistent observation	Yes
	Triangulation (mixed methods)	Yes
	Peer debriefing	Yes
	Negative case analysis	No
	Referential adequacy	Yes
	Member checks	Yes
Transferability (external validity)	Provide thick description	Yes
	Provide database for reader judgement of potential transferability	No
	Demonstrate credibility	Yes
	Overlap (multiple methods)	Yes
Dependability (reliability)	Stepwise replication	Yes
	Inquiry audit	No
	Inquiry audit	No
Conformability (objectivity)	Inquiry audit	No
	Audit trail	Yes

The Researcher

I had a strong personal interest in sport from early childhood through to now (29). I have participated in many different sports over the years, but performed best in cricket. I played in numerous representative Cricket teams for my city and region. I also represented my region (Western New South Wales) at the state high school championships and then later at senior level. I have also competed in many varied sports throughout my career, but I achieved more in cricket than any other sport, culminating in my participation in Australian National University championships. I also achieved success in other sports, such as Volleyball where I competed in the National Schools Cup. Of particular relevance to the present research is that, through my participation in sport, I became involved in coaching. I first became involved in coaching at my cricket club where I would run training drills and organise the different sessions. I then progressed to being an assistant cricket coach/player for the University of Canberra where I coached for 18 months, including at the Australian National University Championships. My own coaching and playing background spurred my interest in psychology and in sport sciences.

My own research background began at the University of Canberra, where I completed a Bachelor of Applied Science, specialising in applied psychology and sport studies. During my time at the University of Canberra, I also completed a Post-Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology, where I completed a research project focused on the influence of competitive anxiety symptoms and goal attainment expectancies on motor performance. After completing the fourth year project, I moved on to the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago, where I completed a Masters degree by research. My Masters research was focused on investigating the relationships between dispositional flow, motivational climate, leadership style, and motivation in semi-elite

rugby union players. My research experiences during my Masters degree and my personal interest in sport psychology led me to further study at Victoria University.

I believe the combination of my participation in sport as a coach and as a player has enabled me to gain an insider's perspective into the coaching and sport psychology literature. Furthermore, I am able to assess a coach's experience from an academic perspective. I believe that my experiences have given me a useful insight and advanced my understanding of coaching research.

I acknowledge that the findings in my dissertation reflect my subjective analysis of the data. It is possible that other investigators may produce different results, if they replicate the studies, or reanalyse the data. In particular, my in depth involvement with the participants throughout the data collection process has meant that I have developed a high level of knowledge regarding the participants, their behaviours, and their interactions. I suggest that the strength of the study lies in my in-depth knowledge of the participants. In order, to ensure a valid and reliable study, I have followed trustworthiness procedures to limit any potential biases based on my previous experiences, and increase the reliability and validity of the research (see validity in qualitative research section in this chapter for full details). I am an experienced qualitative researcher, who has completed advanced courses in qualitative methods and participated in qualitative inquiry workshops.

Research Credibility

Researcher's Note

It is important to note that it was difficult to follow some of the suggested trustworthiness procedures due to the degree of my in-depth involvement with the participants and my background knowledge of them. This made it difficult for external parties to complete peer debriefing to check my observations for reliability and validity.

For example, during the interviews and other informal interactions coaches have explained the aim and purpose of their behaviours to me. Thus when I view the videotape I already have a detailed background knowledge of what the coach is doing and why. To counteract this I have included a section outlining the trustworthiness procedures I applied throughout the study.

Trustworthiness Procedures.

In summary, to aid in establishing the credibility and internal validity I used member checking, peer debriefing, persistent observation, referential adequacy, and prolonged engagement. I used peer debriefing to establish the credibility of the researcher. I met regularly with an experienced sport psychologist to discuss my findings and the interpretations of the interviews. I also attended regular qualitative workshops, where fellow doctoral students experienced in qualitative research checked my analysis and interpretation of the interview transcripts. The fellow doctoral students were experienced qualitative researchers and acted as peer de-briefers and judges at all levels of the coding process. This process allowed any potential biases to be exposed and checked.

I also used member checking as suggested by Patton (2002) to enable the participants to authenticate the interview transcripts and the researchers' interpretations. To achieve this, I sent copies of the interview transcripts and categories and interpretations to the participants. The participants were prompted to read the transcripts and check that their comments were complete and understood. Participants were invited to return to an issue or idea that they felt was important or in need of more detail. The fourth phase of the research process also acted as a peer de-briefing and member checking process for the coaches, because they were allowed the freedom to expand on previous material and events covered that were brought up by me, or in the coach interview, or on the videotape.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that a key to establishing trustworthiness or credibility was prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout data collection, I was intensely involved with coaches and players for the periods of 4-6 weeks. Throughout the 4-6 weeks of data collection with each team, I engaged in persistent observation of the participants and used video recordings to ensure referential adequacy (Lincoln & Guba). The videotapes provide a permanent recording of the pre-game preparations and allow other experts to check my observations.

Transferability or external validity was achieved through thick description of the participants' backgrounds, responses, the research process, and the results from each phase and each dyad (Lincoln & Guba, ; Patton, 2002). Dependability or reliability was demonstrated by the use of multiple methods and the triangulation of material from the coach interviews, observations, player interview, and video recall interview (Patton, 2002). The use of interview, observation, and Video recall interview provided a method of cross-referencing the data collected in each dyad.

Conformability or objectivity was achieved using an audit trail through the use of N-Vivo qualitative analysis software. I used the N-Vivo program during the initial states of data analysis during open coding. By using the software, an audit trail of the data analysis is available for review. It was not possible to complete all steps outlined by Lincoln and Guba or Sparkes. Consequently, negative case analysis, providing a database for the reader, and an inquiry audit were not completed. Kavle (2003) suggested that validation is inherent in the grounded theory approach as process of verification is ongoing, with continual checks of credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness. In order to increase the rigor of the study, however, I completed the required validation and reliability checks as outlined above and in Table 3.1. My rationale for doing was that grounded

theory methods are not infallible and reliability and validity checks aid fellow researchers in assessing the credibility of the findings and the generalisability of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this section, I will present the results from each coach-athlete dyad separately. For each dyad, I use the following format: (a) coach interview, (b) observations, (c) player interview, (d) Verbal Cued Stimulated Recall Interview (VCSRI) with the coach. After I present the results for each phase, I summarise and compare the results between the four different phases. For example, I will use triangulation to compare the results from the coach interview to my observations of the coaches' actual behaviour. In addition, I present section titled "Major Themes" that includes all the themes that emerged from all four dyads. In the major themes section, I will highlight the key aspects of coach-athlete interactions prior to performance and present a model depicting the processes involved in precompetitive preparations. Due to the wealth of information collected the observations and field notes taken from the training sessions are in Appendix D. My observation and evaluation of training aided in my understanding of the dynamics of the team, the targeted player and the coach, and as such have been included.

Results for Team A

Description of Team A

This team was a sub-elite women's team based in an Australian Basketball Association competition in South-Eastern Australia. The team was made up of players' ranging from 17-38 years of age, ($M = 23$ years). The head coach, Amy, was in her second season coaching Team A. Team A had two assistants, an assistant coach and a strength and conditioning coach. Team A played in a semi-professional national competition and had a combination of professional, semi-professional, and amateur players. The differences in professionalism in this league resulted in training being limited to two times

a week along with individual training and pre-match training. Semi-professional and amateur players worked full-time whereas professional players were able to train as full-time athletes. The lack of time limited the ability of the team's to get together for training times. The regular in season training consisted of one recovery session, including swim and weights, and court practice on Tuesday and Thursday. Amy held individual sessions with players as needed. Team A played once a week or twice on weekends depending on the draw. The team meet an hour and 15 minutes before a match to prepare.

Phase 1: Interview with Amy on Intended Coaching Practices

Background to Amy

Amy was a 46-year-old female who had played basketball for over 20 years, including a long period in a national team. Amy had been involved in coaching professional basketball in Australia and overseas for 11 years. Amy began her coaching career after she was asked to be a player-assistant coach by the then national coach of Australia. After retirement she then became an assistant coach in ABA and Women's National Basketball League teams before moving on to become a head coach in the ABA. Amy had also coached at national and international levels.

Amy said, that she had always perceived that she would make the progression from player to coach at some stage and, when given the opportunity to be involved as a player-coach, Amy stated she "jumped at the chance."

I was a player for many years and 'Simon' [her coach at the time] asked me to assist and play, when I had come over from North America. So I just made that progression and had the opportunity to step into the coaching position. But I had done a lot of camps and I was a player that was probably destined to coach, in that I always wanted to understand to game and the complexity of it.

At the time of the research, she had been a head coach for seven years and had been at the Team A for two seasons.

Amy's Intended Coaching Practices and Structure of Pre-Game Environment

Coaching on the day of the match for Amy was not as involved as she would like. Due to the semi-professional nature of the league in Australia, Amy's time with Team A was restricted. On the day of a match, Amy did not have any contact with the team until one and half hours before the start of the game. She stated that in this hour and a half, the team followed a rigid structure, beginning with a brief informal meeting in the change rooms at least an hour and 15 minutes before the start of the match (see Figure 4.1). During this time, the players' would change into their uniforms and tape/strap their ankles. Amy stated that, at this time, the atmosphere was "nothing too serious", and she was interested in nothing more than how the players' were and how their day had been. Amy reported that once the players' had changed they went through a warm-up session for approximately 20 minutes with the strength and conditioning coach.

With 40 minutes to go to the start of the game, Amy called them into the change rooms for a 10-15 minute pre-game talk where she outlined the game strategy, defensive and offensive structure, and aimed to motivate the players' and instil confidence in them as a team. With 20 minutes to go, Amy said that the players' went back on court to complete a second physical warm-up focused on shooting drills. During this time, Amy said she finished preparing herself and then headed out to stand courtside. This continued until the national anthem and team announcement occurred. Finally, Amy highlighted that she then had 1-2 mins to talk to the team before the start of the game. During this time, she stated that her focus was on the starting five. She said that she reviewed the game plan and key aspects of the game before calling the first play and sending them on court.

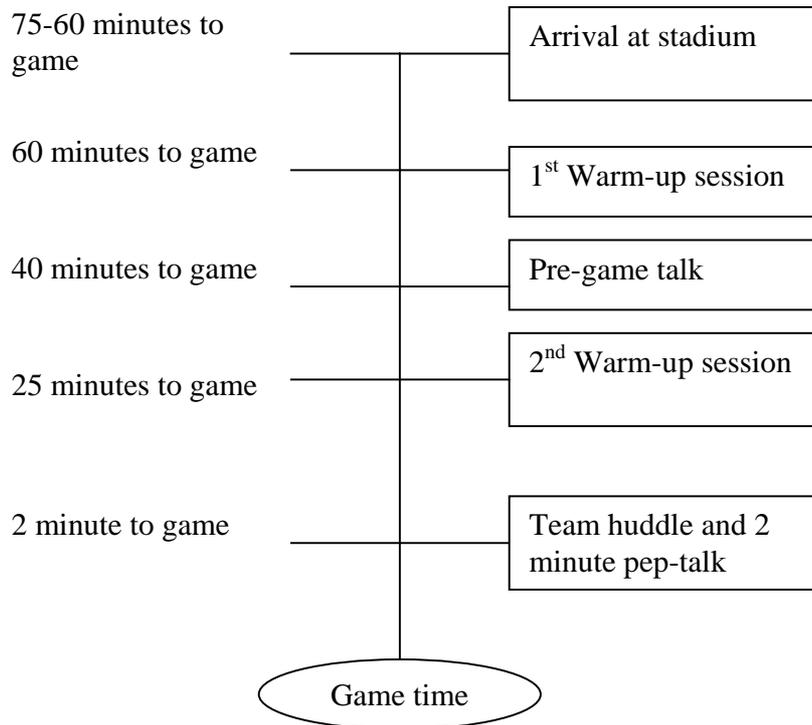


Figure 4.1.

Timeline and structure of Amy's pre-game preparations for Team A.

Amy's Coaching Objectives Prior to Performance

In this section, I examine the major objectives that emerged from the interview with Amy. The primary coaching objectives included: physical preparation, mental preparation and mental readiness, using physical preparation to aid mental preparation, motivation of player, reinforcements of players' role in the team and game, preparing herself, individual or personal coaching of players', player knowledge and evaluation, and hold a team meeting or pre-game talk. From the interview, it emerged that Amy's primary goal was to mentally and physically prepare her players'.

Having them mentally prepared and physically prepared, meaning stretched and warmed up. . . we like to play a very high up-tempo type of game, so they need to

be ready to play that sort of game. . . and, when I say mentally and physically prepared, that's also making sure that they were not overstimulated or that they were not flat.

Other primary goals included, preparing herself and focusing players' on their role in the team and the game. Amy reinforced that mental readiness and a game centred focus as being important objectives. She also stated that she achieved these through set pre-game routines, individual interactions, player knowledge, instilling confidence in players', motivating the team, and being prepared herself. I will examine Amy's objectives and the processes she applied to achieve them in more depth in the following section.

Physical preparation. Amy's primary goal was the optimal physical preparation of players' for competition. Physical preparation included two different warm-up routines the first focused on the stretching and warming up of the team. Amy said that the first warm up was conducted by the strength and conditioning coach and occurred 60 minutes before the game started. The second warm-up consisted of shooting drills and game simulation held 20-25 minutes before the game started. Amy stated that warm-ups followed set pre-game routines that were aimed at providing the players' with a chance to reach their optimal physical conditioning for the game. In addition, the shooting drills were aimed at more game specific tasks and also at focusing the player on their specific tasks in the game. Amy said that the physical pre-game warm-up routines did not change for each game in order to facilitate players' getting into a routine that aided their physical and mental preparation.

Using physical preparation to aid mental preparation. Amy reported that the physical warm-up routines were also part of getting players' to become more focused on the game. Amy said that she used set team based physical preparation routines for this

purpose. The routine aspect, she suggested aided the mental readiness of players' as they prepared for the game. In particular, Amy said:

I know that when I get them back they were stretched and warmed up and mentally ready to come into the room and hear me talk. When they leave the room it was still light and easy, and when they go through the process, I think the focusing starts. . .they're now sitting there ready to hear instructions or hear the final run through of things and ready to go. . . They do not just go from banter to focus. . . everybody here we go. It is sometimes not easy just to switch on like that.

The importance of physical preparation to mental readiness was reflected in a statement by Amy whom said "that the routine was very important when you talk about mental preparation." She reported that she followed a structured routine each week and encouraged her players' to follow a routine that aided them in preparing physically and mentally for a match. Amy theorised that a routine, including physical warm-up aided team cohesion and helped players' in focusing on the game and on their specific role. Amy stated the first warm-up assisted the players' to begin to concentrate and narrow their attention on the game and their particular role. By following a set routine, Amy insisted that she could help players' attain their optimal mental readiness and focus on the upcoming game.

Mental preparation and mental readiness of players. Amy proposed that having her players' mentally prepared was the major concern for her on game day. She emphasised that she structured the preparations to ensure that the players were physically ready to compete, however, mental preparedness was seen as being just as important. Amy suggested that structured pre-game routines (team and individual) assisted players' mental preparation and helped them focus on the game. This was seen in how she structured the

pre-game period, with two team-orientated warm-ups separated by a pre-game talk that was designed to review and focus the team on their game specific goals.

One of Amy's primary coaching intentions was to ensure that the players' were confident in their role in their team and in their individual role in the game. Her goal was to instil a sense of belief in the team and their ability "so that they go out really confident and believing that what we were doing was the right thing . . . it's really just focusing them." Amy said that she focused the players' by applying a set schedule that the team followed before each game. The set schedule and the first warm-up was the starting process for players' focus to become more-game specific. Furthermore, she suggested that the pre-game talk acted as a focusing point for the whole team and also the coaching staff. Consequently, the pre-game talk acted as a transition period that brought the game specifics to the forefront of team's attention.

In summary, Amy proposed that set team-orientated physical warm up routines aided players in narrowing their focus onto their specific role in the game. Furthermore, the pre-game talk allowed the players to come together as a team and reinforce what they had to do individually and as a team to win the match. Amy suggested that she aimed to focus players' mentally onto their specific roles and duties within the team and the specific game. She suggested that this helped the players' mentally prepare by focusing or narrowing their attention onto game specific issues.

Use of motivational strategies. Motivating her players' to perform was an important aspect of Amy's pre-game objectives. She said that she achieved this through individual interactions with players, and in the pre-game talk. Amy stated that during the pre-game talk she focused on the positives, motivated the players, and to instilled confidence in the players'. In addition, Amy reported that encouragement and positive

reinforcement were key concepts that Amy tried to instil in her players in the hour before a match. For example, Amy suggested that always being positive aided players' preparations and gave them confidence. She reported that she used small encouragements to focus her players and ensure that they entered the game in a positive frame of mind and were confident in their ability and motivated to perform.

Reinforcing players' role in the team and game. Another of Amy's primary concerns for game day was ensuring that each player knew the team plan and their individual role in the game. For example, "where our emphasis was for that game, or how we want to execute our game plan against a specific team, or what were doing." Amy suggested that a player's confidence in their ability to perform their role in the team was an essential component of preparation. Consequently, she reminded players of what their job in the team was, specifically, the tactics and strategies to be applied in the game, and of their specific role in the up coming game. Furthermore, she declared that her reinforcement of player's role in the game and team provided a focal point to aid players' mentally preparing for the game.

Amy suggested that the reinforcement of the team and individual tactics was achieved in a few different ways. She stated that she spoke to players as a team during the pre-game talk, individually before the match, or if necessary pulled a player aside during the warm-up. Amy said that she used the pre-game talk to review and reinforce the game plan, focus the players' on their role in the game, and to get players thinking about game specific issues. In addition, she stated that the pre-game talk and individual interactions primarily followed up material that had been discussed at training during the week. Specifically, Amy reported that most of the preparation was completed during the week at training and game day was just reinforcing or emphasising points that had been worked on

previously. The goal was to ensure that the players' knew their role in the team, their specific job in the game, and were confident in performing it.

Amy's personal pre-game routine and coach preparation. Personal preparation and following a pre-game routine was an essential element of Amy's own pre-game preparations. While the players' were on court doing the warm-up, Amy said that she and the assistant coach reviewed the game plan for that match, for example, discussing the different offensive and defensive plans for the game. Another part of her personal preparation was reviewing the game plan and her pre-game speech was part of her mental preparation routine. Amy stated that she needed to be just as focused as the players and be clear in her mind on what her role in the team was for that game. Furthermore, Amy stated, "I sit in the locker room and get my thoughts together before heading out to stand courtside". She set aside specific time for her own routines/rituals, which she perceived to aid her mental preparation for the match. This was part of her personal routine and was a key element of her pre-game preparations. Amy viewed herself as a performer and suggested that her level of preparation could affect the team's performance.

Amy's personal preparation for the game was also a constant theme that emerged throughout the interview. She stated that she used a variety of rituals and routines to mentally prepare herself for not only the game but also for the pre-game talk. She suggested that she needed to be prepared to motivate her players and to show her confidence in their ability. She perceived her performance during the pre-game preparations could affect players' perceptions of her and affect their confidence.

Team meeting and pre-game talk. The pre-game talk lasted for about 10-15 minutes and was held 40 minutes before the start of the game. Amy said that the pre-game

talk focused on reinforcing the strategies and game plan that they had practiced during the week. In particular, Amy said:

We talk about who was matching up on who and maybe just a real brief reminder of what player was a three-point shooter and we want to make sure that we are out on her shot. Then we go over a couple of points that we want to emphasise defensively, a couple of points we want to emphasis offensively. . .

Amy suggested that the specifics of each pre-game speech differed depending on the following factors: time of the season, place on the ladder, opposition, team form, and team goals.

Amy also reported that in her pre-game speech she aimed to provide encouragement to the players, focus them, and ensure that they were confident regarding the game. Her primary intentions revolved around the reinforcement of the team's game tactics and strategies. Amy's secondary intentions included assessing players' readiness to perform, something that she continually assessed throughout the final hour.

Individual interactions and personal coaching. Amy stated that she used individual interactions with players to enhance her assessment of a player's state of mind and readiness to perform. She said that during the pre-game preparations she focused on achieving the optimal preparation for the team and for each individual each player. For example, Amy, said that she often pulled a player aside during the warm-up to have a brief talk to them. She insisted that the interactions were spontaneous and that her goal might be to reassure them of their role in the team or to calm them down before the start of the match. She reinforced that these short interactions usually revolved around minor things such as: "player match ups or a pep up" or:

I might say to our point guard, you have done a great job this week in training of pushing the ball up the floor. We need you to do that this game. Or, you know the last time we played this team you know you did this for this player or try this for this player. You know we have been working on this. Just little reminders or little encouragements.

The factors influencing why Amy talked to players individually lay in what had transpired in the previous game, players' current form, reinforcing events from training during the week, key match ups, reinforcing good play, motivation, or praise/encouragement. In addition, Amy's pre-game assessment of each player's confidence before the game also influenced her decision to intervene with her players.

Amy highlighted that in the individual interactions, her goal was to keep players positive by using words of encouragement, praise for good work, and the reinforcement of previous good play at training or in competition. In addition, Amy said that during the interactions she aimed to eliminate or reduce the players' negative thought patterns. For example, she said that she would give players' a specific goal for the match, "focus on penetrating into the key." She also indicated that she used goal setting and positive reinforcement to refocus players' thoughts onto the game and eliminate or reduce the negative thought patterns that may affect their performance. She suggested that a positive emphasis helped players' refocus mentally for the match.

Player knowledge and evaluation. Amy stated that the assessment of players' preparations and knowledge of relevant effective coaching interventions for each player was an important skill prior to performance. In particular, she declared, "you can sometimes tell in warm-up if a player is somewhat nervous or anxious. . . once you get to know your players you can just read how the warm-up was going." Amy argued that it

was necessary for her to be able to read her players' body language and personality. By doing this, she suggested that she could coach more effectively before a game and assess her players' mental and physical preparation and readiness to perform. To achieve this, Amy observed the players as they arrived in the change rooms, assessed players' body language as she talked socially with them, and observed the players' form during the warm-up routine. If she needed to intervene, then she would often take a player aside before the pre-game talk or during the warm-up and try to refocus the player by motivating them, boosting their confidence, or emphasising the positive aspects of their performance. She emphasised this by saying:

I think it can be what you've seen in the week before at training, whether it be a confidence thing or if the last time you played them they did not play particularly well, or it's always at that stage it's always a real encouragement, positive reinforcement. It is never go out and do this nothing like that. . . You can sometimes tell in warm-up too if a player was somewhat nervous or anxious. . . once you get to know your players you can just read how the warm-up was going.

Amy proposed that the form of the pre-game warm-up could reflect the up-coming performance in the game. Consequently, a key focus of Amy's pre-game preparation was to ensure that her players were motivated, positive, confident, and, most of all, focused on players' role in the game. In particular, she stated that, "hopefully this will distract them from negative things that may be happening for them."

Amy said that, if she perceived the player's preparations to be inadequate then she engaged in individual coaching with the player. Amy suggested that her goal was to lift the players' confidence and get them thinking more positively and believing in their own ability. She stated that she aimed to focus them on specific goals for the match.

I can tell, you can tell, right away when a player was warming up or the team as a whole was warming up. I mean we have sat on the sideline and said I don't like the form of Ally. . . and sometimes you start the game that way and you cannot always get a good read on a player in the rooms and if it isn't their normal self then you might run out and pull the player aside and ask if everything was okay and I guess it gives them the option of saying well actually. . .at least you know that you're aware that something was amiss.

Amy highlighted that the final warm-up allowed her to assess the preparations of her players' and intervene if necessary. She proposed that player knowledge and evaluation was paramount to player and team preparation.

Mediating Variables Affecting Coaching Prior to Performance.

Amy indicated that the time of the season affected the details of the pre-game speech. Amy stated that at the start of the season the focus was more on the team themselves and not on the opposition, but as the finals drew nearer the focus changed to incorporate more of the opposition factors.

. . . at the start of the season you are still on a high learning curve as far as the things you want to do. A lot of times we concentrate on what we want to do and we always say that there were certain things we cannot control about the other team. Towards the end of the season, then it does become very team specific to the teams we were playing, but not early on.

The situation of the team was also a determining factor in the focus of the coach's pre-game preparations. Amy reported that the opposition, their players and their style of play were also mediating factors. In particular, different teams have different strategies and plans. Consequently, Amy stated that the focus of the teams' preparations changed

slightly depending on the opposition and defending key opposition players or offensive strategies.

Summary

In summary, Amy reported that before a game she followed a set timeline focused on team-based activities. To mentally prepare her players, she used physical pre-game routines to aid in focusing the players'. In addition, she said that throughout she used a positive uplifting attitude and encouraged her players' throughout. Amy's primary concerns prior to a match was that the players' were confident and motivated. In addition, she highlighted that her players needed to be focused on their role in the game and in the team. Amy stated that to aid her players reaching their ideal performance state she assessed their mental readiness via individual interactions and observations of their warm up. During these situations, she said that she applied her knowledge of the player and the personality and the current form. Amy also proposed that before a game she needed to be optimally prepared. Consequently, she stated that she takes time to complete her own pre-game routine.

Phase 2: Observations of Amy

Game Day Observations for Amy

The pre-performance period for Team A was highly structured. Players' were instructed to be at the game at least an hour before the match. The final hour before the game was then structured in the following manner (a) arrival (1 hour and 15 minutes to game time), (b) dressing, strapping, and physiotherapy (1 hour to game time), (c) stretching and physical warm-up (50 minutes to game time), (d) pre-game talk (30 minutes to game time), (e) skill-based warm-up (20 minutes to game time), (f) national anthem, final huddle, and team announcement (5 minutes to game time). Amy arrived around an

hour and 15 minutes before the match started and spoke socially with several players' before heading to the change rooms. As the team captain headed out of the change rooms, Amy called her over and started explaining a new warm-up drill that she wanted the captain to run in the warm-up routine.

At this point in time, I was unable to record observations, as males were not allowed in the female change rooms. For obvious reasons, I had to wait outside. During this time, the players' changed, received rubdowns, applied liniment, and had ankles or knees strapped. It was unclear what sorts of interactions occurred at this time between coach and player(s), but it was informal and social with little talk about the upcoming game. Several players' exited the change room and joined the assistant coaches (male) on the court for some informal shooting practice and to socialise. The assistant coaches observed the players' and practiced shooting. The atmosphere was very social at this time.

The assistant coaches let the players' know how long they had before warm-ups began, giving them enough time to complete their strapping and preparations. As the players' were taken around the court for a 20-minute stretching and warm-up session, Amy and her assistant coach went into the change room to review and discuss the opposition, their own game plan, and the topics to cover in the pre-game talk. They talked in depth about the opposition team and their possible starting five. Focusing, in particular, on how Team A would defend against them and how they would attack. Tactics and strategy were reviewed as were the addition of new players' in the opposition that Ally had not played against. The coach wrote several key points on the white board, regarding their offensive and defensive structure and continued to socialise with support staff and managers. The atmosphere in the change rooms started to intensify as the warm-up drew to a close, the coach asked, "how were they looking out there" and appeared to switch on

or step up a gear as she paced up and down in the change room. The assistant coach left the room and Amy reviewed her notes and focused on what she had written on the white board.

The players' re-entered the change room and grabbed drink bottles and jelly babies as they sat down. The coach asked if they were ready and launched into the pre-game talk. Amy stood in the centre of the room as the players' and support staff sat on the benches facing the small white board. She began by welcoming the players' to the first home game of the season and then concentrated on the opposition and who was matching up on whom. Amy then focused on reviewing tactics and defensive strategies that they practised during the week. She actively demonstrated the type of defence for specific opposition players and how they should be guarded, including court position and feet and hand positions. The players' were quiet and attentive, they said little and appeared very focused. The focus of the talk appeared very much on the opposition, reviewing whom the key players were and how to stop their strengths and how to target the weaknesses of the opposition team. Amy's voice was commanding, she was well prepared, and she spoke in a clear and concise manner, pausing to see if each player understood the point. Her points were emphasised verbally by the tone of her voice and non-verbally via clapping, pumping her fists, and pointing to the key points on the white board.

The pre-game talk was finished as Amy summarised the key aspects for the game. Amy tried to motivate and pump up the team by focusing on her excitement at the prospects for the season. The team and coaches had a final team huddle and then headed out to the court for the skill-based warm-up and shooting practice. With 20 minutes to go till game time, the captain took over the warm-up, as the coaches had a last minute

discussion on the possibility of using a new tactic designed at reducing time-outs and increasing Team A's intensity in the game for a specified time.

As the coaches headed out of the dressing rooms they talked socially with several players pointing out what warm-up drill they should be performing. There was some confusion amongst the players as to what they were doing and the warm-up looked a little slow and unorganised. The new warm up drill that the coach had told the captain to run had left the rest of the team confused. The players were not sure of what they were running and the stuttering, mistake-ridden warm up reflected this. Twice Amy stopped the warm-up and directed players to a different court position and a different warm-up format. As the warm-up continued, the coaches conversed around the players' bench and observed the opposition as well as Team A.

Occasionally, Amy or the assistant coach took individual players aside and spoke briefly. Amy brought Ally across on two separate occasions. The first revolved around her opponent. Amy pointed to the opposition player in question and motioned to watch the left-handed shots that she was practicing. Amy gave Ally some last minute advice and reminded her of the good job that she had been doing in training. In the second interaction with Ally, Amy stopped her as she was getting ready to shoot and brought her over to the benches. During the interaction, Amy reminded Ally of her role in the team as a ball carrier and that her job was not only to drive in to the basket, but to keep the pace of the team up and keep the team positive. Amy asked her to talk more and finished by encouraging her and showing faith in her ability, "I know you can do it."

Amy continued to watch from the sideline, speaking briefly to her assistant coach and to the strength and conditioning coach that had noticed how the opposition was practicing their shots. Amy also spoke briefly to the officials but spent most of the time

observing her players or the opposition, frequently shouting words of encouragement or directions for players to pick up the pace “Come on, ‘Sara’ push it up a little harder” or “That’s it ‘Andrea’ keep it up!” As game time approached, the team was brought together for a final time, before the teams were announced and the national anthem was played. Amy stood patiently by the courtside with her clipboard often looking toward the opposition. Amy gave the starting five a reminder of the first offensive play and the defensive strategy that they were to run.

Summary of key observations. Amy was observed to be very well organised during the pre-game preparations. Amy had a primarily organisational role directing coaching staff or players during warm ups and delegating jobs to her assistants. The pre-game preparations followed a strict routine that all players and staff complied to the warm-ups, and pre-game talks all were timed down to the minute. Amy spent long periods of time in discussion with her assistant coach regarding the game and Team A’s preparations and the potential strategies that they may need, as well as the tactics that were going to apply. Furthermore, Amy spent time preparing herself for not only her role in the game, but also for her pre-game talk. Her personal preparation involved reviewing her notes and discussing important issues, such as what to cover in the talk, with her assistant coach. Amy’s preparation was as important to her as the team.

The interactions with Ally consisted of a brief informal talk before the formal warm ups, the pre-game talk, and two individual interactions during the final warm up. Amy ran a well-planned pre-game preparation. Her priorities were observed to be primarily team orientated, as seen in the two team warm ups, and the pre-game talk. During this time though, Amy also focused on individual players’ preparations. Amy spoke to Ally twice, the first regarding Ally’s opposing player and the second regarding

her role in the team and her focus for the game. Amy was observed to deal efficiently with players on an individual level despite the frenetic pace, the crowded change rooms, and the limited space on the team benches. Amy also interacted individually with other players including a player that had been left out of the starting line up and a younger player, aged 17, who was still developing her skills.

Observation was a key aspect towards the end of the pre-game warm-up. In the last 20 minutes, Amy's behaviours were primarily related to what she observed on the court. She spent considerable time watching the opposition warm-up and then relating information to assistant coaches or players. She also watched her players very closely to assess their preparations. The new warm-up routine appeared to affect the momentum of their preparations as the stuttering and mistake ridden routine forced Amy to stop it once and give more detailed directions.

Phase 3: Interview with Ally

Background to Ally

The player involved in the coach-player dyad including the Phase 3 interview, Ally, was a 23 year-old point guard that had played Basketball for 11 years and for three years with the current team. Amy viewed Ally as an on court leader with potential, and cited Ally as being a talented prospect for the future. Ally was chosen for the study after viewing the footage of training and of the pre-game. Ally's interactions with Amy as well as Ally's performance at practice and in the game, aided in my decision to include her in the study.

Overview of Ally's Perceptions of Game Day

On the day of the game recorded in Phase 2, Ally stated she arrived 90 minutes before the start of the game, and sat down to socialise with the coaches and her team-

mates. Ally stated that her normal routine was fairly basic. She stated that she changed into her uniform, talked to the staff and players before heading out to the court to shoot some baskets, while she waited for the rest of team to get ready. Ally reported that her preparation for this game was “pretty normal”, and that there was nothing unusual or out of place. She stated that the first warm up was okay for her and she felt confident and relaxed. In particular, Ally stated,

During the pre-game talk, I was feeling pretty confident. I was listening to what Amy was saying and sort of trying to take in the different points that would have probably affect me more. Some things, again, will affect me more than other things were. I’ve got to try and focus on that and on sort of get it in my head what I needed to do.

Ally’s preparation was primarily focused on herself and what she had to do in the game. Ally found that Amy’s pre-game talk aided her confidence for the game, in particular, “reading through the stuff she had put on the board. I find that good for me actually rather than just saying it.” The key points that Amy had put on the white board acted as a reinforcement of what Ally had to do in the game. Ally reported that she was in touch with her game and what the coach wanted out of her for that match, she understood what was expected of her. Ally cited a key incident in the warm up that affected her preparations.

I think that the actual warm up after the talk was different to what we usually do. And I think that that actually had an effect on us, because we weren’t sort of sure what we were doing in that situation. So, I think that that sort of affected us at the start of the game. Well it affected me at the start of the game. . . .’cause in last year we had the same warm up and then all of a sudden at the start of the game she said no we were going to do this, this, this, and this, so it sort of, yeah a bit different.

Ally reported that as the team started the final warm-up, her coach Amy, pulled them aside and told them that they were running a different warm up than usual. Ally said that the different structure of the warm-up routine affected her preparations for the game and consequently her performance. In particular, Ally highlighted the lack of confidence in her physical preparation in the final warm-up as a reason for why she started poorly in the game. The uncertainty of the warm up and the sudden change in routine, Ally suggested, had an important bearing on her physical and mental preparation. The change in warm up had not been discussed at training or during the pre-game talk. This was unusual and disrupted Ally's physical preparation, she said "I did not feel as ready to go as I usually would."

In reference to Amy, Ally stated that Amy helped her focus on the game itself and informed her of her specific role in the game. Furthermore, she said that Amy was a source of encouragement and aided team cohesion and motivation within the team, as she was "always trying to get us to encourage each other." Specifically though, Ally perceived her coach to be a source of motivation and encouragement for her prior to the game. Amy was perceived by Ally to aid her game specific focus by bringing to her attention and reinforcing her specific roles and duties in the team, and discussing the specific details of the offensive play, she was to run.

Ally, however, stated that she personally preferred more time to warm-up by herself before a match. Specifically, Ally found that certain aspects of the team-based warm-up did not suit her style of preparation. The structure of the pre-game period meant that Ally had little time to focus on her own preparations outside of the two team-based warm-ups and the pre-game talk.

In the game in question, Ally stated that Amy came up and spoke to her about a key player she was matching up against. Ally said that she was playing against one of the better players in the opposition. Amy discussed the specific offensive and defensive techniques that Ally should employ to counteract her opposing player. In addition, Amy referred to the defence that Ally needed to focus on against this player, as the player was left handed. She highlighted that the little reminders like this aided her preparation, as she did not always remember everything that the coach had instructed her and the team to execute in the training sessions during the week.

Ally indicated during the final warm-up that she was focusing on what the coach had said and was “thinking about what I had to do in the game.” Despite the confusion about the warm-up, Ally tried to stay positive and reported that she thought about how well they played last week and focused on getting her shots in and whom she was playing against. Regarding Amy and the coaching practices she employed before the recorded match, Ally said,

I just think that she does have a big influence, 'cause she was very prepared for the game herself, so I think that comes across to us; that we're going to be prepared. So I think that that gives us a little bit of confidence to think that, as a team, coach, and everything like that, we were prepared. So I think she plays a big role in that cause every game she was thoroughly prepared. She knows what they [the opposition] were going to do and that kind of thing.

Summary

Overall, Ally perceived her coach to be a source of motivation and encouragement in the hour before a match. In addition, Amy was a source of direction and of game specific information for Ally. Amy provided Ally with detailed information regarding her

opposing player and reinforced the strategy that she was to enforce throughout the game. Amy was perceived to be influential for Ally in this manner. Furthermore, the meticulous preparation of Amy added to Ally's confidence before a match. The change in warm-up routine, however, had a major influence on the preparations of Ally. She stated that she did not feel as ready as usual and her confidence in her physical preparation was low and consequently affected her performance at the start of the game. In addition, Ally indicated that she preferred more time to prepare herself individually, rather than the team orientated warm-up routine that Amy had in place.

Phase 4: VCSRI Session with Amy

The scenes for the VCSRI were selected based on the analysis of the first interview with the coach. In total, 1 hour and 15 minutes of footage was recorded before the match. After analysis, 11 scenes were edited and selected to be included in the interview. The scenes were selected based on Amy's description of the way she constructed the pre-game period, scenes that reflected the coaches' plan, and scenes that included interactions with the corresponding Ally. Scenes that were spontaneous or situation specific were also included in the VCSRI session. The selected scenes were described in the following section:

Scene 1: Interaction with Team Captain (- 65 minutes)

The first scene depicted a coach-player interaction that took place courtside with 65 minutes to the start of the match between Amy the team captain. As they conversed courtside there were a few players shooting baskets on the court with the assistant coaches, while other players were arriving or were in the change rooms. Amy was holding a clipboard and showing it to the player, as she pointed to specific points of the court.

Amy reflected on the scene and described her actions as relating to the captain's specific role for this game. Amy stated, "she plays a variety of positions. It's just to refocus her. . . where she was going to be starting. She was going to be starting big and what she needs to be thinking about". Amy declared that her goal in Scene 1 was to inform or reinforce, to the captain of her specific role in the game. In this game, the captain was matching up against a physically bigger opponent and Amy reported that she was reinforcing the tactics required to counteract the opposing player's size. The nature of the interaction was game specific and individualised to the player involved.

Amy also stated that she was instructing the captain on a new warm up drill that the captain was to run at the start of this game. She reported that she was verbally running the captain through the specific court placements for the warm-up, where the shots were to be taken from, and the pace of the drill. Amy said that the previous warm-up routine had lacked "hustle" and the new one was designed to increase the pace and the talk between the players.

Scenes 2 and 3: Discussion between Amy and Assistant Coach (-50 minutes)

In the change rooms, Amy and the assistant coach reviewed opposition and player match ups and discussed the game plan. This occurred as the players were going through their first warm-up and were out on the court with the strength and conditioning coach. Support staff came and went, organising drinks and towels for the players.

Amy reflected on this scene, and stated that she wrote all of her notes at home and then reviewed them before the game, verbalising them with her assistant coach. At this point in time, with 50 minutes to the tip-off, she said that they also reviewed the game sheets to see if the opposition had any line-up changes. The assistant coach had been the head coach of the opposition in the previous season, so Amy asked him about his thoughts

on the line up and their potential offensive and defensive structure. Amy emphasised that all of the material had been reviewed and written previously and nothing new was being added, unless there was a line up change. Amy then stated that she and the assistant coach reviewed each match-up after they received the final team sheet from the opposition and then related that to the game plan for the day.

Amy also reported that the discussion with her assistant coach and the reviewing of her notes for the game was part of her preparation for the game.

This was how I prepare mentally for the game as well. Yeah, I have it written out at home and I transfer some of that to the white board and verbally discuss it with the coach and then it was in my mind. It was also very clear and that was where we talk about the 'what ifs', so OK Brenda was matched up on this person and she cannot stop her then our option was to put Fiona on her or put somebody else on her.

Personal preparation was a key concept for Amy, as her personal knowledge of the opposition and of her team needed to be refreshed in her mind. Due to the unknown factors, Amy said, "you really concentrate on what you do rather than what they do." The time of the season (third game) meant that Amy was focused on her team rather than on what the opposition was doing. In addition, she also added that the team they were playing had a new coach that they had not played against before. Amy said that she and her assistant coach were discussing the fact that they were not sure what the opposing coach was going to run offensively. Furthermore, Amy discussed that her personal preparation was a factor in the teams' preparations for each match. Consequently, she stated that she followed a pre-game routine that ensured that she herself was confident in hers and the teams' preparation.

Scene 4: Amy Personal Preparation in Change Rooms (-45 minutes)

In the change rooms, Amy was seated by herself as the assistant coach returned from the court. Amy asked the assistant coach “how do the girls look in the warm-up?” This was a spontaneous interaction and was included in the analysis to reflect the nature of Amy’s personal preparation before a match.

Amy reflected that she had changed part of the warm up and was interested to see how the girls had handled it. Amy stated that, because she did not usually see the girls on the court during the first warm-up, she relied upon her assistant coach to report back to her on their progress and/or anything unusual. Amy said that the time she spent in the change rooms alone, away from the team was part of her personal preparation.

John and Eddie were out there, so it is just good for me to gather my thoughts up and not sort of be worried about whether was she stretching enough? Or what not, 'cause those thoughts can start creeping to your mind and distract. So I just stay in the locker room . . . if Eddie went and said they seem really nervous or really whatever, then if they came in, well I just might say something to try and alleviate that or if he says they look pretty good, you know. Often I will get a chance to say to John how did they go before I address them. He might say that I think they were a bit flat. Well then I might go ok I need to try and pump them up a bit.

In relation to this scene, Amy said “I am getting ready myself and just making sure that I am as ready as possible. . . see where were my presentation was. . . how I am going to present my game to them.” Amy suggested that her personal preparation was important for her and that she could rely on her assistant coaches to relay information about the players back to her as required.

By sending the players out of the change rooms and using the assistant coaches to monitor them, Amy was able to focus on her own preparation for the match. The pace and noise created by the players and staff disrupted Amy's preparation, consequently, she found it preferable to have time alone.

You can see that when people were taping and the manager was in there getting water and the physio. There was a lot of action in there and I just try and chat a little bit to the players it was when they all leave that when I . . . have that as my time to, you know, get myself ready.

Scenes 5, 6, 7, and 8: Pre-game Talk (-30 minutes)

These next scenes occurred during the pre-game talk. During the pre-game talk, the players sat and drank from water bottles and adjusted their uniforms and strapping before sitting down and facing the coach and the white board. The players were very quiet during the pre-game talk. Amy first went over match ups, key players, tactics, and defensive techniques. Then she focused more on team goals, such as increasing the talking during warm-ups, and during the game, and team tactics for the match. Towards the end of the pre-game talk, Amy pumped up the team with lots of positive talk and encouragement. Amy ended the talk by summarising the game plan and pumping up the players before they headed out to the court for the final warm-up.

Amy referred to her statement, regarding it being the first home game of the season. She stated that she was using this as a tool to motivate the players with reference to their good home record in the previous season. Throughout the opening of the pre-game talk, Amy stated that she tried to engage all the players through eye contact, this way she proposed she knew she had their attention.

Amy reported that all of the information that she delivered to the players before the game had been presented previously in training during the week. Amy said that she focused on the player match-ups, offensive and defensive structures, and a general warm-up of the opposition. In particular, Amy stated that, when she was physically demonstrating a defensive technique, she was reviewing and emphasising key points of the defensive press that the team had practiced during the week. Furthermore, she stated that her goal during the pre-game talk was primarily to reinforce the strategies and plays they practiced during the week, “nothing ever at this stage was new.” Amy acknowledged that everything she covered in the pre-game talk had been covered previously, as new material may cause her players to become anxious. Amy declared that one of her goals of the pre-game talk was:

. . . just to make sure that they were thinking about the things that we have focused on and yeah I think it was reinforcement getting it into their heads and thinking about the game at hand and what, you know, what we need to do against this specific team.

Scene 9: Observation of Team Warm-up by Amy and Interaction with Ally (-15 minutes)

Amy was observing the warm-up from the side of the court and watching the opposition. As Ally walked past the bench, Amy asked her to come over and engaged in a brief discussion as they both focused on the opposition. Amy spoke about the opposition and the opposing player that Ally was matching up against.

Amy said that this interaction was focused on Ally’s role in the game.

So ‘Ally,’ I am just telling her, she’s our point guard, I am telling her that that we want to make sure that she was running up the court filling the lane looking at her penetration because she was known as an outside shooter and teams tend to come

right out on her and we're really. . .that's just a goal with her that we're focusing her to penetrate, so again it was just a reminder.

Amy discussed that her goal here was to reinforce Ally's style of play, and how she will be defended against. Furthermore, Amy set Ally the goal of trying to penetrate the defence more rather than taking the 3-point shot. Amy also said that her goal was to reinforce the player's previous good work in training and to emphasis the positive aspects of her game. In particular, Amy reflected that she said the following to Ally:

You have done a really good job this week of focusing on penetration lets see if you can do that. If they close out on you, do that cause you have been working hard on it and it looks really good.

Amy stated that the most important aspect was to conduct the interaction in a "really do good, feel good, positive manner." Amy also reflected on the opposing player that Ally was matching up on.

She and I were just looking over there. We were just talking about who she was matched up on. So she might say so which one was so and so?" And you go "that's her and she's warming up". . . you know, if she gets the chance she just looks down and sizes her up; sizes up her opponent.

Scene 10: Introduction of New Warm-up Drill (-10 minutes)

During the warm-up drill, with 15 minutes before the start of the match, the players appeared a little confused as they stood around the baseline. Amy walked across and directed them to positions on the court and instructed them to perform a new warm-up routine. The players ran the warm-up routine slowly with numerous mistakes and a lack of intensity. Amy stopped them twice to reinforce or instruct them on the correct movements.

When asked about the change in warm-up routine, Amy reported:

This was a new warm-up. I was telling them that what we were doing in the warm-up. Because it was. . . they had not done this before. . .this was normally, I don't. . . this was just because. . . yeah because it was new, this warm-up. This does not normally happen. Yeah, yeah, yep, normally they just go through the warm up but we were not really happy with the warm-up so we were changing it. So I was just giving them some instructions as to what was next, but normally that does not happen. They just go through it. Cause I think it was important that they're...at this stage it was routine in their warm-up, they were comfortable with it and that there still sort of trialling that.

Amy stated that the mix up in the warm-up does not normally happen. Her rationale for intervening lay in getting the players in a more up-tempo mood and more vocal.

Furthermore, Amy indicated that it was unusual for her to be giving instructions during a warm-up, because it disrupted the momentum of the players' physical preparation. This scene was a key aspect of the pre-game preparations because the well-prepared and well-structured environment was disrupted. Amy insisted that the rationale for her introduction of a new warm-up lay in the lack of talk between the players in the warm-up and the slow pace of the warm-up. She did not mention whether she perceived the new warm-up to have had any effect on players' preparations or the team's performance.

Scene 11: Team Huddle (-1 minute)

The final scene involved the team huddle before the starting line-up went out on court. The coach knelt in front of the starting five, whilst the bench players stood behind her. She spoke rapidly for a minute, pointing towards the clipboard as she drew a diagram. As she finished, the team had a huddle and yelled the team name before the starting five headed out to the court for the tip off.

The final minute before the start of the game was focused on motivating the players and reinforcing the defensive and offensive strategies. Amy stated that she was now focused on the starting five and that her goal was to ensure that they knew what was going to happen right from the very first tip-off. In this interaction, Amy aimed to show that she supported the team, to reinforce the key aspects she had mentioned in the pre-game talk, and to motivate the players. Furthermore, by drawing the team together she suggested that it created more of a team atmosphere.

If everybody just walked in and grabbed their stuff and went on the court it would feel really disjointed. That last thing, you know, it feels like as a team you need to do that to get that last bit of continuity together and support.

Summary

Pre-game preparations for Amy and Ally focused on optimal mental and physical reparations. Amy followed a set pre-game routine that was aimed at preparing herself and her team. Her approach was team based and all the activities before a match were based around preparing as a team. Ally perceived her coach as being an important source of motivation and her meticulous preparation gave Ally confidence in her ability. The interactions between Amy and Ally were focused on positive reinforcement and specific instructions on her role in the game and her opponent. Amy said that before this game her interactions with players and Ally had been spontaneous and not planned. Mediating variables such as the opposition, time of the season, and the level of development affected Amy's decisions and behaviours before the match.

*Triangulation of Results for Team A**Coach Intentions and Observations of Amy's Behaviour*

The key elements of Amy's coaching intentions and practices before a match were focused on preparing her players' mentally and physically for the match. Amy stated that she aimed to achieve this through a structured pre-game environment, focusing players on their role within the team, establish team cohesion, motivation, instilling confidence, and show in positive attitude. Amy's behaviours were observed to follow her intended behaviours closely, except with respect to the changed pre-game warm-up. Amy believed that her personal preparation was a key element in ensuring that she and the team were prepared and ready to compete.

Structured physical warm-up. Throughout the pre-game period I observed Amy to follow a strict time period, for the pre-game preparations. The preparations followed the following structure first warm-up and stretching (20 minutes), pre-game talk (10 minutes), and second warm-up and shooting practice (20 minutes). The set structure of the pre-game period served as a set routine that aided players' attentional focus on their performance and was aimed at aiding players' their Ideal Performance State (IPS) for each match. Amy stated that she followed a set pre-game routine and that her preparations were aimed at aiding helping prepare physically and mentally. The team-oriented warm-up aided the players to come together as a team, the set structure, however, left limited time for players to prepare themselves individually.

Nothing new on game day? Amy stated that one of the key tenets for being a good coach was that nothing new was introduced on game day, as it may place extra stress on the players and disrupt their personal preparation. During the pre-game preparation, Amy was observed to suddenly change the warm-up routine with 20 minutes to go. During the

changed warm-up, the players looked confused and lost, the momentum of the warm-up was also observed to slow, which was the opposite of what Amy intended. This resulted in Amy remonstrating on court as she directed the players and asked for more effort.

The introduction of a new warm-up routine was observed to affect players' preparation, as they were unsure of what the coach was asking them to do during the routine. I observed that the momentum of the warm-up to be disrupted by the different warm-up. Furthermore, the players' preparations were affected as the game was due to start in less than 15 minutes away from starting. In Phase 1, Amy had spoken about the use of pre-game routines for players to aid their focus on the game. She had stressed the importance of a structured preparation as a team. Her actions before this game were observed to go against her stated intentions and coaching philosophy. Furthermore, Amy's actions were observed to affect the intensity of the players' warm-up.

Individual interactions. Amy was observed to supplement her team oriented and planned pre-game team interactions with spontaneous individual interactions. These individually based interactions served to reinforce the selected players role in the team. One of Amy's stated goals was to ensure that her players' attention was focused on their specific role in the game. She achieved this by reinforcing the player's strengths and setting individual goals and aims for the game. The individual interactions were aimed at motivating players, and instilling confidence in their ability.

Coach Intentions, Observations, and Player Perceptions

Motivation. Amy's intentions focused primarily on informing the players of their role in the game and team, physically preparing the players, and mentally focusing them on the game. Ally perceived her coach as being a very well-prepared and informative

coach, who provided a boost to the team. Amy's detailed preparation and highly structured pre-game routine were perceived by Ally to benefit the team's preparations because the players' could focus on preparing themselves with the knowledge that their coach had given them the optimal preparation.

Ally stated, that her physical warm-up was affected by Amy's decision to change the warm-up routine without notice. In particular, Ally said that at the start of the game she was not as confident in her physical readiness for the match as she had been the previous weekend she believed that her performance was in the first quarter was affected by the change in preparation. Ally suggested that it was unusual for Amy not to tell the team of her decision to change the warm-up beforehand. Furthermore, Ally perceived Amy as always being prepared and having a meticulous eye for detail when coaching. The sudden change, without warning, was perceived to be out of character and went against Ally's perceptions of Amy's coaching style.

Personal preparation time. Ally felt that Amy's pre-game talk was too long and was not that relevant to her. Consequently, Ally said, that she tuned out and just read the notes on the white board that related to her. The length of the pre-game talk and the team-oriented warm-up were perceived by Ally to be restrictive, as she preferred to have some personal preparation time. The two 20-minute team warm-ups and 10-minute team talk limited her opportunity to focus on her own game and her own pre-game routine.

The discrepancies in Ally's perceptions and Amy's intentions focus on the limited time available to prepare individually and the length of time of the pre-game talk. Furthermore, Ally's perceptions of her coach as a well organised and meticulously prepared coach added to the negative effect of the change in the warm-up, as it was completely unanticipated. Ally said that the coach's style of preparation gave her

confidence and that the sudden and unexpected change in warm-up was out of character for her coach and consequently affected her preparations.

Before the changed warm-up, Ally perceived her coach to be a source of inspiration for her on game day. Ally stated that Amy helped her preparation by reinforcing the style of play that she was to employ against her opposition number and by showing confidence in her ability. Ally felt that Amy was an important source of motivation for her and the entire team prior to a game and that her meticulous preparation gave her confidence. Ally's comments reflected her trust and respect for her coach. The coaching style and preparation of Amy gave Ally confidence in her own game and trust that her coach had given her every opportunity to prepare optimally for the upcoming match. Furthermore, Ally felt that the individual attention that she received from her coach aided her in understanding what was expected of her during that match.

Coach Intentions and VCSRI Session

Nothing new on game day. Amy's reflections on her behaviours before the match were in line with her intended behaviours. The only change in intended behaviour was the change in the warm-up routine. Amy's decision to change the warm-up routine was against her stated philosophy of "nothing new on game day." Amy perceived that the change in warm-up routine did not affect the players and suggested that it would be beneficial to the team in the long term. She suggested that her actions had not affected players' preparations.

The comparison of results between Amy's VCSRI session and the Phase 1 interview showed that the coach primarily followed her stated intentions except for the change in warm-up routine and the length of her pre-game talk. Amy indicated that there were always the situational and contextual variables that influence the preparations.

Unexpected events, such as a change in opposition line up, must also be catered for and dealt with when they occur.

Individual interactions. In the VCSRI session, Amy reinforced that her interactions with Ally were focused on positive reinforcement, game tactics (offensive and defensive), motivation, and instilling confidence. The interactions were designed to remind Ally of her role in the team and her role in the game. Furthermore, Amy aimed to focus Ally's attention on specific goals and tasks. The individual interactions were focused on ensuring that the players were mentally ready to compete. Furthermore, they narrowed Ally's focus after the team based warm-up and pre-game talk.

Coach personal preparation and team performance. Amy emphasised that she used the time during the first team warm-up to prepare herself. Her goal was to ensure that she was optimally prepared for the pre-game talk. The pre-game talk was her time to motivate and show the players that she had confidence their ability. During the pre-game talk, Amy stated that her primary goal was to reinforce team tactics and focus her team on the game. She felt that she needed to be totally prepared and focused herself to ensure that her team took some confidence from her speech and were mentally ready to go out and compete.

Observation and evaluation. Amy stated that during the pre-game preparations she monitored her players' preparations throughout the time that they were preparing. As they arrived, she socialised with and observed them to see how their preparations were progressing. Amy advocated that her players use a set pre-game routine to aid their game focus. As a result, she would observe her player at specific times, such as during a warm-up or assess their preparation by talking to them. Amy then stated that she would assess each player's preparation and then intervene if required.

Summary

The interactions between Amy and Ally were formed around trust and respect for each other. Amy constructed a pre-performance environment that was planned and timed down to every last detail. Ally found that the manner in which Amy was prepared gave her confidence that her coach had everything ready for the game. Ally would of preferred to have more personal time to warm-up but she stated that she gained a sense of motivation and confidence from Amy. The individual interactions between Amy and Ally were focused on reinforcement of the game plan and personal tactics for Ally. Ally found these interactions positive and beneficial to her warm-up. The change in warm-up routine, however, disrupted the pre-game routine of Ally and affected her confidence in her physical preparation and her performance in the first quarter. Amy stated that she had changed the warm-up as they had lacked intensity. Her actions, however, had the opposite effect on Ally. Amy used a highly structured approach to the pre-game environment. Her focus was on the team preparing together in warm-ups, pre-game talk, and shooting drills. She complemented the team based activities with individual interactions that were spontaneous or due to observations of the players or opposition.

Results for Team B*Description of Team B*

Team B was a men's team involved in a conference of Australian Basketball Association. The coach was relatively young (32 years old) and had been coaching the same team for five years. Team B finished out of the playoffs the previous season after winning only a handful of games. At the start of the season, Bruce recruited five new players to the squad including new imports and players returning from the National Basketball League (NBL). At the time of season when the research started, the team was

performing above expectations and had lost only one game. The players were aged between 19 and 34, with an average age of 22 years old. The coach was a former player who was forced into retirement because of a leg injury. The team played in a competition that covered a wide area of south-eastern Australia and as a result they travelled a lot and played two games a weekend or two a week. Team B employed two assistant coaches, as well as several support staff and managers. Training consisted of a recovery session on Monday or the day after a game, followed by regular court training on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Games were usually held on a Saturday night or Sunday afternoon and occasionally on Wednesday. Bruce also conducted individual sessions (skills or fitness) with each player when needed.

Phase 1: Interview with Bruce on Intended Coaching Practices

Background to Bruce

Bruce was a 32-year-old male and was a full-time professional coach who had been coaching for 6 years and for 5 years at the current team. He was a former player who was forced into retirement after a knee injury. He spent several years as an assistant coach at the club before graduating to be a full-time coach. Bruce had previously coached as an assistant coach in the National Basketball League (NBL). He said that he began coaching when he was younger but never thought he would be a career coach at such a young age (32 years-of-age). At the time of writing, Bruce had been coaching for 12 years. An accomplished coach, Bruce had international coaching experience and had studied coaching degrees through university.

Bruce's Intended Coaching Practices and Structure of Pre-Game Environment

Bruce stated that he directed his players to be at the stadium an hour and 15 minutes before the start of a match. He instructed the players to get themselves to game at

the requested time to have their ankles strapped and injuries attended to by the physiotherapist.

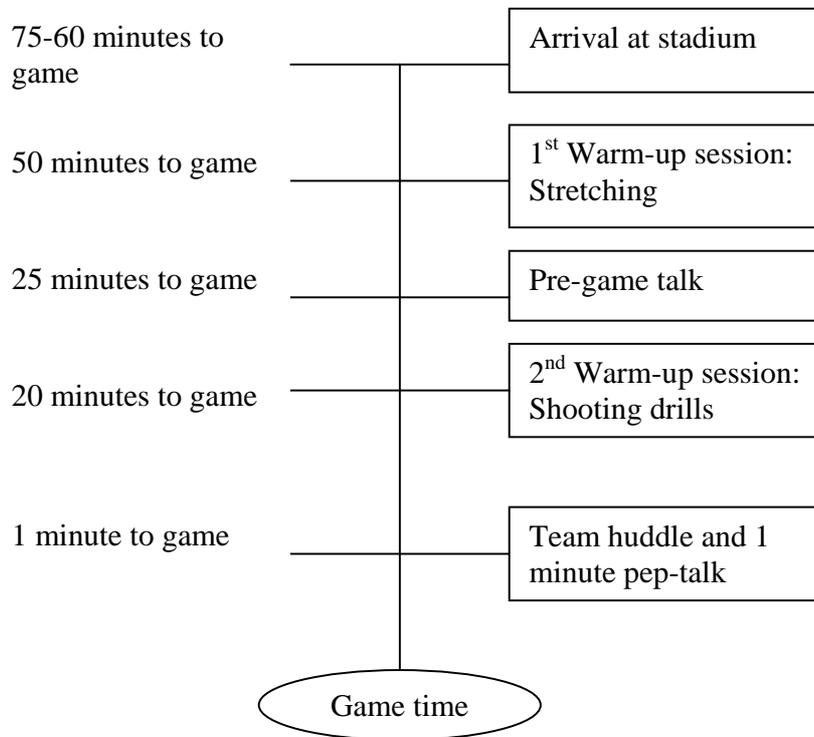


Figure 4.2.

Timeline and structure of Bruce's pre-game preparations for Team B.

Bruce stressed that he completed a lot of preparation during the week for the final hour before a game. Bruce stated that players were allowed to complete their own individual preparation after changing. He highlighted that most players chose to practice shooting. With 50 minutes to game time, Bruce stated that they had an extensive team based warm-up. In particular, he said that the assistant coach and support staff controlled the warm-up and stretching, while he completed his own personal preparation for the game in the change room.

After the first 20 minutes warm up, Bruce stated that he had the players re-group in the change rooms for the pre-game talk.

Then they come in with about 25 minutes to go before tip off, they have five minutes with me, they focus a little bit. I give them a scouting report on Thursday night, so I review that and then review what our focus was going to be for the game.

During the pre-game talk, Bruce stated that his goal was to focus on 3-4 key points. Bruce's comments suggested that the pre-game talk acted as a focusing point for his players, where he aimed to aid their transition into their preferred or ideal performance state for the game. In addition, Bruce declared that he aimed to reinforce the game plan and tactics that the team had practiced during the week. In particular, Bruce said,

I focus a bit more on personnel of the opposition and this time I give more jobs to the individuals within the group and push that. . .“you've got to keep that kid off the glass or we're going to front that guy in the post”. It's a lot more individual based and the problem is that you cannot go to team guys and give `em three things, it takes too long and guys trip off. So I try and focus on key points of the opposition personnel and then focus on a few points generically of the opposition, and then you go into what we need to do `cause you cannot worry about opposition you have to play well as well and you can get lost as a coach in getting caught up in what they do, but they have to stop you as well. . .the big focus is keep things simple and keep referring to that just before competition.

Bruce said that after the pre-game talk, with 20-25 minutes to the game, the players' headed out to the court to complete a second warm-up drill involving set shot routines. At this time, Bruce stated that he stayed in the change rooms and reviewed his notes before

heading out to the courtside when he felt ready. Bruce highlighted that the last interaction he had with the team, was 1 minute before game after the team announcement. In the last minute, he stressed that he reviewed the three main points that he had outlined in the pre-game talk and called the first play.

Overview of Bruce's Coaching Practices Prior to a Match

In this section, I examine the major objectives that emerged from the interview with Bruce. The primary coaching objectives included: physical preparation to aid mental readiness, mental preparation and mental readiness, focus players on game, establish a positive environment, personal knowledge and evaluation of team, individuality of coach and personal preparation, and mediating variables. Bruce reinforced that mental readiness and a game centred focus as being important objectives.

Physical preparation to aid mental readiness. Physical preparation was one of Bruce's main goals on the day of competition. In particular, Bruce highlighted that one of his primary concerns for game day was ensuring that his players were physically ready to compete. Bruce stated that he took a team-oriented view of preparation, combining two separate team warm-ups. The first warm-up, which was 50 minutes before the game, focused on stretching, and then the second with 20 minutes to game, time focused on shooting practice. For Bruce, physical preparation was a key to team cohesiveness and aided players attention to become more focused on the up-coming game. He suggested that the warm-up routine acted as a focusing point for the players and aided them in their mental readying for performance.

Mental preparation. Bruce highlighted that the mental component of pre-game preparations was an important objective. Bruce said that confidence, focus, and motivation were key elements of pre-game preparations. Bruce discussed that his role during pre-

game preparations was to aid players' being mentally ready for the game. He stated that he achieved this by establishing a positive team based environment, ensuring players' are relaxed, reinforcing players' role in team, and focusing players on the game. In particular, he stated that,

I think that the major things are to be relaxed and comfortable to play. . .as an individual and with each other. I couldn't think of too many other things and I think a big thing is to have them happy.

Bruce stated that he achieved this by trying to establish a positive environment that was light hearted and fun. Furthermore, Bruce emphasised "You really were playing for memories." Bruce philosophised that a good positive environment, focused on the team, aided players in becoming relaxed and more comfortable during the pre-game preparations.

In addition, Bruce suggested that two key elements of pre-game preparations for him as a coach was, instilling confidence in players and reducing anxiety in younger players. Bruce declared that he had a team that was relatively young and inexperienced, with ages ranging from 16-28 years of age, so ensuring that they were mentally relaxed and confident in their ability was an essential aspect of coaching prior to performance.

Bruce suggested that being focused and concentrating on the game was a key mental attribute for players before a game. Bruce stated that to get players focused as a team and individuals, he applied a structured pre-game routine that ready involved physical warm-ups and a pre-game talk, through the. Bruce said that a structured schedule and routine acted as part of the players' pre-game routine and aided not just physical preparation but also mentally.

Establish a positive environment. A key principle of Bruce's coaching style was keeping a light positive atmosphere that he suggested made him and the players a lot more relaxed.

A big emphasis is the positive factors and we're a little more relaxed even to the point of cracking a few jokes and getting a few laughs. . . as things were done within that structure and I am not worrying about it and players get in a rhythm and I am a lot more, relaxed with how I treating them, its working very well.

Previously Bruce had run the pre-game period at a high intensity due to his own personal nerves. Bruce declared that focusing on the positive factors and relaxing more, not only aided his preparation, but also aided team cohesion, because the players were more relaxed. Furthermore, he suggested that by establishing a positive working environment that focused on the team and not the individual he could foster trust and respect in the team. He also proposed that a positive environment with open honest communication aided team cohesion and coach-player relationships before a match.

Personal knowledge and pre-game assessment of player preparation. Bruce declared, that the personal knowledge of his players was constructed into mental framework that he had established through observations, personal conversations, and professional interactions. He said, "I really focus, really heavily on the person and I keep a mental checklist of communicating's with players. . .and I try and build a rapport with them beyond the game, beyond the court." Bruce highlighted that he then used this background information, when observing the players and the team, in conjunction with the current context, to intervene with a player when needed. This was reflected in Bruce's statement,

We have a 20 minute warm-up. . . I watch that and that is a really good indicator, if a kid misses a lay up and he starts stressing and he starts hitting himself on the thigh you know you have to talk to him just to put his mind at ease and you just read body language and that was the great thing about the warm-ups and I try to say some encouraging words.

Bruce stated that during the individual interaction he aimed to be a source of encouragement and aimed to emphasise positive aspects to counteract the negative thoughts that may be affecting the player's preparations.

The application of his personal knowledge of players was critical to the functioning pre-game preparations. For example, Bruce highlighted information overload as a reason to not introduce new material or to keep the pre-game talk short. In order to achieve optimal mental and physical readiness he suggested that he needed to limit the amount of information given on game day. Bruce reported that his players were more receptive earlier in the week rather than on the day of a game, rather than when they were focused on playing and in "battle mode". This knowledge meant that Bruce dictated the pre-game preparations and the pre-game talk to reflect this, limiting the flow of information to earlier in the week and then reminding the players' on game day, and introducing no new plans or tactics. In particular, Bruce suggested:

There is a lot of information that you have to sift through. What your group can retain . . . I do not think that I have a really smart group, I have a really hard-working group, terrific group in that way, so the big focus is to keep things simple and keep referring to that just before competition and then during competition.

Bruce's comments suggested that his personal knowledge of Team B's players aided his coaching style on the day of a game. Furthermore, he stated that his long tenure, five

seasons at the same team, aided his knowledge of his players and enabled him to apply effective individualised coaching strategies aimed at getting the best out of each player. Bruce's negative comment reflected his knowledge of the players and how he adapted his coaching style to suit the needs of the situation. He indicated that he was required to reinforce the specific points that he wanted the team to focus on to ensure that the team was mentally ready to perform.

Individuality of coach and personal preparation. Bruce declared, "every coach's personality permeates," through the team. Consequently, Bruce stated that he had altered the manner in which he approached the game compared to previous seasons. In particular, Bruce proposed, "I think that if I am stressed during competition the players anxiety will rise too and if you're stressed, you speak to people in a way that you would not and your tone was a little bit sharper". In particular, Bruce highlighted that "I watch them in warm ups. We have a 20-minute warm up, but I come out a bit later because I pace and do all that stuff, so I don't like the players even seeing that." As a result, Bruce suggested he had taken steps to control his anxiety. Bruce said that he spent time mentally preparing himself and following a set pre-game routine designed to benefit himself and the team. Specifically, he highlighted that he did a lot of preparation for the games and was more structured at training.

Bruce stated that he had personal preparation time during the players' final warm-up session. He said that he stayed in the change rooms and reviewed his notes. The time away from the team allowed him to calm his own nerves and focus himself on what he has to do before and during a game. Bruce suggested that this allowed him to focus on mentally preparing himself and to limit the influence of the coach's nerves on the players'

preparation. He perceived himself as a performer and that his performance could affect that of his team.

Bruce acknowledged that Team B had a range of different support staff at the club. He stated that the assistant coach aided his personal preparation by taking over some of the duties and allowing him to focus in more detail on game and team related issues. Bruce said that during the pre-game preparation he relied on his assistant coach to help him prepare the team. Bruce stated that his assistant coach had a different coaching style that complemented his throughout training and the preparation for a match. For example, Bruce stated that his assistant was “old school” and had a hardnosed attitude towards players’ work ethic. Bruce suggested that the attitude of his assistant helped him to get the best out of the players before a game and eased the pressure on him.

Mediating variables. Bruce stated that the place on the ladder determined the focus of his coaching practices before a match. Bruce recounted his experiences from the previous season, where Team B was not going to make the finals. Consequently, Bruce’s focus was on developing the team and the players, rather than beating the opposition. In relation to his pre-game talk, Bruce indicated that:

Once you get into the last third of the year and you know where you are at and . . . you are either playing for a spot or a high spot in the finals and then . . . you get to know what the other teams are doing a little bit more and you start probably getting away from what you’re doing as that should be established or focused and you can focus on the opposition in a little more detail. But at the moment it is a bit of a dog’s breakfast a bit of patchwork here and there.

Bruce stated that a second factor that influenced the manner in which he approached the pre-game preparations was the level of development of the players and the

team. I conducted the interview at the start of the season. At the time, Bruce stated that he was “trying to establish a team” and had 5 to 7 new players in the squad. Bruce declared that the style of coaching he was applying at the time was influenced by this factor. Specifically, his goals were focused on developing the players into a cohesive team.

Summary

Bruce highlighted that providing the right conditions and environment could foster the preparations for his players. In particular, Bruce suggested that a structured positive environment allowed players to feel relaxed and comfortable and consequently complete optimal mental and physical preparations. He was also conscious of the influence that his behaviour had on his players. To avoid influencing the team’s preparations Bruce said that he followed a pre-game routine designed to mental ready himself for the game, the pre-game talk and the pre-game preparations. He also suggested that the time of the season and the situation of the team influenced the manner in which he approached coaching prior to the match.

Phase 2: Observations of Team B

Game Day Observations

Coaching staff and players in Team B arrived around 90 minutes before the scheduled start of their match. Several members of the coaching staff were involved in the reserves match that preceded Team B’s match. The final hour before Team B’s game followed a strict structure, but allowed players to complete their own individual preparations. The structure of the pre-game preparations included the following elements: (a) physiotherapy, strapping, and changing, (b) physical warm-up, (c) pre-game talk, (d) extra shooting practice due to delayed game (e) skills-based warm-up and shooting practice, and (f) team announcement and national anthem. Unfortunately, due to the

reserves game running into overtime the start time was delayed. This resulted in the coach staff adding a low key shooting practice task to keep the players warm.

Bruce described the home game for Team B as dangerous as they were to play against a talented that played an unstructured style of offensive. Bruce reported that he had no way of knowing how the opposition would play especially after they had had a loss to a team the night before and a plane flight of 2 hours on game day. The main match was delayed because the reserves match was just starting the second quarter an hour and 20 minutes before the scheduled start of the main match. Consequently, the reserves game went into double overtime. Bruce stated that the only rule that he liked to keep was that his players be there at least an hour before the start of the main match. An hour and 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the match, several players were seated in the stands watching the reserves team play. The atmosphere was social and very light, the support staff, including the assistant coaches and physiotherapists, were involved with the current match and were seen to interact with each player as they arrived.

Bruce arrived late having locked himself out of the house. He was already agitated when he found out that the game would be delayed by at least 30 minutes. He interacted with the support staff and some of the players, but headed off to the change rooms still looking agitated. In the change rooms, he sat and spoke semi seriously with the players. The change rooms were frantic as the players changed into their uniforms, received a rub down, or had their ankles or knees strapped. The atmosphere was light, but intense. All the players and staff were aware of the delay in the game and asked what will happen with the warm-up.

As the players and coaching staff prepared, Bruce and a key American import player were observed to argue and fight over an incident in the stands, the import player

was injured in the previous game and was observed to disrespect the coach in front of the public and the players earlier. They argued over his inclusion in the team. Bruce stated that in the previous game the import player had injured an ankle and had not been able to train all week. The coach also informed the player that he was rested for this game, as it was a long season. The import player, however, still wanted to play and continued to get changed. The physiotherapist examined the ankle and agreed with the player that the swelling had gone down but should rest. The coach spoke briefly to the player and said that “it’s a long season and there was no need to push yourself”. The import player retaliated that he was playing and stormed out to warm-up. The coaches discussed this matter for a short time and decided that they would observe him in the warm-up and may let him play a limited role. Bruce was visibly annoyed, he cursed loudly, and as he sat down, he stated “the season is not even half way over” and that resting a key player with an injury at this stage of the season was a “luxury they could afford”.

As the players headed out to warm-up, Bruce was primarily organising and facilitating the players and staff. Bruce searched for a spare court for the players to warm-up on and talked to staff about the players including the reserve or bench players, who would join the team after they finished playing in the reserves game tonight. At this stage, the atmosphere was tense, but the delay in the scheduled game time allowed the coaching staff to sort out the team changes, the changes to the match ups, and the game plan.

The coaches and players discussed the inclusion of a former international player in the opposition who had returned to the game. His size and skill presented a problem for the team, however, Team B planned to run him around the court, due to his age (40 years old) and size. Bruce stated that the unstructured nature of the opposition team’s play was the main worry for the coach, because he was not able to really produce a game plan for

unstructured play. Bruce suggested that all he could do was concentrate on his players and strategies.

During this time, Bruce was observed to be agitated and nervous at this time. He constantly paced up and down in the change room and spoke at a quick pace, cursing every now and then, and stating to me “you’ve come on scatter brain night.” It was evident that my presence with a camera was possibly affecting his behaviours when the team and staff were not present. It is a natural thing to talk to another person when there is no-one else around. I must acknowledge that Bruce’s behaviours may have changed due to my presence.

The tense atmosphere was broken by the humour of the physiotherapist and the by-play between the coaches. The atmosphere was still quite social. The coaches were not heavily involved at this time. The organisation and structure of Team B allowed the players some freedom to do what they want within the schedule provided by the coach. The players were only restricted to the arrival time, the warm-up, the pre-game speech, and the final warm-up.

As the players returned from the warm-up, several of them changed their shirts, and re-hydrated. Bruce stood in front of the whiteboard and got ready to address the group. Bruce began aggressively, he raised his voice and emphasised his points through aggressive hand gestures and forceful language. The players were observed to focus intently on their coach, most said nothing throughout the five-minute speech. Bruce pinpointed the key players in the opposition and reiterated to the players marking them what their job was and how to stop the opposition. His language was aggressive and direct, for example, “I want to see some fucking effort”! Bruce stated later that the best way to get a point across was to be primitive and aggressive. The speech was short, direct,

and forceful. As Bruce finished, the team formed a huddle and scream the team name and then headed out to the warm-up.

As the players headed out to the court, Bruce spoke to several players individually and reinforced several points about the player they were marking. Bruce was observed to take Brad aside to tell him to keep his opposition player out of the key and run him around at the offensive end. Brad was observed to agree with the coach. In the pre-game speech, Brad was observed to be singled out during the pre-game talk and challenged by the coach to take it to “Brian”, the former international player. Bruce was observed to pace up and down the change room floor for a few minutes before taking a seat and overlooking the team sheets. Bruce stated that his preparation from now on was to normally sit quietly and focus himself by reading a novel. Unfortunately, he forgot his book this week. He was observed to be nervous and frustrated at disrupting his routine. Bruce stated that the 20 minutes that he spent in the change rooms as the players warmed up was his time for reflection and how he prepared himself. Throughout the next 20 minutes, he sat down and talked to the support staff, as they came in and out of the change room. Bruce also talked to me occasionally.

As the players warmed-up on court, a reserves player changed clothes and went out to warm-up with the rest of Team B already having played a game. Bruce enquired about how they looked in warm-up and how the injured player was performing. Bruce was observed to sit with his head in his hands. He appeared very nervous and agitated, stating time and again that this was not a usual night for the team. He spoke to me briefly about himself personally and professionally and about coaching in general. Bruce stated that he couldn't make his pre-game talk any longer, as the players were not smart enough to focus for that long.

The assistant coach came in five minutes before game time and Bruce headed out to stand courtside. At this time, Coach B was observed to walk impatiently up and down the court observing his players and the opposition. Occasionally he interacted with an official or his support staff and, briefly, with some players. The interactions were always short and individual. During the warm-up, Brad was observed to be warming up with a low intensity and taking low percentage shots. Bruce was observed to stand by the baseline and shake his head. Brad was also observed to stand at the back of the team during the team huddle and to pay limited attention to Bruce as he spoke.

As the players finished the warm-up, Coach B gathered them around for a quick meeting and appeared to again, reinforce some key points. His manner was aggressive and forceful. The players stood around as the team was announced and the national anthem was played. As they filed back to the bench for the start of the match, Bruce gathered them all together. The starting line up knelt in front of him and the others stood behind. Bruce again spoke forcefully, but more calmly this time. He clapped his hands and they huddled around him. He pumped them up and let the starting five head out to the centre for the tip off.

Bruce and Brad Interactions

I observed that throughout the course of the pre-match preparations Bruce and Brad had limited interactions. They were observed to interact on several occasions, first regarding Brad forgetting his shoes/orthotics. The second during the pre-game speech, where Bruce personally challenged Brad in front of the team to dominate his opposing player and show how good he was. The final interaction was held just after the pre-game talk where Bruce spoke to Brad individually regarding his match up in the game and the tactics that he was to employ offensively and defensively. The limited interactions may

reflect the nature of the coach-athlete relationship between Bruce and Brad.

Furthermore, the nature of the unexpected events may have influenced Bruce's own pre-match preparations, as well as the interactions with Brad's and his pre-match preparations.

Summary

It was evident that during the pre-game period Bruce spent limited time with his players. Bruce was observed to spend considerable time away from the players, approximately 25 minutes. Bruce's interactions with the team were observed to be limited to the short pre-game speech (5 minutes) and the individual interactions before and after the speech. Bruce was observed to engage in silent observation of his players when he was courtside, but the predominant time was spent in the change rooms away from the team. Bruce used his assistants to relay information and to investigate how his players were preparing. He spent limited time with Brad, but did single him out during the pre-game talk and then followed up with a personal chat afterwards.

Phase 3: Interview with Brad

Background to Brad

Brad was a 22 year-old forward/centre, who was in his second year playing with Bruce. Brad took up basketball later in life and had been playing for only 5 years. He was a semi-professional player and had previously played in the NBL, before returning to the ABA to play with Team B. Brad was perceived as a key player for Team B due to his size and strength. Bruce identified three players that he thought were ideal to participate. Due to Bruce and Brad completing some individual work during the week of the testing Brad was identified as a key participant for this research, as he was highly interactive with Bruce before the match.

Researchers Note Regarding Brad Interview

The interview with Brad was cut short due his own personal choice. The player had requested that the interview not be recorded. As a result, I took field notes throughout the short phone interview. The shortened nature of the interview has not affected the results, as I was able to ask the key questions seen in Appendix C, but I was not able to elaborate or probe his responses any further. Please note that the quotations used in the interview with Brad were recorded by hand and may not reflect Brad's statement word for word. Due to the nature of the study, targeting a different player would have meant conducting another series of observations. Gaining access to pre-game change rooms in such an intimate part of elite sport was very difficult, consequently, I present results from a shortened interview with the targeted player in Team B.

Outline of Brad's Perceptions of Bruce

Brad stated that the pre-game preparation went badly before the game recorded in Phase 2. Brad reported that his coach seemed a little more agitated than usual, because he had locked himself out of his house shortly before the game. The late start of the reserves game meant that he sat in the stands with his team-mates and watched, before the assistant coach yelled at them and told them to go and get changed. In the change rooms, Brad felt that the atmosphere was intense, as no one knew exactly what time they would start. In addition, Brad stated that he had forgotten his orthotics (specially designed implants for his shoes). Brad stated that he went to run out to his car to get them, but they were not there. He had left them at home. Brad stated that the short run and the short drive home helped him warm up on the cold night. Brad reflected that, had the first game not been late, he would have been in trouble. Brad suggested that his anxiety levels went up and that his normal pre-game routine was disrupted because of this event.

Brad reflected on the pre-game talk and said that it was really aggressive, “Bruce really pumped it up”. Brad indicated that his coach had challenged him during the pre-game talk, because he was matching up against a former international player and former NBL all-star “Brian”. Brad said that he and Bruce had been doing individual training sessions during the week to counter the offensive strike power of Brian. The extra training session he reflected were beneficial, however, he suggested that they had been unnecessary. Brad suggested that the extra attention from Bruce was making him more anxious about the game.

In reference to the pre-game talk, Brad reported that the individual attention in front of the team on the day of the game, however, was not required and had put him offside with the coach. Furthermore, Brad stated that he preferred to be left alone during pre-match preparations but Bruce disagreed with Brad’s preferences on game day. Brad highlighted that the disagreement in coaching style had resulted in himself and Bruce meeting earlier in the season to work out a compromise between what he wanted from the coach and what Bruce thought was best for him. It was evident that Brad and Bruce had a clash in coaching style on Brad’s preferred pre-game preparations. Brad’s preference was to be left alone to prepare himself on the day of a game. The compromise meant that Brad was given the extra time to himself but Bruce could talk to Brad individually if required. On the day of this game, Brad suggested that his coach had not given him enough space and his nerves had been heightened as a result.

In addition, Brad reported that he was not happy with being challenged by the coach in the pre-game talk in front of the players during the pre-game talk. Brad said that he knew his role in the team was important and he knew whom he was matching up against and that singling him out had not helped. Furthermore, he suggested the aggressive

talk was not needed. Brad said however, that before that game Bruce had helped him in understanding his specific role in the game he just disagreed with the style of delivery that his coach had chosen.

Summary

Overall, Brad perceived that although his coach was trying to assist him prior to the match, he was not happy with the style of delivery. Brad perceived the personal challenge in front of the team during the pre-game talk, as not necessary and inappropriate. It is evident that Brad and Bruce disagree of the Players' preferred coaching style and preferred pre-match preparations. Brad's comments indicated that he did respect his coach but he disagreed with how he acted prior to this match. He felt that the aggression and anxiety of Bruce affected his own levels of anxiety and the extra pressure from the individual attention placed him in a position that he did not want to be in so close to the match. Evidently, Brad did not perceive Bruce's behaviours in a positive manner before that game.

Phase 4: VCSRI Session with Bruce

The scenes for the VCSRI of Team B were selected based on the analysis of the first interview with the coach. In total, 1 hour and 53 minutes of footage was recorded before the match. More footage was taken due to the first game going into overtime As I was unable to tell when the game was to start I am unable to give definite time frames for the events. After analysing the videotape, 9 scenes were edited and selected to be included in the interview. The scenes were selected based on Bruce's description of the way she constructed the pre-game period, scenes that reflected the coaches' plan, and scenes that included interactions with the corresponding Brad. Scenes that were spontaneous or situation specific were also included in the VCSRI session. One scene was omitted, as

Bruce was unable to remember the exact details of the scene. The selected scenes were described in the following section:

Scene 1: Scatterbrain Night

Bruce was observed to be sitting in the change rooms alone unsure of what time the game would start due to the previous game starting late and going into overtime. The change rooms were frantic. Players were changing, getting rub downs, or having their ankles strapped. Bruce had just spoken to several support staff, who had arrived late, Brad had forgotten his orthotics for his shoes, and Bruce had locked himself out of his home. Bruce looked frustrated and pensive and made the comment to me as he sat there “mate, you’ve come on scatterbrain night.”

In the VCSRI session, Bruce stated that at this point early in the warm-up, things were not going as planned,

...very average generally, frenetic. Not because I was late, I always leave well and truly on time, but I locked my keys out of the car and I went out of the house with the wrong car keys. We get there and the manager had screwed up and forgotten one set of uniforms, which was not catastrophic, and then one of the players forgot his orthotics. Combined with that its cold and we were playing a team that was not very good, but can have one of those nights, as they have some talent, so it was probably a level of anxiety.

Bruce indicated that the style of play of the opposition had caused him some anxiety, because he could not really plan for their style of attack. This level of anxiety had been compounded by the numerous problems that he had encountered before the start of play.

Bruce reflected on his behaviours and thoughts regarding his and the team’s preparations. He indicated that normally, he had his own pre-game routine where he

would be more focused on himself and read a book, taking a more organisational role while the support staff organised and dealt with players' requests.

I felt uncomfortable in that situation `cause I normally read a book, so I'm just sitting there talking productively. Well not productively, it was unproductive. I like to do stuff that's productive, that's relevant to the game, and I felt it was and those were the examples I used before hand [see above quote], probably the good thing about talking about it was that I get rid of that. . . I felt under the pump! I started to try and relax at that time.

Clearly, the unexpected events had affected Bruce's preparations and his focus.

Unexpectedly, Bruce declared that talking about the problems on the night to me had aided in alleviating his anxiety and helped him to relax.

Scene 2: Argument with Injured Import player.

In this scene, Bruce was talking with an injured player. Following this he had a short discussion with the assistant coach. This scene was an ongoing sequence of events that started in the previous week. The import player rolled his ankle in the previous match and was unable to practice during the week. Bruce had planned on resting him for this match. The player, however, had other ideas and showed up dressed and ready to play. After an argument in the stands, the import player returned to the change rooms and started getting ready. The physiotherapist said, "well if you are going to play then let me have a look at the ankle." The player was cleared to play by the physiotherapist, but Bruce was reluctant, due to this being a long season. The player took no notice and walked out to warm-up. The coaching staff then discussed the situation and the implications for the team.

At this point in the cued recall interview, Bruce told me that there was some information that may help me in understanding the situation. He related that he and the American import player, Richard, had had a long running disagreement, regarding numerous issues, including Richard's attitude. Bruce stated:

Just to fill you in, I had just had a blue [argument] with Richard outside and he was a hard character to coach. He's . . .and this was. . .we have just got through this. It has been a difficult two weeks, but what had just happened was that he was up talking crap to the spectators and he comes down to ask if he can help coach. And then I have a crack at him that he should be in with his team mates and then he goes in and I walk in and he was starting on put on a uniform. I felt a little bit wedged in a corner with how to behave....

Bruce found that Richard had put him into a difficult position by confronting him in the stands in front of spectators and staff. The reality was that, I did not know this information and it changed my perception of the incident. Initially, I thought the coach was showing concern for Richard's injury, but the background information provided by the coach aided in my understanding of the dynamics of the interaction and of the relationship between the coach and the player. Bruce described the scene in the following manner:

. . .he was not backward in telling people how good he was and he's up there doing that and then he comes down and I'm hearing it and that was really annoying me 'cause I thought he should be with his team, which I'm right. He comes down and asks to be an assistant coach and that was just a red rag and I just jumped on that and then I walk in there and he's got that on [uniform] and my initial reaction was of anger...we got everybody around. It was a long year, you don't want...you gotta be tactful.

The disagreement between coach and player on the day of the game stemmed for previous incidents. The actions of Richard and the already stressful preparations forced Bruce to take action. Richard decided to play in the game against Bruce's orders.

Bruce also spoke of the actions of the team's physiotherapist. The physiotherapist had given Richard the all clear after a 2-minute assessment. Bruce stated that he did not want to risk playing Richard. Bruce was not happy, with the decision and with how Richard and the physiotherapist communicated with the coach. Bruce stated that the incident forced him to take action and have a consultation with all three of them.

I went with Simon and Richard and sat there with them on the consultation and it was amazing what came out...the misrepresentation of reality. . .that was another word for lying and. . . and the thing that I keep going back. . .was the kid, I don't really like him! He was a worker, he was passionate, he was legit about playing, I think he was a winner, so I gotta make sure I don't let that get in the way. On the other hand he was immature and he doesn't see past often. . . . I made my point and but I could see that I was pretty pissed off and frustrated with it.

Bruce's obvious dislike of Richard was something that he, as a coach, had to confront. The coaching style he applied when dealing with Richard, focused on his contribution to the team. Bruce reported that he was forced to adjust his personal attitude in order to ensure team harmony.

In addition, to the issues with Richard, Bruce stated that due to my presence and the video camera, he was not as hard on the physiotherapist for what he had done. Normally, he stated, he would have "really ripped into him that night", but the physiotherapist was also sick and had to take that into consideration. Bruce had changed

his coaching behaviour due to my presence. Upon reflection, though, Bruce stated that, the manner he dealt with the issue allowed for a more positive result.

Scene 3: Pre-Game Talk, Part One

As the players returned, from the warm-up, they high-fived Bruce, took a seat, while drink bottles were handed around and strapping was checked. Bruce asked if they were all there and then launched into what he described as a “primitive” pre-game talk. He began by reviewing the team they were playing and the opposition match ups. His language was colourful and he cursed and yelled to make his point. He kept the speech short, direct, and blunt and highlighted the roles of individual team members, as well as that of the entire team.

“My worry going into that game was I think they [the opposition] had some ability, but they were not very cohesive.” Bruce declared that he was not happy with the players’ effort as a team. During his pre-game talk, Bruce said that he aimed to challenge to guys with specific issues. Bruce stated that he “challenged” Brad and with an issue regarding the player he was matching up against, because Brad does not deal with criticism in that forum. Consequently, Bruce reported that he changed his coaching style to suit the needs of the player. In this case, Bruce used positive reinforcement and suggested that he perceived that he was able to encourage Brad without getting him offside.

Scene 4: Pre-Game Talk, Part Two

The coach reviewed the key aspects that Team B had been working on in practice. His language was colourful and he swore to emphasise a point. His voice was loud and commanding and his body language was aggressive. Bruce was pumped up and his speech reflected this. The players were receptive and responded to the questions he asked, while

members of the support staff looked on with interest, as the coach finished the pre-game speech with a huddle and yelling/screaming the team name.

Bruce indicated that he prepared his pre-game talk, but only followed 3 or 4 key points. Coach B stated that in recent weeks, he stated that there had been a problem with guys listening, but, after watching the video, he declared that they were paying attention. The style of delivery, aggressive and full of cursing, related to Bruce's anxiety over the team's ability to pull together as a unit. Bruce related that he had been worried about the game and he felt that he had to use an up tempo and aggressive delivery style to get players' attention.

It was typical of a game that I think I am worried if, whether the players were ready to go, and I had every sign that they weren't prior to that. So there was a little bit more macho bullshit. That doesn't happen every week.

Furthermore, Bruce stated that the unexpected events during the pre-game preparation had made him think, "shit we could be in problems here" and forced Bruce to act in ways he thought would lift the arousal level of the team. Bruce stated that he thought it was very appropriate for the night.

Scene 5: Interaction with Brad

As the pre-game talk finished, the players all moved off to grab warm-up jackets or drinks. The support staff and physiotherapist organised equipment and checked players' strapping. Bruce went over to Brad, who was matching up on a former international player who although old for a player posed a significant threat. Bruce and Brad spoke briefly and then the coach patted Brad on the back and sent him out.

The interaction with Brad followed on from the pre-game talk. Brad was matching up against a former international player. Bruce stated that he had completed some

individual sessions during the week with Brad on a zone defence, which Team B does not usually play. Bruce reported that he was ‘technique coaching,’ reinforcing the principles that he had focused on during the week. Furthermore, “Brad does not listen. . .yeah he trips away. It has been a hard two weeks for him because his minutes have dropped and it was really starting to stretch a little bit long.” Coach B highlighted to me in the interview that Brad had not played as much as he usually did in the recent games. Bruce suggested that this had affected Brad’s approach to the game, and that he as a coach had to ensure that he was up and ready for the game and for the challenge involved in this match.

Bruce declared that the interaction with Brad was focused on the reinforced of principles that he had worked on with Brad during the week. In particular, Bruce reflected, I am re-emphasising a point with Brad as I am pretty sure as I didn’t feel that he was listening in the huddle and that was not an uncommon thing to try and grab him aside. It’s been a hard year for him. Yeah cause I actually don’t think my style of coaching was good for him. He just doesn’t want to be coached. It’s sad because no one has grabbed him at the right age to educate him, its really unfortunate. We have worked through it. We have been very open with each other. That relates directly back to that incident that what I would have just been going over how to defend Brian.

Coach B felt that the individual interaction, was needed with Brad to ensure that he was focused on his role in the game. In addition, Bruce had found that in the previous weeks, the shorter, more focused pre-game speech and individual interactions had worked, so he had adapted his coaching style to suit the needs of the team. The clash of coaching

style that Bruce had with Brad was highlighted when Bruce stated, “it was hard with Brad. It was either too much feedback or not enough. He is never happy.”

Scene 6: Interaction with Injured Import Player (Richard)

In the change rooms, the injured player sat in the corner, going through his bag as the team headed out of the change rooms and to the court. Bruce and his assistant coach/physiotherapist approached him and discussed the injury and his involvement. Bruce stated, “I’d prefer you start on the bench, but we will see how the warm-up goes. . .it’s a long season. . .”. The player headed out to the court and the coaches’ shrugged their shoulders.

Bruce stated that he had assessed the situation and let “bygones by bygones.” He showed concern for the player.

I was certainly disappointed and angry with him, I think. I was looking at that little excerpt, I would of just made sure we got our contact and talked cause he was hard work. He was not an evil kid, but he was hard work.

When Bruce reflected on the incident, “I could see that it was the start and I actually brought this night up to him to really stress a point to him about his behaviour. I used this night as big example.” Bruce suggested that Richard’s actions had had an influence on the team’s preparations and the relationship between coach and player had to be assessed. Furthermore, Bruce reported that the outcome of the incident coupled with his personal dislike of Richard resulted in Bruce adjusting his coaching style, for this particular player.

Scene 6: Bruce Personal Preparation in Change Rooms

After the players and staff headed out onto the court to warm-up, Bruce moved over to the bench in the change rooms and sat down to go over some notes and the team sheet. At this stage, due to the delay of the start of the game, there was still at least 20

minutes to go. Bruce stated that normally he sat and read a book, and only dealt with minor organisational details, such as clothing, time sheets, reserves, support staff, and drinks. He slouched on the bench and threw the clipboard on the floor. He appeared very frustrated and stressed. And said to me, “you’ve come on scatterbrain night.”

In relation to the disagreement just past and the unexpected events, Bruce described his demeanour in the following manner, “I am obviously shitty still there and but I had obviously resigned to. . . this was how I am dealing with it.” To further frustrate Bruce, he had forgotten the book that he normally read as part of his pre-game routine.

I have not had a book since (laughs), so the thing was a lot of the time. I don’t read the book. I don’t even focus on it, but it was a great opportunity for people to leave me alone. You know its...leave me alone...I don’t think of the game

Bruce stated that his pre-game routine was important to his preparations and with all the other unexpected events prior to this game he stated that he “probably needed it that night,” because it would have helped him refocus on his game and reduce his anxiety levels. Bruce reflected, “Watching this thing I would have been, you know, a ball of stress, a ball of fury, just crazy on some things, and I guess that’s the maturity and the experience.”

Scene 7: Courtside Observation of Other Team

The team was performing warm-up drills and taking practice shots, as Bruce paced up and down the court in front of the bench. Bruce stopped in front of the officials’ scoring bench to observe the opposition team warm-up.

Regarding his observations, Bruce stated, “I was obviously watching Team X a lot. . .they had a game the night before and I look for guys that were limping, moving, just to get a feel if they were carrying any injuries.” Bruce highlighted, that in conjunction with

observation of the opposition team, that he also monitored his own team's preparations, focusing on each player's preparations or form and if they were "switched on". Bruce reflected on the form of Brad, "Brad, was warming up like he was going to a funeral, but I wouldn't have said anything to him cause I have already had some issues with him." Bruce's knowledge of Brad and how he preferred to prepare meant that, even though he was not happy with Brad's preparation, he did not intervene, because it would not have benefited him or the player.

Scene 8: The Final Minute Before Tip-Off

In the final minute before the tip off, the players had finished the warm-up and Bruce called them over for the final time, focusing on the starting line up. The starting line up sat on the bench with Bruce in front on one knee pointing to a clipboard. The bench players stood behind the coach. The coaching staff stood to one side observing the coach. Bruce was very vocal, screaming and yelling instructions at the starting five, gesticulating wildly Bruce focused on specific players before sending the team out to the court. After that, Team B had a team huddle and screamed the team name.

Bruce observed that the players were all calling for Brad to come over and join the group, "having a look at Brad, he was not interested. He just wants to get on the court. He just wants to get onto the court and get on with business." During the one-minute huddle, Bruce said that he normally emphasised three things, including "effort, run the floor, good ball pressure all the stuff that we go on with that was relevant and I call a play to open the game." Bruce described it as a pre-programmed speech, designed to remind the players of their strategy for this game.

Scene 9: Players go out to for the tip-off

As the players headed out to the tip off, Bruce stopped and observed the opposition he looked deep in thought and focused.

So that is probably the worst minute that I have and I send `em out early on court, the way I have done it for years, before opposition, one because I wanted to be relaxed when I am talking to them and send them out `cause there was that and you realise that it was out of your hands. Now you go through that period. . . .That was when my anxiety levels. . .that's when I go to the other end and try not to talk to anybody.

When asked what he was thinking as the players were sent out onto court, Bruce replied, "Fuck, I hope we play good tonight! (laughs) You know we take care of business and I hope the guys were ready you know its hope, because your job's done."

Summary

A series of unexpected events affected the pre-game routines of Bruce and Brad. A key aspect for Bruce was the ability to adapt his coaching style to unexpected events and to assess the preparations of his players. Bruce assessed the preparation of his players and the situation and changed his coaching style to suit the situation. Brad perceived his coach as being a positive for the team but his actions before the game had not aided his personal preparations. Brad and Bruce aimed to achieve the same goals before a match, optimal mental and physical preparation, and focus on the game. They disagreed, however, on the processes involved in preparing Brad to compete. Bruce was not happy with Brad's preparations likening his warm-up to a "funeral procession". Bruce did not intervene, as he knew that Brad would not respond positively to his presence and Brad's mental state so close to the game may have been disrupted. Bruce reported that watching the video aided

in understanding how his behaviours and his players reacted to his actions. Bruce reflected that his aggressive approach was needed on that day, as his players were just not focused. The assessment of player preparations was found to be a key factor in Bruce's interactions with players and behaviours in the hour prior to performance. Importantly though he stated that due to my presence, he had altered how he would have normally reacted.

Triangulation of Results for Team B

Coach Intentions and Observations of Behaviour

Unexpected events. On the day of the recorded game a series of unexpected events such as a delayed game, team infighting, and a disrupted pre-game routine occurred. Bruce was observed to control the pre-game period by attempting to stick to his intended schedule. Bruce successfully dealt with the numerous problems by refocusing himself, Team B, and the coaching staff. By sticking to the schedule Bruce was able to continue to achieve his stated goals of physically and mentally preparing the players and himself for competition. Bruce achieved this by adopting an aggressive (verbally and physically) pre-game talk. Bruce said that the aggression was needed as he felt that the players were not focused on the match. Bruce motivated and encouraged his players through the short and direct pre-game speech and through individual interactions.

Individual interactions. Bruce suggested that personal knowledge of his players and how they prepared was a key to effective coaching prior to a game. Bruce interacted individually with Brad on two distinct occasions. The first was aimed at relaxing Brad after Brad realised that he had forgotten his orthotics for his shoes. The second was more game focused and occurred after the pre-game speech. Bruce reinforced the key principles

for Brad to remember when attacking or defending against his opposing player. The interactions were aimed at positive reinforcement, and instilling confidence in the player.

Coach personal preparation and pre-game routine. Bruce suggested that his own coaching style benefited from a pre-game routine that he followed. He also proposed that his players' feed of his preparation and that he needed to be at the top of his game to ensure that the team and the coaching staff were adequately prepared. Bruce emphasised that he spent a lot of time preparing for game day. Unfortunately, due to unexpected events the team's and the coach's pre-game routines were disrupted. Bruce's anxiety levels were observed to be heightened by forgetting his keys and the book that he normally read to ease his nerves when the players were warming up. The disrupted pre-game routine appeared to affect Bruce and potentially his players.

Physical and mental preparation of players. Bruce aimed to have his players physically and mentally prepared for competition. He achieved this by applying a structured team focused warm-up. The players had two distinct warm-up sessions, both ran by the assistant coaches. The first focused on stretching and warming up the muscles while the second focused on shooting skills. During both drills, Bruce was observed to concentrate on other matters such as personal preparation. Bruce suggested that the team based warm-ups aided players' attentional focus on the game and the structure of warm-up (stretching), team talk, shooting practice warm-up session, helped the players mentally prepare and concentrate on the upcoming task. The pre-game talk aimed to reinforce the team tactics, motivate the players and instil confidence in their individual ability and their ability as a team.

Coach Intentions, Observations, and Player Perceptions

Disagreement in coaching style. The individual interactions with Brad were observed to be short direct and game focused. Bruce stated that Brad had a bad habit of not listening. Bruce and Brad had a disagreement in the chosen coaching style. Bruce stated “he just does not want to be coached.” Bruce wanted to get the best out of his players and aid in the development of Brad to fulfil his potential. Brad, however, disagreed with Bruce’s coaching style and suggested that the extra attention he received made him more anxious and belittled him in front of the other team members. Bruce had aimed to get his players mentally and physically ready for the game. He stated that he used his knowledge of his players to assess and monitor their preparation. In relation to Brad, Bruce said that Brad often did not listen and drifted off in team talks. Bruce wanted to intervene at times with Brad but the disagreement on coaching style stopped him. To ensure harmony in the coach-athlete relationship, Brad and Bruce had compromised on what was best for the player; on what the coach wanted; and what the player preferred.

Player preferred to be left alone. On the day of the match, Brad stated that he would have preferred if Bruce had left him alone to prepare himself rather than challenging him in the team talk and then again afterwards individually. Brad stated that the extra attention made him anxious and placed more pressure on his game. Brad preferred Bruce to let him focus on his own preparation and if needed he would approach the coach to ask any questions, regarding match-ups or offensive strategies. Bruce felt that his players would often not listen and that he used individual interactions. To assess player preparations Bruce challenged his players in the talk as it got their attention and aided their focus on what they had to do as a team and as an individual in the game.

Focus player on role in game. Bruce comments reflected that before the game he aimed to motivate his players, show confidence in their ability, and positively reinforce the team plan. A primary aspect of his coaching intention was to focus the player on their role in the game. Brad stated that Bruce did this through the individual interaction and in the pre-game talk. Despite his disagreement with his coaches coaching style Brad reported that Bruce had aided his focus on the game and reminded him of his specific role on offence and defence in the game. The interactions with the coach during the pre-game talk, however, had increased his level of anxiety and did not aid his preparation.

Coach Intentions and VCSRI session

Unexpected events. One of the main issues to arise from the VCSRI session was controlling unexpected events. On the night of the recorded game, Team B faced a delayed game that went into double overtime (an extra 10 minutes of game time) and an altercation between coach and a player. The unexpected events lead to Bruce introducing a light, extra long warm-up for them players to keep them focused and physically ready for the game to start. He also controlled his own nerves by taking time away from the team to prepare and focus himself on his own role before the game and in the game. The altercation with Richard had thrown his game plan out for the night as Richard was injured and was not meant to be playing. Bruce stated that due to my presence in the change rooms his actions had been different, normally he stated that he would have “gone off” at the player and the physiotherapist. Bruce said, however, that the manner in which he handled benefited both him and the player later on.

Bruce said that he had dealt with the difficult circumstances well that night. The normal structure and pre-game routine of the team and himself had been disrupted yet he had been able to refocus the team, via extra warm-ups and an aggressive pre-game talk

designed to refocus their attention. He had stuck to the normal pre-game routine for the team and ensured that they were physically and mentally prepared. Furthermore, Bruce had spent time assessing and monitoring himself and the team and took measures to ensure that his disrupted preparation did not affect the team. He achieved this by taking time away from the team to calm down and refocus on his role as coach.

Individual interactions with Brad. Bruce reflected that Brad just did not want to be coached and that they disagreed on coaching style. Bruce indicated that Brad needed to step up to the test in the game and Bruce had challenged him to outperform his opposite number during the pre-game talk. After the pre-game talk, Bruce, spoke to Brad individually and reiterated the point that he had made in the talk. Bruce said that Brad often did not listen. Bruce stopped the video footage twice to point out that Brad was “warming up like he was at a funeral” and that Brad was looking elsewhere during an individual talk and during a team huddle. Bruce said that they had compromised on the coaching style and that despite wanting to intervene at the time he had held back due to his respect for the players needs and because intervening may have not aided the player’s state of mind so close to the start of the match.

Summary

The interactions between Brad and Bruce were marked by a compromise between the two on Brad’s preferred coaching style and what Bruce thought was best for Brad’s game and the team. Bruce was forced to change his planned pre-game preparations for himself and Team B due to the unexpected delay. Furthermore, the argument with the injured player and the teams poor warm-up resulted in Bruce adopting a more aggressive coaching style to get them focused on the game. Bruce thought that they were not ready that night at the start of the game, despite a 40 point first quarter. In particular, his

interactions with Brad, whom was playing against a highly skilled player, had been ineffective. Bruce had aimed to motivate Brad up and challenge him in the pre-game talk and in individual interactions. Brad, however, would have preferred to be left alone to complete his own preparations. The difference between coach and player on preferred coaching style was highlighted on the video when Bruce said, “look at Brad he’s warming up like he’s at a funeral.” To achieve his objectives coach Bruce used a combination of individual interactions, pre-game talk and personal preparation. Bruce used a team and individual based approach allowing players the freedom to complete their own preparations. Bruce also used pre-game assessment of players and knowledge of player game states to guide his coaching behaviours before a game. Brad Perceived Bruce to be beneficial to the team but on this occasion he had felt that Bruce had put too much pressure on him before the game increasing his anxiety.

Results for Team C

Description of Team C

Team C played in an ABA conference in south-eastern Australia, the team was highly experienced with the average age being 24.5 years. At the time of the season when the coach-player dyad was studied, the team was mid-table. The coach, Carl, had been with the club on last three seasons. Regular in season training was held two or three times a week including Tuesdays and Thursdays, for a Saturday game. Recovery sessions were held on a Sunday or Monday and individual sessions were sometimes held during the week. The team had several support staff, including an assistant coach in his second year of coaching who was in training, a strength and conditioning coach, and a manager. The team was a mixture of professional, semi-professional, and amateur players. Several players in the team were full-time professionals that played overseas or in the NBL and

returned to play during the off-season. The majority of the team had been together for the past three years.

Phase 1: Interview with Carl on Intended Coaching Practices

Background Information on Carl

Carl was a 30-year-old male, who had played basketball for 20 years as a social player. Carl had been coaching for 16 years, including a six-year stint early on in his career with the same club as Team C. He was in his fourth straight year as a full-time coach with Team C, at the time of the research. Carl said that he fell in love with basketball but, “I was not very good and the only way to extend my involvement was to start coaching”. Carl started coaching at the age of 13 and had been a full-time coach for eight years at the time of writing. The majority of his time had been with the same club, in two separate periods. Unfortunately, for Carl, due to a lack of financial security at the club, he was no longer employed as a full-time coach at he club and was working at another job full-time as well as coaching. He was still coaching Team C full-time but was unable to coach the same number of hours that he had previously. He said that this had changed the dynamics of his coaching style and preparation. In particular, Carl declared that he was still adjusting to the limited time that he could dedicate to the team.

Carl's Intended Structure of Pre-Game Environment

Carl had a different approach to the pre-game preparations than Amy or Bruce (see Figure 4.3). Carl said that he had his players met at the stadium an hour and fifteen minutes before the match. He stated that at this time he liked to keep the atmosphere “light, almost humorous.” Carl believed that the light-hearted positive atmosphere kept the tension and anxiety in the players to a minimum. The preparation for Carl started during the week, as the team trained for the up coming game. Carl said that the events and form

from previous games and at training influenced how he prepared the team on the day of the game.

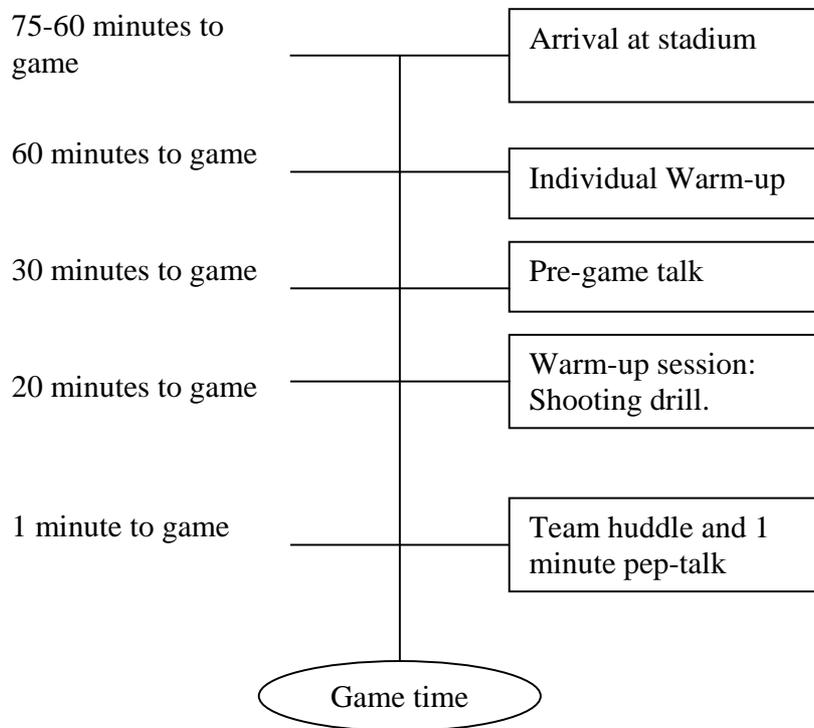


Figure 4.3.

Timeline and structure of Carl's pre-game preparations for Team C

For a night game, Carl highlighted that he might call a few players in the morning to reinforce some important aspects of their game and try to give them some confidence. With an hour to game time, Carl said that he socialised with the players as they changed into the team uniform or were attended to by the physiotherapist. At this time, he reported that his involvement was minor, all he aimed to achieve was a stress free environment to aid players' preparations. Furthermore, Carl reported that he gave the players the freedom to complete their own pre-game routines before the pre-game talk. He said that whilst the players completed their own preparations, he focused on preparing himself. In addition, to

his own preparation he evaluating the players' preparations and spoke individually with players on both a social and professional level.

He said that, with 30 minutes to go to game time, he called his players into the change rooms for the pre-game speech. Carl, reported that he aimed to reinforce their game plan for the night and to show confidence in the team and the players. His main aim was to ensure that the players understood what they were doing as a team and "what they had to do to get on the scoreboard." The pre-game speech, for Carl was a team-oriented process aimed at reinforcing material from training. He stated that his focus was predominantly individual preparation on game day.

Carl said that after the pre-game speech, the players stepped out on to the court for a 20-minute pre-planned shooting routine aimed at players' physical preparations and game skills. During this time, Carl said that he focused on his own personal preparation by reviewing notes, before going out to the court with 10 minutes to game time. He indicated that his courtside role at this time was minor, and that all he did was observe his team to assess their preparations. Furthermore, he said that he observed the opposition warm up to evaluate the opposition line up and look for any poor form or injuries. Carl stated that with one minute to game time he had a team huddle where he reviewed the game plan and called the first play of the game.

Carl's Coaching Objectives Prior to Performance

The nature of the team meant that Carl had different coaching objectives for his players before a match. The experience and level of development meant that Team C were given more time to complete individual pre-game routines before coming together as a team in the pre-game talk. Carl himself reported that, except for the pre-game talk, his

focus was more on individuals than the team. His objectives reflected this with individual coaching and preparation taking precedence.

Individual pre-game routines for players. A key philosophy for Carl was giving players the freedom to prepare themselves individually away from the team,

They get some time on their own, some of the guys like to stay together, some like to listen to music, some like to go on a spare court and do some shooting and I leave them to their own device.

Carl stated that his players were very experienced and that they preferred time to prepare themselves individually. Carl proposed that pre-game preparation was individual and that players needed to do “whatever was best for themselves.” In addition, Carl said that he allowed his players time to complete their own pre-game routines. He suggested that all players were different and responded or prepared differently for competition. Importantly though, Carl indicated that he didn’t leave the players entirely to themselves, as he observed and evaluated their preparations from the courtside, through other coaching staff, and through individual interactions.

Individual orientated pre-match preparation. Carl highlighted that his intended coaching practices before a game were a combination of individual and team oriented activities. In particular, his preferred coaching practices prior to a game focused on the individual rather than on the team as a whole. He stated that this was due to the experience and level of development of the players. Having an older and more professional team meant that Carl had confidence in players preparing themselves. This he suggested, gave him more time to prepare himself and focus on the junior players in the team.

The preference for individual preparations was evident in Carl’s belief that mental preparation was individual and “what works for one guy may not work for another.” Carl

stated that he let the players prepare themselves at the start of the pre-game preparation, before he called them into the change rooms for the pre-game talk. Carl stated that before the pre-game talk and immediately following the talk he often interacted with players on an individual level to gauge their level of mental readiness. The individual interactions allowed Carl to assess each player's preparation and intervene if necessary.

Individual coaching. Although focused on allowing players to complete their own prep-game routines Carl highlighted that he engaged in individual coaching of specific players. Carl said that the individual interactions on game day might arise from his observations of a player's individual form or confidence in training during the week. He highlighted that he would often take a player aside and gives them two or three things to focus on in the game rather than a complete role. Specifically, Carl stated that his aim was "to take the pressure off the player and get him back into the cycle of feeling positive." Carl stated that depending on the situation, it may take five minutes or it may take five weeks. He suggested that the one-on-one interactions with players were individually tailored to his assessment of each player and that his knowledge of their style of game aided the style of his interactions and interventions.

Mental preparation. Carl stated that, "mental preparation was an important aspect of pre-game preparations". He said that he encouraged all of his players to have their own set pre-game routine. Furthermore, Carl monitored the players' mental preparations during the final hour of preparation through observations, personal communication, and individual interactions. He suggested that it was his job to ensure that all players were mentally focused on their role in the game. Furthermore, he stated that he aimed to motivate his players, to ensure that they were all confident in their ability and that their attention was focused on the game at hand. In particular, Carl aimed to ensure that each

player knew what was expected of them during the match and that they were confident and focused on that role.

Carl highlighted that on the day of a game he aimed to have his players motivated and confident in their ability. He highlighted a recent example that arose after the retirement of a key shooting guard. Carl said that this had placed pressure on the remaining guard, Campbell, to perform and to fill the gap left by his former team-mate. Carl stated that Campbell's confidence in his ability had dropped after some poor performances. Consequently, Carl stated that his goal before a match was to show his belief in Campbell's ability and to emphasize that no negative consequences would arise if he missed a shot.

I took him aside on Saturday just reinforced in him the belief that we had in him as a player and his ability and reinforce to him that we are gonna live and die with his output, and to have no fear of being put in a negative situation for taking a shot that he should not have or for missing a shot. Just again. . .just to give the guy a bit of a licence and a bit of confidence boost from me before the game to say that I believe in your ability you've got this role, handle it and go out and enjoy it and feel and I will back you up.

Player pre-game assessment. Carl said that the assessment of players' preparations was a key aspect of his coaching practices before a match. He reported that he would observe their preparations and assess how they were preparing. If he perceived them to be under prepared or over aroused, he might take them aside and try to refocus them. For example, Carl stated that as players' finished getting prepared he would often take a player aside and have a short talk with them.

. . . just seeing how they were feeling and just reinforce what we need to achieve on the night from a team point of view and then I just break that down into their contribution. Whether that be a contribution on the bench or in an aggressive role on the floor and just to get a gauge and more not for me to talk, more to hear them. Carl aimed to understand how each player's preparation, both physical and mental, was progressing. In particular, Carl emphasised that he wanted to ensure that players had no negative thoughts about themselves or the game and, if they did, he aimed to refocus them onto something positive. Carl said that he achieved this by setting small goals for each player. Furthermore, the individual interactions were aimed at reinforcing each player's individual contribution to the team for the game.

Personal preparation. Carl reported that after the pre-game speech, the players stepped out on to the court for a 20-minute pre-planned shooting routine aimed at players' physical preparations and game skills. During this time, Carl said that he focused on his own personal preparation by reviewing notes and talking to his assistant coaches, before going out to the court with. Being prepared and focused was important to Carl as he reported that he wanted to be prepared to perform to the best of his ability and aid his players before a match.

Open communication. Carl stated that, in order to understand his players and effectively interact with each, he took time to interact with each individually as much as he could. Open communication was a key element of his coaching style, because he believed that this indicated a healthy relationship between coach and player.

I think that probably the only asset that I have ever used really has been the genuine care that I have got for them and by communicating in a non-threatening manner, and I am happy for them to view their opinions and expressions and in an adult way appropriate way for mature behaviour and we go on from there.

In particular, Carl repeated that on game day open communication was an asset, as it aided his coaching style and allowed him to be open and direct with his players regarding pre-game instructions or preparations.

Level of development. Carl reported that the level of development of the team influenced how he structured his intentions and objectives before a match. Team C was a highly experienced team comprising professional and semi-professional players. As result, Carl was able to have confidence that his players could prepare themselves without his intervention. He suggested that before a match he was primarily there to guide and direct his players and intervene if needed.

Situation of the team. Carl reported that what he did on the day of a match was influenced by events from preceding games, players' form in training, the opposition, and place on the ladder. In particular, Carl stated that his behaviours on the day of the match were mediated "what has happened during the week in the lead up and where we have come from and what we were about to face." Consequently, the pre-game preparation for Carl and how he applied his coaching practices was contingent upon preceding events, however, the structure and time frames of the pre-game preparation would not change.

Carl indicated that the level of development and experience of the players influenced his coaching style for Team C. In particular, Carl said that the experienced players in Team C were given more time to prepare individually and he focused his attention on the younger or less experienced players.

Summary

Carl highlighted that his goal before a match was to provide a light positive environment that facilitated players' preparations for the match. He indicated that he allowed his players time to complete their own pre-game preparations. Carl's intentions were primarily focused on the individual rather than the team. This was reflected in the structure of the pre-game environment and his belief that all players prepared differently. The experience and level of development of the players also allowed Carl to focus on other activities. The professional and semi-professional status of the players allowed Carl to spend time preparing himself without worrying about the preparation of his players. In saying this however, Carl reported that he observed his players throughout the pre-game preparations to assess their readiness to perform.

Phase 2: Observations of Team C

Researchers Note: An Unexpected Event

During the data collection for Team C, I encountered unexpected circumstances that affected the data collection. As I began to collect, the data for the observation phase of the dyad Carl informed me that there had been two deaths in the club. One was an assistant coach and the other was a relative of a key player. It was clear to me that this had affected the coach and the team. I found out later on that the assistant coach had committed suicide and that the counsellors had just left before I started filming.

Due these unexpected events, and due to my personal experiences it is possible that my interpretations may have subsequently influence the data collection, however, I feel that the story must be presented. I have included a section regarding the incident and my personal experiences in the appendices titled “Researchers note: An unexpected event and a Confessional Tale (see Appendix G) to highlight how the background of the researcher invariably affects the collection and interpretation of the data. Consequently, the data for Team C does not reflect a normal pre-game preparation. Carl insisted that I continue to collect the data as he felt that it would create a good talking point.

Game Day Observations for Team C

The stadium was already full and a game was already in motion, when I arrived for an hour and a half before the scheduled start of Team C’s game. The lead up game involved Team C’s women’s team. Several players from Team C were seated near the bench watching. Some of the Team C players’ stretched, while others simply watched and socialised with their families or team-mates. The targeted player, Campbell, was observed to be seated near the bench stretching. After stretching, he grabbed a spare ball and headed off to a court that was not being used to practice his shots. The coaching staff were in the change room getting ready for the match. The assistant coach, team manager, and water boy were tending to the uniforms and drink bottles, whilst Carl wrote notes on the whiteboard. The atmosphere was light, but proceeded at full pace as players strapped or changed.

At this point in time, Carl informed me that, as a club they had had a bad week. He said that there had been two deaths in the club during the week, a head coach of the reserves team, junior teams, and sometime assistant coach to Team C had passed away and a player’s grandfather had also passed away. I was informed that it was still okay for

me to carry on with the research, but the atmosphere would be emotional and heavy. Indeed, Carl appeared very upset, his eyes looked heavy and full of emotion. At this time, there were plenty of high fives and pats on the back, as the staff went about organising and preparing for the game that started in 50 minutes. Carl headed out to watch the women's game and interacted socially with several players. I observed Carl to watch the game for several moments before he greeted some of the younger players' parents. Carl then organised junior players that were there to form a guard of honour as a gesture for the loss of their coach.

After the Team C players had changed and strapped, some stretched and started their own pre-game routines, whilst others went to a spare court to practice shooting. Players were allowed the freedom to do their own preparations. At this time, Carl observed his players from the courtside, talking casually to some and watching the game. The assistant coach called "five minutes", letting the players know that they were required in the change room for the pre-game talk in five minutes time. There were many high fives as players streamed into the change rooms. The players were observed to be very quiet, as an emotional head coach began the pre-game talk. His voice was calm and collected. As he spoke, I observed several players were still changing or adjusting their ankle guards. The players were observed to be inattentive; some were still changing, strapping, or talking, Carl, however, continued.

Carl reviewed the events of the week, including the extra effort that the entire team had put in during the week and in preparing tactically for the game. He stated "they [Team C players] own the game" and that the players had done all the hard work. Carl reinforced the team tactics and goals for the game before reviewing the player match-ups and the opposition's key players and how to play against them. The team was quiet and appeared

inattentive, and the support staff looked on and said nothing. The brief pre-game talk last only three minutes and ended in a huddle with all team and support staff before they headed out to warm-up.

I observed the players to continue stretching or practice shooting on the spare court. Some players watched the women's game as it entered the final stages of the fourth quarter. The head coach stood courtside and chatted to the junior players who were there to form a guard of honour for the players at the start of the match. Afterwards, he talked briefly to several key players, including the team captain (Campbell), their leading scorer, and a younger player who top scored against the opposition team earlier in the season. The interactions with Campbell over the final hour were observed to be short, initially focused on social aspects, before becoming more focused on the game. Carl reminded Campbell of his role "take control of the team, show the way." Furthermore, Carl reminded Campbell to forget his recent form slump and be confident that he had the ability to perform well at this level. I observed that Campbell was attentive and agreed with his coach before Campbell headed off to the other side of the court to take a few shots by himself as he waited for the lead up game to end.

The build up was still at a low intensity, the head coach, however, had started to look a bit more nervous. He paced up and down the court; he could not stand still. With 25 minutes to game time, Carl headed back into the change rooms, sat with his assistant coach, and reviewed the team line up. As the assistant coach headed out to set up on the court, Carl sat alone and stared silently at the whiteboard with the team tactics on it. Several players filed past and patted him on the back or gave him a high five. Carl was obviously emotional about the loss of his colleague. Consequently, I stopped filming at this point and returned to stand courtside.

As the women's game finished, the team stepped onto the court and began to take a few shots before the team captain (Campbell) brought them together. He was observed to direct the players to specific spots on the court. They headed back to mid-court and began their warm-up, taking a few shots and running lay ups. The coach stood courtside and watched for a moment, talking briefly to the manager and club president before heading over to the courtside bench. Carl was observed to intently watch Team C and the opposition warm-up. There were 20 minutes to go before the start of the game. Carl talked briefly to the officials on the scoring bench and then with the referees. He then talked briefly with his assistant coach and continued to observe the team in silence. Following the national anthem and a minute's silence, Carl called the players over for a brief huddle. Carl was observed to reinforce the first play and the defensive strategy, before the starting five headed out for the tip-off.

The pre-game period was structured around players' needs with the timing of the pre-game talk and the final warm-up the only routine fixtures. Carl was observed to have a limited involvement with the players, as he tended to be in the background interacting minimally with the players, but occasionally taking a player aside for a brief talk about the game. There was a high degree of social interaction between the coach and his players, but the majority of the time Carl's involvement was observed to be limited as he acted an organiser or a manager, letting senior members of the team run the warm-up, and allowing players the freedom to prepare themselves. The role of the support staff was minimal. They were observed to focus more on the minor details of the team uniforms and water bottles. Carl engaged in observation of his players more as game time got closer. Team C's preparations were primarily conducted as individuals with the team coming together for the pre-game talk, final warm-up, and the national anthem. Carl was observed to watch

his players and intervene if required. Campbell, as team captain, was observed to be involved in running and organising warm-ups and had several brief interactions with his coach. Carl stated that the pre-game period and training throughout the week had been disrupted by the two deaths during the week and the team disharmony caused by their poor form.

Summary

The pre-game preparations for Team C were disrupted by the deaths during the week of the assistant coach and a player's grandfather. Carl despite extra stress and extra duties attempted, successfully to keep the same pre-game structure and routines for himself and the team. Carl was observed to take time to prepare himself away from the team. His interactions with Campbell were short but direct they interacted briefly during the pre-game talk and then individually afterwards. The majority of Carl's time was spent observing or individually interacting with players.

Phase 3: Interview with Campbell

Campbell

The player interviewed for Phase 3, Campbell, was a 27-year-old point guard and team captain of Team C. Campbell had been playing at the same club since juniors and had been playing for 20 years in total. He had been playing with Carl for six years in total and in the ABA for eight seasons. He coached junior players at the club and was involved with the club in a number of different areas. Carl identified Campbell as being a key positional player in the team and in the leadership group. After viewing, the footage of training and of game day, Campbell was identified as the participant for Team C because of his role as team captain, his interactions with Carl, and his role in the pre-game routine.

Summary of Campbell's Perceptions of Carl Prior to a Match

Carl had coached Campbell for the past four seasons and for two seasons earlier on in Campbell's career. Campbell stated that Carl "allowed the players a fair bit of freedom" in their training and preparation. He attributed this to the age and experience of the players. In particular, Campbell added that most of the players had played at much higher levels than their coach had. Furthermore, Campbell stated that the level of players' experience allowed them to make decisions for themselves, rather than relying on the coach.

Campbell stated that Carl's coaching style generally suited him and the group. Furthermore, he perceived Carl as being more of a manager than a coach.

We are probably a little bit older than most. . . we are probably equal or more knowledge some of us, but being a coach does not necessarily mean that you know more than everyone else. It is more that you can organise the players and stuff. I think that is probably one of his strengths. . . that he is a pretty good people person and. . . has a bit of a knack of bringing people together, having guys play for us.

It was evident that Campbell had strong opinions regarding his position in the team and the role of Carl. At the time the research was conducted, Team C was going through a form slump and with several high profile players having just returned, the expectations were high. The form slump had caused some disharmony in the team. Campbell did iterate that "he [Carl] generally does a good job of just giving the freedom, but also at times reeling you back in and keeping your feet on the ground and not thinking that you were a bit too good for yourself."

Campbell's perceptions and reflections of the pre-game preparations and interactions before the recorded game. It was evident in the interview that Campbell

preferred to complete his own preparations and pre-game routine to ensure his own physical and mental readiness. Campbell indicated that during the pre-game period he was not feeling as physically ready for the match and spent extra time preparing himself. He completed the extra warm-up and stretching away from the team and coach as it enabled him to focus more clearly on himself without being distracted by the coaching staff or other players.

With reference to the recorded game, Campbell stated that he got there early as he did not like to feel rushed when preparing for a game. Campbell said that he walked in and socialised with the team and Carl for a while, as he got ready for the match. Campbell reported that, he then went out for a stretch and to warm-up. One of Campbell's goals was to stay relaxed before the game. He said that he achieved this by giving himself a few jobs to complete before the start of the match, which took his mind off the game. Campbell stated that he tried to keep his mind on the team tactics "'cause the team falls to bits if you don't stick to them." Furthermore, he declared that he tried to maintain a balance between mental and physical preparations,

On Saturday night, for example, I was really stiff so I did a lot more running before the game than I normally would and then do other stretches and that relaxes you too. 'Cause when you're a little stiff and you're not shooting particularly well, it really plays on your mind. So you go and get a few shots up and you're happy with your shot and then you can go and relax a bit, and it was not something in the back of your mind, like "oh you're not shooting well today". So there was a bit of that and then trying to get yourself a bit fired up and not too fired up, as it tends to backfire on you more often than not.

Campbell stated that his own knowledge of his pre-game routine and on his physical and mental readiness allowed him to assess his own progress on this particular game day and complete further physical preparation (stretching and shooting) to aid his mental preparation.

I have got to the point where I can balance the two and I will just gradually build myself up over that time and keep your focus without trying to remove yourself from the group. So, being around the guys keeps you a little bit keyed up, and watching the game before takes your mind off it a bit.

Campbell referred to feeling a bit tired before the match, “I was, maybe a bit flat, before the match” he felt that this had affected his mental preparation for the game. Furthermore, Campbell stated that the team in general struggled that day including the coach. He declared, “I guess that one of my main focuses with my pre-game was just making sure that you have those things done so you have a baseline standard that you meet and then try and work from there.” Completing the basics of his game and his contribution to the team as a point guard and captain, Campbell suggested, were a key part of his pre-game mental preparation.

Campbell stated that he did not like to have his pre-game preparation interrupted by other players or coaching staff; he preferred to let the players do their own thing and to not be bothered. He stated that he only intervened if he thought the player’s body language was down or too anxious or if they were missing too many practice shots. He iterated that these interactions would primarily be aimed at the younger more inexperienced players. He stated that his goal was to instil confidence in the player.

Campbell stated that the pre-game preparation, specifically the team warm-up and shooting drill was for him a team bonding session. The role of the coach at this was to be in the background.

Basically its our time, we will go out and it was a bit of a bonding thing as a team. . .now it was game time, we were starting to get our heads into the game and starting to pull together as a team. . . . Carl was pretty much in the background. . . he doesn't really do anything until it is time.

Campbell stated that Carl's role prior to the game observed for this research focused more on the organisational and managerial side of coach. Campbell stated that the coach, for example, might, "talk to the refs. . .or talk to the assistant coach about their match ups and a bit more game preparation for him and then with a minute to go, when we go in, he is there". Furthermore, Campbell stated in reference to Carl, "he is pretty much the coach and he has a barrier up. He is the coach and we are the players." Campbell perceived the coach as being distant and uninvolved in pre-game preparations. To counter this view, as team captain, Campbell said that he assumed a role of importance prior to a match and the coach to be primarily in an organisational role. Campbell's perceptions of Carl suggested that there was some disagreement between the captain and the coach.

Campbell stated that on the day of the recorded game, Carl aided his and the team's focus on the game and made them aware of what they had to work on during the game to win. In addition, Campbell stated that, Carl was observed to be present and ready to interact or intervene, if he needed to. He perceived his coach as "always looking over your shoulder" and being there to help the players out.

I guess he was an overseer more than anything else, and if you need him to be there, he will step in like. Otherwise, he just organises the troops, at the start tells us what to do, then off you go, with a looking over your shoulder type of thing.

In the final 20-minute warm-up, Campbell perceived this time to be for the players. He stated that, Carl was always present during this time, but he emphasised that he listened to what the players wanted to do in the warm-up and changed the routine to suit their needs. Specifically, Campbell said,

Shawn, wanted to do more lay-ups. So we come out with 20 minutes to go. He had not done much running and normally we just come out and get some shots done just three lines of shooters, but he's like we need to do some running, so lets do some lay-ups and then some shooting. Then we will go back to the lay ups.

Campbell's level of experience and Carl's preference to complete his own pre-game routine means that there was limited interactions between Campbell and the coach before the game. Carl's belief that pre-game preparation is individual and Campbell's need to work harder on his personal pre-game routine resulted in the short interactions between the two.

Campbell's Reaction to Deaths Within the Club

When asked about the death of the assistant coach and a player's grandfather, Campbell responded by saying,

I guess most of the guys were a bit shocked by Zane dying, but no one was shattered, no one. . . it was a bit strange actually. I don't think it was playing on anyone's mind in particular. Like they knew about it, but it did not cut them deeply enough that they were not able to concentrate. If it had been a family member or someone really, really close, then it would have been different Nathan, the big

bloke, his grandfather died during the week, he came out like a house on fire, he was really focused.

The deaths had both occurred on the Thursday and the game had been recorded on the following Saturday night, two days later. It was entirely possible that the news had not sunk in yet, as the players had not had the time to grieve. It was difficult to make any conclusions, however, as Campbell could not know how the other players were dealing with the death of the assistant coach. Campbell stated that the centre whom had lost his grandfather had come out “on fire”, scoring the first 8 points in the game. The rest of the team and coaching staff, with the exception of Carl, he perceived to be unaffected, overtly at least.

In reference to how Carl had been affected by the death of the assistant coach Campbell stated, “it was probably on his mind, but there were other reasons for that, but other than that, no not really.” Campbell did not want to elaborate on this point any further.

Campbell's Perceptions of Carl

Campbell showed some level of disrespect for Carl's coaching ability. Campbell questioned Carl's level of knowledge and experience in the game and felt that all or most of the players knew just as much as he did. Furthermore, Campbell perceived Carl's role before a match as being to organise and the team and stand in the background. He went, as far, to state that he, as team captain, ran the warm-up routine and intervened with players whose preparation he perceived to be off the mark. Campbell's apparent disrespect for Carl was reflected in the statement that the team gets along better with the assistant coach (referred to as Cameron).

. . . a lot of times we know that we cannot talk to Carl, but Cameron will probably take a slightly different approach and he will either talk to us or ask us things or we will talk to him about certain stuff, like we have got to get out of this defence, and sometimes Carl will be like I don't know, but if it comes from Cameron or via Cameron it sometimes softens the blow a bit. It doesn't challenge his integrity as much. Although Carl is pretty good like that, but as a coach you always want to maintain that you are in control of things, and I guess that was a bit of an avenue for us to communicate to Carl, but also during pre-game and that kind of thing he is heavily in consultation with Cameron and then Cameron was kind of overseeing the warm-up as well. . . and then during the games he is also in Carl's ear.

Campbell indicated that he used Cameron to get messages from himself and the players to Carl, rather than communicating directly. This process showed the disharmony between team captain, the team, and Carl. The lack of communication and lack of respect for his coach may have lead Campbell to spend less time interacting with him on the day of the game.

Summary

On the day of the game, Campbell indicated that there was limited interaction between himself and Carl. This was, in part, due to the unexpected circumstances off the week that left Carl with other duties to attend to. It was also evident that Campbell had wanted to spend more time focusing on his own preparation and pre-game routine away from the coach and the rest of the team. Campbell's form at the time as well as his assessment of his own physical preparation and mental readiness meant that he needed to focus more intently on himself rather than the team and the coach. Campbell's

disagreement with the coach during the week may have resulted in the limited interactions between the two, as he may have wanted to keep his distance from the coach. His role as team captain and as an experienced player meant that Campbell was knowledgeable of his own pre-game state and how to aid himself to enter his preferred game state.

Phase 4: VCSRI Session with Carl

In the analysis of the VCSRI session for Team C, I had to consider some unexpected events, i.e., the death of an assistant coach and a player's grandfather. As a result, I have included a section titled "Researcher's note: An unexpected twist and a confessional tale". This section focuses on the unexpected events that occurred during the research project and how my experiences as a person and a researcher related to them.

The scenes for the VCSRI were selected based on the analysis of the first interview with the coach. In total, 1 hour and 20 minutes of footage was recorded before the match. After analysis, 11 scenes were edited and selected to be included in the interview. The scenes were selected based on Carl's description of the way he constructed the pre-game period. Some scenes reflected the coaches' plan and other scenes included interactions with the targeted player, Campbell. There were limited interactions between Carl and Campbell, consequently, scenes involving other players and the coach have been included for analysis. Scenes that were spontaneous or relevant were also included in the VCSRI session. The selected scenes are described in the following section.

A Disrupted Week

When asked how the preparation for the recorded game had gone Carl replied that, During the week the preparation was not really according to plan the feeling amongst the team was pretty negative and the element of fun at that stage had gone

and the guys were at the point of where you either do really well or you just fall over and die. We were fighting with each other and yeah everyone was looking to point the finger at everyone else and so it was a challenging week for us for the obvious reason was what happened to Zane [the late assistant coach] and also with how we had been playing and people pointing the finger and a few guys not knowing their role well enough.

The preparation during the week had affected the team's training. The disharmony between the coach and players was an issue that they had tried to address throughout the week. In addition, the death of the former reserves coach and a player's grandfather, had affected Carl's preparation for the game. In relation to the day of the game, Carl stated,

Things were pretty normal an hour before the game. We had done a lot of talking throughout the week in terms of pre-game that we didn't. . . .if I remember correctly, we didn't even use a white board, we just, I just, if I remember correctly we, Cameron and I. . . we talked about it all week and the emotion that was around the club. We just thought that it would be a lot better to say less and just talk about a couple of things and talk about the opportunities of the game and the challenges and then we decided we would let them do their own thing and talk to people individually around the court, rather than have the team and we just felt that talking had worn itself out.

Carl stated that the preparation during the week and on the day of the game had influenced the way that the team had played.

The match went the same way we prepared. Yeah we lost the game I think by ten and we just weren't ready and we weren't able that week to accept the challenge as a team at training and turn that challenge into something positive that we could

attack in a positive way. It was like we've got a challenge, its too big for us, so lets start fighting with each other. So, it was a real process of that week, it was just a challenging time that as a team we just didn't come through it on the game on Saturday.

In particular, Carl referred to the death of the reserves coach as a reason why his personal preparation had been disrupted.

So I think yeah, I think the practice really reflected how we played on the Saturday and the stuff that had happened. . . Zane, that played a big part with a few of us. It certainly stirred me up a little and a few of the others in a negative way. We had been dealing with the kids the day before and grieving kids and parents and earlier in that night we had counsellors here and we working with the counsellors with the younger kids, so it was. . .to be honest the game was the furthest thing from our mind by the time Saturday night had clicked around.

In reference to his friend, Carl reflected,

Yeah Zane was a friend of mine and. . .it just had an effect for 24 hours prior to the game or two days prior to the game, you know Mary [Head coach of Team C's women's team] and I had kind of been going around and just consoling everyone else and neither of us had a chance to really. . . . We didn't really get a chance to say much about ourselves, but the pressure and everything, but leading up to that game, I was pretty down and out and I was pretty flat and I wanted to try to. . .and in sport you want to try to turn that negative into a positive. . .but the emotions going through my mind. 'Cause Zane was part of some of the things that we did pre-game, so the emotion that was going through my mind was just a little was a

little mixed, you know what I mean, a little sad, a little mixed, a little angry, and a little annoyed at the week we had and everything that was going on so. . .

Scene 1: Interaction with Andrew (-60 minutes)

The first scene involved a short interaction with a key player, Andrew, an hour before the game. Players were still arriving, some had been involved in organising balls, uniforms, and drinks for the team or dealing with the club's junior players. Andrew was seated courtside stretching his legs, as he watched the women's team play. Carl knelt down beside him and spoke briefly to the player. Several players were shooting baskets on a spare court, while some were completing some stretching away from the rest of the team.

Carl stated that the interaction with Andrew related to his previous good form against the opposition. Carl informed me that Andrew had just returned from playing in Europe and said that he had not quite fitted in with the team yet. Carl reflected that the aim of this interaction was to reinforce his position in the team and how well he had played against the same opposition last season. In particular, Carl reflected,

I just reassured him, cause I hadn't been working him into the game as much as what I had done last year. Because he was still so fresh coming back and I was assuring reassuring him that, you know. I really wanted to use that night to get him feeling better about his role in the team and trying to explain, to play with no fear and just really try to encourage him to play his game and not to worry about what was happening around him to much.

Carl had aimed to instil confidence in Andrew's ability to score against the opposition and in reinforce that he should play his own game not worry about the team. Carl's aim was to

positively reinforce Andrews's position in the team and show confidence in his ability to play despite not knowing the structure of the team's offence.

Scene 2: Pre-Game Talk 1(-35 minutes)

This scene involved the start of the pre-game talk in the change rooms. Carl was standing in front of the whiteboard as the players came into the change room. Several players were observed to be strapping their ankles, changing, stretching, or re-hydrating, as the coach started. The beginning of the talk focused on the on the weeks events, including the team meeting between players to discuss a training strategy for the team and the deaths in the club.

The start of the pre-game talk was described as disjointed by Carl. He declared that as he started the pre-game talk his players were still moving around, changing or strapping their ankles. Carl described his leadership during the pre-game speech as lacking and "skirty". Furthermore, during the pre-game talk he emphasised that leadership from Campbell and other key players was a must. Carl had wanted the players, in particular Campbell to step up and take control. Specifically, Carl stated,

. . .to really step up and forget anything that has happened off the court and even the way we come out and just turn the form around with the on court action. If they really want to apply some pressure on the guy that has been there with us. . . The team is full of veterans, but the leaders of the team [Campbell] were the people that I have coached in the last 3-4 years, cause there has been a good network between us all, `cause I guess I was trying, hoping, to call on that to say "hey there was a good chance for you tonight to turn some of this stuff around and turn it into a positive".

Carl stated that the pre-game talk was different from normal. In particular, he highlighted his lack of leadership and the players lack of focus during the talk.

It would normally be a lot more focusing in the room prior to a game and just looking at the tape it really does just typify how we were all week. There was a lack of enthusiasm and a lack of leadership. I lacked leadership that week. I personally think that was highlighted by that. It's a bit disappointing.

Carl felt that his lack of leadership flowed onto the team and was highlighted by their lack of attention during her pre-game talk.

The lack of enthusiasm and you know once you talk about focus. Its kind of like the guys get a lot of time on their own anyway prior to a game we make sure of that. I think it is really key and important and that 5 minutes or 6 minutes needs to spend quality time and body language, you know, guys on the ground stretching, and guys taping their fingers, and kind of all over the place. To me that is a sign of, you know, they were not ready to be in that room for me to be talking about anything at that time and no matter what I said or whatever the message that I was trying to get through probably didn't get through to everyone.

Scene 3: Pre-Game Talk 2 (-32 minutes)

In this scene, Carl's pre-game talk focused on the game plan and strategies that they were to apply in the game. In particular, Carl focused a focus on two key opposition players that have dominated the past few games in the conference. Carl was observed to speak in a passive manner that portrayed a cool and calm attitude. The players were observed to be inattentive, as they were still preparing, tying shoes, drinking, or changing.

Carl said that the second part of the pre-game talk, aimed to reinforce what Team C needed to focus on to win the match. Carl stated that he reviewed the key points that

they had worked on during the week at training. Furthermore, Carl said that he wanted to show confidence in the younger players that had performed so well against this team last time they had met. In particular, Carl highlighted Andrew's record against the opposition and challenged him to continue on in the same manner during this game. Carl had wanted to accentuate the positive aspects of the team and forget the negative aspects, such as the infighting, that had affected their progress during training.

Scene 4: Pre-Game Talk 3 (-30 minutes)

Carl's pre-game talk switched to focus on the summary of the material presented in the talk and a short motivational speech. Carl stood in the middle of the room now away from the whiteboard and spoke louder and with more intent. The players paid more attention now and the coaching staff stood up and joined the team. The players and coaching staff stand up and have a huddle, yell the team name and before head out to warm up.

In this scene, Carl stated that during the week they had run an experiment to try and sort out the personal and professional differences between team-mates as well as coaching staff.

. . .on the Tuesday of that week, instead of practice we had a team dinner and then we set a challenge for them team to lock themselves in a room and because of what had happened leading up to that game and the way we had been playing we thought we'd had been try something different. So we thought what we'd do was get them in a room and let them nut it out as a team `cause they weren't coming together. So I thought it would be a good experiment to have them in the one room and put a training session together for the Thursday.

Carl indicated that he was holding the piece of paper that the players had worked on during the week. Carl said that he was trying to instil some team pride and aid them in working together as a team. He was using the hard work they had done during the week to motivate them into backing up the principles and characteristics that had been lacking in previous weeks. Carl attributed the winning streak in the following games to the work the players had completed in planning the training session. Carl reflected as he watched the videotape,

I think there were too many excuses leading up to that game for us to fail and me being the leader, I think that I didn't squash that enough. I wasn't strong enough at that point in time. Had I been a little stronger with some of the things that had happened I think that things would have been a little bit different.

Carl viewed his own leadership as being poor that week. He suggested that if he had shown a stronger character during that time then things might have been different.

Scene 5: Interaction with Jason (-20 minutes)

Standing by the court, Carl called Jason over. Jason was key player in the starting line up. Carl spoke briefly with Jason before patting him on the back and letting him go off and practice shooting as they waited for the women's game to end.

Carl related that Jason was struggling with his fitness at the time the game was recorded. According to Carl, Jason was an experienced campaigner and the interaction was aimed at focusing him on his specific role in the team for this specific game. In particular, Carl stated, "it was more just for him to stay focused on what he needed to do and not talk and if he was going to talk try to make it really positive rather than anything negative." Carl indicated that Jason's lack of fitness and poor form in previous weeks had led to a negative attitude that had been affecting the team.

The individual interaction with Jason reflected Carl's knowledge of his players. Carl suggested that knowledge of his players was essential as it enabled him to interact effectively to aid them in performing at their best. Carl's indicated that the knowledge of Jason, his personality and game, enabled him to effectively intervene with him to aid his preparation for performance.

He [Jason] was one of those people that you don't have to say much to. He was quite intense himself and if I get into him too much he was just uncontrollable. So I like to just say very small little things and leave him alone to his own devices and then try to coax him through competition. That was the best method that I have found individually.

Scene 6: Interaction with Matthew (-16 minutes)

Carl stood courtside and watched the game. As Matthew went past Carl tapped him on the shoulder and pulled him over. Carl spoke at length with Matthew for around 3 minutes as they waited for the game to finish. Matthew was a younger and less experienced player that had had a good game against this team last time.

Carl referred to Matthew as one of the younger players in the team that had had a lot of success at different levels of competition but was inexperienced in this competition. In this incident, Carl reflected that his conversation focused on showing confidence in Matthew's ability, "every week was a similar thing I've got confidence in your ability go out play enjoy the challenge and I just have to constantly remind him of consistency and how to you know just focus on the little things."

Carl reflected on the interaction with Matthew and reported that, Matthew like, he is quite an intelligent kid, a very intelligent guy, and most of its played inside Matthew's head. He was one of these guys that you have to get his

head right otherwise he was no good at all and so with Matthew it was always conversation back and forth all this and even talking and just a couple of quick points, just whatever questions he's got and then leave him alone. Its confidence and just a verbal persona. . .he won't talk in a group he is too shy in our group to talk. So the only way I get anything out of him was through one on one.

It was apparent that Carl's personal knowledge of his players aided him in adopting his coaching style to suit the needs of each player. Carl suggested that with Matthew he needed to talk to him to aid his understanding of Matthew's preparations for the game.

Scene 7: Personal Preparation Time for Carl

Carl sat in the change room by himself. He was seated on the bench with his head down as the assistant coach and a support staff member entered. Carl and Cameron talked with the support staff member, Grant, about the junior players as mascots. Cameron stood in front of Carl in silence as Carl's head goes down. Cameron paused, then placed his hand on Carl's bowed head and left the room.

This scene evoked personal issues within Carl. Carl reported that at the time he was reviewing the program sheet and looking at the obituary of Zane, reflecting on the fact that it was normally during this time that he was there in the change room with him. "I remember that cause I was reading the stuff in there about Zane there was some stuff in the program about Zane so I was just reading it." In particular, Carl declared that his emotions were high at this time.

But I was trying to deal with my emotions at that time cause the guys had gone it was quite and you know if Zane was there it would normally be the time we would be laughing and carrying on and yeah. . . . Totally that was my time and I had nothing else to think about except me so it was starting to think about it and it was

starting to really play on my mind. You know Cameron recognised that and he just left me to my own devices.

Scene 8: Observation of Warm-Up

During this scene, Carl was standing courtside observing his team and the opposition during the warm up. He stood with his arms folded, moving only to watch his team and the opposition, the assistant coach, and support staff organised the minor details in the background (e.g., water bottles, first aid kit, and players jackets).

Carl stated that at this stage of the preparation it was very simple. He said that he was simply observing his players to see how they were preparing. Furthermore, he was trying to stay relaxed and focus himself on his role for that particular night.

Mate nothing. Just watching seeing how the guys were and any body language or anything like that just making sure that were you know I wasn't really. . .that's just watching it and seeing it. . .you can tell through a warm up how the guys were feeling whether they have responded to anything you have said or you know if generally there were any questions they will come over at that time and have a quick yearn. But that was just trying to relax and get ready.

The assessment of player preparation via observation was part of Carl's coaching style, as it allowed him to examine if the players had acted on his instructions, from the team talk or an individual interaction earlier.

Scene 9: The Final Minute

Before the teams were announced, Carl called the players together for a final chat prior to the start of the match. Carl knelt in the centre of the huddle surrounded by the starting five that were seated on the bench with the bench players standing behind the coach.

The final interaction with the team in the last minute was focused on calling the first play. Carl suggested, that calling the first offensive play gave the players some initial direction and a very specific focus. Furthermore, during this last minute, Carl allowed any players to raise any questions and for him to reinforce the principles focused on during the pre-game talk.

So there will be a minute to go on the clock and while it was running down we come in and I just reinforce what we want to do the very first play. That's it first play of the game. . .“lets focus on this and nothing else. Try to go start this in structure. . .” sometimes it doesn't go your way but sometimes it does. . . just a reinforcement messages by that stage there was not much that you can do. If the guys aren't ready then there not ready and on that night they weren't ready.

On this occasion, Carl highlighted that his players were not ready to play and that there was not much that he could do at that stage. Carl however, reflected that he did not recognise this earlier. In hindsight, he acknowledged that the events of Tuesday (player lock in) and Thursday (deaths in team) had affected their preparation too much and his leadership had been lacking.

Scene 11: Game Time.

The starting line up has been announced and the anthem sung, the minute silence was over and the players headed to the centre for the tip off. Carl stood on the sideline and watched them head out.

With the team walking out for the tip-off Carl reflected on his personal preparation and stated that he felt ready, focused, and pumped up. Carl suggested that his preparation had made him feel ready for the match and ready to perform his role.

I was ready at that stage I am pretty keen to get it on and get going. The adrenalin was going through the body and your just feeling pretty good about life really. Pretty focused yeah but nothing else, just ready for the game to start and then your in and then something takes over and you even forget you even there.

Summary

The unexpected circumstances for Team C greatly affected how Carl performed on the day of the recorded match. Carl aimed to take a relaxed approach to pre-game preparations and let his more experienced team take the time to prepare themselves. Carl was unable to achieve his preferred pre-game performance state due to the emotion surrounding the death of his friend and former assistant coach. He acknowledged that despite his best efforts his leadership during that time was “lacking”. Dealing with the death of a friend and understanding suicide are difficult issues and Carl and Team C were clearly affected by the events. To aid the team’s preparations, Carl aimed to keep the same pre-game routine for him and the players in an attempt to control for the emotional distraction. During the pre-game talk, Carl used the emotion of the situation to motivate his players. In regards to the targeted player, Campbell, stated that his preparations were different due to his poor form and his own assessment of his body prior to performance. Campbell felt that he was not as confident in his physical preparation and subsequently performed extra stretching and jogging to reach his desired pre-performance state. Campbell’s perception of his coach as lacking game knowledge and as an overseer affected them manner in which he interacted with his coach before the game.

*Triangulation of Results for Team C**Coach Intentions and Observations*

Pre-game routine and individual preparations. Carl stated that preparation for performance is individual and different people prefer different styles of physical and mental preparation. Carl gave the players in Team C time to prepare themselves individually and to complete their own pre-game routines. Furthermore, throughout the pre-match period, he said that he preferred to keep the atmosphere light and relaxed. This aided players in their ability to focus on the game and prepare individually. Throughout the pre-match period Team C's players were given time to prepare themselves individual and to complete their own pre-game routine. At this time, Carl was observed to monitor his players by interacting socially and professional with players or standing and observing them as they prepared. The age and experience of the players meant that Carl could rely on them to prepare and focus themselves for the game whilst he spent time with the younger players ensuring that they were focused on the game.

Dealing with unexpected events. The unexpected circumstances regarding the two deaths in the club made it difficult to compare the stated intentions to the observations. Dealing with and controlling for major distractions, however, was a key skill of Carl's behaviour on the day of the observed game. Carl kept the pre-game routine for the team as normal as possible and limited the focus on the deaths to a short speech in the pre-game talk. Carl had spent time with counsellors and had spent time consoling members of the club earlier in the day. Keeping the players and himself focused on the game whilst not forgetting the emotional turmoil of the time was a key aspect of his behaviour on the day of the game.

Coach preparations and team performance. Carl intended to motivate and encourage his players before a game, however, due to the specific circumstances he was observed to spend considerable time away from the team preparing himself. Carl suggested that he needed to be focused and ready to ensure that he could complete his job as a coach prior to and during the match. He used a series of short individual interactions with players focused on reinforcing their role in the game formed the majority of his pre-game coaching behaviours.

Coach Intentions and Player Perceptions

Coaching style and pre-game routine. The structure of the coach's pre-game schedule suited the players' in Team C. Campbell's comments suggested that Carl's coaching style allowed them the freedom to complete their own pre-game routine. Campbell, however, did not agree with Carl's coaching knowledge and practices, he perceived his coach to lack the ability to perform at this level. In particular, he noted Carl's nerves before a match as a distraction and his interactions were likened to an "overseer". Campbell had a lack of respect for his coach and even in the specific circumstances he suggested that Carl lacked leadership before that match. This perception revolved around the form slump and the in fighting within the team that the coach had failed to quell in the preceding weeks. Campbell also suggested that the players were experienced enough to not need a coach's individual attention before a match and that his presence often disrupted the flow of the pre-game preparations. Carl and Campbell have different perspectives of coaching before a game and the lack of respect shown for Carl's coaching style and coaching knowledge affected Campbell's ability to communicate with his coach. The inability of coach and player to communicate directly and openly before a

game could affect the team's performance and team cohesion, despite the coach's intentions.

Coach Intentions and VCSRI Session

Lack of leadership and poor preparation. Carl reflected that his behaviour and leadership had been lacking before the match after he watched the video. He observed his behaviour and that of his players and answered that on that night his coaching was "off the mark" and that the players were not ready to play. The key incident for him, was players still changing and strapping, or not listening during the pre-game talk. Carl explained that Team C's preparations were inadequate that night and that they were not ready to play. Carl explained his behaviour as resulting from the loss of his friend/colleague and the drain that it had had on him and the other people within the club.

Player assessment before a game. Carl stated that one of his roles before a match was to ensure that all of his players were mentally ready to perform to their capabilities. Before the match, Carl said that he observed his players and spoke to a few individually regarding their place in the team or their ability. He focused on assuring players that he was confident in their ability and reinforcing the role that they were to play in the game.

Player Perceptions and Observations

Campbell was observed to spend a limited amount of time with the coach staff on the day of the recorded game. As captain, he was observed to spend time speaking with players away from the changing rooms. The dominant behaviour of Campbell before the match focused on his pre-game routine and physical preparations. His preparations were focused primarily on himself and he withdrew from the team before hand in an attempt to aid his physical and mental readiness. He stated that his experience and his personal

preferences meant that he preferred to prepare away from the team. Throughout the pre-game talk, Campbell was observed to be inattentive during the pre-game talk.

Summary

Carl used a combination of team and individual based pre-game preparations. Campbell for example, completed his own pre-game routine that was focused on his physical and mental state. Campbell preferred to complete this routine alone as it aided his focus on the match. Carl and Campbell did not interact in depth before a match apart from during the pre-game talk and a short interaction before the first warm-up. Campbell had had a run of poor form recently, so Carl spoke briefly to him about having confidence in his own shots and not to worry if he misses then. Carl had aimed to show faith in his ability and to boost his confidence. Carl spent the majority of the pre-game preparations focused on the younger players and the recent arrivals to the team. Campbell being the team captain took the role of organising the players and running the team warm-up. Carl spent time away from the team to prepare himself. The unexpected events of the week including the death of the former assistant coach had affected Carl greatly and his pre-game preparations were more intense and emotional.

Results for Team D

Description of Team D

Team D was a women's team competing in an ABA competition in south-eastern Australia. The team consisted of a young group of players whose average age was 20 years old. Team D was comprised of a mixture of national league players and junior representative players, who have played together previously in representative competitions, but not in the ABA. Several players held professional contracts in Australia or overseas. The coach, Donna, was in her first year as a professional coach at this level.

During the regular season, Team D trained twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Donna also held individual sessions with players before official training and when required. Several of the more professional players also held separate training sessions with personal trainers or fellow national league players. Team D had an assistant coach, but limited support staff. The targeted player, Debbie, was a 19-year old centre, whom was in her first year with Team D and Donna. Debbie was chosen as the targeted player for the Phase 3 interview, because of her performance in the recorded game. A more detailed description of Debbie is found at the start of Phase 3.

Phase 1: Interview with Donna on Intended Coaching Practices

Background to Donna

Donna was a 27-year old female, who was in her first year as a coach in the ABA. She had been playing basketball for 18 years and was an accomplished player in the national league. Donna was a professional player, who had coached juniors at various levels for 13 years. She began coaching when she was 13 years old and had been running coaching clinics for several years. Donna highlighted that she had played with and against several of the players, whom were in the team. Donna said that she started coaching Team D after she was approached by her mentor whom had recommended her for the job as head coach of Team D. Before that, Donna coached junior teams and ran coaching clinics since she was a teenager but stated that she had no experience with a team at ABA level.

Donna highlighted that she was quite young (27 years old) for a coach at this level and that it was rare for a female to coach at this level. Donna suggested that her age allowed her to relate better to the team, because the average age of Team D was 20-21 years of age. Furthermore, as a current national league player, she stated that the players could relate to her, because she was a “players’ coach.” Specifically, Donna said that she

had played with and against a few of the players that she coached in Team D. She said that this aided her in recruitment of new players to the club for this season.

Donna reported that her interest in coaching at this level was personal development as a coach and as a player,

I actually think its going to make me a better player and I'm really keen to see how I go when I get back out on the court, because. . .it's just. . . coaching takes a completely different understanding of the game.

She highlighted that throughout the season so far she had had some “shockers” and “felt like it [a loss] was my fault”. Donna stated that it was a learning curve and that she was getting better as the season went on.

Donna's Intended Structure and Time Schedule for the Pre-Game Preparations

With regard to her coaching practices on the day of competition, Donna stated that she liked her players to arrive at least an hour before the start of the match. She said that, at the start, she let the players prepare themselves in the change rooms. At this time, she may be present in the change room or she might complete her own pre-game routine by reviewing notes or discussing game matters with her assistant coach. She declared that some players might go to have a few practice shots on a spare court, whereas others might sit around and talk. Donna stated that with 45-50 minutes before the start of the game she brought the players into the change rooms for the pre-game talk (see Figure 4.4). She said that the pre-game talk lasted for 10-15 minutes, after which the team was sent out for a 20-30 minute warm-up.

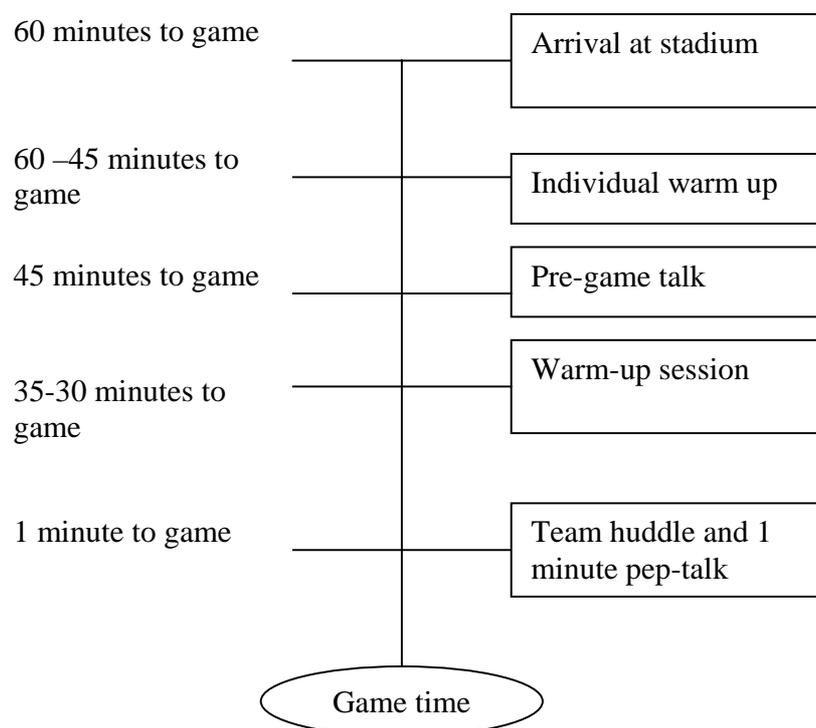


Figure 4.4.

Timeline and structure of Donna's pre-game preparations for Team D.

Overview of Donna's Intended Coaching Practices Prior to Performance

Donna acknowledged that her goals as coach for this season focused on making the finals and developing the team, and herself as a coach. She said that her focus was not only on the development of the team but also on the development of the players individually. This was highlighted in Donna's statement "I know their game very, very well, so I've worked individually with a lot of them through the season to try and achieve their own personal goals." Before a game, however, she reported that her primary intentions were to maintain a positive focus, reinforce game plan, and physically and mentally prepare her players. She said that she achieved this through individual

preparation time for herself and the players, pre-game talk, running the warm-up session, and speaking individually to each player.

Mental preparation. Donna said that mental preparation at this level was important. The young and inexperienced nature of Team D meant that they had to learn how to adapt to tough situations. She believed that her team had the ability to defeat all the teams in the conference, but they had to learn how. Experience and mental preparation before a match were factors that she considered paramount for Team D's success. In particular, she aimed to have her players confident and motivated to perform their role in the team.

Donna reported that during the week at training and then again, on game day she gave each player something specific to focus on. Donna said that she aimed to reinforce the attributes that each player brings to the team on the day of the game, telling them that that was their focus for the game and for the team.

So I don't think there is a standard thing that you can say about mental focus on every single person. . . .one of the hardest things is to read them, read every single one of them, at every moment of the game, it's tough.

Donna stated that mental preparation was a key factor of preparation on game day for Team D. The young and inexperienced nature of Team D and the limitations in Donna's coaching experience, however, had resulted in a learning curve for both coach and players with regard to preparation. Donna suggested that she had made some mistakes and that she was learning how to adjust her coaching style and coaching practices in order to ensure that her players were ready to compete. In addition, she declared that her players needed to accept that they were playing at a highly competitive senior level and not

juniors. She emphasised that the pressures and expectations were different and several players needed to rise to the challenge.

Player assessment and individual coaching. Donna reported that during the stretching and warm-up session she might speak to the players, if anything was urgent. She related that she would only intervene early with a player, if it was obvious that something was affecting their preparation.

When they're all shooting around together it's fairly obvious if someone's kind of off colour because none of them are quiet, they're all very boisterous and, and loud and, and fun and whatever. So, if I see something like that, that's when I'll do that, before the talk so that they can get it off their chest and go in hopefully focused on what we're about to say in the talk.

In particular, Donna stated that she spoke to each player individually as they were stretching.

Once we get out from the talk and they start warming up, I will individually, when they're all sitting around stretching, I'll individually go around and talk to most of them about what I want them to do that game. What their focus is, if they're about to go and play on a certain opponent, most of them I've played against throughout, some for many years. . .I've played, so I'll give them some kind of personal advice.

The young and inexperienced nature of the team was one reason why Donna applied this technique prior to a game. The individual attention to each player enabled her to set personal goals for each player to focus on during the game. This she suggested aided the team and each player in developing their skills throughout the year. Donna said that she used her experience and knowledge as a player to drive her coaching. Furthermore, she believed that her experience as a player gave her the confidence as a coach despite her

lack of experience at ABA level. She stated that her knowledge of some of the opposition players allowed her to relate specific information to her players on offensive and defensive tactics.

Positive focus. Donna indicated that a key aspect of her coaching style on the day of a game was keeping a positive focus. Her goal was to ensure that all of her players were positively focused on the game, that they were having fun, and had some direction for each game. She stated that she achieved this by giving each player individual and team goals, through respect to her players, by showing a positive outlook, and through open honest communication.

Player knowledge. Knowledge of her players personally and professionally also aided Donna's preparations on game day. Donna highlighted that her knowledge of each player's body language and mood prior to a game enabled her to effectively intervene with each player and refocus them onto the game or establish what was affecting their preparation.

I think it's fairly obvious off the field when you once you, get to know these girls well and I think you need to get to know them through the season. Yeah it's, it's fairly clear when there's something not quite right with them.

Donna highlighted that her knowledge of the players aided her to evaluate how they were preparing. She reported that when she observed them warming up she could assess their readiness to perform. Furthermore, Donna acknowledged that her young age aided her in this sense as the players, she suggested could relate to her.

Coach involvement in warm-up session. A tactic that Donna said she employed to ensure that her players were completely prepared was to run the warm-up drill herself. Donna stated that she started to do this when the captain found it took pressure of her and

allowed her to prepare more effectively. Furthermore, Donna said that it also increased the pace and quality of the warm up and ensured that the players were at game intensity.

I think it's important to have a nice, hard warm up 'cause they've shown that they come out harder at the beginning of their game which we've needed to do. So what I'll do is, I'll stand on the baseline, just clap, kind of give the instructions, talk them through it, and one by one, if I need to, I might make a comment to someone or it's more just encouragement though, I won't pull them out of warm up to say anything unless I need to. That's when they really need to kind of click together.

Donna also suggested that her presence aided team cohesion and her own personal preparation. Specifically, running the warm up alleviated Donna's anxiety and gave her a better understanding of each player's preparation. She declared that the closeness of her to the team at this time enabled her to intervene and direct the players in a quick and effective manner. Donna said, "I need them to be focused on the job ahead of them and I don't want them thinking about anything else, I need them to know exactly what I want from them."

Donna reported that her primary concern in the hour immediately prior to a match was ensuring that players' knew their role in the team and were completely focused on the game. She stated, however, that she was on a steep learning curve and was still making mistakes. As a first year coach, she suggested that she was still establishing what she needed to do as a coach prior to a match and was learning from what the players wanted or needed.

Mediating factors: Level of development. The young and inexperienced nature of the team has meant that Donna learned to adjust her style of coaching to suit players' skills and needs.

My role's obviously to make sure that I get the message across to the players and what the job is at hand. . . I have found that less was better. Less information is better. . . with this team, if you give them information overload, it will all go through one ear and out the other immediately, so I've learnt that less was better. I sometimes feel like I'm under prepared, but in actual fact what it is, is that I'm trying to keep it fairly basic so that they can just keep to the job.

Donna suggested that a more experienced team would need more detailed information and less individual attention than what she gives Team D.

Mediating factors: Situational and contextual factors and the opposition. Donna said that she preferred to keep the focus of the pre-game talk on Team D and not on the opposition. Donna acknowledged that, "if we start focusing on the other team too much and, and their results, and this and that, and how many this, and the stats here, and the stats there, it all just goes to shambles." Consequently, Donna stated that she preferred to focus on what her team had to do to perform well and win the game. In contrast, however, she also stated that nothing was routine, and she allowed for some freedom in the preparation "It's purely depending on whom we're playing." She emphasised that the focus of the talk changed for the specific situation of the team and for each different opposition.

Furthermore, Donna indicated that her pre-game talk was basic and focused on relaying information that they had worked on during the week. Specifically, Donna suggested that,

I already kind of knew that you'd probably have to keep it fairly basic for that group, you learn that at training and stuff too. So it didn't take too long to click onto that one, but before a game. . .there's really not that much to do. I might go in, I don't even always write things on the board. I kind of go in there and just talk to them. . .these girls tend to just want to go out there and shoot around together and have a bit

of a play and whatever and just be a bit of fun, so it's all different. It, it depends.

So my role is just really kind of to sit back and observe and be there and yeah that kind of thing and just get them ready.

In particular, during the pre-game talk, Donna stated that she focused on specific players of the opposition and the player match-ups, followed by Team D's offensive and defensive strategies. Donna said that during the 5-10 minutes she spent on the talk she aimed to motivate her players as a team and guide them through their goals for the game.

Mediating factors: Game schedule. Donna also emphasised that preparation on game day could be different depending on the schedule of games. For example, if they had a double header over a weekend (Saturday night and then Sunday afternoon) then the structure of the preparation for the second game would be different. In this case, Donna said that on Sunday morning she would scout the results for the opposition team through the Internet and focus on how the opposition performed and how each and every player performed in the game. She then related this to her proposed match-ups and spoke briefly in the pre-match talk about the opposition's form. Furthermore, Donna integrated Team D's performance as a team and individually into her pre-match talk and into the individual interactions she had with each and every player in the second game.

Summary

Overall, Donna acknowledged that her primary role on the day of a game was to observe.

My main thing was to observe, make sure that they're all prepared. . .the biggest role was probably to make sure all their minds were on the job and myself to make sure that I have not left any confused message there that they all know exactly they're all going out there to do exactly the same thing.

A key aspect of Donna's coaching style was open communication and honesty. Donna declared that open feedback between coach and player allowed her to complete her job and make decisions before a game, during a game, and at training. In addition, Donna said that gaining the respect of players via open communication and feedback regarding her coaching on game day and at training aided her development as a coach.

Phase 2: Observations of Team D

Game Day Observations for Team D

Donna sat with her friends and several players as they waited for the game to start. It was an hour before the Sunday afternoon game was to start. The team, having played the night before, were given a somewhat laidback warm-up for this game. Several players had changed and were shooting baskets on the court, whilst others laughed and joked with their coach in the first few rows of the stadium seats. The atmosphere was laidback and the intensity was low, Donna seemed to be in no hurry to push the players into anything.

With 50 minutes to game time, all players headed off to the change rooms to get changed and strapped. Being a women's team, I was not allowed into the change rooms at this time. Donna had a private management meeting with the assistant coach and managers of the club and the team. Donna's meeting lasted 10 minutes, after which she checked on the players that were practicing shooting on the court and then on the players in the change room before heading back to the bench. Donna waited on the bench with her friends and support staff, as the manager organised water and towels for the game. With around 45 minutes till game time, the coach and assistant coach headed into the change rooms. I was allowed in at this time. The mood was upbeat and fun, perhaps a reflection of the age of the team, 20-21 years old. As Donna stood in front of the whiteboard, the mood became a little more serious and the players' attention was focused on their coach. Each

and every player was ready, dressed, strapped, and looking towards Donna. They were observed to be quiet and attentive.

The pre-game talk was 5-6 minutes long. Donna began with a quick run down of the opposition and how they played in their match the night before. After analysing the previous game, Donna focused on Team D and how they would match-up against the opposition and the game plan that they would follow. The opposition included a player, who was contracted to a professional team overseas. Donna mentioned that she needed to be watched and to not let her run with the ball. A senior player discussed a concern regarding their defensive strategy that Donna welcomed.

Team D had a positive attitude towards the game and appeared to be confident. The coach summed up the pre-game talk by saying a few key words about their game plan and then pumping them up with “this was your time girls...win the weekend”. The players and coaches’ huddled, had a hands up, and yelled the team name, before heading out to the court for a warm-up.

Donna was observed to be highly involved with the players prior to the start of the game. She had a different approach from others coaches that I had observed. For example, she stood on the baseline while the players ran through the warm-up and, as they began to stretch, she spoke directly to each and every player in detail. The conversations were personal and focused on each player’s individual role in the game. She then ran the warm-up and shooting drills herself. It appeared that her in depth involvement was as much as for her preparation as the players. Donna stood on the baseline and ran the warm-up, where she directed the different drills and shouted encouragement and praise, all the time being positive. The warm-up itself was highly detailed and the players moved at a high pace throughout, becoming involved in progressively more detailed and complex drills.

With 3 minutes to go to the start of the game, the players were pulled to the side of the court for the team announcement and national anthem. Donna gave the players a few brief words of encouragement “you guys looked great out there; keep it up”. After they returned, Donna had a short exchange with the players in the starting line-up. She questioned the players on the defensive strategy and the first play they were going to run. Team D then headed off to the centre circle to greet the opposition and get ready for the tip-off. Donna looked nervous at this time and her movements in the past 20 minutes had become increasingly agitated, she paced up and down the courtside in front of the players with her arms folded, her eyes were closely focused on her team as well as the opposition. At the tip-off, she continued to stand. Donna was observed to not sit down for the first quarter, she continued to pace up and down the sideline and became very verbal, yelling directions, encouragement, and praise.

Interactions with Debbie on game day. On the day of the game, I observed Donna to have limited interactions with Debbie. Donna’s first game specific interactions with Debbie and the team occurred with 45 minutes to game time, prior to this Donna socialised with the players and let them prepare themselves. After the pre-game talk, Donna was observed to talk briefly with Debbie in the change rooms as they headed out to the court. On court, Donna spoke to Debbie for 1-2 minutes regarding the match from the night before and how Debbie could get herself into the game. Donna then had several short interactions during the warm-up as Debbie ran through under the basket. Overall, the interactions between coach and player were limited, as Donna had shortened the warm-up due to the double header over the weekend and let the players complete their individual preparations by themselves for the first 20 minutes.

*Phase 3: Interview with Debbie**Debbie*

The player interviewed for Phase 3, Debbie, was a 19 year-old highly credentialed player whom was part of Team D's leadership group. Debbie was currently playing in her third season in the national league and was expected to have a lucrative career in the future. Debbie was a centre/forward for Team D and was in the starting line-up. She had been playing basketball for 11 years and had played for 4 years in the ABA. She was in her first year with Team D and had been asked by Donna, with whom she played with in the national league to join Team D for this season.

Overview of Debbie's Perceptions of Donna's Behaviour Prior to Performance

Debbie stated that Donna's coaching style on the day of a game suited her preparation. Debbie attributed this to Donna being a very approachable person and that she was a "players' coach". The respect Debbie had for Donna as a player transferred to her as a coach. In particular, Debbie said that because Donna was a player, Debbie and the team could relate better to her than a coach, who had not been playing at the same level. . . .she's a player herself. It helps because, just like certain little things, like something happens on the court and it looks totally different off. . . .she understands because she knows as a player things, concepts. . . .look totally different on court as they do off court.

Debbie felt that Donna was easy to approach, easy to talk to, and approachable. Being able to openly communicate with her coach aided Debbie's pre-match anxiety and enabled her to feel at ease with her coach.

It's a lot easier to explain to her when like, if she says, "oh why didn't you put that shot up?" and she said well it split one was coming over. . . . She says "oh okay" then like she understands, whereas some coaches sort of just go "well no" you

know and, and kind of yell at you, so yeah she's really easy to talk to. She's very honest.

Debbie was in her first year with the team and stated Donna, who was also in her first year as a coach, was still learning and had improved since the start of the year. Debbie had a very high opinion of Donna and her ability to improve and succeed at this level. Debbie said, "She's always been good, but she's improved as we've improved," in particular, "allowing us to give her feedback and or just asking for feedback and allowing us to have our say."

On the day of the game, Debbie highlighted that there had been a mix up in the time the game started. She and some other players had thought the game started at midday and some thought 12:30pm. Debbie had arrived early and became worried when there were not that many others there. Debbie stated that she was a little anxious until she called the coach, whom told her that she was early and it was not a problem.

It didn't really affect my preparation at all, because I live about an hour away anyway so I'm used to having to leave early and get to places really early. At the start, when I first got there and there was another girl there, we were a bit "where was everyone?"

Debbie stated that, an hour before the game, she sat around and talked to the other players in the change room before going for a shoot around with the other centres and forwards. Debbie stated that, with 40 minutes to go, Donna called them into the change rooms for the pre-game talk. During the pre-game talk, Debbie stated that her coach focused on the match-ups that they had spoken about during practice and reviewed the opposition's game from the previous night. Debbie said that the coach also reinforced the

key principles of the teams' game plan and the key opposition personal who needed to be defended against in order for them to win.

In particular, with Team X, one of the girls from Team X the night before, who came off the bench scored twenty something points. And so she said well that's not going to happen to us, no one comes off the bench and does that. . .

Debbie stated that, after the pre-game talk had finished the team went out to the court to warm up and stretch. Debbie said that when they were stretching, Donna came over and talked to the players. She reported, "this was where we sort of start to focus and get really ready and while we're stretching she'll come around and give individual people, like everyone, goals." In particular, she referred to the game from the previous night,

The game before on Saturday, I got four really quick fouls. And so I was really frustrated, so she came around to me and said "okay shake it off it's a new game you know, new team ... whatever" and so that you know. . . a lot of coaches just do it to kind of key players, where she does it to everyone.

Debbie felt that the personal interaction with Donna helped her preparation, "especially the just relax and shake it off." Debbie stated that she was anxious about her previous performance and felt that she had let the team down in the previous game. Debbie highlighted that the positive intervention by Donna refocused her reduced her anxiety level, and boosted her confidence. In particular, "that definitely did because I would've I felt. . . I would've gone out a bit erratic and sort of a bit all over the place, because I was I, I would've tried to do too much."

Debbie declared that Donna's involvement in the team warm-ups prior to the game added an extra source of motivation and encouragement to the players. Donna's presence aided the team's preparations, because it gave them a focal point and her communications

and hustle pushed the team to warm up and to establish a higher skill level and a higher intensity.

Donna standing there and just encouraging, it just, it kind of just gets you involved a little bit more with her, and instead of being players and coaches it's kind of she's one of us. Like, like we don't need her to completely motivate us, but it's just that extra little kick that we take from her.

Donna's involvement in the warm up was an atypical coaching technique that Debbie said had benefited the team in terms of preparation and focus. Furthermore, Donna's presence reduced the gap between coach and player, as she perceived Donna as being one of the team. Debbie's perception of her coach as being one of the team aided her confidence in her coach's ability. This increased the level of trust and respect between coach and player and aided her's and the team's preparation.

Debbie indicated that Donna was heavily involved right up to the start of the match. Debbie said that, within the last 30 minutes before the start of the match, the coach acted as a source of motivation and encouragement for the team. In particular, Debbie declared that Donna was an important part of the team on the day of a game, because her positive attitude and outlook on the game acted as a source of motivation that brought the team together.

I think she's very, very important, because if she wasn't there or if she wasn't around and you know or she was sort of flat and sort of unenthusiastic about our game, that's contagious like that'd rub off on us and we can we feed off her.

In addition, Debbie highlighted that her mental preparation for the game was excellent,

I think I prepared very, very well. Actually, it's probably the best preparation I've had all year and like I'd spoken to Donna about it afterwards. She actually asked me what I did different. I said "no I really didn't do anything different", it was just oh, I can't actually put a finger on what it was exactly that brought it all together that game. I've, I've had good games this season already but, for some reason, I just felt really switched on. Like I was really tired we'd had our game Team Y the night before and I'd got there that little bit earlier and I was you know a bit lethargic and everything, but there was, something different, I could just keep going. I can't exactly put a finger on what it was, but yeah it was I think it was pretty good that, that game.

Debbie suggested that during the preparation Donna had refocused her after a previous poor performance the night before. Debbie acknowledged, "it might've even been before Team Y game where Donna had actually said to me I don't care about how many you shoot, get yourself in the game by rebounding". Before the game, started Debbie suggested that,

I was kind of a bit edgy and a bit oh "was she going to be mad at me, what's going to happen? You know was the team mad at me?" And all that kind of stuff and when she just came up and sort of said "shake it off it's a new game".

During the resulting win, Debbie had her best rebounding effort of the season including 17 points and 20 rebounds.

My best rebounding effort by far. I've been getting sort of double figures in points and rebounds most games, but lately my rebounds have started. People have started to sort of work me out and everyone. . .I'd be having two people blocking me out when shots go up and so my rebounding started to drop, but. .

.and at the start of the season Donna was kind of like I want you to shoot more. And so my focus switched from rebounding, which was normally what kind of gets me into the game, to shooting now. And so it was kind of back to normal for me, it wasn't I'm not trying to make an special extra effort to do anything, she just sort of said "no throw that all out the window just go back and play", and then finally it all sort of sunk into place.

Debbie said that Donna's advice on the day of the game refocused her and allowed her to play her traditional style of game. The two interactions including the advice regarding the previous poor game aided her preparation. Specifically, Debbie suggested that Donna had helped her mentally refocus from the negative thoughts regarding form to a positive thought pattern aimed at what she could do to get herself into the game. The knowledge that her coach and team were not annoyed with her performance from the night before lifted Debbie's state of mind.

Donna's importance to Debbie's and the team's preparation was reflected in her perception of Donna's positive attitude.

I think definitely the things that she says, like when she says as a team as such not, not necessarily individually, but as a team when she really instils. . .like she believes we can do it. We can win, we can make finals, we could win the final, and sometimes you might think well, well yeah whatever, like after a game when we've lost. You just think oh no way we. . .there's no way we could make finals after that performance and she'll say stuff like "I'm really disappointed, because I know we can do better", and she doesn't single anybody out or anything like that. I think and you know that there's always going she's always going to sort of be behind you whatever happens. And that was especially brought kind of to my

attention after the Team X game, before the Team Y game when she had forgotten about the game before and that was it. She knew I could play on Sunday.

Overall, Debbie held Donna in high regard. In particular, Donna's positive focus and attitude after a loss the night before gave Debbie a positive energy and aided in how she approached the second game of the double header.

I get nothing but positive sort of energy from her and that especially on Sunday helps cause we're all tired and we've had our long trips and she's very positive and she takes the time to sort of like take every individual and spend time with them; not just she doesn't just like single out key players.

Phase 4: VCSRI Session with Donna

The scenes for the VCSRI of Team D were selected based on the analysis of the first interview with the coach. In total, 55 minutes of footage was recorded before the match. After analysis, 13 scenes were edited and selected to be included in the interview. Donna could not remember one of these scenes so it was consequently left out of the analysis. The scenes were selected based on Donna's description of the way she constructed the pre-game period, scenes that reflected the coach's plan, and scenes that included interactions with the corresponding targeted player, Debbie. Scenes that were spontaneous or situation specific were also included in the VCSRI session. The selected scenes are described in the following section:

Scene 1: Pre-Game Talk 1 (-45 minutes)

In the change rooms, Donna stood in front of the whiteboard facing her team. She was holding a clipboard with her notes on it. As the coach spoke, the players became quiet and listened intently. The coach reviewed their opposition's game from last night and related the results and how they played to Team D's game plan.

Donna explained that the first scene was very basic. Her aim was to relay information on the opposition's game from the night before. Donna stated that she focused on the top scorers and the form of the opposition's key players. Donna said, "they played a game the night before, very interesting stats, basically it was indicative of the kind of game they played and I was just telling them that." In particular, Donna wanted to emphasise that the opposition were a running team and that their "big girls" or centres and forwards were not a factor unless they were playing well. Donna was reinforcing the opposition's style of play and the current form of specific players, who were deemed as a scoring threat.

Scene 2: Pre-Game Talk 2 (-42 minutes)

In the change rooms again, Donna was now focused on Team D's game plan and the player match-ups. There were several points written on the whiteboard behind Donna. Donna focused on two specific key players of the opposition.

Donna was reinforcing the specific match-ups for the oppositions' starting five and telling each player how to play against them. Donna stated that her goal here was to reinforce the material and strategies that the team had focused on during training in the previous week. In this instance, Donna said that the players did not necessarily know the exact match-ups for this game, due to the two games on the weekend. Furthermore, due to the inexperienced nature of the team, Donna did not want to overburden the players with information on the opposition. Instead, she had wanted them to focus on what they were doing in each game and not in both. In this scene, Donna exemplified this by explaining the match-ups to the starting five, focusing on what each player's specific job was in playing against the player.

I'm more about concentrating, 'cause their half court D [defence] was so good. I can make changes and it, it almost, I find that, if I give them those individual things to focus on, they lose focus of their own game, so I have purposely not given them match-ups until game day, because it might change depending on players. . .all season have been in and out from every team, so it's just, I find it's better to just do it on game day. They all know what they've got to do and I change match-ups a lot anyway through the game.

Scene 3: Pre-Game Talk 3 (-39 minutes)

This game was the second match in a double header. The previous night Team D had played 2 hours drive away. The Sunday afternoon game was to start at 1pm. The coach changed the focus from the opposition onto Team D and what they had done during the week and how they played last night. Donna began to focus more on the game plan and on what had happened in the game the previous night.

Donna said that the previous night Team D had let the other team outplay them and they had not stuck to their game plan. Consequently, Donna stated that she was reinforcing the game plan for the upcoming game. She highlighted this by referring to game stats of the opposition's game the previous night.

[Last time] They didn't play better than us. We, just, well they did play better than us, but we allowed them to just play their game plans, so we had to fix all of that, um also because the night before we had that game I just felt like there was some important things from their stats the night before that they really needed to know about.

Donna suggested that her main goal was to reinforce the positives from the previous night and highlight the different defensive strategy that they would be using (half

court player on player defence as opposed to full court player on player). Furthermore, Donna wanted to show that she still had confidence in the team despite the loss in the previous game. In particular, Donna stated that she wanted to focus on the following aspects in the pre-game talk,

What the other team does. What they do well. . .which individual was going to match them up on those players. What defence as a team we're going to run to try and control that and then what, what we're going to focus on that's it.

Donna stated that one of her main concerns was to keep the confidence and motivation up in every player for the finals. Her focus, however, had primarily been to take it one game at a time and not burden the players with excess pressure and expectations that she believed might affect how they approached the game.

Scene 4: End of Pre-Game Talk (-37 minutes)

Donna started to pump up the team and motivate them as they huddled together in the centre of the room. Donna stood in the centre surrounded by the players, who were arm in arm. They all yelled out the team name and headed out of the door, to complete stretching and the physical warm-up.

Donna stated that her aim here was to ensure that the players were not strictly focused on a win. Donna wanted the players to focus on their own game, "play hard and be aggressive." Furthermore, Donna wanted the players to enjoy the game and have fun and not focus on results too much.

My whole idea has been that if you put too much pressure on them and you start talking about results and you've got to win this, you've got win that, we did that, I found I did that in the Team X game a little bit too much. I kind of looked at my

pre-game talk before the game and thought, “yeah, no, there was way too much focus on results.”

Donna explained that the team talk and the get together was the start of where they focus as a team. She said that the players had their individual warm-up time prior to the pre-game talk, if they needed it, and at this stage of the preparation, it was time to focus as a team.

Scene 5: Players on Court Warm-up (-32 minutes)

Donna stood and observed the players from the baseline of the court. It was unusual to see a coach actively involved in the pre-game warm-up. She stood and directed the warm-up from that position and observed the players. Donna shouted encouragement and praised the players for good work.

Donna stated the purpose of her standing on the baseline, running the warm-up drills, was to increase the players' intensity and ensure that they completed the warm-up drills correctly and at pace. Donna said that the team had responded positively to the change and had not felt pressured by her presence.

My whole thing was that I feel like that, if I'm out there with them it makes it, it does make a bit of a difference and I found that taking. . .I, I've taken over the warm-up over the last ten games or so, basically since we've been on a bit of a winning streak purely because I find that and I suppose just to focus on what they're doing, rather than having to focus on getting through stuff. . .I make them push themselves a little bit more and really get longer. And I also like to go around and say something to each of the players about what they're focusing on what they've given to me as their goal, or whatever, it all depends on who we're playing or whatever, but I'll always try and go out and say something.

Scenes 6, 7 and 8: Individual On Court Interactions with all Players (-30 minutes to – 22 minutes)

On the court, Donna and the assistant coach were observed to speak directly to each player as they stretched. Donna made sure that she spoke to each player for several minutes. Due to the action taking place on court, the increasing noise of the crowd, and the loud music I was unable to record the verbal content of these interactions.

Donna said that she and her assistant coach go and talk to each and every player while they were stretching to reinforce their role in the game and to give each player individual goals. For example, Donna explained that she told Debbie to stay positive and keep her head up.

She was disappointed with her game from the night before, so I was telling her to keep her head up, that it's okay and to come in. Just telling her to keep her head up and I just kind of say to her I know you're always ready.

Donna stated that it was important to speak to all the players and not just the starting five. She emphasised that, it was a team game and that everyone contributed during a match. Furthermore, Donna said that, due to the nature of the opposition, the bench players quite often play lots of minutes, so she suggested that it was important to ensure that each player knew their individual role in the team. She suggested that by giving each player specific goals or objectives during the match they each had a specific focus during the game that aided how they approached the match. Donna proposed that the individual interactions also allowed her to assess how each player was preparing for the match, so she could and intervene if needed.

Donna gave a prime example of what she talked to her captain, Emma, about prior to a game. She was observed to stand in front of Emma and point to an opposition player,

who was warming up. Donna then demonstrated how Emma should protect the ball in offence and then how to attack it in defence. She said that her goal was to reinforce the tactics they had worked on in an individual training session during the week.

. . .she's [the opposition player] by far. She's the league's leading scorer, she, yeah, and telling. . .it'd be rough, tough as a board trying to rip, because our players have a habit of grabbing it and bringing it up here. . .Team Y could have a very fake defence of getting up all over them. So I was showing Amy what she does, trying to get her on her front foot and rip it through. . .

Donna acknowledged that the time of the season and the specific situation, double-header, changed the way in which she had approached the players before this game.

What I did notice was I've maybe spent more time talking to the players this morning than at other times. Normally, I keep it all a bit brief. Well, maybe that was because I was worried that they might be a little bit mentally tired, because we travelled to Team X the night before. . .some of them had things to say to me back.

Adopting her coaching style to suit the situation of the team and the time of the season was something that Donna had learned. The extra attention to her players aided her preparation in terms of understanding each player's state of preparation and allowed for player feedback and questions.

Scenes 9 and 10: Donna Involved in Direction of On-Court Warm-Up Drill (-20 minutes)

The coach directed the players to start a drill. She walked along the baseline and under the baskets as the players took shots. While she observed her players, she shouted words of encouragement and hustled the players to increase the tempo of the drill as the players began to get moving. Donna was observed to pace up and down, looking intently

at the players as they took their shots, Donna walked along the entire length of the baseline and along to the benches courtside before returning to stand under the basket.

Donna said that in this situation Coach she was just “there” and that she and the players just “talk a bit of shit”. She reported that her presence on the baseline was to provide encouragement. Standing on the baseline instead of near the benches may have been more for her benefit. Donna said, because she “felt part of the group”. In particular, She stated, “so it’s for both, [coach and players] benefit. I think ultimately it’s for their benefit, because it means I can read them better if I’m with them.” Donna suggested that her close presence and observation of the players allowed her to make any last minute adjustments.

I don’t know. It’s probably just as much for my benefit as theirs in a way. It just keeps you with the group. You just noticing things going on a few times through warm up. I’ve, I’ve pulled them in at some stage and say, “girls we don’t look focused or whatever. Let’s keep it up. We’re looking flat. What’s up, let’s get it going, whatever that’s all.” It’s just, it’s purely so that, if there was something there that I can observe I can nail it before the game starts.

Scene 11: Final Talk Courtside (-5 minutes)

With five minutes to go, the players were called over for a final pre-game talk courtside. Donna stood in the centre of the players, surrounded by the starting five. The team was observed to be pumped up as they ‘high-fived’ each other as they walked over to the coach.

During the final talk instead of telling the players what play they were going to run and what the offensive and defensive structure would be, Donna stated that she questioned the players about what they were going to do. Donna suggested that by questioning the

players they were more likely to remember what the specific game plan that had been taught at training and reinforced during her pre-game talk. In addition, Donna stated that it forced the players to listen, as they knew they were going to be questioned before the game.

What I've actually learnt was that like me; still, as a player, sometimes you were taking so much in that you forget about the whatever or sometimes you're staring someone straight in the eye and acknowledging, but not hearing a damn word they're saying. I do that all the time; it's a really bad habit. So, I was thinking maybe that's what it was, so, since, I've been actually asking them to tell me what we're in [offensive and defensive structure].

Donna's aim in this final interaction with the team was to reinforce the key aspects of the game plan that they were to concentrate on. Furthermore, team cohesion was a goal that she tried to maintain throughout the pre-game preparation. The final talk and the "high-fives or high-ten" between players and coaching staff as they ran out on court acted as a final source of encouragement and aimed to "keep the group tight."

Summary

Debbie described her pre-game preparation as the best of the season. Debbie stated that Donna aided her confidence in her ability and eased her anxiety regarding her poor form and foul trouble in the previous game. Donna refocused Debbie onto her strengths and aimed to calm her nerves and ensure that she was focused on the game. Positive reinforcement and individual goal setting were key elements of Donna's pre-game preparations. Donna ensured that she spoke to all of her players regarding their role in the team. Debbie stated that Donna's positive attitude and her coaching style aided Debbie and, in particular, the team during the pre-game preparations. Debbie perceived her coach

as an important source of motivation and encouragement for the team. The respect that her coach had for them as players gave them a relaxed and confident attitude that they carried into the game.

Triangulation of Results for Team D

Coach Intentions and Observations

Two games in two days. The double-header weekend (two games in two days) influenced Donna's and Team D's pre-game preparations. On the day of the recorded game the pre-game preparations were shortened due to the game the previous night and the travel involved (two hours drive in each direction). The players were given considerable time to prepare themselves while the coaches sat and spoke to players and reviewed their notes. Donna stated that she aimed to have each player focused on her role in the game. She achieved this by speaking to all of her players individually and giving them specific goals, related to the role in the team, to focus on. Furthermore, she monitored the progress of her players' warm-up by standing on the baseline and directing the players through the drills.

Positive reinforcement and a positive attitude. Donna exhibited a positive attitude throughout the pre-game period. In the individual interactions with Debbie, Donna told her to forget about her form from the game the previous night and to get herself into the game through her strengths (rebounding) and build her confidence from there. Donna played a prominent part in the pre-game warm-up, organising all aspects of the preparation and having close contact with all her players. She considered herself part of the team and her actions reflected this. Donna acted as a source of motivation/encouragement and confidence for Team D before the match.

Coach Intentions, Observations, and Player Perceptions

Attentional focus and mental readiness. Debbie had a high degree of respect for Donna and stated that her coach aided her preparations and performance on the day before the recorded game. Debbie said that Donna aided her mental preparation by refocusing her and showing confidence in her ability after she had performed poorly the night before. Debbie had thought the team may have been angry at her performance and her anxiety levels before the recorded game were higher than usual because of her concerns. Donna's confidence in her ability and the goals set for Debbie aided her in achieving one of her best performances for the year. Of particular interest was Debbie's suggestion that her coach had aided her in achieving the best preparation and the achievement of a peak performance. Debbie suggested that she and the team feed off the confidence and positive attitude that her coach exhibited in the pre-game period. Donna's coaching style suited the players and her actions gave them confidence and motivated them to perform to the best of their ability.

Feedback and communication. Debbie cited that Donna often asked for feedback from her players regarding her performance after a game. Donna also admitting her own mistakes and allowed for the team to be open and honest with her regarding her coaching practices. The open communication between coach and player was perceived as being beneficial to both coach and team as it allowed for direct open and effective communications when there was limited time. Debbie's comments suggested that this aided in her respect and trust of her coach and gave her the confidence to trust her coach's comments in high-pressure situations.

Coach Intentions and VCSRI Session

Individual interactions and player knowledge. Donna highlighted that the individual interactions with Debbie prior to the recorded game were a key to her turn around in her performance. Donna indicated that her knowledge of the players and their game allowed her to intervene effectively with her players and refocus their negative thought patterns by positively reinforcing them and giving the player specific goals to focus on. In the case of Debbie, Donna, told her to forget the previous game and to focus on her strengths and get herself into the game that way.

Mediating factors. The nature of the double header, the time of season (close to finals), and the level of development in Team D resulted in Donna adjusting her pre-game preparations. Due to the two games in consecutive days and the closeness of the finals, Donna's allowed her players' to have more time to individually prepare themselves before this game and did not focus on the pressure of making the finals during the pre-game talk. Instead, during the pre-game talk Donna reinforced the principles that they had practiced during the week and focused on what they needed to do to beat the current opposition. She suggested that too much information, the young nature of the team, and their inexperience may result in an increased level of anxiety. Consequently, she aimed to limit to amount of information, kept a calm and positive pre-game environment, and focused only the present game.

Observations and Player Perceptions

The interactions between Donna and Debbie were short and succinct. Donna maintained a positive focus at all times during the pre-game period and she used this to motivate and encourage her players. Debbie responded to her coach and stated that she had the best preparation of the season thus far. Debbie attributed this to her coach and the

short positive reinforcement of basic principles that her anxiety had made her overlook. Donna's direction of the pre-game warm-up was found to act as a source of motivation and encouragement for the team. Debbie suggested, that the coach's presence at that time lifted the intensity of the warm-up and the spirit within the team. Debbie reported that the coach was part of the team and having her there at that time benefited changed the manner in which she approached the warm-up and the extra intensity aided her confidence in her physical preparations for the game.

Summary

Donna aimed to establish a positive and motivating pre-performance environment and to have here players physically and mentally ready to compete. She achieved this through a combination of team based activities and individual interactions. Players such as Debbie were given the freedom to complete their own preparations prior to the team-based activities. A key feature of Donna's coaching style was that she spoke to each player about their role in the game and what they were to focus on. Her purpose was to ensure that her younger and less experienced players were relaxed, focused, and confident. Donna also ran the team warm-up from the baseline, where she directed, hustled, and encouraged the team. Debbie saw these factors as key strengths to coach Donna's coaching style. Debbie feed off her coach's positive attitude. Specifically, Debbie stated that Donna's words of encouragement aided her in achieving her best preparation for a match and alleviated her anxiety.

Analysis of Major Themes

In this section, I highlight the major themes that I identified from the four dyads. The aim of this section is to present the overriding themes from the four coach-player dyads and to present the results in a model depicting the interrelationships between the

different factors and components of the model. I used the combination of triangulation and multiple methods to extract the common themes from all four phases and all four dyads. As the thesis is focused on mental preparation, I only present the themes that are related to this theme. I acknowledge that the tactical and physical aspects of pre-game preparation are present but analysis of these is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The structure of this section is as follows; I have placed the themes into higher order categories to group similar or related themes to aid in showing the interrelationships. First, I present the primary objectives of the coach-player dyad immediately prior to performance. Each objective is then presented in more detail. Second, I present the factors that I identified as influencing preparations prior to performance including using physical preparation to aid mental readiness, mental preparation strategies, tactical reinforcement prior to performance, using pre-game routine (coach and player) to aid mental preparation, onsite player assessment and evaluation, coach-player relationship issues, and the mediating factors. Third, I present the coaching interventions that coaches applied during the pre-game preparations with their players. Coaches used the following interventions: individual interactions, observational and assessment, positive reinforcement, focus players attention on specific role, goal setting, relaxation, and pre-game routine. Finally, I present a model depicting the processes and interrelationships influencing preparations for performance. For each objective, theme, and coaching intervention, I provide a description and present the lower order themes, before providing information on the interventions used by coaches during the pre-game preparations.

Primary Objectives Immediately Prior to Performance

The analysis of the four phases from each of the four coach-player dyads revealed that preparations prior to performance the coaches and players primary goals prior to a

match were focused around: (a) optimal physical preparation, (b) optimal mental preparation and mental readiness, and (c) reinforcement of tactical strategies and game plan. The results from all four phases revealed that, these three primary objectives represented the structure that coaches and players used to construct the pre-match preparations for the team and themselves. The coaches and players also perceived all three to be equally important to preparation.

In this section, I will focus on results pertaining to achieving optimal mental preparation and readiness. The focus of this study is on mental preparation and this section will focus on presenting data that is relevant to mental preparation strategies. Physical preparation and tactical reinforcement are viewed as key constructs of coaching prior to performance and are perceived as being a key aspect to an optimal, holistic preparation. As the focus of the study is on mental preparation, summaries of the results for optimal physical preparation and tactical reinforcement will be presented. Due to their importance, short summary sections on physical preparation and tactical reinforcement are presented. Information linking mental preparation to physical preparation or tactical reinforcement will be presented.

Using Physical Preparation to Aid Mental Preparation

A common focus of the pre-game preparations was the optimal physical preparation of players. Both coaches and players perceived that physical preparation aimed at warming the players' bodies for the match was a critical part of pre-game preparations, prevented injury, and was linked to performance. In the VCSRI sessions, coaches suggested that the physical preparations were a method of focusing players' attention on the game and narrowing their concentration from social to more game specific. Both the coach and player interviews suggested that physical preparation routines

encompassed the following team and individually based attributes: team warm-up (jog and stretch), individual stretching, or shooting practice. Coaches also suggested that the pre-game war-up routines enhanced players' mental readiness by providing focal points that increased players' concentration onto game related matters.

My observations of the pre-game preparations confirmed the suggestions of the coaches and players. I observed that the majority of coaches used team based warm-ups to facilitate players' physical conditioning. The physical routines appeared to assist players to enter their game state by providing a means of narrowing their focus onto their role in the game. In addition, the team-based warm-ups appeared to facilitate team cohesion by bringing the team together as a unit. From my observations the teams that used individual based warm-ups rather than a team based warm up appeared less cohesive and less focused than those that used team based preparations. The coaches and players, however, stated that individual preparation time was preferred by players and perceived to be more beneficial than having a wholly team based warm-up routine. Furthermore, the teams and players that preferred individual preparations were more experienced and generally older.

Players and coaches perceived that physical preparation was a key aspect of the pre-game period for players' physical and mental readiness. In the coach interviews and in the VCSRI coaches stated that physical preparation was a linked to players mental readiness for the upcoming game, consequently, coaches perceived that a well structured physical preparation was required to aid players in entering their ideal performance state. The link between preparation and performance was supported by comments made by coaches in the VCSRI sessions. In particular, coaches' stated that they used the pre-game warm-up routines to monitor their players' physical preparations and players' mental readiness. Specifically, Bruce said "how they warm-up is how they play". Coaches

proposed that they could assess players' preparations and intervene if necessary to facilitate players' preparations and ensure that they mentally and physically ready to perform.

Physical preparations were observed to be different for each team. In particular, I observed that the more experienced teams had more personal preparation time when compared to the younger or more inexperienced teams. Despite the suggested importance of the physical preparations and player assessment prior to performance, all coaches were observed to spend considerable time away from their team as they warmed up. In the VCSRI sessions, coaches said that they used their assistant coaches to relay information regarding the team's progress.

Mental Preparation Strategies

Mental preparation or mental readiness was a key concept for coaches and players. In the coach interviews and the VCSRI sessions, coaches stated that throughout the pre-game preparations they aimed to have their player' mentally ready to compete. The analysis of the coach interview and my observations showed that coaches used the following techniques to aid players mental preparation including: motivational strategies, giving positive reinforcement, showing confidence in their players, and a implementing a structured pre-game routine for the team to aid players' mental readiness. In the Phase 3 player interviews, players stated that they mentally prepared by following an individual pre-game routine combining some or all of the following: shooting, stretching, socialising, receiving a rub down, or listening to music, talking to the coach or coaching staff. During these activities players' suggested that they aimed to focus on their role in the team, their role(s) in the game, to have confidence in their own ability, to be relaxed and calm, and to be focused on the game and their role in the team. One player stated that he set himself

goals during the pre-game period relating to the player he was matching up on. I found in both coach and player interviews that coaches and players used different strategies during the pre-game preparation, to achieve the common goal of optimal mental readiness. A key finding was that both coaches and players perceived the physical warm up to aid mental readiness.

Motivation

The coach interviews and my observations of all four coaches highlighted that coaches used praise and encouragement to motivate their players. I observed this to occur primarily during the second warm up 10-15 minutes before the start of the game. Coaches used verbal and non-verbal encouragement such as clapping or slapping a player on the back. I also observed the coaches to use individual interactions to motivate players, where they gave specific instructions or advice. In addition, in pre-game talk I observed the coaches to push home the positive aspects of their team/players and their specific strengths. In the coach interview, coaches also indicated that they used the pre-game talk to motivate players and to instil a sense of belief in their own abilities. Amy, for example, stated in the Phase 1 interview that she used the teams' good home game record to motivate her players during the pre-game talk and aid in their self-belief. This statement was reinforced in the VCSRI sessions. In particular, coaches stated that they used motivation, praise, and encouragement that were aimed at boosting the team's or players' confidence in their ability.

Accentuate the Positives/Positive Reinforcement

In the coach interviews and again in the VCSRI sessions, I found that the coaches' interactions with players individually and as a group in the pre-game talk focused on accentuating the positive aspects of a player's ability. During individual interactions,

coaches used positive reinforcement of previous form or hard work in training to motivate and/or boost the confidence of players. A positive focus was also used as an intervening task to eliminate or decrease negative thought patterns in players. Positive reinforcement often related to coaches reinforcing players' specific role in the game and their role in the team. Coaches' in the Phase 1 interviews reported that positive attitudes and positive talk were perceived as being essential because negative thoughts could potentially distract the player from playing their role in the team and affect the team as a whole. This was reinforced in the VCSRI session, because the majority of coaches' reported that they aimed to establish a positive pre-performance environment that facilitated players' preparation and aiding them entering their ideal performance state.

The Phase 3 interviews with the players highlighted that their perception of the coach and their attitude could potentially influence their game state prior to performance. In particular, players stated that a positive confident attitude in their coach gave their own confidence a boost and eased their nerves regarding the game. In contrast, coaches could also create negativity or anxiety in their players by talking to them too much, for example the interactions between Bruce and Brad showed that despite the coaches intentions the outcome of the interactions were perceived differently and had a negative influence (increased anxiety) on Brad and his preparations.

From the coach and player interviews and my observations, it was evident that the level of development of the players influenced this theme. This was attributed to the more experienced teams spent less time interacting with their coach than less experienced players. For example, Debbie stated that her coaches' positive attitude in the pre-game preparations aided her self-confidence and helped her to focus on her strengths for the upcoming game. Whilst Campbell, whom had 6 years more experience at ABA level or

higher than Debbie, in contrast preferred to complete his own individual pre-game routines away from the influence of Carl. The difference between these two players reveals how the individual characteristics of each player can dictate how coaches and players interact before a game.

Confidence

In the coach interviews, coaches highlighted that they used the pre-game talk and individual interactions to instil confidence in players' ability. After viewing video footage in the VCSRI coaches reinforced that, their aim during these team and individual interactions was to structure a positive atmosphere to aid players' confidence. Having a high self-belief and backing oneself were key aspects for coaches, as players need to have the confidence to take shots, for example, without any hesitation. Coaches said in the VCSRI session that they used player's previous form, good work in training, and highlighting players' strengths to boost players' confidence in their ability. Coaches aimed to limit players negative thought patterns and task irrelevant thoughts that could disrupt them achieving an optimal game focus. In addition, Coaches and players suggested that high self-confidence before a game was important for performance. Specifically, coaches and players said that a player's confidence in their own ability was particularly important to performance as players make split second decisions in games that affect the team and a lack of confidence in their own ability may distract them from making critical decisions in the game.

Goal Setting

In the VCSRI and observation, I found that, coaches set individual goals for players to achieve in the game. Coaches indicated that they used individual goals were found to aid players' attentional focus before and during the game. For example, Donna

reported that she used goal setting to ensure that players' had a task relevant focus when they stepped onto the court. In addition, Bruce gave Brad specific goals and targets regarding the player he was matching up against. I found that coaches perceived individual goals as a method of focusing players on their specific role with the team and in the game. This was reinforced by comments during the VCSRI session, coaches highlighted that setting individual goals was more important for their younger and less experienced players or for players, who were in poor form and needed a boost in confidence or to be refocused. More experienced players stated that they often set their own goals and had different insights than their coach on the specific offensive and defensive details that they should focus on during the game.

Focus Team and Players on the Game

During the pre-game period, I observed that coaches monitored their players to make sure that they were not focused on task irrelevant thoughts and knew their role in the team and in the specific game. The importance of players adopting a game-centred focus was related to performing their role in the team and players following the team plan devised to win the game. Coaches were observed to use a variety of interventions or techniques to focus their players on the game including: set scheduled pre-game structure, pre-game routines, team oriented activities, such as warm-ups and the pre-game talk. In the VCSRI session, coaches stated that these techniques were all aimed at increasing the team's or the players' concentration and attentional focus on the game. In particular, coaches said that they used the pre-game talk and individual interactions to reinforce the offensive and defensive strategies practiced at training. Coaches also stated that they set individual goals for specific players to ensure that they were concentrating on the task at hand. In addition, players stated that they used set pre-game routines, warm-ups, and

shooting practice to aid themselves in focusing on their role in the game. I also found that players assessed their own preparations before a game and performed specific tasks aimed at increasing their own physical and mental readiness outside the structure laid down by the coach.

Tactical Reinforcement Prior to Performance

Coaches were found to use the reinforcement of tactics to aid player preparations. In particular, during the VCSRI session, coaches highlighted that that was tactical reinforcement to aid players' focus prior to a game. Coaches suggested that a brief review of the players' role in the game and in the team aided players in focusing on what they had to do for the team and what their contribution for this specific game would be. Coaches argued that their aim here was to ensure that players had a clear idea of the offensive and defensive positions during that specific game. This occurred during the pre-game speech/team meeting and through individual interactions with players.

Using Pre-Game Routines to Aid Mental Preparation

Team or Individual Oriented Preparation

I observed that the pre-game routine of every team differed. The focus of the preparations for each team, however, followed a combination of team-oriented activities and individual preparation time. I observed that Team A followed a strict team-based pre-game preparation, whilst Teams' B, C, and D all followed a combination of team and individual oriented warm-up and preparatory routines. The different combinations reflected the different coaches' coaching styles. Furthermore, the level of development of the players affected the style of pre-game preparations. For example, I observed that coaches of younger and less experienced teams, such as Team D followed a team-based warm-up schedule, whereas players in more experienced teams, such as Team C had more

individual time to prepare themselves. A disruption or change to a team based routine was found to affect players' preparation dramatically. For example, in Team A, Ally reported that the different warm-up routine left her lacking confidence in her own physical preparation.

Players Pre-Game Routine

I observed that players followed a similar pre-game routine each game. The pre-game routine focused on attaining the appropriate mental and physical readiness for the game. In the player interviews and my observations, I found that all players preferred to spend some time preparing themselves alone and away from the team in conjunction with team based routines. I found that the degree of autonomy different depending upon experience. Furthermore, all players assessed the level of their own physical and mental preparation prior to a match to ensure that they were ready to perform. I observed that the different structure of the pre-game preparations in different teams, allowed players' more or less time to complete their own pre-game routine. In addition, I observed that older and more experienced players preferred more individual time to complete their own pre-game routine, whereas younger and less experienced players preferred a combination of team and individual pre-game routines. In the coach interview, coaches suggested that pre-game routines were essential for players and encouraged all players to follow a set routine to aid their physical and mental readiness. In the VCSRI session, all coaches stated that they aimed to facilitate players' pre-game routines and monitor their progress before the game started. The coaches said that they achieved this by observing their players during their routines to assess their mental and physical readiness they compared this to the players usual or preferred routine. The coaches said that they if they perceived the player to be "off the mark" with their routine them they intervened.

Coaches' Pre-Game Routine and Coach Mental Preparation

In the coach interviews and in my observations, I found that coaches followed set pre-game routines designed to aid their focus and mental preparedness on the day of a game. This was reinforced by the findings from the VCSRI sessions. Coaches stated that and were observed to spend time away from the team, reviewing notes, discussing tactics with assistant coaches, focus on what they had to do to prepare their players, and focusing on their role in the game. The coaches' stated in the VCSRI sessions that personal pre-game routines were aimed at reducing nerves, focusing attention on task relevant issues, clearing the mind, reinforcing what they had to do before the start of the match and mentally readying themselves for the match. The coaches said that they needed to be relaxed and focused to complete the pre-game speech, motivate their players, and to be prepared for the game. They achieved this by following their own pre-game routine.

In the Phase 1 interview and in the VCSRI, coaches acknowledged that they needed to be at the top of their game to prepare their players optimally. In particular, coaches highlighted that their performance before a match and how their player's perceived their confidence and anxiety could affect the players preparations and confidence and consequently their performance. The coaches' personal pre-game routine was aimed at ensuring that the coaches knew the opposition and their own team game plan and were ready to perform to the best of their ability.

During the VCSRI, I found that the coaches aimed to be upbeat, positive, confident and motivated because any negativity may influence the players' confidence and mental preparation. As a result, the coaches said that they followed a pre-game routine to ensure that they were mentally prepared to perform during the pre-game talk and were ready for the players. It was only during exceptional circumstances when coaches were forced to

change their behaviours to getting players focused on the game. For example, Coach Bruce stated that due to the disrupted preparations he was forced engage in a more aggressive pre-game talk to gain his players attention and refocus them on the game.

In the Phase 3 player interviews, I found that, the perception of coach nerves and anxiety affected both players and coaches. Players were found to perceive excess coach interactions and nervous behaviour as being distracting. The players stated that if their coach spent too much time interacting with them then they perceived that the coach maybe nervous about their performance. I found that more experienced players, however, accepted that it was part of their coaches' coaching style before a match and were not affected by the behaviour. Less experienced players', however, were more conscious of their coaches' behaviour and were more likely to be affected. Players' also declared that the coaches' behaviour and communication could affect their levels of anxiety and confidence both positively and negatively. Consequently, in the VCSRI coaches' declared that they assessed their own anxiety levels and used appropriate measures to reduce anxiety and calm down. Bruce for example, was observed to spend time away from his team to relax, focus himself, and to ensure that his nerves did not affect the team.

Onsite Player Assessment and Evaluation

In the hour prior to a game, coaches said that they monitored and evaluated their players' preparations (physical and mental), to guarantee that their players were at or close to their ideal performance state. This was highlighted in the coach interview and in the VCSRI where coaches stated and that they spent considerable time observing their players as they arrived, during warm-up, during the pre-game talk, and when they were involved in individual interactions. In particular, coaches' said that they achieved this through social and professional interactions with the players, observation of players' body

language during warm-ups and shooting drills, and by monitoring players' progress throughout the build up to a game to assess whether their players were focused on the game. If the coach perceived a player to be off their game or under prepared then they would intervene to try to motivate or refocus the player. All four coaches stated in the VCSRI that player assessment and evaluation prior to performance was a key aspect of pre-game coaching. In particular, the evaluation of player preparations was related to how and when coaches needed to intervene to aid a player in reaching their ideal performance state. Consequently, in the coach interview and in the VCSRI coaches declared that an in-depth knowledge of players' game state and personality was required to know how to evaluate a player and then intervene effectively.

Knowledge of Player Game State

In the Phase 1 coach interview and VCSRI, coaches said that they used their knowledge of players' body language and pre-game routines to assess their pre-match preparations. In particular, coaches said that they observed and studied their players at training, as well as before and during games, to construct a mental framework of the player and their ideal or preferred performance state. Coaches said that they constructed the mental framework of each player from the interactions (social and professional) with players, their style of game, their current form, their previous playing experience, the coach's knowledge of the player's personality, the coach's knowledge of the player's preferred coaching style and communications, and the player's form in training during the week. In the VCSRI session, coaches demonstrated that they used this framework to monitor players before games and to drive their coaching practices/interventions during this time. In particular, all four coaches stated that, the personal knowledge of each player was used to guide the coaches' style of intervention when interacting individually with

players before a game. Furthermore, coaches indicated that their interactions and interventions with players were mediated by their own knowledge of what was best for the player, what the player preferred, and what was best for the team.

Coach-Player Relationship Issues

Coach-Player Communication

Coaches proposed that open communication between coach and player was a key aspect of the coach-player relationship prior to performance. I found in the coach interviews, that open communication between coach and player was perceived as being important for preparations and performance in the hour immediately prior to a match. The player interviews and VCSRI sessions reinforced this finding. In particular, coaches said that due to time constraints, their communications with players needed to be direct, open, and honest before a match to ensure that their messages/instructions were understood. While players said that that open communication allowed them to give their coach feedback and to offer their opinions without fear of any reprisal. The responses from players in the Phase 3 interviews and my observations, suggested that players were not confident in communicating problems with coaches before a match. For example, Ally did not tell her coach, Amy, that the different warm-up routine was not aiding her physical reparation. Another example poor communication between player and coach was seen in my observations and the interview with Campbell in Team C. In particular, Coach Carl and Campbell had limited communication with other and spoke through the assistant coach at times. I observed that the poor communication resulted in increased tension between coach and player, leaving issues unresolved and possible influencing team harmony and on court performance.

Perceptions of Coach

Player perceptions of the coach and the issues of trust and respect were seen as key aspects by players. Players said that the respect and trust for their coach's knowledge and ability was related to their confidence in the coaches' decisions before and during a match. For example, if a player perceived their coach as lacking knowledge then the level of respect for their coach and their confidence the decisions dropped. The responses from two of the four players' in the Phase 3 interviews showed that the players' perception of the coach influenced their ability to comply with their coach's requests. If a player trusted their coach and their decisions, then the player had more confidence in following their coach's decisions. This was reflected in the interactions between Coach Donna and Debbie. Coach Donna was able to be direct and honest with Debbie about her previous poor performance and tell her to forget it and to refocus back to her strengths. Debbie reported that this aided her confidence and preparations for the game.

Players generally perceived the coach as an organiser, a motivator, part of the team, and a source of information prior to performance. During the pre-game speech and individual interactions, players found that they generally received a positive attitude and encouragement from their coach that acted as a source of motivation and aided their confidence. Furthermore, respect for the coach was found to be a critical issue, for Team C. Campbell, the team captain, stated that the players had more experience than the coach and that he was just an organiser. Campbell stated that, as a result, his communications often went through the assistant coach and not directly to the coach.

Perceptions of Player

In the VCSRI session, I found that the majority of coaches' professed that their perceptions of the targeted player were influenced by the knowledge of the player's game

and personality. Furthermore, coaches' perceptions of the players were influenced by the player's recent form and efforts in training. These factors flowed onto how coaches adapted their coaching style to the specific player during the pre-game preparations. In particular, coaches said in the VCSRI and the Phase 1 interview that their perception of a player's preferred coaching style influenced the manner in which they interacted with their players before a match. For example, Coach Bruce changed his preferred coaching style for Brad to ensure that Brad's pre-game routine and game state was not affected by his behaviour.

Compatibility of Coaching Style

Two of the four player interviews showed that the compatibility of the coaching style between coach and player was an issue that affected the whole coaching process not just before a match. Coaches said that they recruited players, who were favourable to their own coaching style, as they perceived this to aid in the group dynamics and to the coaches' desired style of play for the team. A compatible coach-player relationship was perceived to be beneficial to coach, player, and team. Coaches' and players' suggested that compatible relationships influenced the degree of communication between coach and player both positively and negatively. Specifically, incompatible dyads had poor communication whereas compatible dyads were more open and honest in the communications. Players' were found to prefer coaches, who they could get along with. In particular, trust and respect for coaches and the decisions they made was a key factor, as shown in the negative atmosphere in Team C and the positive atmosphere in Team D. I found that in the player interviews, players' level of respect for the coach's ability as a former player/coach affected players respect and trust in their coach. The players' perceptions of the coach then reflected their respect and trust in their coach's pre-game

decisions and instructions. Consequently, players' perceived that their own respect for the coaches' ability to coach and the coaches' coaching knowledge influenced the compatibility of coach-player interactions before a match. The importance of coach-player compatibility is highlighted by the interactions between Bruce and Richard in Team B. The altercation reflected deeper-seated issues regarding the relationship between coach and player, which consequently influenced preparations for performance.

Mediating Factors

Immediately, prior to a game, I found that a number of different factors mediated all aspects of the preparations. The mediating factors influenced the manner in which coaches pre-game preparations were run, the intensity, the style of interactions, the coaches' level of involvement, and content of the pre-game talk and interactions. These factors, included the level of development of coach, player, and team; current situational and contextual factors; unexpected events; and the opposition mediated pre-game preparations. Coaches and players said that the pre-game routine and the focus of each game generally did not change, but the specifics of the pre-game talk, game focus, and goals (team and individual) changed.

Level of Development of Team, Player, and Coach

Coaches stated that the pre-game preparations differed depending on the level of development of the team. At the start of the season, teams draft new players into the squad. Consequently, coaches suggested that at the start of the season the team is in a developmental stage and can still be assessing the right combination of players and the style of play that suits the team. Furthermore, coaches said that the team's level of development reflected team cohesion. Subsequently, the focus of the coaching in the first few games is to establish on-court relationships and combinations in a team. In the coach

interviews, the majority of coaches highlighted that the level of development reflected the age and experience of a team. For example, younger teams and players that had limited playing experience at ABA level had a different focus prior to the game than teams with older and more experienced players. I observed that coaches spent more time talking individually with younger and less experienced players than with older or more experienced players. More experienced teams and players were found to have more time to prepare individually than teams with less experience. I also found that in the VCSRI session, that coaches' adapted the complexity of the information they delivered in the pre-game talk and in individual interaction to reflect the level of development of players. For example, Donna said that she limited the amount of information that she gave to her younger players. She argued that this was because giving a large amount of information may cause excess worry and anxiety that could influence players' preparations and performance.

I found through the combination of observation, coach interview and VCSRI that, the level of development of the coach was a factor in pre-match preparations. In particular, I found that experience as a coach and as a player affected pre-match preparations. For example, Donna was a first year coach in the ABA, whereas Amy, Bruce, and Carl had a minimum of 6 years experience as an ABA coach. Donna described her first season as a learning experience, as she was still defining her coaching style and learning how to construct an effective pre-match routine for herself and her players. Players also commented on the experience and level of development of their coach. The players reflected that the more experience and coaching their coach had the more respect and trust they had in their coach. Donna's as a coach/player, however, was perceived as having

insight into basketball as she was still a professional player, despite her limited coaching experience.

Situational and Contextual Factors

Time of season. Coaches stated that the pre-game preparations differed depending on the time of the season. At the start of the season, coaches were focused on developing a cohesive team and establishing effective combinations on the court, rather than on opposition factors. In comparison, toward the end of the season, I found that coaches said they were focused on opposition-specific preparations and what they as a team needed to do to beat the opposition and make the finals. In the player interviews, I found some players spent more time mentally preparing for games that had a bearing on the finals or were close to the start of the finals.

Place on ladder. In the coach interviews, I found that coaches perceived that the team's place on the conference ladder affected how the team prepared on the day of a match. If a team was in contention for the finals, the focus was more on performance related issues and beating their opposition to progress to a higher playoffs berth. In contrast, coaches stated that when they were not in contention the finals they were focused on different aspects of coaching and applied different objectives to the pre-game preparations. In particular, coaches suggested that they focused more on the development of players and building/developing combinations in preparation for the next season.

Unexpected Events

Throughout all aspects of the research process, I found that controlling unexpected events was a key factor for all coaches. I observed that unexpected events, such as a delayed game, an altercation with a player, or a death within the club, were all factors that required coaches and players to alter their normal pre-game routine. In the VCSRI session,

coaches acknowledged that dealing with events such as a death and the emotions and stress that comes with something so unexpected required coaches to restructure their pre-game routine and the schedule of the pre-game period to guarantee that their players were still focused on the game. In particular, coaches suggested that they assessed and monitored their players' progress more vigilantly to determine whether they needed to intervene with players or change their plans to ensure optimal preparation. Coaches and players were found to implement plans that ensured that players still attained their optimal mental and physical readiness. For example, Bruce instructed the players to have an extra long and different warm-up to keep the players focused on the game, after he learnt that the game had been delayed.

Opposition

A key finding affecting the pre-game preparations related to the opposition. I found that in the coach and VCSRI interviews, coaches suggested that the different opposition teams also influenced the manner in which teams prepared for each game. For example, coaches changed their pre-game speech to reflect the different offensive and defensive strategies applied by different opposition teams. In addition, I found that during the player interviews, the players stated that playing against a different team changed how they mentally rehearsed their shots in the warm-up. In particular, one player stated that for each different team he adapted his shooting routine to reflect the different opposition player that he was matching up against. Coaches and players both perceived that the individual differences in team and player match-ups required players to adopt a different mental approach in preparation for each game.

Coaching Interventions

Throughout the research process, I found that coaches had their own individual style of player interventions. In particular, I observed coaches to approach each player in a different manner. During the VCSRI sessions, when I asked the coaches to explain their interactions they stated that the interventions were based on their knowledge of each player and the mental framework that they had constructed from their interactions and observations of the player in training and competition situations. The interventions were usually spontaneous, however, some coaches stated during the VCSRI that previous form and experiences led them to pre-plan an interaction with a player to aid the player in achieving their ideal performance state before a game. The coaches also suggested that the interventions were also aimed at easing their own concerns regarding the player's preparations. The following coaching interventions however, were found to be common between all coaches.

Individual Interactions

All four of the coaches in my study stated that they interacted with their players individually to give more detailed instructions or to provide motivation and instil confidence in their players. In the VCSRI, three of the four coaches stated that the individual interactions they had with their players' often differed for each player, because coaches assessed their players differently to reflect the individual nature of each player's game style and their preferred coaching style. The individual interactions were often spontaneous and based on events and player assessment on the day of the game or on events from the last week.

Observation and Assessment

All four coaches assessed their players' preparations, mental and physical, before a match. I also observed that coaches used their assistant coaches to aid them in observing and evaluating their players' physical warm-up and to aid in information regarding players' preparations and injuries. When I asked about what the coaches were observing or assessing in the VCSRI sessions, coaches said that they looked for poor body language, poor shooting, and players that appeared distracted during the physical warm-up sessions. In the coach, interviews and the VCSRI, coaches suggested that a player's physical preparation often reflected their mental state, therefore, the observation and assessment of players at this time was an essential element for coaching prior to performance.

Motivational Strategies

Coaches stated that they used positive talk, encouragement, and praise to motivate and instil confidence in their players. During the pre-game talk and all individual interactions, coaches aimed to accentuate the positives of the player and reinforce the strengths of their game to motivate them and instil confidence in their ability. Positive talk and reinforcement was a common strategy used by all coaches before a game. Coaches applied these principles to player's who they perceived to be nervous or had shown previous poor form during the week leading up to the game.

Reinforcement of Players' Roles in Game and Attentional Focus/Concentration

One of the primary goals reported by the coaches in this research was to focus players on the game and their specific role in the team. Coaches said that they used individual interactions focused on a player's strengths and previous good performances to reinforce the player's role in the team and what they added to the team. All four of the coaches stated that this was an important aspect of coaching prior to performance and an

essential element of each player's pre-match preparations. Coaches attributed the importance as relating to player confidence, team cohesion, team strategy, and player focus. In addition, coaches stated that the reinforcement of a players' specific role in the game was aimed at reducing negative thoughts and anxiety that may have influenced the player's preparations and performance. It was evident that older or more experienced players did not necessarily respond to their coach reinforcing their role in the team. One player, Campbell stated that this tactic was related to Coach Carl's nerves and not to his own preparations.

Goal Setting

During the pre-game preparations, I observed that some coaches used individual goal setting during individual interactions with players. When asked during the VCSRI session coaches said that they used individual goal setting with players before each game as a means of focusing players and reinforcing their specific role in the team. Coaches also said that they primarily used this form of intervention to set individual goals to reduce anxiety in the younger and less experienced players in the team or with players that had been out of form. The coaches stated that they perceived goal setting to be a means of reinforcing the individual strengths that a player could use to regain their confidence in themselves and in their ability.

Summary of Major Themes

The major themes that emerged from the four dyads reflected the use of motivational strategies to enhance players' mental readiness for performance, the use of pre-game routines, coach preparation, observation and assessment of players, and mediating factors that changed the context of the preparations prior to a match. It was evident that coaches and players perceived mental preparation to be an important aspect of

pre-game preparations. This was reflected in the different strategies and interventions used by coaches to assess and monitor their players' mental preparations. By applying multiple methods or perspectives on prep-game preparations, I was able to ascertain how both coaches' and players' perceived mental preparation and use my observations of the interactions to check each participant's perceptions and responses. The major themes reflect the combination of all four phases and all four dyads. It is apparent that mental preparation is an important component of players', coaches', and teams' pre-game preparations. Mental preparation is a key aspect of preparations during the hour prior to performance. The structure of the preparations prior to each team's game included key elements reflecting mental preparations, for example, the use of pre-game routines and pre-game talks. Coaches and players also stated that mental preparation is linked to performance, as a player that is closer to their preferred mental state was more likely to perform better. This was highlighted by Ally's experience with the different warm-up and Debbie's individual interactions with her coach prior to the performance.

Constructing a Visual Representation of Coaching Interactions Prior to Performance

To aid in the analysis the interviews, field notes, and observations, a visual representation of the interaction factors that affect mental preparation prior to performance has been constructed. The Visual Representation of Coaching Interactions Prior to Performance (VRICPP), shown in Figure 4.5, depicts the processes that influence players' mental preparations and performance immediately prior to performance. In addition, the VRICPP shows how a coach constructs the pre-game interactions/interventions during the pre-game period. A description of the factors or components of the model are presented in the following section. In this section, I focused on describing the processes and direction of the components that affect mental preparation during the pre-performance preparations.

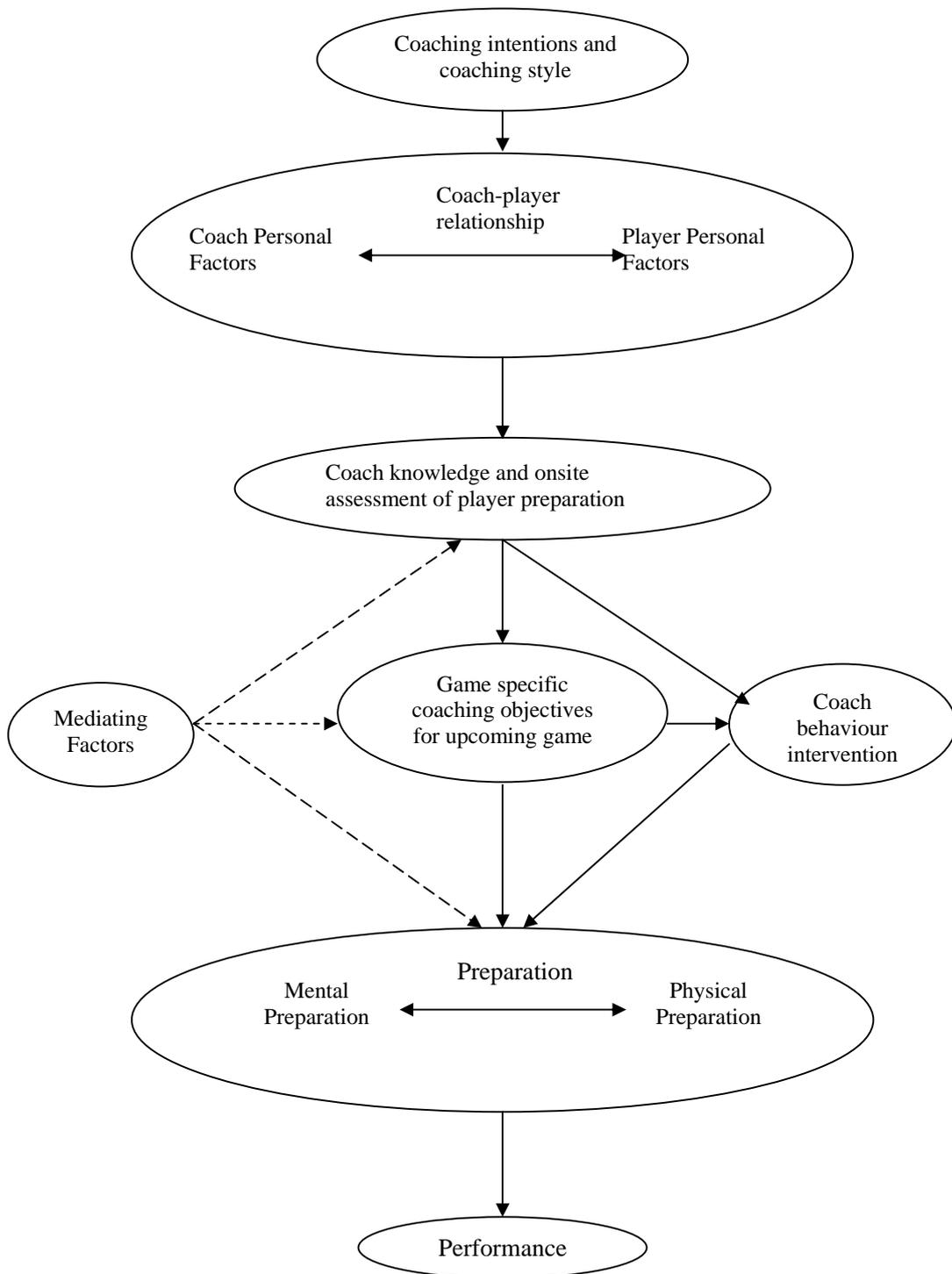


Figure 4.5. A visual representation of coaching interactions prior to performance (VRCIPP)

The VRICPP is primarily focused on how coaching influences mental preparation. The goal of the VRICPP is to highlight the factors that emerged during this study and provide a platform for future researchers to build upon.

A Description of the Visual Representation of Coaching Interactions Prior to Performance (VRICPP)

The VRICPP is based on the interactions inherent between coach and player prior to performance. The coaches' *Coaching Objectives and Intentions* combine to influence how they construct their relationship with the players. The *Coach-Athlete Relationship* is a result of the interactions between *Coach Personal Factors* (coach's personality, coaching style, experience, level of development, player experience), *Player Personal Factors* (personality, position, preferred coaching style, experience, level of development, age, and current form) combine to form the *Coach-Athlete Relationship*. The *Coach-Athlete Relationship* then directly influences the coaches' *Coaching Objectives* for a player and the team, and the *Coach's Knowledge and Onsite Assessment of Players' Preparations* during the pre-game period mediate the *Coaching Objectives* and the *Coaching Behaviour Interventions* applied during the pre-game preparations. The onsite assessment of players' preparations involves individual interactions, assessment of form in games and training, game day observations, and the player's role in the team. This assessment influences the coach's objectives for the team and the players and the coach's decision to intervene with the player. The coach's intervention can take a variety of different formats, for example, shouting encouragement; an individual interaction to refocus the player; a change in team warm-up; or a more aggressive pre-game talk. The coaching interventions and objectives are mediated by the team's level of development, the time of the season, the place on the ladder, and unexpected events, such as a delayed game.

A number of *Mediating Factors* including, situational and contextual factors, player level of development, and the time of the season then mediate the coaches' interventions. The *Coaching Objectives* and *Coach Interventions* then interact to influence the mental (e.g., motivation, confidence, self-belief) preparation/readiness of players. The preparation component of the VRICPP reflects the combination of team and individual warm-ups, pre-game routines, pre-game talk, form at training, and game day preparations of players. The physical preparation of players on game day including warm-ups and pre-game routines were found to influence players' mental preparations and vice versa. The resulting level of players' preparation then forms the basis for their performance in the game. The VRICPP reflects the processes that affect players' mental preparations immediately prior to performance in Basketball.

Key to the Model

In the model, a single directional arrow represents the direction of the relationship and effect of one factor on another. For example, preparation directly influences performance. A bi-directional arrow represents two interacting factors that influence each other such as mental preparation and physical preparation. A dashed directional arrow represents an interacting relationship that may change. These lines reflect the mediating factors such as unexpected events or a delayed game.

Description and Explanation of Factors Included in the Pre-Performance Coaching Model

The purpose of this section is two-fold, first I describe the factors in the model and second I explain the inter-relationship between the factors in the model. I will present the description of the factor and then the interrelationship between the other factors. The inter-relationship between two factors will only be described once to avoid repetition.

Coach Intentions and Coaching Style

The coach intentions and coaching style component referred to the coaches overall preferred coaching style and their general coaching objectives. The coaches' preferred coaching style and their objectives for the team interacted to influence how the coach established their relationships with the players and the team.

Coach-Athlete Relationship

The coach-player relationship component was a combination of coach personal factors, player personal factors, and the interactions/interrelationship between coach, player and team. This category reflected the overall coach-player relationship, and included aspects such as coach-player compatibility, trust, respect, and the degree of communication, between coach and player. The overall relationship between coach and player was an important component of pre-game preparations as the relationship had flow on effects to the style of coaching, coaching interventions, player assessment, preparation, and performance. In addition, the coach-player relationship was influenced by the coaches overall coaching style and their coaching objectives.

Coach personal factors. This category reflected the individual differences inherent in each coach and their coaching style. Specifically, coach personal factors included the coaches' level of personal pre-game preparation, personality traits, age, gender, level of development, coaching style, playing experience, coaching experience and number of years coaching the team. Coach personal factors influenced and were influenced player personal factors. The interaction between these factors combined to form the coach-player relationship.

Player personal factors. This category reflected the individual differences inherent in each player and their preferred coaching style. In addition, it reflected each player's

personality traits, preferred coaching style, age, level of development, experience, perception of the coach, current form, and number of years in the team. Player personal factors directly interacted with coach personal factors to form the coach-player relationship.

Coaching Knowledge and Onsite Assessment of Players

This category reflects the coach's assessment and monitoring of player preparations and pre-game readiness. Coaches used a mental framework of their players to drive their objectives and pre-game interventions with players. The mental framework was comprised of the coaches' knowledge of players' game and personality, and preferred coaching style, onsite assessment of player form. In this component, all aspects of the coach-player relationship influenced the coaches' knowledge of their players' personality, preparation, preferred coaching style and interventions, and the player's game state. The coach used this knowledge to assess players' preparations and mental state before a game. This assessment occurred via observation, social interactions, professional game related interactions, and assessment of player form. This component of the model directly influenced the type of interventions used by coaches and the specific objectives that coaches used in the pre-game preparations to prepare their players for the upcoming game. In particular, coaches used their assessment of the players' preparations to drive the specific interventions aimed at aiding the player reach their ideal performance state. The player assessment also influenced the objectives that coaches had for their players during the pre-game preparations.

Game Specific Coaching Objectives

The coaching objectives category integrated the short and long goals term goals that the coach had for the team and the players for the game, for the season, for each

player, the team, and the pre-game period. In particular, this component of the model reflected the specific objectives that coaches had for the pre-game preparations before the specific match. The specific coaching objectives directly influenced preparation both physical and mental of players as well as the coaches' choice of coaching interventions during the pre-game period.

Coaching Behaviour Intervention

This category describes the style of interventions used by the coaches' before a match. The different types of coaching interventions included: team versus individual preparations, team based warm-ups, specific goal setting, pre-game talk, individual interactions, technique demonstration, motivational instructions, praise, hustle, and non-verbal encouragement such as a pat on the back, a high five, or hand clapping. Coaches combined their assessment of player preparation with their knowledge of the player to construct effective interventions designed to aid players reaching their optimal pre-performance state. Coach interventions directly influenced player preparation both physical and mental.

Mediating Factors

The mediating factors included any unexpected event of situation that potentially influenced the coaching objectives or the pre-game preparations. In particular, the key mediating factors that influenced the pre-performance coaching process included: the coaches, players, and teams level of development, the time of season, the teams place on ladder, the opposition, and unexpected events. These mediating factors influenced the pre-game preparations and coaching process by forcing coaches, players, or the team to adapt or change normal/usual pre-game preparations. The mediating factors affected the coaches' objectives by forcing the coach to change what they were aiming to achieve

before a game. Furthermore, the mediating factors influenced the onsite assessment of player preparation and the actual preparation of the players and the coach. Mediating factors played a significant part of pre-game coaching and preparation by forcing coaches and players to adapt or change the normal behaviour and readjust to regain their desired level of mental preparation.

Preparation

The preparation component of the model comprised two distinct but linked aspects, physical and mental preparation. Both types of preparation were contingent on the other and when combined acted to aid in the player reaching their ideal performance state before the game. Preparation during the pre-game preparations directly influenced performance in the game. Specifically, the ideal pre-game preparations for a player encompassing mental and physical readiness influenced the performance at the start of the game. The preparation component includes the important player perception and evaluation of coaching behaviour component. This component reflects how the player perceived the coaching behaviour and interactions. Player perceptions related directly to and were part of players' mental preparation for performance. Specifically, the perception of coaching behaviours and the interpretation of were found to influence players' confidence in their ability and preparations.

Mental preparation. Mental preparation referred to players' psychological state and mental readiness for performance in the upcoming game. Specifically, a player's motivation, confidence, game focus, pre-game routines, arousal, anxiety, and knowledge of their role in the team were key aspects of mental preparation. Mental preparation directly influenced physical preparations before a game. Mental preparation could aid or hinder shooting drills for example. Physical preparations directly influenced mental

preparations as confidence in physical preparation was related to a player's mental readiness to perform. Mental readiness was also influence and comprised player perceptions of coach behaviour. Mediating factors such as unexpected events affected player/team pre-game routines and thus affected players' momentum during the pre-game preparations to directly influence physical and mental preparation.

Performance

Performance was a direct culmination of all of the components in the model. The primary influence was preparation (mental and physical), but the combined influence of all the different components interacted together during the pre-game preparations to affect players' performance in the game.

Summary of the Pre-Performance Coaching Model

The Pre-Performance Coaching Model (VRICPP) was the culmination of interactions between the coach-player relationship, coaching goals and intentions, player knowledge and assessment, mediating factors, preparation (physical and mental), coach intervention, and game specific coaching objectives. A key aspect of the model was the influence of the mediating factors such as the time of the season or level of development. These mediating factors changed the context of the objectives in the pre-game period, influenced how the coach or player approached the game and constructed their pre-game preparations. Coaches aimed to aid players and the team in entering their ideal performance state, they achieved this by constructing a structured pre-game routine that was able to be adapted to the mediating factors. To aid preparation for performance, coaches had to be open and able to deal effectively with these factors otherwise players' preparations and performance may be affected.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

After restating the major findings, I discuss the following topics: the objectives of the pre-game period; the Pre-Performance Coaching Model (VRICPP, see Figure 4.5) and previous theoretical models; the influence of the coach in pre-game preparations; the use of pre-game routines prior to performance; and mental preparation and pre-game routines. I also discuss how coaches construct mental frameworks to assess player preparations; coaches' reflections on their behaviours; factors mediating pre-game preparations; and, finally, the methodological issues and implications for research and practice arising from this research.

Synopsis of the Major Findings and Relationship to Theory

Coach-athlete interactions prior to performance were an important determinant of athletes' mental preparation and influenced athletic performance. Specifically and congruent with previous research, the four coach-player dyads showed that coaching behaviour prior to performance could have a positive or a negative influence on athletes' mental preparation and performance (see, Gould et al., 1999). The major themes that emerged from the research also supported Bloom's (1996) conclusion that coaches play an important role in all aspects of athletes' preparations for performance. My conclusions in this study, however, contrasted with those of Keating and Hogg (1995), who concluded that the coach's role prior to performance was minimal. Possibly the different levels of competition, i.e., elite versus semi-elite, and the level of development of the players accounted for the differences. I discuss this finding in more detail later in the chapter.

Another key finding was that coaches considered themselves as part of the team, and perceived that their behaviour or performance prior to a match could influence how the team and individual players performed. The perception of the coach as a performer

supported previous research with Olympic coaches by Gould et al. (1999). Gould et al. found that athletes' Olympic performance was perceived to be related to the performance of the coach and their ability to perform in a high-pressure environment. In particular, players' perceptions of coaches' actions and communications prior to performance were found to have a major influence on the preparations for performance and athletic performance. It is evident that coaches need to be in their ideal performance state (IPS) to aid pre game preparations. Bloom (1996) and Bloom et al. (1997) found that collegiate coaches spent time completing their own pre-game routines aimed at enhancing their mental and physical readiness for the upcoming game.

In the current research, I found that the responses from the four players highlighted the importance of a compatible coach-athlete relationship to pre-game preparations and athletic performance. Jowett (2003), highlighted the influence of a poor coach-athlete relationship on elite performance can be reflected in an incompatible coach-athlete relationship. Furthermore, Jowett found that a relationship formed around conflict and negative emotions detracted from the athletes' performance and the attainment of goals. Smith, Smoll, and colleagues (Smith & Smoll, 1991; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978, 1979; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Smoll & Smith, 1989) reported that the players' evaluation of coaching behaviours mediated those players' reactions to the coaches' behaviour. Consequently, the perception of coaches' behaviour has important implications for coaching practices.

Objectives of Pre-Game Preparations

In support of Bloom et al. (1997) and Côté and colleagues (Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Cote & Salmela, 1996; Cote, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993; Cote, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b; Cote & Sedgwick, 2003), coaching behaviour and players pre-match

preparations before a match were an extension of work that had developed from training. A key factor driving the behaviours of coaches prior to a game was the reinforcement of principles practised at training. Coaches were found to structure their pre-game routine and interactions with players around the reinforcement of strategies in the pre-game talk. On game day, very little new information was delivered, rather the focus was on pre-planned tactics and strategies that teams had talked about and practised in training previously.

The basis of the pre-game preparations focused on the establishment of a positive environment that fostered player preparations. This supported research by Côté and Sedgwick (2003), who found that elite rowing coaches aimed to establish a positive training environment that facilitated the rowers' performance. In the current research, this was achieved through structured planning, the use of team and individual pre-game routines (mental and physical), a structured pre-game environment, team meeting (pre-game talk), individual interactions/coaching, and controlling unexpected events. Côté and Sedgwick suggested that a highly organised and structured environment provided an optimal learning environment that aided in athletes' physical development. In the present research, coaches' used positive, structured, and well-organised pre-game environment to aid players' concentration, focus, and mental readiness for the upcoming game.

Entering the IPS, was perceived by both coaches and players as a key element of pre-game preparations. Specifically, the coaches viewed mental preparation and readiness as being important aspects of pre-game routines. Orlick and Partington (1988) found that Olympic athletes perceived mental readiness as a key factor in achieving excellence at high-pressure competitions, such as the Olympics games. Evidently, players and coaches aim to attain an optimal pre-game state that facilitates performance in competition. The

IPS is a combination of the physical and mental factors that allow an athlete to perform close to their best. In a review of the literature on IPS and peak performance, Williams (2001) cited that mental readiness and preparation were important parts of the attainment of peak performance. In addition, research by Jackson (1995; 1996; Jackson, Ford, Kimiecik, & Marsh, 1998) on the attainment of optimal psychological states, such as flow, highlighted that psychological attributes, such as concentration, intrinsic motivation, control of arousal and anxiety, and the motivational climate, all contribute to an increased probability that athletes will enter IPS. The current research highlighted that achieving optimal psychological states, such as the IPS, prior to performance was an essential aspect of athletic preparations. Furthermore, coaches' behaviours and communications during the pre-game preparations can enhance or inhibit athletes achieving their optimal pre-game psychological state. Coaches need to be mindful that their behaviours and communications can potentially disrupt athletes' pre-game preparations.

The attainment of athletes' IPS was facilitated by the use of set physical pre-game routines. Players and coaches both perceived that mental preparation was linked to physical preparation routines. In particular, coaches and players stated that the systematic and habitual process involved in the specific warm-up routines facilitated the levels of athletes' concentration and their focus on the game. Keating and Hogg (1995) cited that professional ice-hockey players were involved in pre-game routines or rituals. They proposed that these rituals were imbedded as part of the pre-game routine to prepare the players physically, psychologically, and psychophysiologically. The players in the current thesis perceived the use of the routines/rituals to be important to their mental state, as well as their performance. Similar to the professional players in Keating and Hogg's study, the basketball coaches and players in the current study perceived that keeping a routine was

important and any disruption to the routine could affect their mental preparation and, consequently, their performance. This was highlighted in Team A when Amy, the coach changed the warm-up routine 20 minutes before the start of the game. Ally, the player, was, consequently, not as confident in her own preparations at the start of the game and perceived her performance to have suffered in the first quarter.

Discussing the Pre-Performance Coaching Model

The model presented in Figure 4.5 represents how coaches form their coaching behaviours and interventions in the pre-performance environment and the relationship of coach behaviour to players' mental preparation. The goal of the Pre-Performance Coaching Model (VRICPP) was to highlight the factors that influence players' mental preparations and the processes involved in pre-game preparations. In addition, the VRICPP depicts the coaches' involvement in the pre-game preparations, their objectives, and the interventions used to prepare their players. One key element of the model was the construction by the coaches of a mental framework of players. The interactions between the coaches' mental framework of players and their onsite assessment of the players' preparations formed the basis of the majority of individual coach-athlete interactions/interventions prior to a game.

In the VRICPP, I present the mediating influence of a variety of different factors that coaches consider or control during the pre-game preparations. The mediating factors included: unexpected events (e.g., delayed game), players' level of development, and situational or contextual factors (e.g., time of season or different opposition). These factors interacted with all coach/player personal variables to influence coaching behaviour and ultimately pre-performance preparations. Coaches also aimed to control for unexpected events and distractions that may affect their own or their players' preparations.

The mediating factors, such as time of season, the opposition, and place on the conference ladder, were all factored into the coaches' preparations. Unexpected events, such as delayed games, player altercations, and even bereavements, had to be dealt with effectively and professionally in order to aid preparations for performance.

The components of the Pre-Performance Coaching Model (VRICPP) show similarities to the Coaching Model (CM, Cote, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) and the Mediation Model of Sport Leadership (MM, Smoll & Smith, 1989). A key similarity with the CM was that coaches in the current study constructed and applied a mental framework of their players and applied this to interactions and interventions before a match. In the CM, Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. showed that the goals and objectives were mediated by the mental framework that the coach had of each player. This was a key aspect of coaching in the study by Côté, Salmela, Baria, et al. because the mental model directly influenced coaching behaviour. There has been limited research on how coaches construct and apply these mental models in sport. Further research is required to ascertain the breadth and depth of the influence that the mental framework of players has on coaching decisions before and during competition, as well as at training.

The objectives of the VRICPP also show similarities to the MML (Chelladurai, 1990). In particular, the MML states that coaches strive to produce athletes that are content and happy so that they can reach their optimal performance state. The results of the current study and the VRICPP reflect this goal.

In the current research, there was limited information on how coaches constructed their mental framework of their players. The coaches highlighted that they built up their picture of players through interpersonal interaction, both social and professional, as well as through their observations and assessments player's during all aspects of coaching and

socialising. In addition, the mental framework was a compromise between coach and player on the preferred style of coaching. To achieve this, coaches had to understand each player individually. This was supported by research conducted by Côté, Salmela, Baria, et al. (1995) and Côté and Sedgwick (2003), who concluded that understanding the individual differences in players was an essential aspect of effective coaching. Côté and Sedgwick found that both elite coaches and athletes perceived individual coaching as an important aspect of the coach-athlete relationship, and as an important aspect of training in elite sport. Understanding how coaches conduct individual coaching could provide detailed information on coaching assessment and decision making prior to performance.

The components of VRICPP showed similarities to Smoll and Smith's (1989) Mediation Model of Sport Leadership (MM, see Figure 2.1). Smoll and Smith showed a link between player perceptions of coach behaviour, player evaluative reactions, and coach behaviour. In the current research, players' assessment of pre-game coaching behaviours influenced their preparation. The VRICPP highlights this suggested link and the potential influence of players' evaluations of their coach on the preparation of those players. This relationship has important implications for pre-game preparation and coaching practice. In this sense, coaches need to be more aware of how their actions (verbal and non-verbal) affect their players. Effective coaches understand how to individually coach their players and recognise that players respond in their own way to different coaching behaviour. The majority of the coaches acknowledged this and compromised on their preferred behaviour to aid the player(s) in reaching their ideal pre-game performance state. Understanding how each player and how to interact/intervene to aid pre-match preparations can aid pre-game coaching. Similarly, players need to be confident and openly communicate their problems with their coach. In high-pressure

situations, players' pre-game routines could be disrupted and the momentum of their preparations disrupted.

Summary of the Pre-Performance Coaching Model

I designed the VRICPP to show the processes inherent in the pre-game preparations. The VRICPP shows how the coach-athlete relationship and the coaches' behaviour influence players' pre-game mental preparations. The model reflects elements of previous theoretical models, including the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Baria, et al., 1995) and the Mediation Model of Sport leadership (Smoll & Smith, 1989). Consequently, some overlap between the VRICPP and previous theoretical models may occur. The primary purpose of the model is to highlight the response of the coaches and players, and understand the factors that influence pre-game mental preparation. An important factor to consider is the time-frame for the interactions examined, because the current research was focused on the time immediately prior to performance.

I based the VRICPP on the responses from basketball coaches and players. As such, the model may not represent responses from other sports, especially non-team based sports. Previously, the unique or situational aspects of each sport have been cited as the reason that no clear model of effective coaching practices has been established and is an influential or mediating factor (see Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, et al., 2000). Researchers, such as Brewer and Jones (2002) and Gilbert and Trudel (2000), have highlighted the situational and contextual factors relating to each sport that make coaching unique. As in the Côté et al. CM, the development of a model that has been based on research from one sport, limits the generalisability. For example, when validating the CM Gilbert and Trudel found there were differences between the different sports (gymnastics and ice hockey). Consequently, further research is warranted to refine the processes

involved in the VRICPP and the mental preparation of players prior to performance. Additional refinement of the model and additional research on coaching and mental preparation prior to performance is required to validate and build the model presented in this thesis further.

The Influence of the Coach in Pre-Game Preparations

A key finding from the four coach-athlete dyads was that coaches were perceived by players to be a central figure in the pre-performance environment. In addition, coaches were perceived to have the potential for being either positive or negative influence on mental preparation during this time period. The results presented in this thesis supported research by Gould and colleagues (Gould, Greenleaf et al., 2002; Gould, Guinan et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001) on Olympic athletes and coaches. Gould et al. (1999) found that coaches and coaching issues were perceived to be influential in aiding athletes to prepare for Olympic competition. In addition, Olympic coaches were perceived to be a negative influence on athletes when they were unable to deal with Olympic pressure, did not address conflict, or not the usual coach with whom athletes had trained. Players in the current research found that coaches aided mental preparation by being a source of motivation, by boosting confidence in a player's ability, by easing anxiety or relaxing players, by providing important information to players, and by providing a positive environment in which players prepared. In contrast, some players also perceived their coach to be a negative influence on their preparations. Specifically, players stated that their preparation was disrupted by the coaches' own anxiety, placing too much pressure on players prior to performance, when the warm-up routine was changed or by coaches talking too much or disrupting players' pre-game routine.

It is clear that how athletes perceive coaching behaviour and interactions immediately prior to competition can affect their mental preparation and readiness to perform. In the MM, Smith and Smoll (1989) highlighted the finding that listening to players' evaluative reactions to coaching behaviour was an important aspect of coaching. In this case, being so close to competition, coaches needed to address the potential for their interactions or lack of interaction to affect mental preparation, such as confidence or anxiety, and to influence the subsequent performance. As with Bloom's (1996) study, coaches in the current research were perceived to be a central figure during the pre-game preparations. Consequently, coaches are in a position to facilitate or debilitate the momentum of players' preparations and, therefore, their mental readiness. The importance of the set routines or pre-game rituals was highlighted in Keating and Hogg's (1995) depiction of ice-hockey players' ritual-like, pre-game routines. The players perceived the routines to be an important aspect of their physical and mental readiness for performance. The coaches' non-interaction in Keating and Hogg's study may relate to the coaches not wanting to disrupt the momentum of players' rituals so close to the start of a match.

My findings in the present research did not support the conclusions of Keating and Hogg (1995) in key respects. Keating and Hogg concluded that coaches did not play a part in the pre-game preparations of elite ice-hockey players. Their study however, focused on only one professional team. The coaches in the present thesis were found to be highly involved in the pre-game environment, including the organisation of assistant coaches to conduct warm-up drills and relay information back regarding player preparation. The findings supported Bloom's (1996) contention that coaches are heavily involved in athletic preparation for performance. This was supported by players' perceptions that their coach played an important part in organising, facilitating, motivating, and focusing them on the

game. Possibly the different findings in Bloom's, Keating and Hogg's, and my research relate to the level of expertise in the samples. The players in Keating and Hogg's study were professional athletes, whereas the coaches and athletes in the current research and in Bloom's study were semi-professional and collegiate respectively. Consequently, the more professional or experienced the player, the less input may be required from the coach. Coaches, however, play an important role in virtually all aspects of pre-game preparations for basketball players. Their interactions with players were focused on physically and mentally reading their players for competition with particular attention on the players' game focus.

Gould et al. (1999) highlighted the central role of the coach to athletic performance and concluded that coaches were performers themselves. The examination of four coach-athlete dyads in this thesis support Gould et al. In particular, coaches needed to be at their best to prepare their players, because the coaches' behaviours and interactions could affect player's mental readiness and stop players from entering their IPS.

Bloom (1996, in press) concluded that coaches are central figures in the pre-performance environment. Coaches fulfil a primary role in the organisation and facilitation of the activities prior to a match. Côté and Salmela (1996) also cited that coaches were highly involved in the organisational aspects of elite sport, in particular, at the competition site. The importance of the coach to pre-game preparations is also seen in a study by d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, and Durand (2001), who found that before and during competition coaches' interactions were a collaborative effort with the athlete. d'Arripe-Longueville et al. completed their research with archery, an individual sport. The type of sport, individual or team, may mediate the type of interactions the coach-athlete have prior to competition. Furthermore, the level of experience of the

athletes may also dictate the role of the coach, (see Bloom, 1996; Keating and Hogg, 1995).

Mental Preparation and Pre-game Routines Prior to Performance

Coaching and Mental Preparation

Orlick and Partington (1988) found that mental preparation and mental readiness were key aspects of excellent performance at Olympics games. The current research supported their contention that mental preparation is an important aspect of performance. In particular, the four coach-athlete dyads in the current research suggested that mental preparation was linked to performance and was an important aspect of pre-game preparations. Indeed, both coaches and players set aside time to mentally ready themselves for performance. Mental preparations took the form of relaxation, pre-game routines, interactions between coach and player, time alone, focus, shooting drills, reinforcement of the individual's role in the team, and team meetings (pre-game talks).

There is limited information in the research literature pertaining to mental preparation immediately prior to performance. Keating and Hogg (1995) conducted a study that focused directly on this aspect. Keating and Hogg found that elite ice-hockey players were involved in three phases of preparation, all of which involved rituals or routines that were aimed at physically or mentally readying themselves for the match. The players in Keating and Hogg's study stated that having a set pre-game ritual or routine was essential for their performance. Likewise, both coaches and players in the current study declared that team and individual pre-game routines aided them in achieving an optimal mental state for the upcoming game. Both coaches and players suggested that mental preparation in the pre-game period was linked to performance. This finding has important implications for coaches, athletes, and sport psychologists, because it demonstrates the

importance of finding an effective pre-game routine that optimally prepares players.

Achieving the IPS via a pre-game routine has been shown to be an effective way of aiding coaches and players during their pre-game preparations (Williams, 2001).

The Relationship Between Physical Preparation and Mental Readiness

Coaches and players in the current research stated that they used physical preparations to aid mental readiness. This topic has not been widely discussed in sport psychology literature. Coaches and players both suggested that the physical warm-ups, at either team or individual level, were part of the process of mentally readying themselves for performance, and any disruption to the physical warm-up can upset the mental readying and, reduce players' confidence in their own ability and their performance potential. Keating and Hogg (1995) suggested that the physical routines and rituals become mechanisms to tighten or narrow players' focus to more game specific matters. Further research is warranted to assess the link between mental preparations and physical preparations.

Pre-game Preparation and Pre-Game Routines

A primary objective of the coaches in the current research was to physically and mentally prepare their players. Coaches used a set pre-game structure to narrow the players' concentration as the games drew closer. Coaches generally began the final hour being very social with players. As the game time neared, the intensity of the preparations gradually began to increase. The structure of this time differed for each team. Each coach adapted the preparations to suit their team and their own coaching style. For example, Amy used team-based activities, starting with a stretch and warm up, whilst other coaches allowed players time to prepare themselves then using the pre-game talk to bring them together as a team. The combination of the pre-game routines, a pre-game talk, and

individual interactions with players aided players' mental readiness a by becoming more game specific as the game drew nearer. This supported findings by Côté, Salmela, and Russell (1995a), who observed that, at the competition site, coaches supervised their athletes' rehearsals/preparations for competition and helped in controlling the distractions in order to ensure that the athletes had the best preparation for their upcoming performance. The coaches in the present thesis acted in a similar manner. The coaches were perceived to facilitate and organise the pre-game preparations, to motivate players, and aid their focus on their game role.

Players Pre-Game Routine

Pre-game routines were important for players' preparations. Players perceived that their pre-game routine as an important aspect that heightened their performance potential. The relationship between pre-game routines and performance supported research by Orlick and Partington (1988) and Eklund (1994a; 1994b), who found that the pre-game routines of Olympians and elite wrestlers, respectively, were related to preparations for performance. The importance of pre-game routines was reflected in Eklund's (1994a) study. Eklund found that wrestlers whose mental preparations were interrupted by cognitively processes the coaches' expectations did not perform as well as those who focused. It was evident that disruption to players' routines could decrease players' confidence in their physical preparation and affect their mental readiness.

Pre-game routines serve as a process that narrows players' focus on their specific role in the team and games. During the pre-game period, coaches were perceived to be both a positive and negative influence on the pre-game routines of players. In particular, coaches were found to play a key role in aiding player's' pre-game preparations by providing essential game-related information, motivation/encouragement, and confidence

for players. Coaches were, however, found to sometimes disrupt players' pre-game preparations by interacting with players at inappropriate times, by being overly anxious, by not giving players time to prepare themselves via their own pre-game routine, and by affecting the momentum of their preparations.

Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, and Guinan (2002) reported that Olympic coaches who were perceived to over coach their athletes were felt to have had a negative affect on Olympic performance. The results from the current research supported the findings by Gould et al., in particular showing that players perceived that, if coaches over coached them during the pre-game preparations, this affected their mental readiness by increasing their anxiety and decreasing their confidence in their ability. From these findings, it is apparent that coaches need to be aware that their actions and behaviours may negatively affect players' mental state close to a game, thus, decreasing the players' confidence in their ability and/or increasing their anxiety levels.

In the current thesis, individual pre-game routines were found to be an essential part of pre-game preparations. Some coaches encouraged players to construct effective routines that facilitated their mental readiness for performance. Sport psychologists (e.g., Boutcher, 1990; Jackson, R.C., & Baker, 2001; McCaffey & Orlick, 1989; Orlick, 1992) have advocated the use of pre-game routines with the aim of focusing athletes' attention, reducing anxiety, increasing confidence, and helping athletes enter competition mentally at their best. The current study adds to this literature by showing that pre-game routines are a vital part of players' preparations for competition.

Coach Personal Preparation and Pre-Game Routine

All four coaches spent time preparing themselves during the pre-game period. Specifically, coaches spent time away from the team and structured the pre-game

preparation period to include time for their own pre-game routine. The results from the current research support findings by Bloom (1996) and Bloom et al. (1997), who found that, on the day of competition, coaches followed set pre-game routines aimed at mentally and physically preparing them for performance. Indeed, coaches in the present research perceived themselves as part of the team and recognised that their performance could influence the team's preparation. Bloom et al. (1997) found that all coaches (ice hockey, volleyball, and basketball) adhered to individualised pre-game routines on the day of competition. The routines of coaches in the present research were aimed at facilitating their own self-relaxation, arousal control, focus, clarifying goals, and self-confidence.

Reduction of anxiety by including relaxation time was a key for the majority of the coaches. Coaches' needed to control their emotion in the hour prior to performance because coaches' own anxiety may transfer to their players' and increase, affect preparations and performance (e.g., Baker, Côté & Hawes, 2000). The perception of the coach as not being ready may distract the players' from their preparations and disrupt the momentum of their pre-game routine. Gould et al. (1999) found that if coaches did not handle crisis situations effectively, then athletes' performance suffered. Similar to the athletes, coaches reported their need to prepare to deal with the pressures of competition because, their behaviours and responses to stress could affect athletes' preparations and performance. On the contrary, Gould et al. found that, if coaches conveyed confidence and projected a positive appearance under pressure, then athletes reflected this response because the coach was perceived as being in control. The importance of the coach being ready is twofold: (a) to ensure players did not perceive their coach as being nervous and unprepared, and (b) to ensure they were prepared to deal with the stress and anxiety of pre-match preparations.

Mechikoff and Kozar (1983) observed that coaches serve as positive role models and that the perception of their actions and communications can influence the athletes who they coach. Therefore, adequate coach preparation and performance prior to a match is a key aspect of a team's performance. Mechikoff and Kozar's suggestion is of particular relevance to coaches of developing athletes. As athletes' perceptions of their coach's confidence in the team's and their own ability can affect how their preparations and performance. By following a pre-game routine, coaches facilitate player preparations and negate potential interruptions to players' preparations.

Summary

Pre-game routines are perceived as being an essential aspect of mental preparation immediately prior to performance. In the current research, I found that coaches and athletes reported that following a pre-game routine enhanced their readiness for performance. This is not a new concept because researchers (e.g., McCaffey and Orlick, 1989) and sport psychologists (e.g., Jackson, R.C & Baker, 2001) have advocated the use of pre-game routines to enhance mental readiness and performance. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that coaches discussed how that they followed set routines prior to performance. In support of the research of Bloom et al. (1997) and Bloom (in press), the current research highlighted the importance of coach readiness to athlete preparations and performance. Further research on coach pre-game routines is warranted to elucidate the link between coach readiness and athlete performance.

Using and Constructing Mental Frameworks to Assess Player Preparations

Player Knowledge and Onsite Assessment

Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) proposed that coaches applied a mental checklist or model of athletes' potential, when assessing what was required to reach the coaches'

stated goal. In the present research, coaches applied a similar mental model or framework that guided their coaching behaviours before a match. Coaches described how they are continually developing their knowledge of players' personality, game state, and the players' preferred coaching style through observation at training and in competition, and via interpersonal communications. Coaches then applied their knowledge prior to a match to assess players' mental state and intervene if they deemed necessary.

Coaches were found to facilitate the pre-game preparations of players' prior to a match by applying a mental framework they had constructed of the players. Similar to coaches in the research of Côté et al. (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, Baria et al., 1995; Côté, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b), the basketball coaches construct a mental understanding of each player to get the best out of them. It was clear that applying a mental framework of players aided the coaches in intervening and coaching each player prior to performance. This process was not always effective, because despite the coaches' best efforts the players sometimes disagreed on the best coaching style for them. Specifically, players and coaches were found to compromise on what the coach thought was best for the player, best for the team, and the preferred coaching style. Evidently, part of the mental framework that coaches applied to pre-performance coaching was a compromise between coaching intentions and players' preferred coaching style. Thus, players need to communicate their preferred behaviours to the coach. As Jowett (2003) showed, poor communication between coach and player can lead to a downfall in the coach-athlete relationship.

In the present research, coaches' sometimes misjudged players' preparations and spent time intervening with players who would have preferred to be left alone. Clearly, coaches can either have a positive or a negative influence on player preparation. This was

highlighted in a series of studies by Gould and colleagues (Gould, Greenleaf et al., 2002; Gould, Guinan et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001), who found that, at the Olympic Games, coaches needed to be aware that their behaviours could directly influence athletes' preparations and in their efforts to attain of peak performance.

Preferred Coaching Style and Coach-Athlete Compatibility

In the present research, I found that players' preferred coaching style was a key issue facing coach-athlete interactions prior to performance. Researchers, (Chelladurai, 1984, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978); (Liukkonen, 1999; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996) have shown that athlete satisfaction is linked to compatible coaching styles and players' preferred coaching style. A match between the coaches' actual coaching style and the players' preferred coaching style can reduce stress, and lead to a more productive pre-game preparation. Coaches and players were implicitly developing compatible coaching styles to balance coach, and team needs.

Coaching style has important implications in terms of communication and mental preparation. Côté and Sedgwick (2003) found that both coaches and players perceived that establishing a positive environment was an essential aspect of a coach-athlete relationship. Jowett (2003) highlighted what happens to athletes' performance when a coach-athlete relationship breaks down. Specifically, Jowett found that performance suffered when the relationship between a coach and an athlete broke down and the goals and communications became unclear. Furthermore, Kenow and Williams (1999) concluded that, for a coach-athlete relationship to be effective, there needs to be a compatible relationship needs to be evident.

Wylleman (2000) observed that coaching research has been uni-directional relationship with limited attention focused on the athlete. The present research showed

that coaching is a bi-directional relationship marked by negotiated interactions, co-operation, and integration of preferred performance states with the coach's coaching style and pre-game objectives. Players in the current research preferred a combination of autonomous pre-game routines with team-based activities. The findings from this thesis are in accordance with those of d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, and Durand (2001), who found that the coach-athlete collective courses of action during elite archery competition was cooperative and either immediate or due to shared perceptions, or was constructed through negotiation. Similarly, in the present study showed similarities to that of d'Arripe-Longueville et al., with coaches and players combined to discuss preparations in the pre-performance environment. The interactions were primarily focused on the reinforcement of principles from training and previous discussions. In this situation, players assumed a less dominant role and listened to their coach. Players with more experience, however, were more active in their interactions with their coach.

Summary

Perceptions of athletes in the current research showed that coaches did not always positively influence pre-game preparations. Indeed, the athletes' evaluative reactions and perceptions of coach behaviour were negative at times. Smoll and Smith (1989) found that the evaluative reactions of the athletes was a key aspect related to coach behaviour. Smoll and Smith's MM showed that the athletes' perception of coach behaviour is a mediating factor. Coaches' need aim to construct a coaching style that best enables what the athlete and coach need to achieve before a game.

Reflections on Coaching Behaviour

Intended Behaviour versus Actual Behaviour

Overall, I found that coaches generally followed their intended coaching practices on game day, with the exception of dealing with specific situation/contextual constraints and controlling for unexpected events. This reflects research by Saury and Durand (1998), who examined elite sailors via interview and observations. Saury and Durand found that coaches' behaviour comprised organised activities or routines, but coaches reported that they were required to be flexible due to uncertainty or unforeseen events. It is evident that, despite the best intentions, coaches need flexibility and adapt their behaviours, plans, and intentions to manage for the uncertainties of sport and in life. In support of Côté and colleagues (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, Baria et al., 1995; Côté, Salmela et al., 1995a, 1995b) and Keating and Hogg (1995), coaches and athletes were involved in organised and well-structured routines prior to performance. The goal of coaches' meticulous and well-organised structures was to enhance athletes' to reach their optimal pre-game state. Being ready for and controlling potentially disruptive events pertains to all coaches.

Coaches and players need to be prepared for unforeseen events and specific situational and contextual events. Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995) found that, at the competition site, coaches spent time ensuring that athletes' preparations were not disrupted and controlling for unexpected events. The actual behaviour of coaches in the current thesis reflected this. Coaches constructed a pre-game environment that was aimed at limiting external pressures on the athletes. Coaches also spent time dealing with unexpected events that, such as a delayed game start or the passing away of an assistant coach the day before the game. Therefore, being able to cope with those events required

flexibility. Coping with unexpected events is a key attribute of coaches in sailing (Saury & Durand, 1998) and gymnastics (Côté, Salmela, Baria et al., 1995).

Self-reflection in Coaching

The four coaches also found their involvement in the research process, involving the interviews, observation, and video recall interviews, enabled them to self-reflect on their coaching behaviours. As with the coaches involved in Wilcox and Trudel's (1998) study, the four coaches in the current research reported that viewing themselves and their own behaviour on videotape. Also, reflecting on their behaviour, in Phase 4, the coaches reflected on the challenge of matching intent with action in complex real-life coaching situations. Indeed, these coaches found that the process acted as a means of personal development and insight. Similarly, Wilcox and Trudel found coaches were able to reflect on their behaviour and evaluate the outcome of their actions. Evidently, stimulated recall interviews can assist coaches in evaluating their own behaviour and enable a process of self-reflection to proceed.

The process of learning and developing in coaching often involves reflection. Trudel and Gilbert (in press) discussed the proposition that self-reflection of one's own coaching behaviour acts as an experiential learning aid and can be used to enhance coaches' understanding of their actions. Gilbert and Trudel (2001) showed that youth sport coaches learn through experience and reflection on their own actions. Through this self-reflective process, coaches were found to refine their coaching behaviours and actions (Gilbert and Trudel). The same process appeared to be occurring in the current thesis, because the coaches were reflecting on their own behaviour during the data collection process and used the video recall interview to assess and refine their coaching practices in the time prior to performance. Due to the perceived benefits of video recall the self-

reflective process, might be considered for inclusions in coach development and education. Further research on this topic is warranted because the process of reflection and experiential learning has important implications for coach education.

Factors Mediating Pre-Game Preparations

Level of Development of Coach, Team, and Player

In establishing their activities during the final hour, coaches need to consider the level of development of the team and players' preferred coaching style. The influence of the level of development was highlighted by Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995). They proposed that players' level of development was a contributing factor in the coaching model. In particular, the level of development influenced the mental checklist/framework that coaches used to evaluate athletes' potential and their chosen coaching behaviour. Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. suggested that level of development was a key factor influencing selected coaching behaviours. The coaches in this research stated that they needed to know the level of players' physical and mental skills. They could then adapt their coaching strategies, communications, and interventions accordingly.

In the current research, I found that the level of development of the team and the coach influenced the coaching style adopted prior to a match. The level of experience and development of coaches was a key factor in their behaviours prior to a match. There is, however, limited information on how coaches' level of development or experience affects their behaviour and practices. Bloom and colleagues (Bloom, Salmela, & Schinke, 1995; Miller, Bloom, & Salmela, 1996; Schinke, Bloom, & Salmela, 1995) conducted a series of studies on the career paths of coaches. Coaches were generally ex-players and as players were developed become leaders, assistant coaches, or coaches at junior levels before becoming senior or head coaches. Coaching is an experiential profession where learning

often occurs through actual experience, either as a player or assistant coach. Often coaches have assumed leadership roles before they begin coaching and with the help of a mentor begin to develop their skills and coaching style (Bloom, in press). Through mentoring, self-reflection, and coach education, coaches develop and the longer they coach, the more sophisticated skills they acquire. Coaches in the current research all stated that, even though they were at different career or developmental levels, they were still developing and refining their skills. It is suggested, that the coaches' level of development and experiential base is an influencing factor in coaching prior to performance.

Situation and Context

It became clear that coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to a match were influenced by unique situational and contextual factors. Gilbert and Trudel (2000) and Brewer and Jones (2002), declared that it is important for the unique aspects of each sport and the specific situational coaching to be recognised in coaching. In the current thesis, the time of season, opposition, number of games on the weekend, unexpected events, place on the league ladder, and form influenced how coaches constructed the pre-game environment. Coaches thus need to adapt their coaching behaviours to the changing environment and unexpected events that occur.

The situation and context are important determinants of coaching behaviour and pre-game preparations. How coaches integrate these factors into their coaching plan and practices have implications for coaching research. The situational and contextual factors influence the content of the interactions between coach and player, as well as the content and focus of team meetings. In particular, dealing with and controlling unexpected events is an essential aspect of pre-performance coaching. Players' evaluations of their coach

during this time can influence their pre-game preparations and their mental readiness for the upcoming match.

Coaches stated that the uniqueness of their team situation, including place on the ladder, time of the season, current form, and the opposition, affected the goal of their behaviours and interactions during the time before a match. Researchers, such as Brewer and Jones (2002), Potrac et al. (2000), and van der Mars (van der Mars, 1989), have highlighted that the specificity of the information obtained from coaching behaviour research, such as systematic observation, lacks contextual information. In the present thesis, I highlighted how the specific situation of the team was a factor in the structure and content of the interactions between coach and player.

From a research perspective, the inclusion of the situational and contextual factors enhances the reliability of the information being presented. Previous research conducted using questionnaires or systematic observation instruments focused on narrowly defined general coaching behaviours or practices (e.g., van der Mars, 1989; Potrac et al., 2000). Potrac et al. indicated that multi-method studies could provide additional information pertaining to coaching practices and aid in the development of a model of more effective coaching practices. The current thesis is in accordance by providing important information regarding how coaching behaviours and practices change and adapt to different situational and contextual elements. Furthermore, the results from the current research add credence to the suggestions by researchers that multi-method studies provide a holistic view of coaching behaviour and the influence of coaching behaviour on athletes.

Unexpected Events

As discussed earlier in this chapter, coaches had to incorporate contingency plans into their pre-game plans and preparations to ensure that they were able to control for

unexpected events. The coaches in Saury and Durand's (1998) study also showed that flexible plans were required to cope with and control unforeseen events or situations. Gould and colleagues (Gould, Greenleaf et al., 2002; Gould, Guinan et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001) investigating athletes' and coaches' Olympic performances highlighted that coaches who could control unexpected or unforeseen events were perceived by athletes positively. Assuming the coach is a central figure in the preparations of players, then controlling for unforeseen events is a critical aspect of pre-game coaching. In particular, unexpected events can disrupt the momentum of players' preparations and potentially affect their attainment of optimal pre-game mental state. This was reflected in a study by Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995), who found that, at the competition site, coaches' primary objectives were to control potential distractions and aid athletes in preparing for competition. Consequently, controlling and preparing for unexpected events is a key mediating factor of coaching prior to performance because the potential for disruption of athletes' pre-game routines and preferred mental states can be high. As well as having alternate plans, coaches must be flexible enough to think quickly, changing their pre-determined plans to cope with unexpected circumstances.

Methodological Issues: Strengths and Limitations of the Thesis

Strengths of the Research

A strength of this thesis was in the application of grounded theory. Grounded theory procedures (see, Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowed me to analyse the data as I collected it. I then narrowed the focus of the study onto the key issues, and to guide the rest of the interviews and observations. I was able to use the emerging themes from the initial coach interview to help direct the observations, player interview, and VCSRI session with the same coach and the corresponding player, as well as using the

information with the following dyads. Furthermore, Kavle (2003) stated that grounded theory methods provide a process of verification and aid the research by focusing the data on core or central variables that emerge. This also limits the collection of unrelated, irrelevant or redundant data.

I believe another key strength of the research was the application of a multi-method approach, combining interviews with both members of dyads, observation, and VCSRI. The application of different qualitative research methods allowed me to cross check material and analyse the themes as they emerged throughout the research process. Furthermore, I was able to analyse the dyads in depth from a number of different perspectives (coach, player, myself). By using this approach, I was able to gather more detailed data from different perspectives than the simple application of an interview or observational instrument. A key aspect of the observation phase of the study was the use of a video camera to record the data. By using video to capture the events, a hard copy of the behaviours and interactions was available for analysis. In addition, my observations and interpretations could be checked by my supervisors to increase accuracy. By triangulating and cross checking the participants' responses with the video observations and field notes, I was able to produce a more detailed analysis of the coach-athlete interactions than observation alone would have provided.

The application of different qualitative methods provided a means of triangulating data. Patton (2002) stated that multiple methods balance out the strengths and limitations of the different methods being applied. Furthermore, the application of video observation and VCSRI sessions allowed in-depth and detailed data to be gathered for analysis. When video is used in conjunction with other quantitative measures, such as systematic observation or survey methods, the combination could increase the reliability and validity

of results. This occurs through the triangulation of results from different methodologies and combining the strengths of the different methodologies, which can ameliorate the weaknesses and limitations of each method.

Few studies had focused specifically on coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance. This research should aid in the understanding of how coaches and athletes prepare for competition especially immediately before a game. Coaching is not just limited to what happens at training and during competition. The time immediately prior to competition is crucial. Coaches taking inappropriate approaches to mental preparation in the pre-competition period can cancel out the positive effects of hard work during training. Similarly, coach behaviours just before a match, which disrupt mental preparation of players, can raise problems that coaches then have to deal with during the match. This thesis demonstrates that what coaches say and do before matches can have a powerful effect on players' mental state going into the match and may affect performance.

Limitations of the Thesis

Due to the nature of the research, I was closely involved in all aspects of the research process. My presence in the training and competition environment in high-pressure situations may have resulted in participants interacting with me and potentially changing their behaviours and reactions. This may have occurred, not only because of my presence, but also because of the video camera. This was evident in Team B, where Bruce spoke candidly to me about his coaching style as the team warmed up on the court. Furthermore, Bruce stated that he adapted his behaviours due to my presence, stating that he would have handled specific interactions with players differently had the video camera not been there. This reaction is inevitable when researchers spend time in high-pressure environments. To lessen reactivity and changes in behaviour, I had followed

familiarisation procedures to ensure that the coaches and players were comfortable with my presence. It is recommended when examining coaches and athletes in high-pressure environments, such as interactions before a game, researchers spend more time at practice and at games before recording the event selected for analysis in their research. This may lessen the reactivity of the participants. It is suggested that demand characteristics and social desirability are part of the research process and must be factored in when conducting research of this nature.

In the current thesis, I must acknowledge that I was the basis from which the research evolved and the thesis represents my own analysis and presentation of the data. In particular, my presence with a video camera in a high-pressure environment may have affected the behaviour of the participants. Coaches, such as Bruce, may have adapted their behaviour to be perceived in a socially-desirable manner or for dramatic effect. Virtually all aspects of the research process, it must be accepted that the researcher can influence the outcome. I did however, take steps were taken to minimise the influence of my presence. One technique to reduce the reactivity is using a wireless microphone on the coach with a stationary camera mounted on the change room wall and a second camera with a zoom lens in the stands. In addition, collecting data on 3-5 separate occasions and only using the data from 1 or 2 randomly selected games would reduce the behavioural changes by coach and player. Clearly, the downside would be that perhaps researchers would not be able to gain the inside knowledge of the participants from actually being present throughout the pre-performance period.

A second limitation was that I focused exclusively on a single sport. Previous researchers, van der Mars (1989), Gilbert and Trudel (2000), and Potrac et al. (2000), have discussed how that the uniqueness of a sport influences results. Basketball is a team sport

and hence the results, where the coach is actively involved, may not necessarily correlate to an individual sport, where the coach has limited or no direct interactions with their athletes immediately prior to or during competition. Conversely, coaches in this research attended to the needs of multiple players. In some individual sports, coaches can individualise exclusively in the pre-game period. A more rounded view might emerge as researchers continue to investigate coach-athlete interactions immediately before performance in a range of different sport contexts.

It is also possible that the difference in experience and expertise acted as a limitation in this thesis. Examination of different levels of expertise and the effect on coaching behaviour prior to performance is viewed as an area for future research.

Several of the coaches in this study stated that a better understanding of their coaching style would be possible through extended observation such as a whole season or a road trip. Financial constraints resulted in time and game restrictions in the current study. The collection of data across a season would likely result in less participant social-desirability responding and possibly increase the accuracy of the information based on a larger sample of behaviour.

A further limitation of the present research was the relative lack of interest from players in the targeted teams. In Team B, Brad withdrew from the interview after five minutes and refused to allow it to be recorded. It is possible that the coaches had a vested interest in the project with respect to professional development, whereas players were not as interested because they did not perceive direct benefits to their game would result. Perhaps a more detailed explanation of this kind of project and potential benefits at the start would have resulted in more players interested. Furthermore, financial reward for

players being involved would also increase their likelihood of participation, but may have negative consequences also (e.g., socially desirable responses).

The generalisability of the results in this thesis is limited by the methodology of using single gender dyads. The examination of mixed-gender dyads would provide more detailed information on how coaches influence athletes' preparations for performance. In particular, the comparison of mixed gender dyads to single gender dyads would aid in the understanding of the coaching process prior to performance. Furthermore it was noted in the analysis of the results that there were limited differences between female coaches of female teams and male coaches of male teams. Future investigations of coaching prior to performance and gender would be an interesting study. It should be noted however that there are very few female coaches of male teams in basketball and indeed in many other sports, thus limiting the potential for a prospective study.

A final limitation was the use of gendered dyads. Researchers have shown that gender differences exist in the perceptions of coach behaviour and leadership behaviour (see Chelladurai, 1990, 1993; Jowett, Paull, & Pensgaard, 2005). It is evident that the results may have been different had opposite gender dyads been used. It is also important to note, however, that further research needs to be completed on the effects of a coaches gender and the coaching process before any conclusions regarding the influence of gender on coaching can be made.

This research clearly had a number of limitations. These limitations need to be addressed in future research, to increase the reliability and external validity of the data. Nonetheless, the use of a multi-method research approach, with triangulation to cross-reference between coach and athlete perceptions, as well as perspectives from each coach, increased my confidence regarding the major conclusions in this thesis.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for Future Research

The multi-method approach was a strength of this research and it is recommended that combining qualitative and quantitative methods can provide an in-depth assessment of the coaching process. By using different methods, researchers can assess the different perspectives of the coach and the player, as well as taking some account of the researcher. The application of a longer term study would have provided more detailed information. The application of a case study over 3-5 weeks of games and training sessions, or a longitudinal study over a season would have balanced some of the limitations of the present research.

I used a digital video camera with a zoom microphone. The configuration of the stadiums meant that I could not clearly hear conversations recorded between coach and player via the audio recording. As a result, some data were lost. The use of a wireless microphone attached to the coach and player and relayed in real-time to the video footage would greatly enhance the data produced. The application of increasingly sophisticated technology is an exciting prospect for field researchers however.

Future researchers could further assess how coaches construct mental frameworks of the players plus how coaches apply these frameworks during training and competition. The current research supports the work of Côté, Salmela, Baria et al. (1995), regarding mental models and relationships between coaching behaviour and coaching practice. In addition, further research is warranted on the use of pre-game routines immediately prior to performance. In the current study, it was evident that players and coaches used pre-game routines. Importantly though, players and coaches declared that the physical pre-game routines aided mental preparation.

Additional research is needed to assess the influence of the researcher in the data collection phase. It may be that more time is spent with the team to lessen the influence on the information being gathered. Using more stringent familiarisation procedures may ensure that coaches and players become more accepting of the presence of a researcher and a video camera.

Implications for Coaches

One implication for coaching practice relates to the match between coach and player, in terms of compatibility of coaching style. In the present research, I observed that coaches needed to be aware of players' preferred coaching style, so they could determine how to intervene with each player to ensure that the player responded positively to their advice. In particular, coach knowledge of players' game state and personality was viewed as an asset by all coaches. Coaches found that, if they coached their players in their preferred style then players were more responsive both on and off the court. This probably reflects adaptability and experience to some degree.

Coaches' in the present research needed to allocate time to develop their own ideal mental preparation and pre-game routine. Coaches have been found to be performers in their own right (see, Greenleaf et al., 1999), and their performance can affect their team's preparations. As a result, coaches need to be aware of their own preparations and mental state to ensure that they are performing at their best prior to a match.

The application of video cameras to coach education has important implications for how coaches learn and develop their skills. It was apparent in this study that the coaches were surprised at their own behaviour and how the players at times reacted to their communications. Video is a useful tool in developing self-reflective coaching practices and has potential as an applied tool in coach education. The present research

highlights that coaches can potentially learn and develop by watching their own coaching behaviours.

Another implication for coaches from the present thesis need to find a balance between team-oriented and individual-oriented pre-game routines. Coaches need to establish the right pre-game structure that facilitates both players' and teams' preparations, as well as that of the team. When the right balance is achieved players can focus and prepare better for games. Furthermore, in the present research, some players stated that they preferred to have time to prepare themselves away from the team-oriented warm-up activities because this aided their mental readiness.

I also identified an issue linking the need for a team-individual balance to the earlier point about preferred coaching style. It was clear from comments that coaches and players differed in their perceptions of preferred coaching style and behaviours. First, I identified some occasions where the coach thought that a player preferred one style, whereas the player actually preferred a different style. Second, there were circumstances in which the coach was aware that their preferred style was at variance with that of the player, but insisted that, as coach, they knew best or the player should adapt. Consequently, coaches need to be outstanding communicators, especially regarding the listening and self-reflection. Coaches should also be trained to better understand the link between thoughts and behaviour, to enable them to judge when some acknowledgement of players' preferences might enhance the players' responses in training and competition performance.

Furthermore, I found an awareness of all players' level of development affected the preferred style of warm-up in the present research. Younger and inexperienced players usually preferred more individual attention from the coach and more team-based warm-up

activities, than the more experienced and older players. When players are still developing their skills, coaches need to typically focus on different aspects of coaching prior to matches. In addition, coaches found that the younger players required less complex pre-game information and more specific attention than older players. Older players usually required more autonomy and more individual time to prepare themselves than lesser-developed players. I also found that more developed teams preferred more in-depth pre-match talks and more information regarding offensive and defensive structure.

Implications for Sport Psychologists

It is important for sport psychologists to aid players and coaches in acquiring a pre-game routine that suits their individual style of play and aids players/coaches in being as close as possible to their ideal performance state. Sport psychologists could aid players and coaches through teaching relaxation techniques, focusing strategies, concentration, individual goal setting, arousal control, self-talk, and mental readiness. The positive focus of coaches prior to the game is an area where sport psychologists can assist coaches. Sport psychologists can help coaches in establishing positive coaching practices that are aimed at facilitating players' pre-game preparation. In addition, sport psychologists can assist coaches by helping them create a structured environment that is routine, but flexible enough to accommodate for unexpected events to occur.

Previously, attention for mental preparation and pre-game routines has focused primarily on athletes. The present study confirmed Bloom's (1996) findings that coaches need to mentally prepare themselves for competition. Achieving the ideal performance state is important for coaches, because behaviours and cognitions, such as anxiety or anger, have been shown to affect players' confidence and mental preparations. Aiding

coaches in their pre-game routines therefore, could indirectly assist athletes to achieve their ideal performance states more frequently.

Sport psychologists can help coaches in recognising their behavioural patterns that affect their players' mental states. This is important for coaches because players' perceptions of coaching behaviour can also affect their on-court performance. For example, the use of video for shared reflection and intervention is a technique that could be used to assist coaches' in controlling anxiety or aggressive behaviour. Video provides a means of analysing performance and has been applied to many other areas of sport. Sport psychologists could use it to facilitate coaches' understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and help to identify areas of coaches' pre-game practices that are affecting either their own performance or that of their players.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this thesis was to investigate coach-athlete interactions immediately prior to performance. Using grounded theory and multiple methods, I found that, for coaches, time prior to performance is marked by a combination of team and individual activities, during which both coach and player aim to achieve the player starting the game as close as possible to their optimal or ideal performance state. To achieve their preferred performance state, athletes follow their own pre-game routines that are marked by physical and mental preparations. During this time, the coach is an integral figure. Coaches provide the structure that facilitates players' preparations. Coaches help to bring athletes' focus and concentration from the broad to the more game specific. The coaches in this research aimed to achieved enhanced athletes' focus and concentration by providing a positive pre-performance environment, team meetings, onsite assessment,

individual coaching and interventions, applying player knowledge, and observation and assessment.

Coaches had positive and negative influences prior to performance and their actions could motivate players for the match or increase their anxiety and decrease players' confidence in their own ability. Consequently, players and coaches needed to compromise on what was the best course of action prior to performance. Coaches and players sometimes disagreed on what was the players' preferred coaching style. To reduce conflict on preferred coaching style coaches took into account what they perceived to be best for the team, what was best for the player, and their own goals. The importance of the pre-game preparations to performance necessitates that more communication and understanding is required by both coach and player to find the most appropriate interactions prior to a game to aid players' mental preparations for performance.

Coaches also applied a mental model of players prior to performance. Coaches used the mental model to assess their preparations and monitor if they needed to intervene to aid the player in reaching their preferred pre-performance state and aid their mental preparations for the game. Further research is required to understand how coaches construct and apply these mental models and how the models influence their coaching behaviour and practices.

A key finding of the study was that coaches should be prepared to accommodate any unexpected events. A range of factors for which coaches could not prepare influenced the preparations of all four teams in the current study. It is important that coaches are able to effectively deal with events, such as the delayed start of the game or emotional reactions of players to being injured or dropped, to ensure that players' preparations are not disrupted and the pre-game goals are reached.

This thesis has provided an in-depth view of coach-athlete interactions prior to performance and has explained the factors that influence pre-game mental preparations of basketball players. Further research is required to highlight the influence of pre-game preparations, including coaches' behaviour, on athletes' mental preparations for performance in a range of sports. In this thesis, I also elucidated the process that coaches and athletes use to prepare for competition and how coaches intervene with players during high-pressure situations. The critical influence that coaches have on the mental preparation of players was highlighted, showing that coaching behaviour is linked to athletes' psychological states prior to performance. Future research should recognise the advantages of multi-method studies and a combination of research methods to maximise knowledge. In addition, the application of more sophisticated technologies will continue to aid the accuracy of data being gathered. I trust that the research reported in this thesis and the questions that research has raised will stimulate others to examine the important topic of coach influence prior to athlete performance.

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APPENDICES

A1: Information Package to Coaches

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B1: Consent Form-Coaches

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C: Interview Guide

D: Training Session Observations

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G: Researchers note: An unexpected event and a confessional tale

Appendix A1: Information Package to coaches

Scott Fletcher, PhD Student
Victoria University
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance
PO Box 14428
MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001
Australia
Telephone: (03) 9688 4207
Facsimile:
(03) 9689 4891

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray
Email: Scott.Fletcher1@Research.vu.edu.au

Dear XXXXXXXX,

I am a PhD student studying at the School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance at Victoria University, with professor Tony Morris. I am writing to you regarding research with elite basketball coaches and players. My research is aimed at investigating how coaching behaviours influence the preparation and performance of basketball players immediately prior to a match. The research aims to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence Basketball players' preparation and performance prior to an match and will advance our knowledge of how coaching can aid in establishing an optimal environment for athletic preparation and peak performance. The reason I am writing to you concerns your potential participation in the study. Please read the attached information on how the study will be conducted and complete the attached form if you are interested.

I am available at any time at the address below for a more in depth discussion. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Fletcher
PhD Student,
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance,
Victoria University.
W: 03 9688 4207

Information for coaches

The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players

The importance of an optimal environment prior to performance in elite sport has been linked to the achievement of peak performance. Indeed, it is suggested that preparation on the day of competition is related to success or failure. The current research project aims to investigate how coaching behaviours and practices influence players' preparations prior to an important match as well as the subsequent performance. The project will focus on coach-player interactions and aims to establish what factors influence the preparation of players prior to a match.

If you choose to participate, you will be involved in a series of stages beginning with a briefing of the project and an informal observation of a practice session. The second stage will involve an interview regarding your objectives and strategies for coaching on the day of competition; the interview will take approximately 30 minutes and can be conducted by phone if necessary. The third stage will involve observation and videotaping of you and your teams interactions prior to a match. During this time, a small video camera will be used to aid the observations. The final stage will involve a second interview where you will be shown a series of edited video recordings of the pre-performance period that was recorded previously. This will take approximately 30 minutes. Following the completion of all the stages, we will discuss your experiences of the study and any questions or issues that concern you.

We believe that information from this study will benefit coaches and players by establishing a clearer or more detailed understanding of the pre-performance period and how coaching behaviours may influence players' preparations and performance.

If you are interested, please complete the attached form and send it to

Scott.Fletcher1@research.vu.edu.au

If you are not interested in participating, you are not required to return any information at all. Thank you for your time.

Please note that participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to participate. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Fletcher
PhD Student,
Victoria University,
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance,
PO Box 14428
Melbourne city MC,
Vic, 8001

Return form

(Please fill in the following details...in the blank spaces provided and forward the completed by e- mail to Scott.Fletcher1@research.vu.edu.au)

Yes, I am interested in participating in the study titled “The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players.”

Your contact details

Name: _____

Phone- (w): _____

Phone- (m): _____

E-mail: _____

Information

Gender: Male or Female

Age: _____

Name of the current team that you are coaching and the competition:

Highest (or current) level of education reached (e.g., High school, Bachelors degree):

Number of years playing Basketball:

Number of years coaching Basketball:

Highest representative level you have reached whilst playing Basketball (i.e., national, state...):

Highest representative level you have coached:

Coaching qualifications obtained (if any):

Please return this form in the attached envelope, or send the above information to the following email address Scott.Fletcher1@research.vu.edu.au

Appendix A2: Information Package to Players

Scott Fletcher, PhD Student
Victoria University
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance
PO Box 14428
MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001
Australia
Telephone: (03) 9688 4207
Facsimile:
(03) 9689 4891

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray
Email: Scott.Fletcher1@Research.vu.edu.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a PhD student studying at the School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance at Victoria University. I am writing to you regarding research with basketball coaches and players in Victoria. My research is investigating how coaching behaviours influence the preparation and performance of basketball players immediately prior to a match. The research aims to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence a player's preparation and performance prior to an important match and will advance our knowledge of how coaching can aid in establishing an optimal environment for athletic preparation and peak performance. The reason I am writing to you concerns your potential participation in the study. Please read the attached information on how the study will be conducted and complete the attached form if you are interested.

I am available at any time at the address below for a more in depth discussion. I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Fletcher
PhD Student,
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance,
Victoria University.

Information for players

The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players

The importance of an optimal environment prior to performance in elite sport has been linked to the achievement of peak performance. Indeed, it is suggested that preparation on the day of competition is related to success or failure. The current research project aims to investigate how coaching behaviours and practices influence players' preparations prior to an important match as well as the subsequent performance. The project will focus on coach-player interactions and aims to establish what factors influence the preparation of players prior to a match.

If you choose to participate, you will be involved in a series of stages beginning with a briefing of the project and an informal observation of one or more practice session. The next stage will involve the observation and videotaping of you and your coach's interactions immediately prior to a match. During this time, a small video camera to aid in the observations. The second stage will involve an interview regarding your perceptions of your coach on the day of competition; the interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

We believe that information from this study will benefit coaches and players by establishing a clearer or more detailed understanding of the pre-performance period and how coaching behaviours may influence a player's performance.

If you are interested, please return the attached form in the enclosed envelope. You will be contacted within a week of the receipt of the form. Please note that due to the highly selective nature of the study you may not be selected to participate.

If you are not interested, you are not required to send any information at all. Thank you for your time.

Please note that participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to participate. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Fletcher
PhD Student,
Victoria University,
School of Human Movement, Recreation, and Performance,
PO Box 14428
Melbourne city MC,
Vic, 8001

Return form

(Please fill in the following details and forward the completed form in the return envelope provided or e-mail to Scott.Fletcher1@research.vu.edu.au.)

Yes, I am interested in participating in the study titled “The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players.”

Your contact details

Name: _____

Phone-(w): _____

Phone-(m): _____

E-mail: _____

Signature: _____

Information

Gender: Male or Female

Age: _____

Name of current team and competition:

Name of current coach(s):

Number of years playing Basketball:

Number of years playing Basketball with your current team:

Number of years playing Basketball with your current coach

Highest representative level you have reached (i.e., national, state...):

Major achievements in Basketball (optional question):

Please return this form in the attached envelope, or send the above information to the following email address **Scott.Fletcher1@research.vu.edu.au**

Appendix A3: Information package and consent form-Minor

**CONSENT ON BEHALF OF A MINOR
CERTIFICATION BY PARENT / GUARDIAN OF A MINOR**

We would like to invite child/dependant to be a part of a study that explores coaching behaviours and athlete experiences prior to athlete performance. The information you and your child/dependent provide will be part of a study that seeks to develop our understanding of the factors that affect Basketball preparations prior to a performance.

I, _____ hereby give my consent for my son / daughter / dependant _____ **to participate in a research project titled “The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players” being conducted at Victoria University by, Professor Tony Morris, Dr Daryl Marchant and Scott Fletcher. I have read the plain language statement that outlines the research and understand that the purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of coaching behaviours and athlete preparation prior to performance.**

Procedures:

The key focus of this particular study is to explore a specific performance and investigate coaching behaviours and elite athlete preparation. Your child/dependant’s participation will involve a series of stages. The first stage involves the observation of the pre-performance period. During this time, the researcher will observe and record your child/dependant’s preparations for their upcoming performance. The researcher will use a small video camera to record both coach and player. The second stage involves an individual interview regarding the pre-performance period, lasting approximately 30 minutes. During this time, your child/dependant will be asked a number of questions relating to their preparations for a Basketball match and what their coach does during this time. The information your child/dependant provides will be invaluable in assisting us to develop recommendations for improving knowledge on elite athletes’ preparations prior to performance.

I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my child's / dependant's participation in this research. I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my child's / dependant's participation in the study will immediately cease and any information collected will not be used.

I have been informed that the information will be kept confidential. I understand that only summary results will be reported and the individual responses will not be released to any person or organisation.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Parent / Guardian signature

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Scott Fletcher (w) (03) 9688 4207, Prof. Tony. Morris, ph. (03) 9688 5353 or Dr Daryl Marchant, ph, (03) 9688 4035. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03- 9688 4710)

Player information

(to be filled in by player under the supervision of a parent or guardian)

Name: _____

Gender: Male Female

Age: _____

Number of years playing Basketball:

Name of current coach(s):

Name of team and age group:

Number of years playing under your current coach(s):

Highest representative level you have reached:

For future contact please fill in the following details

Contact ph: _____

e-mail address: _____

Appendix B1: Consent form-Coaches

The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players

Information for Coaches

In recent years, researchers have identified the pre-performance period as a crucial time for elite athletes. Indeed, some have stated that success and failure is embedded in the athlete's preparation on the day of competition. One of the most important interactions the elite athlete has on the day of competition is with their coach. In the modern sporting world elite coaches play an important part in athletes' lives throughout the training and competition environments and indeed in the hours prior to a performance. In this research project, we aim to observe coaches and players during the time before the player performance in a competition. We will also talk to coaches and players about their experiences during this time. This research will enhance our understanding of an important aspect of the coach's role in elite sport.

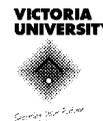
We wish to invite you to participate in our investigation of coaching behaviours prior to a Basketball match. The key focus of this particular study is to explore a specific performance and investigate the coach's behaviours and the player's preparation. Your participation will involve a series of stages. The first stage involves an individual interview that will last approximately 30 minutes. During this stage, we will discuss a number of issues relating to coaching practices immediately prior to a match. The second stage involves the videotaping and observation of the pre-performance period on the day of a match, during this time a video camera will be used to observe you and your player. The final stage will involve an interview where video footage of the pre-performance period will be viewed and discussed. The information you provide will be invaluable in assisting us in improving knowledge on coaches' roles in elite athletes' preparation prior to performance.

Please note that participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to discontinue at any time, without the need for reason or explanation. Furthermore, during videotaping sessions or interviews you are free to ask the researcher to stop recording if they feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, you are entitled to ask any questions at any time regarding the research. No information gained from the interview will enable you to be identified by anyone other than the research team and data will only be reported as group information. All of the video and audio data collected will be kept confidential and stored securely at Victoria University.

Should you have any concerns or queries about the research project, please do not hesitate to contact Scott Fletcher, Prof. Tony Morris, or Dr Daryl Marchant at the address below. If at any stage you have concerns about the conduct the research project, please contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, P.O. Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (Ph 9688 4710).

Scott Fletcher PhD Student Victoria University (w) (03) 9688 4207	Prof. Tony Morris Victoria University (03) 9688 5353	Dr Daryl Marchant Victoria University (03) 9688 4035
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**Victoria University
Consent Form for Coaches**



INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you, to be a part of a study that explores coaching behaviours prior to athlete performance. The information you provide will be part of a study that seeks to develop our understanding of the factors that affect Basketball preparations prior to a performance.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, _____

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research titled: “The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players” being conducted at Victoria University by Prof. T. Morris, Dr Daryl Marchant, and Scott Fletcher.

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Scott Fletcher and that I freely consent to participation involving these procedures.

Procedures:

The key focus of this particular study is to explore a specific performance and investigate the coach’s behaviours and the player’s preparation. Your participation will involve a series of stages. The first stage involves an individual interview that will last approximately 30 minutes. The second stage involves the videotaping and observation of the pre-performance period on the day of a match. During this time, a video camera will be used to observe you and your team.. During this stage, we will discuss a number of issues relating to coaching prior to competition. The final stage will involve an interview where video footage of the pre-performance period will be viewed and discussed. The information you provide will be invaluable in assisting us in improving knowledge on coaches’ roles in elite athletes’ preparation prior to performance.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time, without reason or explanation and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I understand that my involvement will be confidential.

Name (print):

Signed:.....

Witness:.....

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Scott Fletcher (w) (03) 9688 4207 or Prof. T. Morris, ph. (03) 9688 5353 or Dr Daryl Marchant, ph. (03) 9688 4035. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

Information**Gender:** Male Female**Age:** _____**Number of years coaching Basketball:**

Name of team coached and competition:

Number of years with this team:

Highest representative level you have coached:

For future contact please fill in the following details**Contact ph:** _____**e-mail address:** _____

Appendix B2: Consent form-Players

The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players

Information for Players

In recent years, researchers have identified the pre-performance period as a crucial time for elite athletes. Indeed, some have stated that success and failure is embedded in the athlete's preparation on the day of competition. One of the most important interactions the elite athlete has on the day of competition is with their coach. In the modern sporting world elite coaches play an important part in athletes' lives throughout the training and competition environments and indeed in the hours prior to a performance. In this research project, we aim to observe coaches and players during the time prior to a match. We will also talk to coaches and players about their experiences during this time. This research aims to enhance our understanding of an important aspect of the coach's role in elite sport.

We wish to invite you to participate in our investigation of coaching behaviours prior to Basketball match. The key focus of this particular study is to explore a specific performance and investigate the coach's behaviours and players' preparation. Your participation will involve two stages. The first stage is the observation of the pre-performance period on the day of match. During this time, the researcher will observe and record your preparations for your upcoming performance. The researcher will be using a small video camera to record both you and your coach. The second stage involves an individual interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes (please note that only 3 players in the team will be interviewed, selection will be based on court time). We will discuss your preparation and performance, as well as what the coach does during that time. The information you provide will be invaluable in assisting us to develop recommendations for improving knowledge on what helps and hinders elite athlete's preparation prior to performance.

Please note that participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to discontinue at any time, without the need for reason or explanation. Furthermore, during videotaping sessions or interviews you are free to ask the researcher to stop recording if they feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, you are able to ask any questions at any time regarding the research. No information gained from the interview will enable you to be identified by anyone other than the research team and data will only be reported as group information. All of the video and audio data collected will be kept confidential and stored securely at Victoria University.

Should you have any concerns or queries about the research project, please do not hesitate to contact Scott Fletcher, Prof. Tony Morris, or Dr Daryl Marchant at the address below. If at any stage you have concerns about the conduct the research project, please contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, P.O. Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (Ph 9688 4710).

Scott Fletcher PhD Student Victoria University (w) (03) 9688 4207	Prof. Tony Morris Victoria University (03) 9688 5353	Dr Daryl Marchant Victoria University (03) 9688 4035
--	--	--

Victoria University
Consent Form for Players



INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you, to be a part of a study that explores coaching behaviours and player experiences prior to a Basketball match. The information you provide will be part of a study that seeks to develop our understanding of the factors that affect Basketball preparations prior to a performance.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, _____

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research titled: "The intent and influence of pre-competitive coaching on the mental preparation of basketball players" being conducted at Victoria University by Prof. T. Morris, Dr Daryl Marchant, and Scott Fletcher.

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Scott Fletcher and that I freely consent to participation involving these procedures.

Procedures:

The key focus of this particular study is to explore a specific performance and investigate the coach's behaviours and the athlete's preparation. Your participation will involve two stages. The first stage is the observation of the pre-performance period on the day of match. During this time, the researcher will observe and record your preparations for your upcoming performance, using a video camera. The second stage involves an individual interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes. We will discuss your preparation and performance, as well as what the coach does during that time. The information you provide will be invaluable in assisting us to develop recommendations for improving knowledge on what helps and hinders elite athletes preparation prior to performance.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time, without reason or explanation and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I understand that my involvement will be confidential.

Name (print):

Signed:

Witness:.....

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to Scott Fletcher (w) (03) 9688 4207, Prof. T. Morris, ph. (03) 9688 5353 or Dr Daryl Marchant, ph, (03) 9688 4035. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

[*Please note: where the subject/s is aged under 18 years, separate parental consent is required; where the subject is unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]

Information**Gender:** Male Female**Age:** _____**Number of years playing Basketball:**

Name of team and age group/competition:

Name of current coach(s):

Number of years playing Basketball with your current coach(s):

Highest representative level reached:

For future contact please fill in the following details**Contact ph:** _____**e-mail address:** _____

Appendix C: Interview guide

Interview Guides

Phase 1-Coach interview

Aim: Establish the intentions behind coaching behaviours prior to a performance.

During this interview, I am interested in understanding your experience as a coach and your role as a coach in the hours prior to a match. The questions I will be asking you will relate to your experiences as a coach on the day of an important match. The aim of this interview is to discuss what you do on the day of a competition to prepare your players. Take your time to answer the questions. If you do not understand the question just ask me to repeat it. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to understand your experiences as a coach, so please tell me what you think. The interview will last approximately, 30mins during which you will have the opportunity to pause or discontinue at anytime. You may also refuse to answer a question if you wish to. Any questions before we begin?

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

To begin with, Can you tell me how you first got into coaching?

Can you tell me how the team went last season?

How are they going this season?

What are your goals for the current season?

PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

I would like to start with some questions that focus on your role prior to a match, can you describe for me in as much detail as possible your involvement with your players on the day of a match?

All the interactions with your players and the purpose of your actions and communications.

How would you describe your coaching style, prior to competition?

What do you aim to achieve with your players prior to a match?

What influences the way you prepare your players on the day of competition?

Can you give examples?

More specifically, can you describe what you do with your players during the final hour leading up to an important match?

Can you give me a typical example (or describe a situation) of what you do or say to a player as they are preparing for a match?

What factors affect your role during this time?

Do you interact with different players in different ways? If so how?

How does this affect your overall objective for the match?

MENTAL PREPARATION QUESTIONS

In your opinion what are the key components of mental preparation on match day?
Can you give me examples of how you have worked with the mental preparation of your athletes on match day?

In terms of athletes' mental preparation how do you monitor/evaluate/modify this on prior to a match?

How can you determine if your player is "switched on" or well prepared mentally prior to a match?

Is there anything else, that we have not covered that you feel is important prior to a match?

Any final comments?

Probes:

What effect did that have?

Could you expand a bit upon that for me please?

Could I just make sure I have that right? [Restate the participants response to the question]

In your opinion, what should players be focusing on in the hour leading up to an important match?

Can you tell me what you perceive your most important role prior to a match to be?

Phase 3-Athlete interview

Aim: To establish how the athlete perceives the coach's behaviours prior to a performance and how they are affected.

I am interested in understanding your experiences as a player in the hours prior to the match that was previously recorded. The questions I will be asking you will relate to your experiences and perceptions as a player on this day. The aim of this interview is to discuss your preparations and performance before the match and the role that your coach played on this day. Take your time to answer the questions. If you do not understand the question just ask me to repeat it. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to understand your experiences as a player, so please tell me what you think. The interview will last approximately, 30mins during which you will have the opportunity to pause or discontinue at anytime. You may also refuse to answer a question if you wish to. Any questions before we begin?

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

When did you first become involved in Basketball?

How long have you been playing with this team and this coach?

Can you tell me how the team went last season?

Can you tell me how the team is going this season?

PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

I would like you to focus on the period prior to the match that we recorded the other day [state date of match and tournament name]. Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, your preparation for that match?

As you look back on that day, are there any events prior to the match that stand out the most? Why?

What were your major concerns on the day of that match?

Now I would like you to focus on your preparations immediately prior to the match. Can you describe for me what you did in the final 10 minutes leading up to the match? Can you describe how you were feeling during this time? Can you describe what you were thinking during this time? How did your preparations affect your performance?

Can you tell me about what your coach did during this time?

Can you tell me how your coach's actions and words affected your mood/feelings?

Probe-Can you give me an example.

Did this affect the way you play? (If so... How do you deal with your coach's actions or comments?)

Can you tell me how important or influential your coach was leading up to this match?

Did the way the pre-match warm up influence the way you played? If so why?

MENTAL PREPARATION QUESTIONS

How would you rate your mental preparation for this match...(insert name and date of the match)?

Was your mental preparation different from what you normally do prior to a match?

Was your mental preparation

Do you think that your coach influenced how you prepared mentally for this match? If so how?

Can you explain how your coach influenced your mental preparation prior to the match? Is there anything specific that your coach did to influence your preparations? e.g., comments or behaviours and which influenced you more?

Is there anything else you could tell me about that we have not covered in the interview?

Probes:

Can you give me an example?

What effect did that have?

Could you expand a bit upon that for me please?

Is there anything else you could tell me about that we have not covered in the interview?

Could I just make sure I have that right? [Restate the participants response to the question]

Do you always follow your coach's instructions or advice? Why?

In Basketball what are the key components of mental preparation on match day for you?

Is there anyone else with you on the day of a match that talks with you about your Basketball?

Phase 4-Stimulated recall interview

Aim: To establish the thought processes underlying the coach's behaviours prior to a performance.

Select scenes using the following criteria

The situation must include coach-player focused interactions,

The situation has to be relevant to the player's preparation or the performance,

Both the coach and player must be involved in the scene unless the interaction occurs at a distance where the player is not in the range of vision.

Behaviours or communications that the coach did that were not in accordance with the their statements in Phase 2.

Behaviours or communications that the player thought hindered their preparation.

During this interview, you will be shown a series of video clips showing you interacting with your player [name player] that were recorded previously at [insert name of tournament and the date of the match]. I am interested in exploring what you were thinking when you said and did these things during the pre-performance period shown in the video.

Briefly describe the selected event and ask the coach to comment on their behaviour or communication focusing on why they acted in this manner or why they said what they did.

During this scene you were...?

Can you explain/describe what you (elaborate on the event)...[insert description of behaviour or comment]?

Can you explain why you took this action or made this decision?

Note: If the coach cannot remember the scene then the scene will not be used in the SRI session.

Replay the scenes to the coach

The video segments will be viewed in full once and then re-wound to allow the coaches to view the segment and pause the tape at a critical point to discuss the selected intentions underlying their behaviours. The coach will be instructed to view each scene, describe the scene, and explain their thinking behind their actions. Each coach will be seated at a table with a TV and VCR directly in front of him or her.

After viewing each segment the coaches' will be asked the following

Can you describe, "What was happening during this segment?" And why you were acting in this manner.

Now that you have viewed the video clip, can you elaborate further on your actions or comments that you made in the video segment?

As you look back at this event, can you recall what you were thinking?

What was the purpose of your actions?

What was your goal here? Why?

Probe: What did you aim to achieve through this? Did your action receive the intended reaction?

Why did you decide to do/say that? The coach will be asked to explain the goal and their intentions behind their verbal and non-verbal behaviours prior to the player's performance.

Any final comments?

Probes

Were your actions different from your usual routine in any way? If so why?

What were you thinking at this point?

What effect did that have?

Could you expand a bit upon that for me please?

Is there anything else you could tell me about that we have not covered in the interview?

Could I just make sure I have that right? [Restate the participants response to the question]

Appendix D: Training Observations

Training Session Observations for Team A

Training for Team A ran for 2 hours on the Thursday night before a Saturday game. Team A was due to play their first game of the season on the Saturday. Training began socially, as the some players strapped their ankles or knees and began taking a few shots. Coach Amy started training with a short discussion of the practice session and what was involved. The players were then sent out on the court with the strength and conditioning coach for a short warm-up jog and completed a few stretches afterwards, before beginning a short shooting drill. Coach Amy and the assistant coach stood courtside and observed the players and provided encouragement or comments (e.g., “GO, GO, GO”, or “come on push it”) aimed at increasing the pace or tempo of the drill. Individual players were singled out and given instructions related to technique correction.

Coach Amy frequently demonstrated defensive techniques or plays herself, whilst verbally reinforcing the correct movements. Coach Amy would stop the practice drill or play and demonstrate the movement in slow motion, whilst directing the player or players on body position, court location, and what the player should be aiming to achieve with the movement. The directions were all positive and aimed at showing the player what they were doing wrong and what they should be doing.

Throughout practice the assistant coach was involved in observation or physically involved as a defender against the players. He was rarely totally involved in running the drills, however, he did aid Coach Amy in setting up and evaluated the progress of the drills and intensity of the session. He was often observed to be offering encouragement and trying to increase the pace of the play.

Following the warm-up drills a series of plays was conducted, which Coach Amy said had to be at game intensity. Throughout these plays Coach Amy was often physically

involved. Furthermore, Coach Amy was very verbal throughout the practice session always controlling the intensity or pace of practice by yelling “go, go, go” or by clapping her hands and asking her players to push a little harder. Good work was encouraged and reinforced, whilst mistakes were corrected constructively and rarely punished. Coach Amy often stopped the plays or drills to demonstrate or walk the players through the correct motion. She would regularly question players on where they should be and what they should be thinking. Instructions were often yelled during plays to guide players as to what they should be doing and to reinforce correct execution. Coach Amy’s communications were clear, constructive, instructive, and positive. I observed Coach Amy to frequently encourage and motivate players, through praise for good work or positive reinforcement. I also observed Coach Amy to address players’ via first names, furthermore, I observed Coach Amy to rarely use abusive or negative language.

Throughout the practice session I observed Coach Amy to frequently engage in the silent observation of the players. The intensity of her observations was heightened when the team practiced a new offensive structure. I observed Coach Amy to stand even closer on the court very close to the play to observe how they completed the new offensive. As, the new offensive structure had not been practised and I observed the players repeatedly make mistakes. Coach Amy frequently stopped the play and walked them through the play explaining in detail what the strategy was, what they should be thinking, where they should be physically, and where they were physically going on the court.

Towards the end of the training session a planned move went wrong and Coach Amy brought the players together and criticised their poor play, going over what went wrong, questioning the players, and stating that they must listen more. The players reacted by talking more in the next play and lifting their intensity. The move went wrong again

and the coach criticised them more directly stating that they must be disciplined and act as a team. After finishing the restructured offensive Coach Amy told the players to go on a warm-down jog and finish with stretches, the assistant coach ran the warm-down session.

Overall, I observed Coach Amy to be a very vocal coach who applied a variety of techniques to control her players. Coach Amy used guided concurrent instruction, technical instructions, both static (when drills had been stopped) and concurrently during drills, praise and positive reinforcement for good work, and constructive feedback/instructions after mistakes. She spent considerable time observing and evaluating the players; she also used her body language to emphasis points, such as clapping and becoming physically involved in practice. A key aspect of her coaching style was simulation of moves accompanied by verbal directions to guide players through new plays. The simulation of moves in slow motion, accompanied by the verbal instructions was a technique repeated often by Coach Amy. Coach Amy guided the players through the physical move, showing them the correct body position, but she also provided directions on what the player should be thinking whilst involved in the move. The player's body language was very receptive when the coach was giving individual advice.

Training Session Observations for Team B

The Thursday training session was held away from the home stadium at a local high school stadium. Team B was due to play a double header over the weekend, with a Saturday night game and a Sunday afternoon game, both away. Before the official starting time of practice, Coach Bruce was heavily involved in running drills with players who were ready. Other players were observed to be socialising or strapping ankles in preparation for training. As the session started, Coach Bruce brought the players and support staff together for a review of what was involved in the training session. He was very vocal and straight to the point. A recent injury to a player meant that, despite the good start to the season, the players must regroup and refocus as a team in order to continue. Coach Bruce referred to a series of cards and time sheets in his pocket, which listed the different drills and plays that he had planned. The support staff and assistant coach all had copies that they referred to as they organised the equipment and managed the players.

The training session was highly structured and meticulously planned. The players were instructed to start with a short warm-up involving a jog, sprints, and stretching. Some players were observed to have been doing their own warm-ups prior to the start of the training. The intensity of the session was very high and the coach was constantly talking to his players. There was little silence at all over the entire training session. The assistant coaches and support staff were ever present throughout the training session. They did or said little, however, aside from providing drinks, towels, and extra equipment. Coach Bruce was observed to be constantly pushing the players to exert more effort. This was achieved through verbal hustle and physical noise, such as hand clapping and pumping of fists. Coach Bruce had a loud distinct voice, and was observed to never be

quiet throughout the entire 90 minutes. In addition, he never stopped moving up and down the court the entire time. Furthermore, he frequently placed himself within arms reach of the players and walked through the drills, getting in the face of the players and aggressively trying to get more out of them. Coach Bruce was observed to be very physically involved in the plays at times. He was often ready to inject himself as a defender and physically competed against the players.

Throughout the training session, the predominant behaviours of the coach were observed to be verbal-based directions, focused on technique, technical correction, encouragement, praise, reinforcement, and punishment/reward (players performed sprints or push-ups, if they lost a contest). At the start of training, there was a heavy emphasis on the team and playing as a team. This was achieved through specific drills that were designed to enhance the new combinations within the team. Training was observed conducted at a very intense pace that kept the players relatively quiet outside of the drills as they grabbed drink bottles and tried to recuperate. During the breaks the coach laughed and joked around with several players.

Throughout training, Coach Bruce applied technique simulation to emphasis his point. He regularly stopped the players in the middle of a drill and then walked them through the correct moves. The coach was observed to be constantly talking, directing, encouraging players, and constantly pushing them to exert more effort. He also engaged in individual player assessment and evaluation. This was reflected in individual interactions held with players throughout the training session. The players were attentive and listened carefully, often saying little. It was only the American imports that were vocal. The imports were usually found to be trash talking or talking themselves up, this frequently

resulted in Coach Bruce taking them aside to be disciplined verbally or physically with a series of sprints.

The physical aspect of practice was high and players were told repeatedly that a game level intensity was wanted. The physical and mental deterioration of the players was reflected in the drop in quality and intensity of the training. This incited Coach Bruce to raise his voice and demand more effort from his players. At this point, Coach Bruce pointed out a few rules that had been broken, i.e., players that were late for training and wearing non-team practice uniforms. The team was punished by having to complete a series of sprints.

Overall, Coach Bruce was observed to be very meticulous in planning training. The session was of a very physical nature at a very high intensity. Coach Bruce was a very verbal coach, engaging in very little silent observation. He was constantly evaluating and directing the session, he verbally and physically praised and encouraged players. The predominant behaviour revolved around direction and guidance of players through the drill, accompanied by reinforcement or encouragement. Coach Bruce was heavily involved in the session, often stopping the drill to simulate or walk players through the move or technique. The coach's knowledge of his players was reflected in how he assessed the players' mental and physical exertion, asking for more effort or praising good work. This was observed towards the end of the training session he sensed their tiredness and stopped training for the evening with a summary of what was expected on the weekend and what needed to be improved upon in games and practice. Coach Bruce then handed out scouting sheets on the opposition to the specific players that they were matching up against. At the end, Coach Bruce stated that the team was really not on their game today and their intensity and focus was "not there."

Training Session Observations for Team C

Team C gathered on their home court and awaited the arrival of their coach. The training was held at a different time and place than usual and the coach was late due to a confidential matter. The players sat around and socialised, they laughed and joked around, as some strapped ankles or attended to knee braces and clothing. The cold temperature meant that the assistant coach got the players up and shooting baskets while they waited for Coach Carl to arrive. Coach Carl was observed to be stressed, as he walked over. The players began a warm-up drill, jogged and stretched, while the coach and assistant coach discussed the plan for the training session. After a few unexpected losses at the start of the season the atmosphere was slightly tense and it showed in the coaches behaviour. After the warm up, the team was brought together. Coach Carl was forceful, making several key points regarding their effort and play from the weekend and reinforced what must be improved upon for the next game. He directed the players on the first drill, and, as they began, he wandered to the base line and observed the play in silence. This was a characteristic of his coaching style, he was observed not to become very verbally involved. He was often observed to be silent, standing or walking around the sideline and baseline. Only occasionally did he reinforce a move or direct a player to move to a certain place on the court. Due to the poor execution of the drills and set plays, however, Coach Carl became increasingly frustrated and often stopped the play to gather the players together and review what went wrong, Coach Carl was observed to reinforce that they had to improve on their previous efforts.

The players looked flat and often when the play broke down several of the more vocal and more experienced players argued or disagreed at length about where a player should have been moving on the court. Campbell, the team captain, was often observed to

be arguing with his fellow players. There was limited communication between Coach Carl and Campbell at this time. The breaks in the play affected the momentum of the session and, eventually, after a number of arguments and too many mistakes, Coach Carl introduced sprints as a punishment/reward. At certain times in the session, the team was split into two teams to play against each other. The losing team was forced to do sprints, while the winners had a break and a drink of water. To begin with, all players sprinted for a minute across court, then there was a 30-second rest followed by another set of sprints. The sprints appeared to affect the bigger players more, because I observed them to be grimacing as they rested afterwards. After the team finished the series of sprints, a player took his drink bottle vomited in the bin and said “Mate you’ve come to the worst training session ever”!

The player’s statement was reflected in the coach’s body language. As he paced up and down the court, he frequently shook his head and became increasingly frustrated. Eventually, Coach Carl brought the team together and split them into two groups where he and the assistant coach each ran them through the set plays walking them through each section and simulating the plays, whilst verbally reinforcing body position and the goal of the move. The intensity was low, the atmosphere was tense, and this showed in the faces of the players and on the coaches’ behaviour/manner. Often Coach Carl was silent and simply observed, as the players argued and worked things out for themselves. Coach Carl was not a very vocal coach, his voice was not overpowering or commanding and his communications were generally restricted to breaks in play. Every now and then he reinforced good play or encouraged specific players. Coach Carl was observed to use hand gestures whilst talking to emphasis his point, a characteristic that helped to drive home his state of mind, as the longer the poor executions of the plays continued the more vigorous

and exaggerated his hand gestures became. Eventually, after stopping play for another set of sprints for the losing team, coach Carl walked over and asked me to stop filming. The lack of team harmony and the arguments continued.

Training Session Observations for Team D

Training was a low-key affair this session for Team D. Before the training session started Coach Donna was holding a skill session for the forwards and centres. Coach Donna was heavily involved in the skill session, she was a centre/forward herself and used her playing experience to aid the training session. As the rest of the team arrived they looked at the training schedule that Coach Donna had placed on the white board. The focus of the session was on shooting practice for the first hour. Coach Donna had set some goals on the board for the different positions and for specific players. It was Thursday night and Team D had a double header on the weekend, a game on Saturday night and one Sunday afternoon. Consequently, the training session would have a low intensity and was focused on basic skills. After a quick jog and stretch, Coach Donna sat the players down in the centre of the court and as they stretched she reviewed the games for the weekend. The players asked a few questions as they stretched and partnered up for the training drills.

The training session was light for the first hour as the players practiced shooting 3-pointers, jump shots, lay ups, and free throws. At this time, Coach Donna and her assistant coach were observed to stand back, and observe. There were limited verbal interactions with players except for a few minor technical corrections. Coach Donna was observed to walk around the court occasionally she stepped in to instruct a player on the finer points of their shooting technique or correct a mistake that appeared to be affecting their shooting. The intensity of the session built up as the players finished their set drills. The centres were set some specific tasks regarding their role in the team and practiced game simulation shooting with a defender (often Coach Donna) and moves inside the key. The guards practiced three-point shooting and finally game simulation shooting. The assistant

coach and Coach Donna were seen to walk around the court observing the players as they scrimmaged. Coach Donna was not very verbal during the initial drills but as the intensity increased in the game simulation shooting so did her level of communication. Coach Donna kept pushing the intensity up by yelling encouragement and simulating game pressures, for example, “3 seconds on the shot clock Debbie.”

Coach Donna’s involvement was still limited at this stage using encouragement and praise sparingly. She appeared to be intently observing the players and evaluating their shooting. It was rare that she intervened but when she did she applied a physical demonstration or simulation to make her point taking the player through the correct move or shot slowly and piece by piece before simulating the whole movement. Coach Donna then watched the player and made further corrections or encouraged/praised them when they got it right.

The session then changed pace as the players ran moves from the centre court line to the basket, getting more intense and complex as the move went on. The session ended with scrimmage play and the practice of set pieces that focused on the teams that they were playing on Saturday and Sunday. Coach Donna became very vocal and began yelling instructions about court position, defence position, offensive moves, and encouragement. Coach Donna controlled the intensity of the session by clapping her hands and pushing the players verbally to reach “game tempo”. Her voice dominated the stadium and her communications became louder, more frequent, and more intense. Coach Donna was asking her players to lift to another level. She applied pressure through the use of game simulation, often she would place a limited shot clock on a player and count down herself or become physically involved against the centres in both teams. The plays ran smoothly

and Coach Donna was pleased with the workout and gathered the players to warm down and stretch and have a final debriefing for the games on the weekend.

Appendix E: Basketball in Australia

Basketball in Australia

The Federation of International Basketball Associations website (www.fiba.com) ranked the Australia women's team at number 3 in the world and the Australian men's team at number 8. Professional basketball in Australia, however, was a complex issue. Unlike North America or Europe, basketball in Australia was not a highly sponsored sport. Basketball in Australia was forced to compete with the major football codes and summer sports, such as cricket, that dominant the Australian sporting landscape. Basketball, however, does has a big following in Australia, being ranked as the sixth most popular participation sport (*Participation in exercise, recreation, and sport: Annual report, 2003*) ahead of sports, such as Australian rules football. The small financial base for sport in this country has resulted in professional basketball receiving limited TV and news coverage and as a consequence limited sponsorship. The lack of TV coverage and competition with football codes, such as Australian Rules football, that can draw 90,000 people to one match, means that clubs operate with a smaller financial base for players, coaches, and teams. For that reason, the best players were forced to leave to country and pursue careers in Europe or North America or rely on working part time or full time as well as practicing and competing. This was even more of a concern for the women than the men, despite the higher ranking.

The Australian Basketball Association (www.ababasketball.com) was the second tier competition to the National Basketball League (www.nbl.com.au) and Women's National Basketball League (www.wnbl.com.au) in Australia and incorporates five different conferences across the country, with national finals, involving all conference winners being held every year. The ABA operates in the off-season of the national leagues. Not all coaches were paid, most receive remuneration for expenses whilst they

work a normal 40-hour week. Some, like Coach Bruce were full time professional, others like Coach Carl were previously employed full-time as a coach but now have to work full-time due to the clubs financial restructure. With players it was a different mix. Due to the timing of the season players often return from professional leagues in the USA or Europe, as well as Australia. Teams in the ABA were therefore a mix of professional and non-professional players across the league and within each team. It is important to note the difference between basketball in Australia and North America or Europe, Australian basketball is focused on community-based clubs and not through educational institutions. Furthermore, basketball in Australia operates on a tight budget and is not focused on highly funded universities' or colleges'.

Appendix F: Game Summaries and Performance Descriptions of all Teams

Game Descriptions and Summary of Performance for all Teams

Team A Game Summary

A slow start from Team A cost them dearly as they went down 11-21 in the first quarter. The high number of turnovers and the lack of offensive structure did not change in the second term with the half-time score at 19-35. The poor play continued in the third quarter with a high number of fouls and errors being committed by Team A. The visiting team continued to run the ball up the court quickly scoring frequently on the fast break through their tall players. Team A however, improved and won the quarter 26-16 but were still behind 45-51 at three quarter time. The final quarter saw the home team have many chances, taking twice as many shots as their opposition, but the failure to take control of the game saw the visiting teams lead increase to 15 points, the final score of 51-66.

Team B Game Summary

Despite the late start and all of the mishaps before the game Team B, the home team, kicked off the game with a 40 point first quarter and were ahead by 15 points, 40-25. Team B started the game running and scored the majority of points from broken play and restricted the influence of key opposition players in defence. Coach B was observed to be a very frustrated with his players ignoring the game plan. Team B received a verbal berating at quarter time. Team B, however, continued the good start by being ahead by 24 points at half time, 69-45. As they headed to the change rooms Coach B was observed to be content but not entirely happy with his team. This was reflected in the third quarter where the opposition crawled back into the game through Team B's poor execution and their high number of turnovers. Coach B again blasted Team B on the court for not following the game plan as they headed to the final break up 87-71. In the final quarter, Team B appeared to have the upper hand and the oppositions were outscored by 10 points, leaving the final score 114-88.

Team C Game Summary:

Team C started well scoring points through their centre and off fast breaks, the opposition stayed within 5 points at the first break via three point shots from two key import players. In the second quarter, the opposition playing in an unstructured manner scrapped their way into a sizeable lead via more three-point shots and from the increase in turnovers from Team C. The third quarter was closely fought with both teams high in turnovers. The frustration was evident on both teams as they headed to the bench for the final break with Team C down by 10 points. The final quarter was a dogfight full of heavy defence and scrappy play. Every time Team C got within reach of the opposition they managed to get a man free and score a three point shot to increase the gap. In the final minutes Team C's intensity dropped and the eventual margin blew out to 11 points (95-106).

Team D Game Summary

The game started quickly and for the first quarter it was level pegging with the running game of the opposition forcing team D into a game style that was against their game plan. Missed shots saw Team D go into the first break down 16-23. A frantic coach was observed to have a long and involved talk with the players that went over the allowed time for the break. The opposition dictated the second quarter, however, poor shooting and a high number of errors saw Team D get back into the game, through scoring from the bench players (21 vs 2). Good rebounding (63-38), especially offensively, enabled a lot of second chance baskets to be converted, leaving them trailing 38-41 at half time. Team D lifted after the half time break into what the coach and player said after the game was one of the most impressive games of the season. In the second half Team D shot at 44% compared to 22% and they ran away with the game, leaving the opposition behind. The unstructured play of the opposition led to a high number of turnovers and a poor shooting percentage that was capitalised on by

Team D. They outscored the opposition by 11 points and lead 57-49 at the three quarter break. Team D finished off the game with a 26-point fourth quarter and restricted the opposition to 10 points in the quarter and 18 points for the second half eventually winning 83-59. A comfortable win that the head coach and team were proud of having won both games for the weekend.

Appendix G: Researchers Note. An Unexpected Event and a Confessional Tale

Researchers Note. An Unexpected Twist and a Confessional Tale.

As I arrived, at the stadium the club's women's team was playing and was ahead by some margin. The stadium was full. It was 90 minutes to the start of Team C's game. I observed Team C's coaching staff to be running around organising the last minute details for the team or watching the game. I walked in to the offices and spoke to one of the senior players, whom told me that Carl was in the change rooms.

As I entered the change rooms, several players were changing and getting their ankles strapped. The nature of this study was very intrusive, so I was a little apprehensive. The coach stood in a conference with his young assistant coach and the team manager, several players were just arriving and other were heading out to the court to watch the lead up game or shoot baskets on a spare court. I shook hands with all coaches and was told to go ahead with my filming. I informed them and the players that if they wanted me to stop at any time to let me know.

I began filming and, as the coach and I stood by the courtside, he told me, "mate we've had some unexpected events during the week." The team had been in disarray and their poor form had openly affected the team harmony at training. When I had attended a training session, I suspected that there had been some more arguments in the preceding week, this was not the case. Carl then proceeded to tell me that there had been two deaths in the club during the week, including the suicide of an assistant coach, who was the current coach of the reserves team and a junior team. The second death had been a grandfather of one of Team C's key players.

I stood there stunned with the video camera recording the floorboards. I could not find a place to hide fast enough. There I was with a video camera, while the team was grieving. I felt like I should have left immediately, but, Carl said that it was okay for me to keep filming and that it would give me something to write about. My heart

was going a million miles an hour. I seriously wanted to leave, but the coach had told me to stay.

On the courtside, stood several of the junior players that the late coach had been coaching. The junior players were there to form a guard of honour for the players and to stand on court during the minutes silence. Carl spent considerable time with these players ensuring that everything was ok. Friends and family members would periodically appear and pat Carl on the back or console him. The key moment came when the players were out on court warming up and Carl was seated in the dressing room talking to his assistant coach and the team's manager. He sat on the pine wood bench looking at the concrete floor and the clipboard between his feet. I assumed that he was reviewing the team notes and the line up of the opposition team. On closer inspection, Carl had become overcome by the emotion and with head in hands was crying.

This was what really affected me. I had been filming a man's deepest emotions. I stopped filming but, professionally, I should have stopped altogether, apologised, and returned another day. I had also not known that counsellors had left just before I arrived. The suicide of the coach and my actions in the change room had affected me deeply and brought forward my own experiences. The events at the basketball stadium and their unexpected nature had brought back my own emotions. As a professional, I felt that I had made a mistake, as I had not known what to do. I followed Carl's advice to continue filming, but I was not prepared to experience or deal with such an event. The unexpected nature of the event had taken me by surprise.

Later on, after the events had passed, I had spoke to Carl several times and organised the VCSRI session. He told me that everything was okay and that we could proceed with the video interview. The end result was that during the interview, when I

showed the scene of him with his head in his hands weeping, he was unable to talk about it. Dealing with death was an extremely tough issue and often seems to be even worse, when it involves suicide. During the interview, I asked Carl if he wanted to stop, but he told me to continue. He did not elaborate too much on the death of his friend and I did not want to evoke any more emotion than I already had. The interview was completed and Carl was allowed to talk about the events at his own discretion. It should be noted that I offered Carl professional counselling, but he declined, having already had access to counsellors.

This incident and the unexpected nature of the events does influence the study. Consequently, I have included this section to aid in the readers understanding of the events. My notes and observations are provided to add to the information presented by the coach and player in the interviews. The study was designed to analysis coach-athlete interactions and pre-game preparations. In this case, Team C faced an extra challenge whilst trying to prepare for a match.