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21 Coaching scholars have identified coach education as key to raising the standard of coaching  
22 practice (Burton & Raedecke, 2008; Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Jones et al., 2004; Knowles et al.,  
23 2006; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 1987; Nelson et al., 2013). Similarly, many coaching agencies  
24 now highlight the importance of improved education (e.g., the Coaching Association of  
25 Canada). As a result, formal coach education programs and certifications, for example, the  
26 National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) in Canada, have been developed to ensure  
27 that coaches are “meeting or exceeding the high standards embraced by more than 60 national  
28 sport organizations in Canada” (CAC, 2016) and providing athletes with access to effective  
29 coaching.

30 However, while coaching scholars agree on the importance of developing effective  
31 coaches, as Côté and Gilbert (2009) underlined, there is little consensus on what effective  
32 coaching means and the experiences coaches must acquire in order to become effective. Côté  
33 and Gilbert sought to remedy this by proposing an integrative definition of coaching  
34 effectiveness as, “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal and  
35 intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection and  
36 character in specific contexts” (p. 316).

37 In this paper, we are interested in examining what constitutes effective coaching as  
38 reflected in prominent coach education websites and programs in Canada. More specifically,  
39 we are interested in understanding what set of ‘knowledges’ currently shape how effective  
40 coaching is represented within these websites and programs.

41 We chose to frame our discussion of the knowledges of effective coaching through a  
42 Foucauldian perspective, which focuses on how power operates through discourses defined as  
43 “ways of knowing, which are perpetuated through our everyday practices” (Markula & Silk,

44 2011, p. 48). According to Foucault (1978), discourses are to be understood as the ensemble  
45 of rules and conditions, which allow for certain knowledges to be produced and be  
46 intelligible. Furthermore, discourses and power relations are intricately interrelated and co-  
47 constitutive: “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of  
48 knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (1979,  
49 p. 27).

50 From a Foucauldian perspective, any knowledge that a coach draws upon (e.g.,  
51 physiological, sociological, managerial, etc.), can be understood as a discourse as each one of  
52 them corresponds to a specific way of understanding and practicing sport coaching and  
53 training. Such discourses can either become dominant and understood as the “Truth” of sport  
54 coaching or be marginalized within a specific discursive field (e.g., performance sport). For  
55 example, currently a number of scientific discourses primarily inform how we understand and  
56 practice “effective coaching.” This does not mean that these discourses will always dominate,  
57 as Foucault was careful to point out that discourses should not be understood as static entities:  
58 We must not imagine a world of discourses divided between accepted discourse and  
59 excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a  
60 multiplicity of discursive elements, which can come into play in various strategies  
61 (1978, p. 100).

62 Therefore, following Liao and Markula (2009), we were interested in looking at two  
63 prominent Canadian coach education websites to understand “what knowledges [currently]  
64 dominate [the field of sport coaching], where they come from, and how they have become  
65 dominant” (p. 40). Drawing on a Foucauldian perspective was instrumental in enabling us to  
66 move beyond the surface rhetoric of these websites and start to think critically about how

67 dominant discourses and power relations operate through these coaching resources. More  
68 specifically, our Foucauldian perspective enabled us to start to think critically about what  
69 dominant understandings of effective coaching and “best coaching practices” are produced  
70 through these coach education frameworks and what some of the effects of this might be.  
71 Gaining such an understanding is paramount, we believe, if we want coaches to do more than  
72 uncritically apply so-called “best coaching practices.” Our purpose, therefore, in writing this  
73 paper is twofold: firstly, to examine the current possibilities for coaches to understand and  
74 practice “effective coaching” and secondly, to show coach educators and coaches how  
75 drawing on a Foucauldian framework might open a space for understanding and practicing  
76 “effective coaching” differently.

77 In what follows, we introduce the two Canadian websites we selected and our  
78 Foucauldian perspective and share the insights we gleaned from our Foucauldian reading. We  
79 then elaborate on some of the implications of our insights about the current possibilities for  
80 understanding and practicing “effective coaching.” Following this, we compare our insights  
81 from this reading to the International Sport Coaching Framework given its high status and  
82 influence as an “internationally recognised reference point for the education, development and  
83 recognition of coaches” (ISCF, 2012). Finally, we conclude by offering some suggestions to  
84 address our concerns about the dominance of certain knowledges and the various effects of  
85 this dominance for athletes, coaches, coach developers and the coaching profession at large.

### 86 **A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

87 The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) website, which was the first coaching  
88 website we examined, has for a mission statement to enhance “the experiences of all Canadian  
89 athletes through quality coaching.” It is directly connected to the National Coaching

90 Certification Program (NCCP) with goals to “empower coaches with knowledge and skills,  
91 promote ethics, foster positive attitudes, build competence, and increase the credibility and  
92 recognition of coaches” (CAC, 2016). The CAC website acts as a promotional tool for the  
93 NCCP as well as for the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model and encourages  
94 coaches to “Find out where they fit” (CAC, 2016) and register for various coaching courses  
95 (community, competitive, or instruction).

96 The second website we examined was the Sport for Life Society (S4L) website. The S4L  
97 website is far more information rich than the CAC website and targets a wider audience, that  
98 includes parents, athletes with disabilities, educators, health practitioners, and recreation  
99 professionals. It officially promotes the LTAD model and outlines its various stages: “the  
100 LTAD is a seven-stage training, competition and recovery pathway guiding an individual’s  
101 experience in sport and physical activity from infancy through all phases of adulthood” (Sport  
102 for Life Society, 2016). This seven stage model outlines coaching guidelines for various  
103 stages of development (Active Start, Fundamentals, Learning to Train, Training to Train,  
104 Training to Compete, Training to Win, and Active for Life) and for different streams and  
105 contexts (recreational, competitive). The first three stages (Active Start, Fundamentals and  
106 Learning to Train) provide the shared foundation for both the recreational/active for life  
107 pathway and for the competitive/high-performance and elite sporting pathways.

108 Our reading of these websites was inspired by Foucault’s (1972) analysis of discursive  
109 formations that he conducted as part of his “archaeological” and “genealogical” work. This  
110 work for Foucault involved identifying concepts and theories as discursive elements in texts  
111 and then detecting what discourses are most present and active in these sources. More  
112 specifically, concepts, according to Foucault (1972), were the various discursive elements that

113 could be linked together in order to produce intelligible theories about a specific object. In our  
114 case here, that would mean concepts that refer to various elements that together produce  
115 intelligible theories about effective coaching in performance sporting contexts. Concepts are,  
116 then, first articulated together into various statements and then into theories, which refer to  
117 how individualized groups of statements “link with general domains of statements” (Markula  
118 & Silk, 2011, p. 131). Theories are then further connected to discourses and to power relations  
119 in order to understand what discourses dominate and what discourses are marginalized in a  
120 particular discursive field (e.g., performance sport).

121 To begin our Foucauldian reading, the first author printed off and scanned through all the  
122 pages of the S4L and the CAC websites in order to identify reoccurring words for each  
123 website. This engendered a long list of words for each website, which we then grouped  
124 together in charts and organized into “larger concepts.” We identified the following nine  
125 larger concepts from this exercise: athletes, coaches, competition/performance, development,  
126 fun, health, instruction/learning, skills, and training.

127 We then linked these nine concepts together into 19 statements. These statements  
128 represented for us the possible relationships that could be shown to exist between these  
129 concepts. To elaborate, these 19 statements represented what we saw to be the possible ways  
130 in which our nine larger concepts could relate to each other in order to produce “true” and  
131 “intelligible” statements about sport, physical activity and coaching. For example, our  
132 analysis of the concept “athlete” showed that it intertwined with the other eight concepts to  
133 produce the following “truths” about athletes:

- 134 - Successful athletes achieve their potential through physical and mental skill development  
135 to win in competitions;

- 136 - Athletes are well-rounded and lifelong participants in sport and physical activity;
- 137 - Athletes remain healthy and injury free by avoiding burnout and premature
- 138 specialization;
- 139 - Athletes need to insure they recover properly from training and competitions.

140 Next, we took the 19 statements we formulated and grouped them into three distinct  
141 “domains of statements” or theories about sport, physical activity and coaching. That is, we  
142 asked ourselves, how has the knowledge represented in these websites been put together and  
143 organized to shape what we know about “effective coaching?” By doing this, we were able to  
144 identify the following three theories as the strongest and most obvious representation of what  
145 effective coaching “means” on these websites: “effective coaching for  
146 performance/competitive sport,” “positive coaching for lifelong engagement in sport and  
147 physical activity,” and “true sport for lifelong engagement in physical activity.” Importantly,  
148 from a Foucauldian standpoint, any theories that one formulates from a group of statements  
149 always also represents the limits of discourse and what can and cannot be said or written  
150 about a specific object or practice at a particular socio-historical time. The development of  
151 these theories, therefore, was a particularly important aspect of our reading as it was what  
152 enabled us to begin to understand the perspectives that currently dominate what it means to be  
153 an effective coach. Accordingly, in what follows we elaborate further on each of the theories  
154 we created as a result of our reading.

### 155 **Effective Coaching for Performance Sport**

156 Our Foucauldian reading of the CAC and S4L websites enabled us to observe the  
157 emphasis placed on physical training as well as on a planned approach to training as central to  
158 effective coaching. Effective coaching was articulated as the optimal development of athletes’



159 physical and mental skills while the recommended approach to physical training was always a  
160 periodized approach where training, competition, and recovery were based on scientific  
161 principles. The S4L website defined periodization as a planned approach to sport training  
162 which involved “creating comprehensive training, competition and recovery plans to deliver  
163 peak athlete performance at the right time” (Sport for Life Society, 2016). To support the  
164 importance of periodized training, the S4L website dedicated an entire section to inform  
165 coaches about the ‘10 Key Factors’ of effective training (Sport for Life Society, 2016). Seven  
166 of these key factors were physiological (physical literacy, specialization, developmental age,  
167 sensitive periods, periodization, competition, excellence takes time), one psychological  
168 (mental, cognitive, and emotional development), one organizational (system alignment and  
169 integration), and one philosophical (continuous improvement). From these key factors and  
170 training principles, it became clear to us how dominant various scientific discourses are in  
171 shaping coaches’ current understandings of effective coaching.

172 Both websites also indicated that to perform well as an athlete is to achieve results by  
173 winning in national and international competitions. For example, the CAC website stated,  
174 “This stage is about training to win at the highest levels of sport: international competition”  
175 (CAC, 2016). Although successful performance was defined as winning competitions, it was  
176 also admitted that competition is stressful and induces physical (and mental) fatigue.  
177 Therefore, training, in addition to optimizing competition success, must be carefully planned  
178 and individualized to ensure athletes recover: “Training is carefully planned, with the training  
179 year divided into one, two, three, or more cycles, depending on the demands of the sport and  
180 the individual athlete’s strengths” (CAC, 2016).

181           We were also struck by the emphasis on athlete health in our reading of the websites.  
182           Indeed, first and foremost, a healthy athlete remained injury free and avoided mental and  
183           physical burnout: “Coaches must allow frequent preventative breaks to prevent physical and  
184           mental burnout” (Sport for Life Society, 2016). In addition, a healthy athlete leads a balanced  
185           lifestyle which includes an optimal diet and physical fitness level to support his/her  
186           commitment to high-volume and high-intensity training throughout the year. As the CAC  
187           website stated, “Proper nutrition is important for overall good health and optimal athletic  
188           performance” (CAC, 2016).

189           However, we did not anticipate the strong connection between mastering physical skills  
190           and avoiding injuries. Indeed, according to the websites, physical skill was considered the  
191           most important factor for avoiding injuries and thus, achieving one’s potential to win in  
192           competitions. Specifically, two types of skills were emphasized: fundamental movement  
193           skills, which include the “ABC’s of Agility, Balance, Coordination, and Speed” (Sport for  
194           Life Society, 2016) and sport specific, technical skills. At the same time, both websites, we  
195           noticed, discussed how coaches should avoid premature specialization (e.g., the focus on sport  
196           specific, technical skill) to ensure that their athletes remain injury free. As the “learn to train”  
197           section in the S4L website stated: “Premature specialization promotes one-sided development  
198           and increases the likelihood of injury and burnout” (Sport for Life Society, 2016).

199           While the emphasis on physical skill training to foster and promote athlete health did not  
200           completely surprise us, we were surprised to see how little mental skill training was  
201           emphasized given its rise in popularity and acceptance across both academic and coaching  
202           circles. Furthermore, when mental skill training was discussed we were struck by how narrow  
203           this discussion was. For example, the websites mainly focused on aspects of mental skills

204 training that supported athlete motivation and performance excellence: improved focus,  
205 visualization, and goal setting. The reason behind this emphasis became clearer to us as we  
206 carried on with our reading and began to see how, according to the websites, “positive” and  
207 “desirable” mental skills such as athlete motivation and confidence are natural bi-products of  
208 sport on the condition that coaches and athletes adhere to the scientific training and athlete  
209 development principles outlined by the LTAD (Sport for Life Society, 2016). Meaning,  
210 mental skills training, as represented on these websites, is only important and useful if it can  
211 be used by a coach in addition to scientific knowledge to support athletes’ performances and  
212 results. In other words, what connecting the dominant concepts and statements about effective  
213 coaching together into a theory really helped us to see, was that despite a strong rhetoric  
214 around the need for coaches to focus on outcomes other than just striving for results, this  
215 particular focus is still stronger than anything else in the education and development of  
216 effective coaches in Canada.

217 Furthermore, connecting the dominant concepts and statements together into a theory  
218 about effective coaching helped us to see the dominance of scientific discourses which  
219 encompass such knowledges as sport physiology or sport medicine in shaping current  
220 understandings of what it means to be an “effective coach.” Moreover, we were able to see  
221 how this narrow and limited the understanding of effective coaching is a result of this  
222 dominance. Again, we found this surprising given the shift in coaching research towards more  
223 complex understandings of effective coaching as, for example, “the consistent application of  
224 integrated professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’  
225 competence, confidence, connection and character in specific contexts” (Côté and Gilbert,  
226 2009, p. 316). This is why we found that reading these coach education websites and

227 programs through a Foucauldian lens was so useful because it allowed us to move beyond any  
228 surface rhetoric to understand how dominant discourses operate through these websites and  
229 how they both enable and constrain how we can understand and practice “effective” coaching.

### 230 **Positive Coaching for Lifelong Engagement in Sport and Physical Activity**

231 The second theory that we formed based on our 19 statements about sport, physical  
232 activity and coaching was the theory of positive coaching for lifelong engagement in sport  
233 and physical activity. Positive coaching was articulated as the development of fundamental  
234 physical movement and sport skills. This “physical literacy” was further defined: “Physically  
235 literate individuals demonstrate a wide variety of basic human movements, fundamental  
236 movement skills, and fundamental sport skills” (Sport for Life Society, 2016). In addition, the  
237 development of “mental fitness” defined as “instilling foundational principles of positive  
238 attitude, positive focus, and imagination, while emphasizing effort and fun,” was also an  
239 important aspect of being a positive coach (Sport for Life Society, 2016).

240 In other words, a positive coach aimed to promote lifelong engagement in sport and  
241 physical activity, optimal health, and holistic individual development, which considered  
242 “mental, cognitive and emotional development combined with physical development,  
243 ensuring each athlete develops as a complete person” (Sport for Life Society, 2016).  
244 Furthermore, the recommended approach to becoming a positive coach emphasized  
245 prioritizing fun and safety as a coach (<http://www.coach.ca/coaching-the-basics-s16571>,  
246 2015). Such coaching also needed to be athlete-centred and based on the scientific principles  
247 of human growth and maturation. Human growth was defined as “observable step-by-step  
248 changes in quantity and measurable changes in body size such as height, weight, and fat  
249 percentage,” whereas maturation referred to “qualitative system changes both structural and

250 functional, in the body’s progress towards maturity such as the change of cartilage to bone in  
251 the skeleton” (Sport for Life Society, 2016).

252 Lastly, according to the websites, positive coaches are trained and certified by the NCCP;  
253 act as good role models, mentors, and leaders; are good planners, managers, problem-solvers,  
254 and critical thinkers (CAC, 2016).

255 However, despite all of this emphasis in the websites on the importance of coaching in an  
256 athlete-centred and holistic way, we were surprised by how uninformative the websites were  
257 in this regard. Indeed, there was very little information regarding how coaches might actually  
258 implement an athlete-centred or holistic coaching approach. This strongly contrasted with  
259 how well developed the various key physiological factors and principles for effective  
260 coaching for performance sport were, with further links systematically provided for each key  
261 physiological factor. The S4L website is the best example of this inconsistency, by strongly  
262 encouraging coaches to follow links to “find out more” about effective training principles  
263 such as periodization (Sport for Life Society, 2016), whereas no further links were provided  
264 to find out about athlete-centred coaching or holistic athlete development.

265 This reading of the websites echoes Headley-Cooper’s (2010) research results on  
266 coaches’ perspectives on athlete-centred coaching, which highlighted coaches’ lack of  
267 conceptual clarity around this term, but also:

268 How coaches attach divergent meanings to the term ‘athlete-centred’ sport, referring to a  
269 holistic philosophy of the athlete, coaching practices that involve athletes within the coach-  
270 athlete partnership, specific values as essential components of athlete-centred coaching,  
271 and a philosophy of success that extends beyond athletic performance. (p. ii)

272 Her study also helped to illustrate certain barriers that coaches identified towards  
273 implementing an athlete-centred coaching approach such as “concerns about winning and  
274 receiving funding, lack of athlete-centred coaching approaches in youth sport, coaches level  
275 of experience and confidence, structure of the national team program, etc.” (p. v). These  
276 observations also echo the work of Cassidy (2010) who argued that calls for holistic coaching  
277 “are based on little more than good intentions and a dictionary definition” (p. 439). She  
278 claimed that the term “holistic coaching” remains highly ambiguous within coach  
279 development circles and as a result has the potential to become meaningless and disregarded.

280 Indeed, what connecting dominant concepts and statements into a theory about positive  
281 coaching helped us to see was that despite a strong rhetoric about the importance of coaches  
282 focusing on developing healthy and well-rounded individuals, these broader aims were not  
283 supported by any resources or pragmatic information. This indicated to us that positive  
284 coaching and its broader aims of optimal health and holistic individual development are  
285 secondary to obtaining results and not what really matters for a coach to be effective. Again,  
286 we found this surprising given the rise in popularity and acceptance across the broader field of  
287 coach development of positive sport psychology coaching models and research (e.g., Bigelow,  
288 et al., 2001; Kidman, 2007; Mastrich, 2002; Thompson, 1995, 2003).

### 289 **True Sport for Lifelong Engagement in Sport and Physical Activity**

290 The third theory we formed based on our 19 statements about sport, physical activity and  
291 coaching was the theory of true sport for lifelong engagement in sport and physical activity.  
292 True sport is “an undertaking by all Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments and  
293 leading sport organizations to collaborate on preventing unethical behaviours and promoting  
294 ethical conduct in Canadian sport. True Sport members across Canada are committed to

295 community sport that is healthy, fair, inclusive, and fun” (Sport for Life Society, 2016). True  
296 sport is also fun, promotes lifelong physical engagement in physical activity, and leads to  
297 optimal health and individual development. Furthermore, true sport “puts children and youth  
298 in a positive life course, builds stronger and more inclusive communities, and contributes to  
299 economic and environmental sustainability” (Sport for Life Society, 2016). As such, true sport  
300 strongly overlaps with the second theory we discussed of positive coaching for lifelong  
301 engagement in sport and physical activity.

302 The concept of “fun” is perhaps the best example of the overlap between the two theories.  
303 Indeed, fun was linked to children, the development of fundamental movement and sport  
304 skills through varied and challenging exercises and free play, positive coaching and youth  
305 development, a lifelong engagement in sport and physical activity, and true sport. These  
306 connections were supported by the positive sport psychology literature for youth sport (e.g.,  
307 Holt, 2008; Ommundsen & Vaglum, 1991; Sabock & Sabock, 2008; Smoll & Smith, 1987;  
308 Thompson, 1997, 2003; Wells et al., 2008). These researchers were concerned with bringing  
309 the fun back into youth sport to ensure the lifelong engagement and participation of all in  
310 sport and physical activity. Again, similar to the statements about athlete-centred coaching,  
311 what we found most striking about the statements about fun was the paucity of pragmatic  
312 information or any referral to resources regarding how coaches are supposed to design and  
313 implement programs intended to promote fun in sport beyond just advocating such true sport  
314 principles as “go for it, play fair, respect others, keep it fun, stay healthy and give back”  
315 (Sport for Life Society, 2016). This dearth of information regarding fun once again contrasted  
316 heavily with the abundance of coaching information and resources regarding how coaches are  
317 supposed to train their athletes for optimal performance and achieving results.

318           Therefore, what connecting the dominant concepts and statements into a theory about  
319 true sport really brought to light for us was once again the disconnect between the strong  
320 rhetoric around fun and optimal health and individual development and the presence of any  
321 pragmatic resources to help coaches design practices with these goals in mind. This indicated  
322 to us once again that these “other” aspects of being an effective coach such as ensuring that  
323 one’s athletes are having fun, developing the whole individual and striving for optimal health  
324 are more lip service and not backed up by anything specific and practical that a coach could  
325 do to achieve these outcomes.

326           Finally, as we emphasized in our introduction and made clear as our purpose for carrying  
327 out this reading, a key part of using Foucault to read such texts like these two coaching  
328 websites is to then be able to connect the theories that emerged to discourses and power  
329 relations. Therefore, in what follows, we connect the three theories from our reading of these  
330 two websites that we have just discussed to the discourses and power relations of sport  
331 coaching. We focused our discussion on dominant and marginalized discourses in sport  
332 coaching in order to better understand what the set of choices for coaches to know about and  
333 practice effective coaching are.

### 334                           **A Connection to Discourses and Power Relations**

335           Our reading of the websites through Foucault allowed us to gain a complex  
336 understanding of how certain ‘truths’ about coaching, sport, and physical activity are  
337 produced, disseminated, and come to be dominant. It also allowed us to gain an understanding  
338 of what discourses are marginalized through current dominant ways of understanding and  
339 practicing coaching and sport and physical activity.



340           Connecting the various theories we identified to discourses showed us that there is  
341 actually a great deal of overlap between the discourses which inform the theory about  
342 effective coaching and the discourses which inform both the theories of positive coaching and  
343 true sport for lifelong engagement in sport and physical activity. Indeed, all three theories are  
344 dominantly informed by specific scientific knowledges of the body (e.g., sport medicine, sport  
345 physiology) as well as sport psychology. This showed us that the range of possibilities for  
346 coaches to understand and practice “effective” coaching is currently very narrow despite  
347 numerous coaching scholars advocating for more complex socio-historical-political  
348 understandings of coaching effectiveness (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2004)  
349 which better account for the social dimensions of the coaching process.

350           Furthermore, despite the increased push towards an athlete-centred, holistic coaching  
351 approach which promotes both “personal and performance excellence” (e.g., Kidman, 2007;  
352 Miller & Kerr, 2002), effective coaching and positive coaching remain articulated as two  
353 separate fields in the websites we examined. Based on our observations, to be “effective” a  
354 coach doesn’t actually need to adhere to the principles of positive coaching (i.e., to adopt a  
355 fun, athlete-centred, and holistic coaching approach). Rather, our observations indicated that a  
356 coach only needs to adhere to the principles of positive coaching insofar as they support the  
357 primary aim of performance sport: to win and/or to achieve improved results.

358           This tension between the qualities of being a “positive coach” versus the expectations  
359 surrounding being an “effective coach” is most evident in the various diverging and  
360 sometimes contradictory statements and definitions about athlete health. Indeed, athlete health  
361 in the effective coaching theory is simply articulated as being injury free and avoiding mental  
362 burnout. These reductionist statements about athlete-health align with dominant

363 understandings of athlete health in the coaching literature on performance sport (e.g., Cohn,  
364 1990; Raedeke & Smith, 2004). This body of research unquestioningly positions the physical  
365 and mental stresses induced by competition as natural, intrinsic, and unavoidable. The onus  
366 for maintaining health is placed on the individual athlete to develop coping skills and  
367 strategies and on the coach to carefully plan his or her training in order to insure that his or  
368 her athletes can recover from the natural physical and mental stresses of competition.  
369 Furthermore, mental skill development is largely viewed as a natural bi-product of athletes  
370 and coaches adhering to the scientific principles of training and athlete development (e.g.,  
371 physical literacy, human growth and maturation).

372 This very narrow and instrumental definition of athlete health contrasts with the more  
373 complex and holistic understanding of athlete-health put forward by positive coaching  
374 scholars (e.g., Bigelow, et al., 2001; Holt, 2008; Kidman, 2007; Mastrich, 2002; Thompson,  
375 1995, 2003), which considered “managing the psychological effects from the athlete’s  
376 performance to non-sport domains; developing the core individual beyond their athletic  
377 persona; and recognizing the dynamic relationship between an athlete’s thoughts, feelings,  
378 physiology, and behavior” (Friesen & Orlick, 2010, p. 227).

379 The power relations at work in the production of such narrow understandings of athlete-  
380 health in the theory of effective coaching are very apparent upon closer examination of the  
381 S4L website and LTAD model. Indeed, there are no coaching resources dedicated to helping  
382 coaches understand how to develop athletes holistically whereas there are countless resources  
383 dedicated to informing coaches about the principles of training and competition recovery and  
384 regeneration for athletes (Sport for Life Society, 2016). This clearly indicated to us that the  
385 more complex understanding of athlete health put forward in the positive coaching model as

386 the holistic development of the individual is currently marginalized by the dominant  
387 understanding of athlete health put forward in the effective coaching for performance model  
388 as simply avoiding injuries through the implementation of periodized training plans to  
389 optimize athletes' recovery and regeneration. Therefore, it is this second narrow  
390 understanding of athlete health supported by the sport sciences and designed to improve  
391 performance and results that dominantly shapes coaches' understandings of athlete health and  
392 of their roles in insuring that their athletes "stay healthy."

393 However, our reading of the CAC and S4L coaching websites through Foucault enabled  
394 us to move beyond showing either the dominance or the marginalization of certain discourses  
395 to examine how these discourses come into play with each other and what power relations are  
396 produced and sustained as a result. For example, the contrast between the strong rhetoric  
397 around holistic and athlete-centred coaching and the absence of pragmatic resources for  
398 coaches to design practices with these goals in mind in the websites we examined plays a  
399 strategic role in enabling coaches to continue coaching how they always have always coached  
400 while being led to believe they are coaching differently so long as they adopt this rhetoric.  
401 Indeed, drawing on positive coaching principles, coaches might strive to coach in a more  
402 "holistic" or "athlete-centred" way. However, what our Foucauldian reading showed is that  
403 positive coaching principles such as "athlete-centred" or "holistic coaching" are not actually  
404 related to any new alternative coaching practices. In fact, they are related to the same  
405 scientific training and athlete development practices put forward in the dominant  
406 performance-oriented scientific coaching discourse (e.g., periodization). And, if as shown in  
407 our Foucauldian reading of key coaching websites, to be a positive coach means in practice to  
408 adhere to the same scientific training and athlete development practices as the ones put

409 forward in the dominant scientific performance oriented coaching discourse, then what  
410 choices do coaches have to critically interrogate these same practices or to coach differently?

411 This question, it seems to us, is central to thinking about effective coaching, coach  
412 learning and coach development. Clearly we do not want programs, curricula and frameworks  
413 that simply reproduce one way of thinking, being and doing as a coach. Again, as Côté and  
414 Gilbert (2009) argued, to be effective a coach needs to be able to integrate and draw upon  
415 different knowledges such as “professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to  
416 improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection and character in specific contexts” (p.  
417 316).

418 But clearly such breadth and scope in thinking as a coach can be difficult and challenging  
419 given the power that many long standing traditions, histories and entrenched ways of  
420 coaching have to limit and constrain coaches such as sport’s strong scientific logic (Denison,  
421 Mills, & Konoval, 2015). Therefore, given our interest and commitment to coaching as a  
422 practice that requires one to be able to think deeply, critically and differently about various  
423 norms and taken-for-granted practices, we thought it would be interesting to examine the  
424 International Sport Coaching Framework and compare its content and representation of  
425 effective coaching to our reading of the S4L and CAC websites and what we saw to be the  
426 dominance of various scientific discourses with an emphasis on physical skill training,  
427 periodized planning, and athlete performance and results.

#### 428 **A Comparison to the International Sport Coaching Framework**

429 The International Sport Coaching Framework (ISCF) was prepared in collaboration with  
430 the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) and the Association for Summer

431 Olympics International Federations (ASOIF) following a process of consultation in order to  
432 “support and recognise the role of coaches at all levels across the globe” (ISCF, 2012, p. iii).

433 This document is organised into eight chapters, which cover the following topics:  
434 coaching framework foundations, coaching in context, coaching recipients and impact,  
435 coaching roles, coaching competence, coach education and development, coach certification  
436 and recognition, and lastly coaching framework benefits. Chapters two through five were  
437 particularly pertinent to us as we sought to understand how “effective coaching” was  
438 represented and discussed within this framework in comparison to the two coach education  
439 websites we previously examined.

440 Comparing the ISCF to the S4L and CAC websites helped us to see that there is  
441 definitely some overlap between the three coaching frameworks. For example, all three  
442 coaching “texts” support the Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD), albeit to  
443 varying degrees. As a result of this overlap, we found that the same scientific discourses  
444 (physiology, sport medicine and psychology) that were highlighted on the S4L and CAC  
445 websites were also prominent in shaping what it means to be an “effective coach” in the ISCF  
446 framework. More specifically, we found a similar emphasis on scientific concepts such as  
447 “periodized planning”: “Devising a strategy includes the short term, mid-term, and long-term  
448 planning of sessions, seasons, and programs” (ISCF, 2012, p. 24) as important aspects of  
449 “effective coaching.”

450 However, the ISCF also differed from the other two frameworks, as one of its foci was  
451 the development of coaching competences: “Coaching capability involves competency –  
452 demonstrated capability in a given context – and underpinning knowledge” (ISCF, 2012, p.  
453 23). These core functions or competences of coaching included setting the vision and strategy,

454 shaping the environment, building relationships, conducting practices and structuring  
455 competitions, reading and reacting to the field, and learning and reflecting.

456 This focus on the development of coaching competences, we believe, allows for a greater  
457 recognition of context and, as a result, for other coaching aims than a narrow focus on  
458 performance and results: “coaching effectiveness is gauged by the consistency with which  
459 positive outcomes for athletes and teams are achieved, reflected only in part by competitive  
460 success” (ISCF, 2012, p. 10). In addition, the focus on coaching competences allowed for  
461 different knowledges to emerge as evidenced in the ISCF’s in-depth discussion of the  
462 different professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledges needed to coach  
463 “effectively” (Côté & Gilbert, 2009).

464 Importantly, what a shift towards a competency driven model for understanding effective  
465 coaching in different contexts also helps to do, is to disrupt the hierarchy between the two  
466 separate coaching streams of performance and participation sport and the “tendency to  
467 traditionally associate the lower levels with the coaching of children and young participants  
468 and the higher tiers with coaching in the performance context” (ISCF, 2012, p. 21). This  
469 recognition of context also lies at the heart of the Standards put forward by the ICCE in its  
470 effort to enhance the exchange and cooperation between sport coaching scholars and  
471 practitioners through the development of the first International Sport Coaching Bachelor  
472 Degree:

473 In bringing the Standards to life, specific national and local contexts and domains of  
474 practice need to be appreciated and respected. There will be different best-fit models based  
475 on specific situations and requirements, and all of them may deliver the required learning  
476 outcomes and coaching competencies in different ways. (Lara-Bercial et al., 2016, p. 345)



500 tenets of positive sport psychology such as athlete-centred and holistic coaching will not  
501 happen by simply injecting a different coaching rhetoric into various coaching models. As our  
502 Foucauldian reading showed, this strategy, due to the complex workings of power, has done  
503 little to promote significant change. Put differently, simply injecting a different coaching  
504 rhetoric into a coaching framework like athlete-centred or holistic coaching is unlikely to  
505 challenge the dominant discursive formation of coaching unless it is accompanied by a  
506 problematization of the power relations that produce coaching's dominant discourses. As a  
507 result, such a strategy, while possibly done with the intention of broadening what effective  
508 can coaching mean, will not fundamentally challenge or change dominant power relations  
509 within sporting and coaching contexts.

510 Moving forward, it is imperative to detail the impact of these dominant knowledges on  
511 the actual practice of coaching. It is only possible to create more athlete-centred and holistic  
512 coaching practices if the knowledge set of effective coaching is opened up for further  
513 problematization. By problematization, we mean that no coaching knowledge or so called  
514 "best coaching practices" should be uncritically accepted and applied by coaches. Rather,  
515 coaches, as well as coach educators who create frameworks and develop curricula, need to  
516 continuously ask themselves how they have come to know what they know and take for  
517 granted to be "true" about being an effective coach. That is, what knowledges dominate their  
518 understanding of effective coaching, what ways of knowing are marginalized or obscured by  
519 this dominance and what are the effects of these dominant knowledges and practices on their  
520 athletes.

521 This process of re-politicizing coaching "truths" and the production of coaching  
522 knowledge at large will enable coaching scholars and coaches to interrogate some of the



523 problematic disciplinary and normalizing/objectifying effects of their practices. This will  
524 undoubtedly mean more work as coaches will no longer be able to subscribe to a set of  
525 guidelines or practices in order to become an “effective” or “positive” coach. But as Denison  
526 and Avner (2011) argued, such a process can also be tremendously liberating for coaches “as  
527 it frees them from the burden of always having to figure out ‘the right way’ to solve problems  
528 and coach” (p. 224), and allows them to devise truly innovative coaching practices that can  
529 benefit their athletes, themselves, and the coaching profession at large. In this regard, the  
530 work of problematizing coaching “truths” and “best practices” is not about being negative or  
531 pessimistic. Rather, it is about understanding that all coaching knowledges and practices have  
532 their uses, but also their dangers and problematic effects and that a commitment to mitigating  
533 these dangers should be a priority for all of us involved in coach education and development.

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