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Peer Athlete Mentoring from the Mentor's Perspective: A Case Study of a Former Highly-Regarded Peer Athlete Mentor

Matt Hoffmann Dr

University of Windsor, hoffmanm@uwindsor.ca

Todd Loughead Dr

University of Windsor, loughead@uwindsor.ca

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To date, researchers have focused solely on protégés' perceptions of peer athlete mentoring relationships (e.g., Hoffmann & Loughhead, 2016), while overlooking the perspectives of those athletes serving as peer mentors. Consequently, using a qualitative case study design, the purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of one former highly-regarded peer athlete mentor (i.e., Nick [pseudonym]). We specifically studied Nick because three current elite level athletes had named him as their peer athlete mentor in a previous study (see Hoffmann, Loughhead, & Bloom, 2017). We conducted three semi-structured interviews with Nick and analyzed the data using thematic narrative analysis. Nick indicated that mentoring played a key role in an athlete's ability to rise to elite sport. He noted that he was motivated to mentor his protégés for their benefit but also for the shared gains associated with mentorship. He described having an unwavering belief in his protégés and a deep allegiance to them. Finally, Nick shared his views concerning the complexity of the "mentoring identity" that he, to some extent, adopted. Overall, Nick's accounts suggested that he was involved in relational mentoring relationships with his protégés (Ragins, 2016). While Nick's perspectives are not necessarily generalizable to others who assume the role of peer athlete mentor, they do suggest a mutually enhancing aspect to mentoring relationships between athletes. The findings from the current study fill a significant gap in the sport mentoring literature and provide important insights into the reasons why experienced athletes may engage in mentorship toward their peers.