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# Coaching style preferences of soccer athletes in successful Division III college teams

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COACHING STYLE PREFERENCES  
OF SOCCER ATHLETES ON  
SUCCESSFUL DIVISION III  
COLLEGE TEAMS

by

Dawson L. Driscoll

An Abstract

of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Exercise  
and Sport Sciences at  
Ithaca College

December 2000

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Greg A. Shelley

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the coaching style preferences of soccer athletes on Northeastern, Division III, successful teams. A qualitative phenomenological research design was utilized to assess the coaching style preferences of these athletes. Male soccer athletes ( $n = 6$ ) and coaches ( $n = 2$ ) were interviewed using an in-depth, semi-structured interview format. Raw data from the eight subjects were content analyzed for common themes. Inductive content analyses produced 543 meaning units that were then synthesized into 85 lower-order themes. The lower-order themes were then integrated into 53 higher-order themes. The number of higher-order themes totaled 7 for participant 1, 6 for participant 2, 7 for participant 3, 7 for participant 4, 7 for participant 5, 6 for participant 6, 6 for participant 7, and 7 for participant 8. The six athletes' higher-order themes were compared for commonalities. Results indicated six common themes (i.e., preferences) that emerged from this across subject examination:

1. Athletes wanted their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and be able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer. As a result, they would improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.
2. Athletes wanted their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he was approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cared about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they felt like they were part of the team and would play to the best of their abilities.
3. Athletes wanted a democratic coach who was open to and encouraged input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies.

Again, they felt like they were part of the team and would play to the best of their abilities.

4. Athletes wanted their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.

5. Athletes wanted their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they would be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they wanted the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling resulted in their trying to ignore the coach.

6. Athletes wanted their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.

The above coaching style preferences suggest that Division III, soccer athletes want their coach to be experienced and enthusiastic about the game, to provide personal support both on and off the field, to be receptive to input concerning techniques and tactics, and to emphasize the enjoyable nature of the game. Division III soccer athletes also desire their coach to be motivational in terms of hard work, intensity, and direction through authoritative and democratic behavior. As a result, these soccer athletes felt a stronger bond to their team and attempted to participate to the best of their abilities.

COACHING STYLE PREFERENCES  
OF SOCCER ATHLETES ON  
SUCCESSFUL DIVISION III  
COLLEGE TEAMS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate Program in Exercise  
And Sport Sciences  
Ithaca College

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

by  
Dawson L. Driscoll

December 2000

Ithaca College  
Graduate Program in Exercise and Sport Sciences  
Ithaca, New York

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master of Science Thesis of

Dawson L. Driscoll

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in Exercise and  
Sport Sciences at Ithaca College has been approved.

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Dean of Graduate  
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Kelly O'Brien, for her unconditional support and love throughout the past few years.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the people who support and love the game of soccer. This includes athletes, coaches, and administrators from all levels who commit their daily lives to the improvement of the game in the United States.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Problem Statement.....	9
Research Question.....	10
Scope of the Study.....	10
Delimitations.....	11
Limitations.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	11
1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
Coaching Styles.....	16
Authoritarian.....	17
Laissez-Faire.....	18
Democratic.....	19
Business-Like.....	20
Sport Leadership Research.....	21
Leadership Assessment.....	24
Decision Styles.....	25

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Multidimensional Model.....	29
Leadership Scale for Sport.....	31
Studies of the Multidimensional Model.....	33
Problems with the Multidimensional Model.....	40
Qualitative Research.....	42
Summary.....	44
2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	46
Identification and Description of the Target Population.....	46
Athletes.....	46
Coaches.....	47
Soccer Programs.....	48
Measurement Techniques.....	48
Description of Data Collection.....	48
Interview Guide.....	49
Observations.....	51
Rationale for Selection.....	51
Data Analysis.....	53
3. RESULTS.....	57
Common Themes.....	57
Common Athlete Themes.....	58
Theme #1.....	59

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Theme #2.....	62
Theme #3.....	64
Theme #4.....	66
Theme #5.....	68
Theme #6.....	70
Common Coach Themes.....	72
Theme #1.....	73
Theme #2.....	74
Theme #3.....	75
Theme #4.....	76
Summary.....	77
4. DISCUSSION.....	78
Principal Findings.....	78
Common Athlete Themes.....	78
Common Coach Themes.....	78
Interpretations.....	80
Theme #1.....	80
Theme #2.....	83
Theme #3.....	85
Theme #4.....	87
Theme #5.....	88

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Theme #6.....	90
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	94
Summary.....	94
Conclusions.....	95
Recommendations for Future Research.....	96
APPENDICES	
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR ATHLETES.....	101
B. INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR ATHLETES.....	102
C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR COACHES.....	103
D. INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR COACHES.....	104
E. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 1.....	105
F. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 2.....	106
G. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 3.....	107
H. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 4.....	109
I. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 5.....	111
J. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 6.....	112
K. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 7.....	113
L. HIGHER-ORDER THEMES: PARTICIPANT 8.....	114
M. COMMON ATHLETE THEMES.....	115
N. COMMON COACH THEMES.....	116
REFERENCES.....	117

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership is perhaps one of the most extensively studied topics in industrial and organizational psychology. Various models of leadership have been proposed and tested to better understand the effects of leadership in these areas (Bell, 1973; Hunsaker & Alessandra, 1980; Lashway, 1997; Likert, 1967; Maier, 1974; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). In contrast, systematic research of leadership in an athletic context has been sporadic and peripheral. It is surprising that there has not been a more concerted effort to study the role and the effects of leadership on athletic performance. Athletic teams provide a natural and manageable setting for leadership research. One of the unique aspects of athletic teams, among others, is the nearly total control and influence that the coach exerts on athletes.

In fact, the coach is the consummate leader of an athletic team. Athletes look to their coach for a number of reasons like technical and tactical guidance, motivation, organizational capacity, positive reinforcement, and social support. The coach is most responsible for developing and nurturing the athlete's innate physical attributes and positive psychological traits that are required for personal and/or team success within the sport. How the coach leads and affects the team can be referred to as his or her coaching style. Specifically, who a coach is and what the coach does in the athletic arena have a tremendous influence on his or her athletes (Nakamura, 1996).

Research on sport leadership and coaching styles has been geared toward

understanding and explaining coaching styles and the effects of coaching styles on individual and team performance. Some early studies focused on the personality traits of coaches to determine if there were particular personalities best suited for coaching positions (Ogilvie & Tutko, 1966; Schutz, 1966), while other studies attempted to specify the behaviors required for effective coaching (Fleishman, 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977). But these studies did not include the influence of various moderating variables that might impact coaching effectiveness. They failed to take into account exclusive situational characteristics created from sport to sport. The personality or behavior of the coach should vary in accordance to the situational demands of the sport. For example, a football coach should possess different personality traits and behaviors than a squash coach. As a result, more complex theories of sports leadership were developed to consider coaching effectiveness as a function of both situational and individual characteristics (Chelladurai, 1980; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978; Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971).

However, many of these more complex studies had inherent limitations too. While they may have taken into account various situational and individual characteristics, their analysis of coaching styles were generated simply from the perspective of the coaches. As Carron and Bennett (1977) pointed out:

Inherent in any conclusion about coach-athlete compatibility based on the coach's personality traits, attitudes, and/or values is one major shortcoming – the athlete is treated as a virtual non-participant in the relationship, the factor of interaction is ignored. An accurate assessment of the factors contributing to or detracting from coach-athlete compatibility must take into account the needs, involvements, and contributions of the athletes.

It does not seem relevant for coaches to examine their own coaching styles without taking into account the needs of their athletes. The coach should consider the preferences of his or her athletes when developing or analyzing his or her coaching style. What is the use of a coach implementing a particular coaching style when it may be in partial or complete contrast to the athlete's preferences or needs? The coach should be more concerned with what kind of behavior the athlete wants from him or her, not what style he or she implements. If the athlete's preferences for coaching styles have been met, if there is congruence between their coach's actual coaching styles and their preferred coaching styles, then they will more than likely be satisfied with this coach's style. The more satisfied the athlete, the better the chance for the athlete to reach his or her optimal effort and performance level (Chelladurai, 1984). In fact, Chelladurai (1984) argued that performance and satisfaction are not independent of each other because they are jointly affected by the coach's behavior.

There have also been attempts by researchers to operationalize leadership styles in industry and business settings from the employee's perspective (Schultz, 1958; Hemphill & Coons, 1957). It was hoped that by understanding which leader behavior was required for effective leadership, leader behavior could be altered to match the leadership preferences of employees. As a result, researchers theorized that there would be improvement in employee work performance due to the increase in satisfaction with their supervisors.

Similarly, there have been many attempts in the sporting environment to

operationalize the required coaching styles from the athlete's perspective. For example, Chelladurai (1978) used the preferences of all subjects from a sport, in this instance basketball, as the required coaching style. Chelladurai (1978) argued that the coaching preferences of athletes should constitute the coaching style of the coach. While he acknowledged the existence of individual differences such as gender, experience, and competition level, he maintained that the athlete's most desired preferences should accurately represent the desired coaching style. Nonetheless, a number of other studies took into account the factors that could affect the preferred coaching behavior of the athletes (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Garland & Barry, 1988; Erle, 1981; Summers, 1983; Terry, 1984). These studies investigated how these individual differences would alter the preferred coaching styles of the athletes.

However, these studies based the coaching style preferences of the athletes exclusively on the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) (Chelladurai, 1978; Chelladurai & Carron 1980, 1980a), a quantifying measurement device. Regardless from whom the perspective or preference is generated, it does not seem possible to quantify a coaching style. It does not seem possible to assign numbers to describing coaching styles. Coaching is a human behavior that cannot be compartmentalized into a neat, orderly package. It cannot be measured in quantitative terms because a coach's behavior, what he says and does, is a product of how he or she defines his world. One coach's behavior will differ from another coach because each coach varies in his or her perception of the world. Similarly, the athletes' perceptions of their coach will vary. The essence of studying



coaching styles can be lost using a quantitative research approach. When a coach's or athlete's words and acts are reduced to merely statistical equations, there is an increased possibility of losing insight into the human side of coaching. Therefore, a qualitative method of describing a coaching style would appear to have the greatest potential for assessing this dimension of sport behavior (Horne & Carron, 1985).

Additionally, there are two further problems with using the LSS as the basis for collecting data on coaching styles. One, the response categories of the LSS refer to the frequencies of preferred coaches' behaviors but not to the context of their behaviors. For instance, two coaches may be democratic to the same extent but in two different set of circumstances. One coach may demonstrate democratic behavior when seeking the input from his or her athletes regarding playing time, while another coach may demonstrate democratic behavior by having his or her team vote for team captains. Second, the items in the LSS were modified from scales from business and industry. Refinements need to be made in the existing scales with new and more meaningful items based on the experiences and insights of both coaches and athletes.

There has been quantitative research on the preferred decision-making styles of soccer coaches by university soccer athletes (Gordon, 1988). The purpose of Gordon's (1988) study was to investigate the validity and applicability of Chelladurai and Haggerty's (1978) normative model of decision styles in coaching and the model's ability in diagnosing decision-making problems in college soccer. Soccer coaches were asked what they would decide in 15 soccer situations and comparisons were made with the model's

predictions of what coaches normally do. The study also examined the coaching decision styles preferred by the athletes for the same situations and then compared the responses of coaches and athletes.

Gordon (1988) found the preferences for decision styles from both coaches and athletes only supported 33% of Chelladurai and Haggerty's (1978) model prescriptions. He found the college soccer coaching climate to be more autocratic than the theoretical model suggested. Surprisingly, athletes rarely attempted to participate in decision-making processes for 15 different soccer situations as much as the model predicted. Both coaches and athletes in this study preferred the head coach to make decisions in virtually all situations and especially those pertaining to performance matters (e.g., training routines, team selection, and team tactics). Hence, Gordon's (1988) argued that the model's ability in helping soccer coaches diagnose problems and cope with them was highly questionable. Furthermore, Gordons' (1988) results brought into question the use of quantitative inquiry for this subject matter.

While this study provided information and insight into college soccer coaching styles, it was based on a quantitative research paradigm, Chelladurai and Haggerty's (1978) normative model for decision styles in coaching. As stated previously, it does not seem proper to use only a quantified measurement model when investigating behavior that cannot and may not be quantifiable.

To date, there is no qualitative research that depicts the coaching style preferences of soccer coaches or athletes. Specifically, the unique preferences of soccer athletes have

yet to be fully captured in order to describe the preferred soccer coaching style. In order to describe the coaching style preferences of college soccer athletes and the reasons behind these preferences, greater attention must be given to assessing the coaching style preferences of collegiate soccer athletes.

With greater knowledge of the coaching style preferences, the greater the ability for a college soccer coach to meet the preferences of his or her athletes. When the needs of the athlete have been satisfied, the athlete will likely feel more comfortable and confident in that environment (Chelladurai, 1984). With personal and team satisfaction, it logically follows, the athlete will be ready to move towards his or her performance potential. As a result, the coach will be more effective in terms of motivating his or her athletes and enhancing individual and team performance.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to provide a qualitative assessment of the coaching style preferences and the reasons for having these preferences by male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams. The specific aim of this study was to gather in-depth qualitative data on the coaching style preferences of varsity soccer athletes at Ithaca College and the University of Rochester. Because there was limited information about the impact of college soccer coaching styles, a phenomenological qualitative design was used to assess soccer athletes' coaching style preferences.

The study was not intended to argue that one coaching style was better than another style. Nor was this research aimed towards adding strength to or attempting to

dismiss any hypotheses about soccer coaching styles. Instead, this study attempted to explore the preferences and reasons why soccer players have preferences regarding specific coaching styles. The nature of a phenomenological qualitative research design allowed for the gathering of data that solely investigated the unique perspectives of each athlete and coach.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of such a study is that it probed beyond any assumptions that may have been held about soccer coaching styles, while depicting the athlete's unique perceptions and preferences regarding these styles. It allowed for the athletes to express and describe in details any thoughts or actions regarding coaching style preferences. It was the athlete's detailed description of what style of coaching behavior is preferred that was of great importance. This study also allowed the development of concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypothesis, and theories. Lofland (1995) described this type of theorizing as "emergent analysis" and points out that the process is creative and intuitive as opposed to mechanical. With greater insight into the perceptions of the soccer player comes greater understanding of their preferred coaching styles. The greater the understanding, the greater the potential for applying some of these coaching style preferences in practice sessions and competition. It is hoped that such a design will motivate other sport psychology professionals to explore such methods in advancing this type of inquiry. By way of learning about the factors that influence soccer coaching style

preferences, soccer coaches can be more knowledgeable and better prepared to implement the most effective coaching style in terms of athlete satisfaction with his or her coach and overall involvement in intercollegiate soccer. Ultimately, it is hoped that coaches in all sports will be able to intervene with the coaching style that best matches the needs of their athletes.

The impact of such a study can be far reaching. With such an inquiry, a more holistic understanding of the preferred soccer coaching styles is possible. In qualitative methodology, people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole. When studying people qualitatively, it is necessary to get to know them personally and experience what they experience in their daily lives. It seems quite significant to know the needs of the athlete as well as the reasons for these needs. In other words, it seems important to determine the factors associated with their perceptions. For example, if an athlete expresses a need for positive reinforcement, it is important to understand the reasons for this need. Instead of only knowing the coaching style a soccer player desires, emphasis must be given as to why, when, and under what circumstances this preference occurs. As a result, greater insight is provided for coaches and sport psychology consultants concerning the needs of male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams.

#### Problem Statement

Little is known concerning the coaching style preferences of collegiate soccer athletes. To date, there have been no studies that have investigated collegiate soccer

coaching preferences using a phenomenological qualitative design. More significantly, male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams have not been examined concerning their coaching style preferences. Most of sports research in general and sport behavior research in particular has been dominated by traditional quantitative methodologies. However, professionals within the exercise and sport science fields are increasing their use of alternative approaches to the quantitative methods by way of initiating and conducting qualitative research (Cote, Salmela, Baria & Russell, 1993; Locke, 1989; Sage, 1989; Schutz, 1989; Shelley, 1998). This trend continues within the field of sport psychology as researchers are hoping to attain a more descriptive understanding of the cognitive and emotional processes associated with athletic performances (Brustad, 1993; Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995; Jackson, 1992). However, qualitative means of inquiry have been omitted in describing soccer coaching styles and preferences of coaching styles exclusively from the athlete's perspective.

#### Research Question

This study was designed to investigate the following question.

What are the coaching style preferences of male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams and their reasons for having these preferences?

#### Scope of the Study

The study involved two, Division III, varsity soccer programs in New York State. Two sets of interviews were conducted. One set of interviews was designed to investigate the preferences and rationale that three players in each of these programs had

for soccer coaching styles. The second set of interviews was designed to investigate the unique perspectives of the head coaches at each of these schools. Interviews took place in the winter semester of 1998.

#### Delimitations

1. Data were collected with extensive interviews and analyzed using qualitative methods.
2. Only male soccer athletes and head coaches from two, Upstate New York, Division III, colleges were included in this study.
3. This study examined only winning soccer programs with a 50% winning percentage for 5 years prior to the study.
4. The study examined only the starting (i.e., first team) athletes involved in the respective soccer programs.

#### Limitations

1. The results are limited to the truthfulness of the participants' responses to the interview questions.
2. The results may be generalizable to male, soccer athletes who start on successful, Division III teams.
3. The results may be generalizable to male, soccer coaches who coach successful, Division III teams.

#### Definition of Terms

1. Phenomenology - a method of inquiry that views human behavior, what

people say and do, as product of how people define their worlds. It focuses on the question: What is the structure and essence of the experience for this person? The primary purpose of such methodology is to report the "lived experience" of the individual. This type of qualitative investigation serves as a means to study how people describe an experience by way of their own unique perspective. It is the study of what is perceived to be reality as opposed to what is reality. It attempts to capture how people construct their realities (Taylor & Bogdan, 1997).

2. Rigor - a commitment to the established rules for conducting inquiry. It deals with one's discipline and accuracy in identifying the problem, designing a research plan, and analyzing the data. It calls for objectivity and conciseness on the part of the researcher (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

3. Bracketing - the way in which the researcher tries to "set aside" any knowledge he or she has about the experience under investigation. Qualitative researchers must attempt to suspend, or set aside, their own perspectives and take-for-granted views of the world. Bruyn (1966) advised the qualitative researcher to view things as though they happened for the first time. It involves interpreting a phenomenon in terms of a new standard of meaning that has not been defined before. Preconceptions are put aside so the subject matter can be confronted on its terms (Patton, 1990).

4. Triangulation - the use of multiple methods of data collection to guarantee an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Triangulation is a means for adding precision and depth to a study by combining the data



from interviews, observations, and empirical materials (Patton, 1990; Shelley, 1998).

5. Intuiting - the process of “focusing” and narrowing of one’s attention to the phenomena of interest. The study of human behavior is time consuming and intellectually fatiguing, and depends for its success upon the ability of the researcher. Intuiting involves complete concentration and absorption in the experience being studied (Burns & Grove, 1987).

6. Interview Guide – a list of questions, topics, or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview (Patton, 1990). These are the questions that the interviewer will ask the participants.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sports have become a vital part of our cultural heritage and our national identity. Many sport researchers have argued that participation in athletics is an important part of the maturation process (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Curtis, Smith, & Smoll, 1979; Gruneau, 1989; Nakamura, 1996). In fact, placing a person in situations like those found in athletic settings may be one of the greatest tests of character. To what extent and how successfully a person handles and manages a sport situation may give some indication of how he or she handles other aspects of life.

In a way, athletics can be seen as a kind of miniature model of life. If the person is outstanding in athletic competition, there is a high probability of his or her doing well in other aspects of life. "Doing well" does not necessarily have to mean a winning performance. Instead, it would mean functioning with a high level of maturity, concentration, and confidence while practicing and performing.

Many sport researchers also believe that athletics offers beneficial values to the participant (Adelman, 1986; Grover, 1989; Struna, 1996; Tutko & Richards, 1971). Athletic participation has positive influences on responsibility, cooperation, respect for authority, loyalty, determination, hard work, and tolerance. In fact, athletic participation enables an individual to learn discipline and meet the challenge of facing other individuals with mental, physical, and emotional balance and toughness. An athlete's ability to gain participation in athletics is dependent upon a number of different internal and external

factors. Natural talent, intelligence, mental toughness, and desire to compete and excel in athletic competition are a few of the internal factors. The quality of competition, the athletic environment, and the influence of the coach on the athletes are some of the external factors.

Quite possibly the external factor with the greatest influence for determining whether or not athletic participation will be beneficial for an athlete is the coach. The degree to which the coach positively influences his or her athletes may coincide with the degree to which his or her athletes are able to gain beneficial values from participation in sport. If a coach has a positive effect on an athlete, the chances are greater that the athlete will benefit from his or her sport participation. Conversely, if a coach has a negative effect on an athlete, the athlete may desire to cease participating in that sport altogether and may have his or her self-confidence, self-worth, and self-image severely damaged. Therefore, the coach plays a critical role in the athletic process and continued participation of an athlete. Not only is he or she responsible for the performance of individuals and the team, he or she is responsible for the physical, mental, and emotional development of his or her players.

These responsibilities constitute the coach as the leader of the team. Leadership, in this case, goes beyond merely teaching athletic skills and basic strategies. As the leader, the coach sets the example that can be followed by the athletes. The coach also must be able to assist in developing his or her athlete's physical, emotional, and intellectual attributes. He or she has to be able to motivate different types of individuals for

attainment of their athletic potential. He or she has to plan, organize, direct, and coordinate the efforts of his or her athletes and team. Who a coach is as well as what the coach does in the athletic arena have a tremendous influence on the participants. The words that a coach speaks and how the coach says them, his or her body language, his or her facial expressions, from raising the brows to smiling, all have an impact on the atmosphere that is created for each athlete and the team as a whole. How a coach leads, influences or impacts, and communicates to his or her athletes is referred to the coaching style (Nakamura, 1996).

### Coaching Styles

The research on sport leadership and coaching styles has varied greatly in an attempt to understand leadership in sport and the effects of sport leadership on performance. Researchers have often examined the forms or types of coaching styles, relying on a third party's descriptive, observational analysis of a coaching style. As a result, there are between three and six different coaching styles. However, the most commonly mentioned forms are authoritarian, "laissez-faire," democratic, and business-like (Chelladurai, 1984; Ditchfield & Bahr, 1994; Hendry, 1974; Legget, 1983; Nakamura, 1996; Straub, 1990; Swartz, 1973; Tutko & Richards, 1971). In any case, it is important to note that no one category completely describes the makeup of one single coach. Instead, a coach usually represents a large portion of the characteristics found in one category along with a few of the characteristics from other categories. The most predominant categories found in the literature are:

### Authoritarian

The authoritative coaches are hard-driving and energetic people who demand certain responses from their players. They believe in strong discipline in order to accomplish the clearly stated team goals. They usually use punitive measures to enforce the rules they established. They are often rigid about schedules and plans with little flexibility to be found on or off the field. Their personalities are not usually very warm and, at times, they can be cruel and if not actually sadistic. They are well organized, prepared, and there is seldom any time that goes without unaccountability. They do not develop personal relationships with their athletes and may even use threats as motivation. While they may be religious and/or moralistic, they tend to be bigoted and prejudiced. This coaching style often produces a highly disciplined and well-organized team. The athletes are infected with intensity and the devotion similar to that of the coach. This intensity normally manifests itself as a high degree of aggressiveness characterized by physical punishment of an opponent. The team's spirit is strong and positive as long as it continues to win (Chelladurai, 1984; Hendry, 1973; Nakamura, 1990).

The team may be prone to dissension when competition does not go as expected or desired. While few teams are adequately prepared to accept adversity and defeat, authoritarian led teams have more of a tendency to lose badly and the team members look for excuses or blame others for the failure. Athletes may drop-off the team if they do not choose to compete in an atmosphere where punishment and fear exists. In fact, many players develop a dislike for the coach because he or she represents authority that uses

punitive measures to enforce rules and performance standards (Ditchfield & Bahr, 1994; Hendry, 1973; Nakamura, 1996).

### Laissez-Faire

“Laissez-faire” coaches, in many ways, are the exact opposite of the authoritarian type of coaches. They usually have relaxed personalities and give the impression that everything is under control. These coaches do not adhere to schedules, often preferring to leave things less structured and to be able to act as their mood dictates. This coaching style produces a relaxed atmosphere in which this freedom from stress often generates a positive attitude towards hard work. The players seem to profit more from the instruction and to retain it longer than they would in an atmosphere where instruction is repeatedly forced on them. The laissez-faire coach believes that the athletes will produce better if motivation is derived from their own enthusiasm.

If the team does not perform well, the disadvantages of this coaching style will be easily noticed. Because the pressures found in competition are not present in the daily practices, the team is not prepared to effectively handle the stress from competition. The athletes are apt to blame the coach when failure is present. They may think of him or her as being inadequate or uncaring and their coach’s aloofness and lackadaisical approach to coaching may cause team members to question their coach’s commitment to their success. It is disheartening to athletes that their coach does not support them ardently and that the person they work for every day does not have their same degree of enthusiasm for the sport as they (Legget, 1974; Nakamura, 1996; Straub, 1990).

### Democratic

The democratic coaches appear between the authoritarian and the laissez-faire type of coaches while maintaining their uniquely democratic make-up. They only use discipline when the situation truly warrants it. They strive to maintain structured schedules, but create a relaxed and positive environment simultaneously. The democratically led team works as a unit and most policies are a matter of group decisions. Democratic coaches constantly are seeking the input of team members concerning issues such as problem solving, tactics, rule setting, team personnel, and conditioning. This solicited information is the basis for the final decision made by the coach (Leggett, 1983; Nakamura, 1996; Swartz, 1973).

The democratic style of coaching may generate a high degree of motivation in the team members. The team members become involved in decisions that affect them and their circumstances. There is a two-way flow of communication. The coach is often liked by a number of players because they are able to express their views and, as a result, the coach appears considerate of their needs. This style of coaching produces good team cohesiveness, a relaxed environment in which to perform, and athletes that produce more than what is expected of them (Ditchfield & Bahr, 1994; Straub, 1990; Swartz, 1973).

Because the coach actively participates as just another voice in some decision-making aspects, the greatest disadvantage to this style is the time it takes to initiate action and to formulate workable solutions to complex problems. This is a chance the coach takes because often there can be too much discussion and too many people sharing

responsibility for major decisions. Another disadvantage to this style is that the athletes are not coaches. Most athletes do not possess the same level of knowledge and expertise as their coaches. Athletes have had to follow the instructions of their coaches for years and have limited exposure to the sport compared to their coaches. This does not qualify them to make team decisions as accurately and effectively as the coach. If their opinions and beliefs are used to make team decisions, there is a chance that the team decisions will be inaccurate (Legget, 1983; Straub, 1990).

### Business-Like

Business-like coaches surpass the aforementioned three styles of coaching in terms of technique and ability to acquire new information. They stress the need to focus on the logical part of the sport rather than the emotional. They are intellectual, pragmatic, and attempt to out-think their opponent through tactics. They are highly skilled at accumulating scouting information about their opponents to provide their teams with tactical advantages. To business-like coaches, coaching is an exact science. These coaches approach their jobs with the highest regard for the organization. They leave nothing to chance and the team's progress is continually being evaluated, seeking to discover any ineffective measures or weaknesses that may detract from the success of the team. These coaches' relations with his or her players are most likely to be business-like. Personality has nothing to do with one's place on the team. Instead the athlete who is most efficient in the execution of his or her duties is most likely to receive the greatest recognition and acceptance. However, with the knowledge of the importance of proper



execution, some players lose their sense of individuality and identity. The athlete who does not share the same convictions as his or her coach usually is not as accepted by that coach. In a highly emotional atmosphere, some players are easily and effectively motivated. These players may be lost when emotion is not present (Ditchfield & Bahr, 1994; Tutko & Richards, 1971).

### Sport Leadership Research

For a better understanding of the behavioral complexities inherent in coaching styles, many approaches to sports research have been used to examine the way in which the coach leads and coaches his or her team. Research in sport leadership has taken a number of different approaches in an attempt to understand the effects of coaching styles on dependent variables like athlete satisfaction with performance. The personalities of the coach and how personality affects the athletes have been examined. Situational factors that are important to leader success like the characteristics of subordinates, the organizational structure, and the demands of the specific situation have also been examined. Focus has been placed also on the actual leadership behaviors such as decision-making and group effectiveness, or the productivity and satisfaction of group members. Situational-specific behavior of leaders has been studied as well as what effect these behaviors have upon followers.

One early approach to studying leadership in sport was to examine the personality traits of coaches to determine if there was a particular type of person best suited to be a coach (Ogilvie & Tutko, 1966). The basic thrust of this research discovered that

individuals with specific personalities were better suited to coach particular sports. For example, a football coach specifically needed to be disciplined for the team to function properly largely due to the number of athletes involved with the team.

But, this research was inherently limited because it did not address the difficulty of task (i.e., level of competition) and situational variables (i.e., age of participants, type of sport, gender of coach and athlete) that could influence the need for a customized coaching personality. Therefore, other early research contended that the effectiveness of sport leadership was a function of both situational and individual characteristics (Gibb, 1969). This interactionist approach was illustrated by leadership models such as the contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967) and the path-goal theory (Evans, 1970; House 1971).

Fiedler (1967) in his contingency model argued that leadership styles resulted from the leader's own needs and personality. He also suggested that leadership style was a stable personality characteristic that was well established. According to Fiedler (1967), leadership can only be improved in two ways: One, the situation is changed so that it is more compatible with the leader's overall personality and two, a new leader is found who is more compatible to the situation. Because Fiedler's contingency theory contended that leader's personality traits were relatively inflexible, leadership could be most effective when the situation was favorable and compatible to the leader's personality. This gives credence to the notion that a coach's personality should be compatible with the sport being coached.

The path-goal theory (House, 1971) suggested that effective leadership would vary

according to the characteristics of the individual group members and the characteristics of the task, not the personality of the leader. This theory stressed that the leader functions in a supplemental way by identifying for group members the route to take to reach valued goals. The specific characteristics of each situation determine the leader behaviors that most successfully aid the members. By utilizing this theory, one could predict that each athlete might prefer specific behaviors from his or her coach.

But these situation-specific theories were originally formed in areas other than sport. It was, therefore, difficult for researchers to explain coaching behavior in terms of leadership theories derived from other fields of human behavior (Terry & Howe, 1985). In fact, Chelladurai and Carron (1978) pointed out that the direct application of these theories to sporting situations could be questioned. They argued that sports teams possess certain unique characteristics that render general leadership theories inapplicable.

The ratio of practice time to performance time, for instance, differs considerably from sport to sport. Unlike industrial settings in which members perform the same task all day, athletes spend endless hours practicing different skills for performances lasting a few hours per week. The duration of sports team's seasons will also typically be much shorter than other organized groups and the nature of sporting contests, unlike working environments, allow for only one winner even though both contestants may have produced their best efforts. In fact, when these theories have been tested in the sporting environment (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Vos Strache, 1979), only partial support for them was found.

### Leadership Assessment

Recent research on sport leadership has taken on three different approaches. One approach has been in the tradition of Smith et al. (1977, 1983) who based their research on the Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS), a device that separated coaching into different behaviors. The CBAS allowed researchers to code and assess coaches' specific behaviors, train coaches to improve their behaviors, reassess their behaviors, and measure the effects of these changes on players' enjoyment and satisfaction (Chelladurai, 1990).

Smith, Smoll, and Hunt (1977) investigated 15 male youth baseball coaches' perceptions of their coaching behaviors. Perceptions of their behaviors were compared with the actual behavioral assessments obtained from the CBAS. It was found that the coaches' perceptions of their coaching behavior minimally correlated with the actual assessments. This strongly suggested that coaches might act differently than they thought they acted.

Smith, Noland, Smoll, & Coppel (1983) explored how athletes from different youth sport teams perceived the behavior of their coaches. Again, using the CBAS, this study examined the youths' perceptions of their coaches' behavior to self-perceptions of the coaches. It was found that the athletes' perceptions did not correspond to the coaches' perceptions, highly suggesting that coaches were not expressing the behaviors their athlete's desired. It was found that these athletes generally wanted their coach to provide them with reinforcement, encouragement, technical information, and organization

and control over their team. In fact, they favorably evaluated their coach when these behaviors were present.

This research has given credence to the importance of assessing the preferences of athletes for customized coaching behavior. Not only do coaches have a skewed view of their own coaching behaviors, but also their athletes do not prefer many of their coach's behaviors. Coaches should have an understanding of their athletes' desired coaching behaviors. When these behavioral preferences have been fulfilled, the athletes' enjoyment and satisfaction are enhanced. But, these assessments of athletes' coaching behavior preferences were accomplished through a quantitative approach, using the CBAS. It seems that combining this quantitative data with a qualitative assessment of the athletes' desired coaching behavior would have been more effective in capturing this kind of empirical information.

### Decision Styles

The second approach to the study of coaching was based on the normative model of decision-styles in coaching developed by Chelladurai & Haggerty (1978). These authors acknowledged and concentrated on decision-making styles of coaches. They argued that decision-making was separate from other sets of coaching behaviors. In fact, they argued that decision-making was one of the constant recurring demands of coaches working at any level of competition. Frequent problems arose in sport that required decisions regarding such matters as seasonal planning, conducting practice sessions, and supervision of actual competitive performances. Such decisions, they theorized, to a

lesser or greater degree, were the responsibility of the coach. However, they also argued that the amount of control athletes should be given in making decisions was critical for their satisfaction with and enjoyment of the sport.

This normative model identified three types of decision styles in coaching sport teams: autocratic, participative, and delegative. A coach with an autocratic style alone made the final decision about confronting issues like interpersonal relations among team members and coaches, intensity of workouts, and team strategy or tactics and personnel selections. This style included the consultative approach where the coach could consult with any or all of his or her players about a specific problem before reaching a decision alone. A coach with a participative style made decisions pertaining to the same issues through consensus. The coach and the team made the decision. A coach with a delegative style allowed one or more team members to make decisions on behalf of the group (which included the coach). The coach with this style was involved only with the announcement of the decision of the team members and its implementation (Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1978).

This normative model of decision styles in coaching also helped explain how a decision would be made in a particular situation. Specifically, the situation determined which decisions should be made and how much input should be gathered from the athletes. Situations, in this case, were defined by seven situational attributes. These attributes helped to shape the situation and influenced which of the three recommended decision styles should be implemented. They were also designed to help coaches increase their

effectiveness in diagnosing coaching problems by deciding when to increase or decrease athlete participation in the decisions that need to be made. These seven attributes were:

1. Time Restrictions – Decisions that were influenced by the amount of time.
2. Quality Requirement – Decisions that required careful analysis for the selection of the best possible solution to a problem.
3. Amount of Information – Decisions were limited to the amount of knowledge that coaches and athletes possessed.
4. Problem Complexity – Difficult decisions were made by the person with the most knowledge.
5. Acceptance – Decisions that needed to be accepted by team members for effective implementations.
6. Coach's Power Base – Decision-making was based on the amount of admiration and respect the athletes had towards their coach's expertise and knowledge of the sport.
7. Group Integration – Decision-making that was dependent upon the amount of conflict on a team.

Many studies have focused on the extent of participation in decision-making preferred by coaches in varying situations (Chelladurai, 1981; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1989). Chelladurai and Arnott (1985) asked 50 high school level football coaches to indicate their preferences among various decision styles (autocratic, consultative, participative, or variations thereof) in a given situation. These

authors were also concerned with the effects of the situational attributes and the various individual difference characteristics on decision style choices. Results indicated that most of the football coaches preferred the autocratic style of decision-making in the given situations. They also argued that situational differences had three times as much influence as individual differences on the decision style choices.

Gordon (1988) assessed the validity and applicability of the normative model of decision styles in coaching and the model's utility in diagnosing decision-making problems in university soccer programs. Specifically, Gordon (1988) was concerned with the relationship between congruence of coaches' and player's decision style choices and member satisfaction. Head soccer coaches were asked how they would decide in soccer situations and the athletes were asked which decision style they preferred. The study examined the congruence between the decision styles chosen by coaches, and those coaching decision styles preferred by the athletes, for the same situations.

It was found that the preferences for decision styles from both coaches and athletes supported only 33% of Chelladurai and Haggerty's (1978) model prescriptions. In fact, the university soccer climate, as perceived by coaches and the players was far more autocratic than the theoretical model suggested. Therefore, the model's utility in helping soccer coaches make proper coaching decisions was highly questionable. There was also little evidence to suggest that either coaches or athletes like the delegative decision style. This was similar to findings from other investigations (Grand, 1982; Larose, 1981).

Chelladurai and Arnott (1985) believed that athletes become suspicious when only one or



two individuals, not the whole team, are involved in decision making. Also, in interviews, Gordon (1982) found that neither coaches nor athletes, from six different sports, believed that athletes knew enough about college athletics to justify delegation in decision-making. Instead, they preferred the head coach to make decisions regarding performance matters (e.g., training routines, team selection, team tactics).

### Multidimensional Model

The third line of inquiry into sport leadership began with the proposal of the multidimensional model of leadership (Chelladurai, 1978; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978) and the development of the Leadership Scale for Sports (Chelladurai, 1978, Chelladurai & Carron, 1981a; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980). The multidimensional model of leadership was devised to directly assess the effectiveness of different coaching behaviors in sports by supplying a general formula for the dual outcome of athlete satisfaction and superior performance. Amongst other things, the model emphasized the importance of actual coaching behavior corresponding to the behavior preferred by the athlete. Athlete performance and satisfaction were related directly to how closely these behaviors coincided. Preferred and actual coaching behavior preferences positively affect performance levels.

More specifically, according to the multidimensional model of leadership, there were three areas of coaching behavior: required, actual, and preferred (Chelladurai, 1980, 1984a, 1990). Group performance and member satisfaction were considered to be a function of the congruence of these three states. The factors that affected these three

states of leader behavior were the characteristics of the situation, the leader, and the members.

According to the model, the coach was required to behave in a certain way because of the demands and constraints placed upon him or her by the situational and member characteristics. Some of the situational characteristics that impinge upon required coaching behavior included: team goals, the organizational structure of the team, the level of the team (e.g., professional versus high school teams), the group task (e.g., individual versus team sport), the social norms, and cultural values. Some of the member or team characteristics included: age, intelligence, ability, experience, and personality dispositions.

Also according to the model, the team members preferred to have their coach behave in a certain manner. Similar to required leader behavior, team members' preferences for specific coaching behavior were largely a function of the individual personality characteristics of the group members. Personality variables such as need for achievement, need for affiliation, intellectual maturity, and competence and experience in the sport influenced team members' preferences for coaching behavior. In addition, the situational characteristics also affected team members' preferences. For example, both the coach and the athletes expected that the coach would behave in a specific manner. Thus, both the coach and the team members were socialized into the same behavioral preference in a given context (e.g., group task, the formal authority system).

Further, the model contended that the actual coaching behavior displayed was formed from the coach's personal characteristics, situational requirements, and the

behavioral preferences of team members. It argued that the coach's personal characteristics included personality, ability, and experience and they all had influence on the coach's actual behavior. In addition, the actual coaching behavior was considerably influenced by the situational requirements. For instance, a coach from a professional sports team would exhibit different coaching behaviors than a coach from a high school team. In addition, the athletes from the two above settings would prefer differing coaching behaviors, and such preferences would influence how the coach actually behaves.

Finally, the model contended that the athlete's performance and satisfaction were a function of the degree of congruence among the three states of coaching behavior: required, actual, and preferred. More specifically, performance was linked to the congruence between required and actual coaching behaviors, while satisfaction was linked between the congruence between actual coaching behavior and the preferred coaching behavior. Chelladurai and Carron (1978) noted that an athlete's performance and satisfaction with the sport were not independent of each other because both were a result of the coaching behaviors. Thus, they argued that athletic performance and satisfaction were jointly affected by the congruence among the three states of coaching behavior.

#### Leadership Scale for Sports

In order to test the multidimensional model of leadership, Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) developed the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS). In the first stage of the development of the LSS, these authors extracted five factors from the responses of physical education students to an original pool of 99 items drawn and modified from

existing scales. In the second stage, a reduced pool of 50 items was administered to physical education students and university athletes in various sports. Factor analyses of these responses showed that the five dimensional description of leader behavior could be replicated in different sets of data. The five dimensions of leader behavior were training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support behavior, and rewarding (positive feedback) behavior.

#### Training and Instruction Behavior

This coach aimed at improving the athlete's performance by emphasizing and facilitating hard and strenuous training, by instructing them in the skills, techniques, and tactics of the sport, clarifying the relationships among team members, and by structuring and coordinating the team's activities.

#### Democratic Behavior

This coach allowed for greater participation by the athletes in decisions pertaining to team goals, practice methods, and game tactics and strategies.

#### Autocratic Behavior

This coach had absolute decision-making capabilities and stressed authority over athletes in all situations.

#### Social Support Behavior

This coach was genuinely concerned for the welfare of his or her athletes, developing a positive team atmosphere, and establishing warm interpersonal relations with the athletes.

### Positive Feedback Behavior

This coach positively reinforced an athlete by recognizing and rewarding his or her good performance.

The final scale of the LSS consisted of 40 items with five response categories; always, often, occasionally, seldom, and never. Chelladurai (1978) developed three versions of the LSS. One version assessed the coach's perception of his or her actual coaching behavior. The second version investigated the athlete's perceptions of the coach's behavior, while the final version assessed the coaching behaviors preferred by the athletes. These three versions of the LSS allowed a researcher to assess the coach-athlete compatibility from a number of perspectives.

### Studies of the Multidimensional Model

Various researchers have used the multidimensional model of leadership and the versions of the LSS to assess issues related to coach-athlete compatibility (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai, 1978; Garland & Barry, 1988; Gordon, 1986; Horne & Carron, 1985; Schliesman, 1987; Summers, 1988; Terry & Howe, 1984; Weiss & Fredricks, 1986). Some issues investigated by researchers included (a) the athletes' preferences for specific leader behaviors, (b) the athletes' perceptions of their coaches' leader behaviors, and/or the coaches' perceptions of their own behavior, (c) the discrepancy between the coach's perception of his or her behavior and the behavior the athlete preferred, and (d) the discrepancy between the athlete's perception of the coach's behavior and the behavior preferred by the athlete.

Chelladurai (1978, 1984) assessed the coaching preferences and perceptions of 87 basketball players from ten teams, 52 wrestlers from four teams, and 57 track and field athletes from six teams from Canadian universities. He found that the congruence between preferred and actual behaviors affected satisfaction with the coach in a curvilinear manner (members were less satisfied when the actual behavior deviated from their preferred behavior in either direction). Specifically, athletes from each sport were more satisfied with the coach when he provided them with training and instruction and positive feedback that exceeded their preference level. This finding supported the view that athletics is a task-oriented enterprise (Gill, 1978) and that coaching behavior that emphasized these dimensions would lead to enhanced team satisfaction.

Congruence in the social support dimension also positively affected the satisfaction with coaching in basketball and wrestling teams, but it was unrelated to such satisfaction in track and field. One explanation for the lack of association between coaching behavior and satisfaction with individual performance can be drawn from task goals. Track and field athletes often set their own performance goals. This process of goal setting was likely internal to the individual and the influence of the coach only peripheral.

Horne and Carron (1985) found it important for college football coaches to provide their athletes with positive feedback and autocratic behavior. In fact, they argued that these two types of behavior were the best predictors of coach-athlete compatibility and the athlete's overall satisfaction with leadership. When the coach provided their athletes with more positive feedback and autocratic behavior than they expected, the

athlete's satisfaction increased. This appeared consistent with the type of sport that was being analyzed. Football required the coach to have absolute control of the team due to its large size and need for organization to remain efficient and competitive. Perhaps these athletes recognized the need for their coach to possess sufficient autocratic behavior for the good of the team. Perhaps these athletes also wanted their coaches to provide them with positive feedback because it helped them maintain confidence in themselves.

Schliesman (1987) used the multidimensional model to study 60 university track and field athletes. He administered the LSS to examine which coaching behaviors these athletes preferred from their coach and how they perceived their current coach's behavior. He found that the athletes were most satisfied with their coaches when they received sufficient democratic behavior and social support from their coaches. Specifically, the closer the match between the perception of the behaviors of the coach and the preferences of the athlete, the higher the satisfaction of the athlete.

Perhaps democratic behavior and social support was a good predictor of satisfaction with leadership for these athletes due to the nature of the sport. Track and field is an individual sport in which athletes look for input from their coaches to reach individual performance goals. Athletes need their coach to assist them with decisions pertaining to practice methods and event tactics and strategies. They also look to their coach for social support because they are competing on an individual basis. Athletes participating in team sports often have other team members to supply social support. This is not as much the case for athletes competing individually.

Weiss and Fredrichs (1986) examined the relationship of university basketball players' perceptions and preferences of their coaches' behavior on the LSS dimensions with team performance and team member satisfaction. When teams were the unit of analysis, the perceived coaching behaviors (the five dimensions taken together) were predictive of win/loss percentage and team satisfaction. Specifically, the authors found that positive feedback was the best predictive factor for team satisfaction. However, they also discovered that perceived social support was most negatively associated with win/loss percentage (i.e., higher levels of social support were associated with lower win/loss percentages).

Perhaps these findings were consistent with this type of sporting team. Perhaps college basketball teams placed great value on the ability of its coach to provide them as a whole with positive feedback. Perhaps basketball teams do not expect team members to provide itself with this type of support or perhaps basketball teams needed this behavior from its coach so that it was able to have confidence in itself. Conversely, perhaps these teams did not desire their coaches to provide social support because team members were able to gain social support from other team members. Because basketball is a team sport, these athletes perhaps perceived that social support should only come from their own teammates.

Gordon (1986) used the multidimensional model for leadership and the LSS to examine how college soccer athletes from teams with various win/loss percentages perceived their coaches' behaviors. Success, in this case, meant percentage of wins/losses.



He found that university soccer players from teams with higher win/loss percentages perceived reception of more training, autocratic, social support, and positive feedback behaviors from their coaches than the athletes from less successful teams. These findings appeared to be logical. Soccer athletes benefited from the increase in coaching behaviors. Gordon (1986) also examined the perceptions of the coaches' own behaviors and compared these to the behavioral preferences of soccer athletes. He found that coaches of teams with greater win/loss percentages perceived themselves as providing more training, democratic, autocratic, and social support behaviors. However, the soccer athletes from more successful teams did not express the preference for democratic behavior from their coaches. Perhaps these athletes felt their coaches possessed the greater knowledge and expertise in the sport and, therefore would have accepted the autocratic behavior in a coach. Meanwhile, perhaps coaches' expectations that their athletes preferred democratic behavior was not accurate.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) looked at how coaching preferences could vary according to the gender of the youth athlete. They found that male youth athletes preferred more autocratic behavior from their coaches than female athletes. At the same time, female youth athletes preferred more democratic behavior and social support from their coaches compared to male athletes. Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) argued that this was because of the inherent gender differences between males and females. For example, males preferred a coach who behaved autocratically because males related better to an authoritative coach than females. Females, on the other hand, preferred a coach who was

democratic and provided social support because they wanted to be able to express their preferences and be in a positive, supportive environment more than males.

Erle (1981) assessed the effects of gender and experience on the coaching preferences of university and intramural athletes. After he compared all the coaching dimensions, he found that males preferred training and instruction much more than females. Perhaps this was because of the type of sport under investigation. Perhaps male college tennis players desire more training and instruction than females or perhaps this was a reflection of how males and females preferred coaching behaviors at this age. He also found that the greater the experience for the male or female athlete, the higher the preference for positive feedback from the coach. It was difficult to explain this finding. It is possible that as an athlete becomes more experienced in a sport, he or she would need less positive feedback because of increased knowledge and confidence in that sport.

Terry and Howe (1985) studied how the type of sport (individual or team) influenced athletes' preferences for specific coaching behaviors. He revealed that male and female athletes in independent sports (swimming, dancing, cross-country, etc.) preferred more democratic behavior and less autocratic behavior than male and female athletes in interdependent sports (basketball, ice hockey, soccer, etc.). This was consistent with Schliesman's (1987) findings. Those athletes in individual sports preferred their coach to have more democratic behavior than athletes in team sports. Contrary to Chelladurai and Carron (1978), they also found no relationship between the gender of the athletes and their preference for autocratic behavior from their coach.

Chelladurai and Carron (1981b) reported that male and female athlete's cognitive structure (intellectual capacity) was related to his or her preferred coaching style. Those male and female athletes measured as higher on cognitive structure preferred more training and instruction and less autocratic behavior from the coach than male and female athletes measured as lower on cognitive structure. The athletes with higher cognitive structure were more able to make use of their coach's training and instruction because they were able to understand and make sense of this information. The athletes with lower cognitive structure preferred to have more autocratic behavior because they were not able to effectively comprehend the coach's training and instruction. Additionally, they rejected the democratic coach because they thought their coach possessed more knowledge and expertise in the sport than they did.

Chelladurai and Carron (1983) also administered the LSS to high school midget, junior, senior, and university level basketball players. The different levels of the athletes were thought to reflect the different maturity levels of the athletes. They found that preferences for coaches to train and instruct progressively decreased from high school midget to high school senior levels, but then increased at the university level. Perhaps college athletes realized the need to increase their knowledge of the sport to remain competitive in their sport. Perhaps the same athletes in high school thought they knew everything about their sport. It was not until college that they matured enough to see the value of instruction and training.

Chelladurai and Carron (1983) also found that the preference for social support

increased from the high school level to the college level. Perhaps college athletes needed more social support due to their situation. For many athletes, this was the first time away from home and parental support and guidance was lacking. Perhaps they needed their coach to provide the support that was lost when they entered college.

Garland and Barry (1988) examined the relationships between college football players and coaching behavior preferences. The subjects were grouped as (a) regulars who started and/or played 50% or more of the plays during the games; (b) substitutes who started and/or played in less than 50% of the plays; and (c) survivors who played only when the outcome was not in question. These groupings represented the football players' abilities. It was found that the more able players preferred their coaches to emphasize more training and instruction, social support, positive feedback, and less autocratic behavior than less able players. This appeared to be in contradiction to Horne and Carron's (1983) findings that college football player's preferred autocratic behavior from their coach. But Horne and Carron (1983) did not account for the ability of the football players. Perhaps if they included this variable of individual difference, they would have found similar results.

#### Problems with the Multidimensional Model

While the notion of congruence among the three states of leader behavior (required, actual, and preferred) appeared to be sensible, the use of discrepancy scores was not. The formula for discrepancy scores is the actual coaching behavior of the coach minus the preferred coaching behavior of the athlete and/or the coach. The more

congruent this relationship, it follows, the better satisfaction and performance of the athlete.

But the actual coaching behavior aspect is dependent upon the perception of the athlete and/or the coach. It is possible that the athlete's and/or the coach's perception could be distorted. When both components of the discrepancy score (perceptions and preferences in context) are provided by the same athlete, their perceptions can dominate in those relationships (White, Crino, & Hatfield, 1985).

For instance, Chelladurai et al. (1988) administered the preferred and perceived versions of the LSS that assessed athlete satisfaction with leadership and personal outcome to Japanese and Canadian university athletes. They found that perceived leadership scores explained more variance in the athlete's satisfaction than the discrepancy scores. They, therefore, did not use the discrepancy scores. Schliesman (1986) also found that the perceived democratic behavior and social support were slightly better predictors with general leadership than discrepancy scores for university track and field athletes. In contrast, Chelladurai (1984) found that discrepancy scores explained a greater percentage of the variance in athlete satisfaction than either the preferred or perceived leadership scores. Due to these equivocal results, the reliability of the multidimensional model for leadership has been brought into question.

Another problem with the multidimensional model was that its validity was based on the LSS, essentially a quantitative test assessing qualitative information. It does not seem plausible or relevant to fully understand a subjective issue like coaching style

preferences using strictly objective data. This methodology was not flexible enough to capture the subtle details inherent in explaining human behavior. For example, the LSS does not fully describe all of the dimensions of the coach's autocratic behavior, no matter from where the perspective was generated.

### Qualitative Research

Qualitative research in physical education, exercise science, and sport science is relatively new. However, it is not new in other fields and has been employed in anthropology, psychology, and sociology for many years (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). In general, quantitative research tends to focus on mechanical separation and analysis, while qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning of an experience to the participants in a specific setting and how the parts of something come together. Patton (1990) used two answers to a questionnaire item to show these differences. In the quantitative approach, a teacher was asked to respond to a statement about accountability in school teachers: "Teachers should not be held accountable." Her response was limited to strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. She checked "strongly agree." In the qualitative approach, the same teacher was asked to respond to the same statement, but she could respond to it as though it was an open-ended question. She again confirmed that she strongly agreed and also related her feelings of frustration with the subject.

Qualitative research focuses on the essence of the phenomena. It emphasizes using induction, while quantitative research mostly emphasizes using deduction. One's view of the world will vary and is highly subjective. A qualitative researcher takes more interest in

the process rather in the product. He or she strives to develop hypotheses from the observations (Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

To date, there have been no qualitative studies that have investigated soccer coaching styles. However, Cannon (1994) used a qualitative research design to assess the personality and environment of successful football coaches from colleges throughout the Midwest. A successful coach meant that the coach had a winning percentage higher than 50%. The coach also had to have been the head coach for at least 50 football games at the same institution. The researcher interviewed 10 head coaches from institutions affiliated with all divisions in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Athletic Intercollegiate Association (NAIA).

Cannon (1994) found that successful football coaches shared many of the same personality and situational traits. One, these coaches were highly organized. These coaches kept strict office hours, provided detailed travel, practice and game schedules. These coaches had something planned for every possible working hour. Two, these coaches were knowledgeable about the aspects of the sport: offense, defense, and special teams. These coaches were constantly striving to improve their knowledge of the game so that they would become more successful in terms of win/loss percentage. Three, these coaches reported having outstanding support from assistant coaches, administrators, and facilities and access to resources such as money, equipment, alumni and fan support. It seems imperative that similar qualitative methodologies be incorporated in the study of specific soccer coaching styles.

### Summary

Nearly all the sport research on leadership styles has implemented quantitative approaches. Approaches have investigated the personalities of coaches in order to determine what personality traits coaches should possess as the leader of the team. Others have investigated the situational factors that are important for a coach to be a success, like the characteristics of the team members, the type of sport, and the demands of that sport. Quantitative approaches have also focused on specific coaching behaviors such as decision-making according to the situation and how these behaviors, rather than personality dispositions, affect team members.

Quantitative sport research on coaching styles also has used more complicated models like the multidimensional model of leadership to better understand coaching styles. Much of this research contended that effective coaching styles were formed from three leader behavior categories: required, actual, and preferred. When there was congruence between these categories, then the athlete would be satisfied with the coach and his or her individual and/or the team's performance. For the congruence to be satisfied, the coaching preferences of the athletes had to be met. However, it has been shown the athletes' preferences were based on their perceptions of the coach and the situation. Quite often, it has been shown that an athlete's and coach's perception of something can be skewed. Qualitative coaching style research has succeeded in analyzing various parts, aspects, and degrees of the coaching style phenomena, but has not provided a holistic account of coaching styles. A qualitative research design would be an important device



for furthering knowledge and understanding of coaching styles. While there have been qualitative studies examining college soccer coaching styles, to date there have been no attempts to provide a qualitative perspective on this subject matter.

## Chapter 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of the study was to provide an in-depth description of the coaching style preferences and the rationale for having coaching style preferences of male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams. A qualitative phenomenological research design was utilized to assess the coaching style preferences of these athletes.

#### Identification and Description of the Target Population

##### Athletes

Athletes were purposely selected as discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Three athletes from two teams ( $n = 6$ ) were purposively selected and then asked to participate in the study. Athletes were informed of the nature and purpose of the study, the format of the interview, and agreed to sign an informed consent (see Appendix A). Each had to fulfill the following criteria in order to have participated. One, each must have been in the starting lineup in 50% of the games during the 1997 college soccer season. Two, each must have participated in at least 50% of the minutes of those games in the starting lineup. These criteria were established as measures of ability for those athletes who made significant contributions to their teams in terms of playing time. These athletes were more involved with the coach on a daily basis than a non-starter and could provide more detailed information during the interview sessions. These criteria also attempted to remove any biases non-starters may have possessed towards their coaches. For example,

it is possible for athletes to possess a negative attitude and feel dissatisfied with their coaches due to lack of participation in competition. This, in turn, may cause responses during the interview to be inherently biased.

Each athlete was interviewed one time following the 1997 college season in January of 1998. The series of questions in the interview was designed to assess the athletes' unique perspectives on soccer coaching style preferences. The content and the order of the questions follow the interview guide as outlined in Appendix B.

### Coaches

In an attempt to triangulate and strengthen the data through multiple informants, two coaches were purposively selected ( $n = 2$ ), each from a Division III institution. Both coaches were informed as to the nature and purpose of the study, the format of the interview, and were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C). Both coaches had to fulfill the following criteria in order to participate. One, each coach had to have been the head coach of the respective soccer program. Two, each coach had to have been the head coach of the soccer program for at least 5 years. These criteria were set up to investigate coaches who had an established tenure as the leader of their soccer programs. It was believed that these coaches developed and implemented consistent coaching styles due mainly to their tenure as head coach, as a result, a more accurate assessment of coaching styles could be investigated. The content and the order of the questions followed the interview guide that is outlined in Appendix D.

### Soccer Programs

Each soccer program was also purposively selected as discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Both programs had to fulfill the following in order to participate. One, each program had to have a winning percentage greater than 50%. Two, each program had to maintain this percentage for five years prior to data collection. This study investigated the coaching style preferences of athletes involved in successful soccer programs.

### Measurement Techniques

An in-depth, semi-structured interview was used for data collection. The interviews of the soccer athletes and coaches were carried out in January of 1998. While the interview process is gaining popularity in the field of sport psychology, including the study of flow (Jackson, 1992), coaching knowledge (Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995), and injury (Shelley, 1998), it has not been used in the study of coaching style preferences for Northeastern, Division III, male, soccer athletes.

### Description of Data Collection

Subjects were instructed as to the importance of their participation in the study, implying that they were the primary source of information on this topic. They were informed that the researcher would be seeking their informed opinions on the topic and what their personal experiences had been. Prior to signing the informed consent form, issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and potential risks and benefits were verbally discussed with each participant, including the necessity of tape recording and note taking

during interviews.

Following each interview, the interviewer attempted to identify and remove any biases regarding the particular phenomena under investigation in order to capture the empirical reality of the information collected (Patton, 1990). This is called bracketing and is used in order to portray the realities of the phenomena as described by the participants as accurately as possible. To successfully bracket the information under investigation, the researcher adhered to the following four steps according to Patton (1990):

1. Located within the personal experience, key phrases or statements that speak directly to the phenomena in question.
2. Interpreted the meaning of these phrases as an informed reader.
3. Obtained the subject's interpretations of these phrases.
4. Inspected these meanings for what they reveal about the essential and recurring features of the phenomena.

The interviewing of the athletes and coaches took place in private rooms in buildings at each respective school's campus. The content of the interviews was tape-recorded. Following each session, the tape-recorded information was transcribed and examined to detect any errors or omissions that occurred during the transcription process.

The primary researcher transcribed all the data and conducted all of the interviews based on the interview guide that is outlined below.

### Interview Guide

Patton (1990) described an interview guide as a list of questions or issues that are

to be explored during an interview. The interview guide provides the framework within which an interviewer could develop, sequence, and make decisions about which information would be pursued in greater depth. The guide helps to make interviewing across a number of people more systematic and comprehensive by constructing in advance the subject areas to be explored.

While the interview guide provided focus for each particular subject, it also allowed for individual perspectives and experiences to emerge (Patton, 1990). The interviewer was free to build a conversation within a particular subject area and able to ask questions that would help illuminate that area. In fact, the interviewer decided the exact wording of the questions during the course of the interview and, as a result, the interview remained conversational and situational in nature.

The interview guides also acted as means to enhance dependability (i.e., reliability) and later helped in comparing qualitative data during the analysis process (Bernard, 1988). The interview guides for the athletes and the coaches (see Appendices B and D, respectively) with similar questions (i.e., similar wording of questions) presented to each subject, were used to ensure that basically the same information was being obtained from the athletes and the coaches. Such an approach allowed for the control of the interview process while allowing the interviewer the freedom to probe into each participant's unique perspectives on coaching styles.

The questions that made up the interview guides were derived from a combination of the following sources:

1. The researchers experience resulting from 7 years of participation as a soccer player and coach at the Division III college level.
2. Faculty consultations with Dr. Greg Shelley who has expertise with qualitative methodologies and the development of interview guides and,
3. Review of the existing literature.

### Observations

To further triangulate the data and strengthen the study, multiple methods of data collection (i.e., researcher observations) were combined with the multiple informants (i.e., athlete, coach, and interviews). As suggested by Locke (1989), an observational log was maintained. An observational log was kept throughout the entire course of the data collection period. This log contained the researcher's personal observations and conversations related to the study from watching practices and games and conversations with the athletes and coaches. Similar to the evolving nature of qualitative research, the information contained in this log was used to further focus on the research question. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to this daily, weekly, and monthly conversing and observing as prolonged field engagement or persistent observation.

### Rationale for Selection

A phenomenological qualitative design was selected because it is designed to directly assess the "lived experiences" of the participant. Phenomenology primarily focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience. It probes into what people perceive their experience to be and what this

means to them. At the same time, phenomenology does not ignore the objective conditions of the environment. Therefore, the subjective experience includes both the person's own reality and the objectivity of the situation (Patton, 1990).

A phenomenological qualitative design has the potential to reveal most fully what the coaching style preferences were of college soccer athletes and the cognitive and emotional reasoning for having and wanting these preferences. Such a design also promoted moving away from the stereotypical mold of quantitative science. Instead, the researcher attempted to obtain and provide data that more holistically described the subject of soccer coaching styles. Because phenomenology is designed to study how people verbally describe their experiences or, in this case, soccer athletes' preferences for coaching styles, it was believed that new insight into college soccer coaching styles would be discovered. More specifically, a better understanding of college soccer athletes' preferences for coaching styles would be gained. Therefore, a phenomenological design, by way of a semi-structured interview format, was implemented to assess the coaching style preferences of soccer players.

At the heart of such an inquiry was the idea that people have differing views, values, and perspectives based on their differing background, culture, and individual situations (Leonard, 1989). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of particular phenomena as well as the personal meanings associated with those phenomena. It also examines how people describe things and experience them through their senses (Patton, 1990). Therefore, to describe the coaching style preferences of college soccer players,



one must study the unique perspectives of the athletes in their respective sporting environments.

### Data Analysis

The athletes' descriptions of their coaching style preferences and the coaches' descriptions of their particular coaching style were analyzed according to Shelley (1998). These data included a total of eight interviews, six athletes and two coaches. To facilitate the analyzing of data, the collected information from the interviews was coded. Coding allowed for the organization of the data before the processing of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to coding as unitizing by which raw data are aggregated into units. These units can be represented by an abbreviation, number, or symbol. Numbers were used as codes that applied to a segment of words or paragraphs. After the coding of different sentences and paragraphs, analysis took the form of categorizing significant statements, formulating meanings, and finally, clustering lower order and higher order themes. There were no a priori variables or theories, rather such concepts were expected to emerge via the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For each data set (i.e., each interview), the following procedural analyses were conducted:

1. All athletes' oral descriptions were transcribed from the tape recorded data and synthesized with notes taken during the interview.
2. The researcher got a general sense of the material being explained and discussed by reading each data set several times.
3. From each transcript, significant statements and phrases that directly pertained

to coaching styles and the overall research question were extracted. These significant statements and phrases were pulled from the raw data to be later “cut and pasted” into meaning units.

4. Meanings were then drafted from these statements and phrases with respect to coaching style preferences. Similar to what Glasser and Strauss (1967) defined as the constant comparative method, data were categorized into meaning units.

5. These formulated meanings then were combined into clusters of lower-order themes. The emergent lower-order theme categories were based on initial “hunches” after having read through the numerous and varied meaning units. By using the constant comparative method, each meaning unit was systematically applied to a lower-order theme, developing additional themes for those meaning units that did not fit into any preexisting lower order theme. These lower-order themes served as the basis for the final analytical steps.

6. Lower-order themes were compared and developed into higher-order themes. The higher-order themes then became the descriptors of the combined lower-order themes.

7. The emergent higher-order themes were then compared across participants (i.e., athletes and coaches) in order to examine any emerging common themes. By comparing the higher-order themes across each of the six athletes, common themes were reported for all the athletes. To obtain a better understanding of coaching style preferences, the comparison of the higher-order themes of the two coaches also generated

separate common themes.

Critical to the success of any phenomenological design is the bringing together of the pieces that have emerged through the data collection, management, and analysis protocols. Patton (1990) depicted this collaboration and description of information as creative synthesis. The overall strength of a phenomenological design depends upon the amount of time spent forming questions, conducting the interviews, and properly analyzing and presenting the results of the study. This is termed rigor and indicates commitment to the established rules for conducting inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Objectivity ultimately determines the success of a phenomenological-qualitative study. Because qualitative inquiry involves the analysis of words rather than numeric data, all information must be well organized, properly managed, and interpreted. With this in mind, the actual words of the participants were used as much as possible.

Before the process of data collection, management, and analysis began, the researcher had to discern between having a sufficient understanding of the phenomena under study and remaining open to the unique perspectives of the athletes and coaches. This was necessary when meaning was given to the significant statements and themes were developed from meaning units. At this critical point, it was important that the researcher understood and bracketed any biases, rather than attaching personal meanings to the emerging experiences. Although, it is not completely possible to accomplish, the researcher attempted to set aside any possible preconceived notions by working through the previously mentioned steps to avoid any potential researcher biases and through the

aid of “study auditor.” Dr. Greg Shelley played the important role of the “study auditor,” by assisting the researcher in examining and becoming aware of any probable inherent or self-created biases about soccer coaching styles.

Additionally, the researcher was able to build trusting relationships and develop a meaningful rapport with the athletes and coaches because the position of the researcher and the amount of time spent with the athletes and coaches. With greater trust and rapport with the athletes and coaches, the more comfortable and willing the athletes and coaches were with explicitly describing and sharing information. The increased comfort and willingness to communicate, in turn, ensured more reliable and valid (i.e., credible) data.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

This study was designed to investigate the following research question: What are the coaching style preferences of male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams and their reasons for having these preferences? Raw data from eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six athletes and two coaches were analyzed. Inductive content analysis of the eight interviews produced 543 meaning units that were then synthesized into 85 lower-order themes. The lower-order themes were then integrated into 53 higher-order themes.

Separate higher-order themes for each of the six athletes (participants 1-6) and their coaches (participants 7 & 8) are presented in Appendices E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, respectively. The number of higher-order themes totaled seven for participant 1, six for participant 2, seven for participant 3, seven for participant 4, seven for participant 5, six for participant 6, six for participant 7, and seven for participant 8.

#### Common Themes

The six athletes' higher-order themes were compared and contrasted. Though each athlete was unique in his preferences for and responses to particular coaching styles, there were similarities between the athletes' responses that supplied insight into some common preferences. Six common themes (i.e., preferences) emerged from this across subject examination. Each of the coaches' higher order themes were also compared and contrasted. While each coach was unique in his preferences and reasoning for employing

particular coaching styles, there were some similarities between the coaches' responses.

Four common themes (i.e., coaching styles) emerged from this examination which helped supply insight into answering the research question.

The following six common themes from the athletes (see also Appendix M) and the following four common themes from the coaches (see also Appendix N) are the foundations that answer the overall research question. What are the coaching style preferences of Northeastern, Division III, male, soccer athletes and the reasons for having these preferences?

#### Common Athlete Themes

1. They want their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer to them. As a result, they will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.

2. They want their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he is approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cares about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.

3. They want a democratic coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and they will play as best as they can play.

4. They want their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.

5. They want their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they will be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they want the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling results in their trying to ignore the coach.

6. Because they participate in soccer to have fun, they want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.

Each of the aforementioned common preferences by the athletes is presented and discussed below. Verbatim responses by the athletes are presented in support of each common theme.

#### Theme #1

*They want their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer to them. As a result, they will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.*

In discussing his response to what type of characteristics or things that he looks for in a soccer coach, participant 1 made the following statement:

I like a coach who has a lot of knowledge about the sport of soccer. He can teach me things about the game that I didn't have any knowledge of before... I think he gains the respect of player's respect by demonstrating a tactical knowledge of the game... at least it does, you know, for me. Usually he knows a lot about the game because he played when he was younger and watched a lot of good soccer.

Later, the same athlete expressed similar sentiments about his current coach: " (My coach) has been really good for me for a lot a reasons. He knows a lot about the game of

soccer... taught me a lot and also given to me..."

In a similar fashion, participant 2 made the following statement about what characteristics he looks for in a coach:

Someone who really knows the game... Someone who can articulate themselves real well... Let's say your playing the game and in the first half nothing is going right and they can say...take in the team in at halftime and say this is what we have to do and when you go out in the second half it really comes together, then you learn to respect this coach. Okay this guy really knows what he is talking about, like someone who can really turn the game around at halftime...that comes from articulating themselves well and if they articulate themselves well then what they want to say comes across clearly and then the team goes out and does that and it works... I respect the coach for his knowledge... you want to listen and try to do what he's telling you to do because you respect him as a coach.

When participant 3 was also asked what characteristics that he looked for in a soccer coach, he said the following. "The first thing I look for in a coach in any sport is, of course, a knowledge of the game... that they have played the game and that they have had the experiences that we are having at the time... Someone that the athletes look up to and that they recognize their talents. Then they will listen to what the coach has to say."

Participant 3 later stated the following about his current coach's knowledge of the game:

The good things about coach are I think he has a really good understanding of the game...a really good tactical understanding. He picks out little things in other teams especially in games that I would never ever see. He seems to have like a photographic memory of every play of every game. He can recall it for you and then give advise to the team or an individual player based on what he saw and things that you just go by unnoticed by me... his tactics are excellent. He knows the game really well.

The same athlete later stated the following in regards to his current coach's enthusiasm for the game:

He wants us to succeed, he does whatever he can to help us succeed and I think that's really important.. He's out there giving up time and he's got two kids and



a family and he's out there putting as much time as we are. Plus, you don't get the feeling he's doing it for money. He's doing it because he loves the team and he wants us to win. That comes through too and that's a good thing about him.

Participant 6 expressed his desire for an enthusiastic and knowledgeable coach when he stated the following about his current coach's enthusiasm:

He's enthusiastic about coaching. Somebody, you know, that's really excited about what he is doing. He's totally dedicated to it and that's obvious by the way he is. He's always into it. He knows the game. He shows that he is totally dedicated and that just makes it easier to dedicate yourself knowing that you are playing for someone that has the same passion that you do.

Participant 4, also when talking about his current college soccer coach, expressed that when the coach earns the respect of his athletes, they will listen to what their coach will say:

You almost have to respect the coaching style. You may not agree with it and you might not necessarily like it, but you have to respect it because you are winning... it's working. You're not going to like everything and some things are going to piss you off, but even if you hate him sometimes, the respect is still there on a level, then you are still going to listen to what he has to say.

Participant 5 said the following about what happens when the coach earns the respect of his athletes by demonstrating his knowledge for the game:

I want to go home from practice and say I learned this or I learned that and I got something out of it and I pushed myself. Then when we get into the game, especially soccer, you know, I want to be able to play. I want to take what I learned in practice and I want him to know that. He has to know that when it is game time, this is my turn to show what I've learned from him. This is going to be how I am going to express myself from him. I'm going to take what he's taught me and I'm going to give it back to him and show him that this is what I've learned and this is how he's repaid....me showing him what I've learned. Its like in a class, you take an exam and you go out and you study everything that he has taught you and then you take the test.

Theme #2

They want their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he is approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cares about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.

Participant 1 expressed the importance of having a good relationship with the coach from the following statement:

I want a coach that I can look up to... I mean somebody that I can talk to or whatever before and after the game. Almost a father figure, kind of a guy. Your teachers here really don't do much beyond the classroom and I don't get that. I guess they are really busy. But, with a coach, I seem to want to play harder for a guy who I think cares about me more than just a soccer player. He knows how I am other than just a soccer player.

Later the same athlete said the following about how his current coach demonstrates that he cares for him beyond the playing field:

I think he cares about me more than just a soccer player... he always asks about my girlfriend, school, that kind of stuff. I've never had that many coaches who have seemed to care about me like that. I have him to thank for getting back into playing and him to thank for getting up to the level that I'm at right now... We may talk about games or players, but we also talk about a lot of other stuff than soccer. I went over to his house and have hung out with his wife and two kids too. I guess that he really makes me feel like he cares about me. This motivates me to try my best for him.

As a result of having a positive relationship with his coach, he later made the following comment:

In a sense, he's allowed me to blossom into a better soccer player. It's been a really good experience for me. Because of this I think that I have really improved and feel like I am an important part of the team. I'm glad to give back to what Mike has done for me... like in the form of hard work, effort,

and then all-conference awards and team success.

When participant 3 also expressed that he wanted a coach that he could have a positive relationship with as he stated:

Another thing I look for is a good rapport with the athletes that they are coaching...Someone who has... seems to be approachable. Someone who... if a player feels like they are having a problem, you know on the field or off the field, either way, they can approach the coach and talk to him about it and get some kind of a reaction as to how to improve the problem or what their outlook is on the player's talent or work level or ethic or anything like that and prospects for the future.

The same athlete later made the following statement about his relationship with his coach:

I feel like that he is approachable like off the field. Another good thing about coach he seems to have good grasp what goes on outside the field and like our social life. It makes me feel like we have a good coach. He remembers little details about on the field and off the field, respects you as a college student and as an athlete... It's nice to see that your important to your coach as person too. ... I want to do my best for coach because he cares about me.

However, the same athlete later talked more about a lack of communication by his coach with other athletes on his team:

One of the negatives about him or part of this style he has then is that he lacked a little bit of communication...not communication so much, but kind of a relationship with some of the guys. Some guys, like they bring it up... say stuff like coach doesn't talk to me...I don't think he gives a shit about me. He doesn't really have relationship with some guys...with some guys he seems to have open communication with. Certainly the captains...he has good communication with some people and not so open with other people. I mean it's not a negative to me because it doesn't happen... So I think that I mean an ultimate coach would have a good relationship with all people and maybe a better relationship with say like some captains.

Participant 5 also stated that he did not feel his current coach approached him when there existed a problem:

I was having problems I didn't feel like he was coming to me and trying

to say what's wrong. Why aren't you playing up to your standards? Instead I had to go to him. I see that as kind of as a negative. And even throughout the whole year, there wasn't much follow-up. He knew that I was struggling to get back into the swing of things. It would have been nice a couple of times if he said come on in and talk to me and said you know you are doing this better, but you still need to work on this. He's approachable, but he doesn't approach you. That's the difference.

Participant 6 also expressed his desire for his soccer coach to possess the skills necessary to develop a good relationship with his athletes from the following statement: "I think an important thing a coach needs is communication skills. One that can relate to his players and isn't just like a coach, you know. He can talk to the guys and kind of hang out once in a while so it's not strictly a coach player relationship."

### Theme #3

*They want a democratic coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and they will play as best as they can play.*

Participant 1 said the following about his coach, "I'm not the kind of person who responds well to a coach who constantly orders people around... There is no way that I could play football, for example. You are told to do everything. So I would never survive as a player if this were the case."

Participant 2 said the following about how his current coach's style of coaching differs from his most preferred style of coaching: "Sometimes it's hard to talk to him about other points of view. Sometimes if you say like, I don't see the point of this drill or

why don't we try it this way. You can get a real negative response... You could tell that he was not really down on someone else's point of view."

Participant 3 talked about why he wants to participate in decisions with his coach about different aspects of the team:

I like a coach who has a style that is more personable with the players than as a dictator...someone as a coach who is working with the team, instead of for the team... looking for input from his players to improve the way we are playing. It is after all the players who are playing the game... that seems to me it would be bring more success because everyone on the team feels like they are part of the team. If they feel like they are part of the team, they are probably going to give a great deal of effort.

Participant 4 also talked about the importance for his coach to look for and encourage input from his athletes when he said the following:

They got to be able to talk with the players all of the time and be open to new ideas and be willing to listen to the players. I don't want someone who is going up there and be like do this and do that and just be like you know a drill sergeant. I don't want that. I want input from all the players and the coach and the coach is kind of like the cornerstone there. He's the leader overall and he makes the final decisions, but he is almost like... he should be like a part of the team. Yeah, you look to him as your coach but its more input from everyone and he just kind of putting it altogether sort of....I think they should talk to everyone involved, involve everyone.

Participant 4 said the following about authoritative coaches, "I had coaches in the past that have just been totalitarian or whatever you want to call it and it didn't work well."

Later when participant 4 was asked why he felt that he did not want this type of behavior from his coach, he said the following:

I'm not a big person on taking orders, like I have no problem taking orders you know in a job, people telling me what to do and stuff like that. But I rather, instead of like someone just saying, you play here, you do this and that's that. I rather have someone say, "Here's the way I think things should work, how do you feel about it? ...that's kind of what I like because it makes

you feel like you are part of the team... You want to incorporate your own views on things into it and still be able to work with what your coach wants you to do.

Participant 6 also talked about wanting his coach to be open to input from his athletes from the following statement: "...I also think it's important that he can relate to his players and listen to what they have to say because they are the ones out there playing and if they see something, feel something that is going on and they can switch it and he is open to those ideas..." Later, the same athlete when asked why he wants to have a coach who is democratic said the following: "...because if you have a coach who is always telling you what to do that can cause players to dislike him quite easily...that could turn off the team and creates an overall bad feeling between the coach and the players."

#### Theme #4

*They want their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.*

Participant 1 said the following in regards to his coach needing to have authority over his players, "He needs to have some rules, too...I mean there has to be some kind of authority so that everyone on the team is on the same page... I mean there are times when the coach needs to order people around but only when it is necessary."

Participant 3 also expressed the need for his coach to show who is in charge at times from the following statement:

I want a coach who demands that you put the work in. Sometimes you have to do stuff that you don't want to do. I mean, nobody likes to run sprints. But, if you have a coach that doesn't make you run sprints, then you are not going to win... You need somebody that's on you and wants you to keep going. Somebody who is going to get on your ass and make you run harder and make

you play harder. You need someone who is somewhat of a hard-ass at certain times...who has a suggestion and puts it out on the team and make them abide by that.

Participant 4 said the following in regards to his coach being authoritative, "The coach is the one in charge. He's leading, he's calling the shots." Later, the same athlete, went into detail for the reason why he wants his coach to be in control of the team:

I think he needs to be in charge too. We still need to look up to him and you got to respect him. As a coach he has to have the respect from his players. ...If you are screwing around or messing around, he can lay down the law and then you know we will still respect him and listen to him and be like come on lets get together and do what we have to do here and get it done. So I definitely want him to be in control, not like just go play and do nothing. I think some people.... If you have 18 players and the coach can do that and coach can be like, "Go practice." Well that's all right... I think people need that sometimes, a kick in the ass. I think he has to take control and earn the respect of his players.

Participant 5 when talking about his current coach said the following about discipline:

He's definitely the type of coach that is high on discipline... don't lose your ball... don't lose your water bottle. Make sure you have everything all of the time. Everyone get on the line and let's do some Braziliass... let's try to keep the line straight... let's try to keep some order... stay five yards behind the guy leading. That's important in soccer. You need discipline, you have to have discipline. It's a game of discipline.

Participant 6 summed up the need for his coach to possess the authority in order to provide direction for the team and be open to his athlete's ideas from the following statement:

When we as a team have to work on something in order to get better, I want the coach to have the authority to make sure we practice that thing. When he wants something done he has the authority to do it...I like a coach who can lay it on the line, when it's time to do that. I would say from experience that's what I've grown to like.

Later, the same athlete said, "You put a lot of time and dedication into (soccer), you need someone to say, 'Alright, this is what we have to do, it's a big game and this is what we are going to do.'"

When talking about his current coach, Participant 6 made the following statement:

I think he is authoritative in a way, but kind of quietly like he really doesn't say very much. He'd go to practice you know what you have to do from the start. He'll get you going and if your not hustling, he'll let you know which is good. It motivates you. I think in practice, he is good with his coaching ways, letting people know what they are doing, what their doing wrong in drills. He gets you doing things the way he wants them done. To play our style, he has drills to get players to do what he wants in games.

#### Theme #5

*They want their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they will be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they want the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling results in their trying to ignore the coach.*

Participant 1 when asked if there was any time for a coach to yell at his athletes, he made the following comment:

During a game, there is not much a coach can really do other than sit back and watch the action. Sure, he needs to make substitutions at the right times and perhaps adjust the style of the game that his team is playing...he can't do much else. It's during practice when the coach has to make sure the team is working on the right stuff to prepare the team for a match. That's when the coach has to do his yelling and other things to get everyone ready.

When participant 2 was asked what type of coach he looks for during practice, he said the following: "...Obviously, if you are messing up, to get on your case a little bit. If he has got to yell, then he's got to yell." When the same athlete was asked when are the



times for his coach to yell during practice, he said the following: "If you can tell that it's real sloppy play and the attitude isn't there, then he's got to yell, especially if it is a team wide thing."

Participant 3 said the following about what kind of coach he wants during practice:

I personally take that responsibility to push myself, but a lot of times I will look around and see guys that aren't working and I'll wonder why isn't the coach saying something, to say like, "Get going! Your teammates are counting on you, why don't you play?" It's good to hear them say that because you want to say it inside, but you don't want to get everybody pissed off at you.

Participant 5 also said, "During practice, I like a guy who is going to yell at us and tell us what to do. He's going to coach us, he's going to teach us and I want to get something out of it."

Participant 6 expressed similar sentiments when he said, "...stopping practices when people aren't into it one hundred percent...Say your going half-assed in practice, you want the coach to stop and yell, 'Hey, (X) get your ass in gear!'"

Participant 1 when asked what he looks for in a soccer coach while playing a game, he said:

Well, I don't like a coach who is going to yell at me when I'm playing in a game. It will only take me off my game. He'll end up distracting me more than really helping me. I need the space to do what I need to do... If a coach yells at me a lot, I will just tune that person out." ... Players are always going to make mistakes. Soccer is a difficult sport in terms of skill obviously because you play with your feet and not your hands. This difficulty allows room for many possible technical errors. So it is not going to do a coach any good who yells at his players for making mistakes. Instead, the coach should point out if your are not playing according to the team's strategies or game tactics.

Participant 2 when asked why he does not want his coach to yell at him during a

game, said the following:

If someone who's yelling all the time, it's not going to register. So I hate playing for coaches who are yelling all the time... Their constantly yelling at you it's such a distraction and you're more worried about what their thinking when you have the ball. If you are running down the sidelines and all the coach doing is yelling at you to cross the ball, you're worried about what he is saying than what you see... I don't like a coach who gets on his players. I mean, I think a good coach, if you messed up, knows you know you messed up. You know the coach isn't happy with you."

When participant 3 was asked what kind of style he likes his coach to possess during games he said the following:

I think a calm coach because he will usually get more accomplished than someone who flies off the handle a lot. Someone who is calm seems to be more poised and in control of themselves... Someone who goes and is yelling and screaming ... will a lot of times have a group of players that form against the coach, instead of forming with the coach. I had a coach who was very demanding, screamed a lot... stuff like that. That coach didn't get respect from anybody.

Participant 6 expressed the need for his coach to be the following during a game:

A coach who is very vocal, but talking to his players, instead of yelling at them all of the time. Why did you do this? Why did you do that? They don't have to yell, but try to communicate with them what to do next time to let them know what they did wrong... I think that when a player makes a mistake, ninety percent of the time he's going to realize... I don't think yelling at him will help.

#### Theme #6

*Because they participate in soccer to have fun, they want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.*

Participant 1 directly stated the following about enjoying himself when playing

soccer: "I feel good about myself when my coach notices that I did something real well. He always compliments me on the good things that I do on the field... I play my best when I'm enjoying myself." Participant 2 said the following when talking about having fun during practice:

As far as playing styles I guess or practicing. Someone who incorporates the game into practice is very nice, rather than just doing drill after drill which is supposed to be game like, but really isn't, you know? It makes the practices more enjoyable and also makes them more beneficial. Someone who can also sit back and be like every once in a while maybe have a fun practice or like after a tough game, you lost, it was real emotional. Maybe next day messing around at practice or relaxing or maybe having the day off or something like that.

Later, the same athlete, talked about how it is possible to be focused and having fun at the same time: "I'm serious and like really focus when we're doing something fun. You know we're playing the game were not doing just repetitive drills the whole time, we're playing eight on eight sometimes, four on four. That can be serious enough so you're not joking around and have fun."

Participant 3 also made the following statement when talking about having his coach making training enjoyable:

...That's another thing that I like in a coaching style... a kind of a game plan or practice plan that allows you to have fun. And fun doesn't mean screwing around. We played tag games and stuff like that and that's fun. That's like fun and that's good sometimes to break up the monotony. But fun playing a game, a little competition, keeping score, that's fun rather than just saying all right let's just play. Ah, like that game we play. I forget the name of it. There's like three or four teams and the loser has to run while the other team plays... it's just something that makes the play (more) fun.

Participant 4 also provided the following about practice and fun:

Personally, I just like to play. I know that you have to do drills and stuff and

I feel everything you need to do drill-wise can be incorporated into some type of playing, then your getting the running you need in. It's game fitness. Your getting everything you need to do in it. If he wants to work on touch, play one touch. If you want work on passing, say you get seven passes and then a goal. There are so many different games that you can play. I think everybody enjoys it a lot more and their not thinking about were doing this stupid drill on crossing. They're just playing...

Similarly, participant 6 said the following about what he wants from a coach as far as fun is concerned:

Also I'm looking for a guy, at times you got to have fun. You got, you know, there are times for seriousness, but at the same time there are times you got to relax and everyone got to crowd around and you just got to have pure fun. If it means spending 2 hours telling jokes the whole time instead of going out and training... you know there are times for that and you need a guy with a personality who will say fuck that, let's just have fun... It's important to have a guy who will let you joke around...

Participant 6 also said the following about the need for soccer to be fun, "...for me it has to be fun. If it's not fun then I am probably out there (on the field) doing a half-assed job, not really caring. If it is fun players probably give 100% and your going to win more and that will make it more fun."

Later, when the same athlete was asked what should be done to make playing soccer fun for him, he said the following about practice: "I would prefer my coach to make practice somewhat enjoyable and fun for me by giving his players positive feedback when they do something right."

### Common Coach Themes

1. The coach should be able to effectively teach and communicate his knowledge of soccer to his athletes because the athletes will listen to and respect the coach.

2. The coach should develop a good relationship with each of his athletes through an open-line of communication based on care about issues on and off the field.

3. Due to the nature of the sport and the athlete, the coach should allow his athletes the freedom to make decisions off the field and when playing in games.

4. The coach should treat each athlete with equal fairness, but differently because each athlete is different.

Verbatim responses by the coaches are presented in support of each common theme.

#### Theme #1

*The coach should be able to effectively teach and communicate his knowledge of soccer to his athletes because the athletes will listen to and respect the coach.*

Participant 7 said the following when asked what is the most important role for him as a coach, "I would say that my most important role is to teach my athletes about the sport of soccer. This is why I am ultimately here... to teach them about soccer. I consider myself to be a teacher as a coach. I think I am a master-teacher who is involved with players at a very intense level. So I try to teach them as much as I can about the game."

Later, when the same coach was asked how he thought his athletes perceived his style of coaching, he said the following, "They would see me as a tactitioner. I think that they feel that I know the game and that I can teach them things about the game and that, you know, I can make good decisions about adjustments to make in different situations. I

think they recognize this and as a result listen to what I say about the sport.”

Participant 8 also expressed the need for a coach to have good knowledge of the sport from the following:

I like to think of myself as a teacher who is a coach. I'm trying to teach my players things about the game that I know from experience. A lot of my players are already pretty savvy about soccer. Overall, soccer players in the U.S. have improved their knowledge of the game. But I still have to communicate to them my knowledge and try new things tactically. If my athletes can see that what they are doing is making them better, then they will respect what I say more and try what I ask them to do.

## Theme #2

*The coach should develop a good relationship with each of his athletes through an open-line of communication based on care about issues on and off the field.*

Participant 8 said the following about why he thinks it is important to develop quality relationships with his athletes:

I try to let the players know that I care about them. I care about their feelings and that I care about whether they got shafted because they are not playing or that I care about them as people and their family if something is going on or their girlfriend there's something going on or if they get hurt you know I make sure that they know because the important part about that is they are away from home and something you and me would take for granted being away from home, they are college students and it's their first time away from home and you are not quite as self-assured and self-confident and you know you miss your parents so I think they need that. They will then listen to what I've got to say and will try hard for me because they think I care about them.

Later, the same coach said the following about making the importance of making a good connection with his athletes:

...one of the things you always hear from other kids that are at other schools or at whatever level ... they do not like when there is a lack of communication... They don't know why they are not playing or they don't know why the coach does certain things.. So yeah, I think that is critical that there is a lot of talk

that the door is always open for them to come. Our players come in all the time, just about every guy on the team ... just waltzes in unannounced wants to talk, sometime its more formal than others, sometimes it's more sad or upset than others... a lot of times they come in for no reason.

Participant 7 also said the following about why he is constantly trying to improve his connections with his athletes:

I'm in the process of working in trying to improve or to get better at making the athlete-coach connection. We're working on some different things with me and some different things with the players in trying to make that line of communication more open and ultimately if we can open that line of communication, I will be able to take the players to a higher level. I feel pretty confident about the soccer side of things, but that psychological part is always extremely difficult.

### Theme #3

*Due to the nature of the sport and the athlete, the coach should allow his athletes the freedom to make decisions off the field and when playing in games.*

When Participant 7 was asked to describe his style of coaching, he said the following:

Well I think in soccer, soccer is a player's game as opposed to basketball for example which I think is more of a coach dominated sport, soccer is a player's game. There are no time outs. So that's a big factor in how I've coached, my coaching style. I am not heavily involved verbally in the contest. I allow the players to control the game.

Later, the same coach, said, "I go back to the idea of decision-making. I think that's a huge thing in soccer. I think it's one of the reasons kids like to play soccer. The fact that's it's a very player-oriented game and they can make the most of the decisions themselves."

Participant 7 also said the following about the sport of soccer: "You are hurting a

player's development by not giving them that freedom of choice on the field. Most of the decisions in soccer are not black and white. Most of the decisions are A, B, C, or D.

Participant 8 said the following about allowing his player's to make choices off the field.

I leave them freedom to make choices. I've never told them they can't join a fraternity for example, but yet I'll point out the negative things that fraternities have to offer them which those people aren't telling them about... showing up for practices in the winter time late because you had to stay up late cleaning the fraternity houses... whatever. And one of our guys won't be able to deal with the freedom to make his own choices about things like that... like alcohol. I've never had a drinking policy. I thought it was better if the team and I tell them that they need to get together and talk about what they are going to do. I think it builds more character that I as the coach say if you want to stay out drinking all night, the night before a game, do it... see how you play... go ahead. I really think that you as a person decide on your own what you are going to do it builds more character because you made the decision rather than have some dictator tell them.

Later, the same coach said the following about the freedom on the field: "It is a player's game, not a coach's game. My players need to figure out the game on their own. Like off the field stuff, they need to learn about taking responsibility for the choices you make in life. So if you go forward when you weren't suppose to and get burned, you have to live with that decision."

#### Theme #4

*The coach should treat each athlete differently, but differently because each athlete is different.*

Participant 7 said the following about how he treats his athletes, but the difficulty his athletes have in seeing this treatment:

Individually there has to be a difference in how you treat each person. I think you try to treat everyone equally, but I don't try to treat everyone the same.



I'm up front with the kids and this is what I tell them. The difficulty the kids have is seeing different treatment that's fair, you know it's all how you look at it. It's a personal thing, you know... Is the coach treating me differently and unfairly or is he just... are they mature enough to see that he's treating him differently, but it's also fair. You know it's a fine line. It's easier to go the other way, in many ways... this is the way it's going to be, but is it the best thing for the players? And ultimately probably it's not, it's a bit unrealistic. That same kid that might have problems with how you are treating someone at one particular point, when there're the one who gets the different treatment because of the particular situation and that point say... it wasn't so bad, now I'm the one who getting this treatment and I see why he did that. They have to be mature enough to see that.

Participant 8 also expressed that he treats each player differently from the following statement:

... you have to treat each person individually. While at the same time you need to have certain guidelines that everybody needs to follow, at the same time everybody is an individual and each kid who walks through that door and wants to talk, I have a little bit of a different demeanor with each one of them.

### Summary

The results primarily focused on the emergent common themes associated with coaching style preferences held by male soccer athletes at Upstate New York, Division III, colleges. This study identified these coaching style preferences and the reasoning for having these preferences. In order to have a better understanding of why these athletes preferred these coaching styles, this study also identified the coach's use of coaching styles and the reasoning for employing these various coaching styles. Despite the participant's unique responses, six common themes from the athletes were identified and presented and four common themes from the coaches were identified and presented.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

This study explored the following research question: What are the coaching style preferences of male soccer athletes on Upstate New York, Division III, college teams and their reasons for having these preferences? This chapter provides a discussion of the coaching style preferences as described by male, soccer athletes and their reasons for having each of these preferences. A discussion of the rationale for making use of particular coaching styles as described by the coaches is also provided. Conclusions are drawn and discussed in relation to the outlined research question, the current body of literature, and the overall realm of coaching styles.

#### Principal Findings

Three soccer athletes from two teams ( $n = 6$ ) and their coaches ( $n = 2$ ) were interviewed. Each athlete's higher-order themes were compared to every other athlete's higher-order themes and common themes were identified as previously discussed. The common themes depicted the soccer coaching style preferences of these athletes and the reasons for wanting these coaching styles. Six common themes emerged from the athletes' interviews and data analysis. Similarly, a coach's higher-order themes were compared to the other coach's higher-order themes and common themes were identified. These common themes portrayed the type of soccer coaching styles being implemented by the coaches and shed light onto why their athletes have particular coaching style preferences. Four common themes emerged.

### Common Athlete Themes

1. They want their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer to them. As a result, they will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.

2. They want their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he is approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cares about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.

3. They want a democratic coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and they will play as best as they can play.

4. They want their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.

5. They want their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they will be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they want the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling results in their trying to ignore the coach.

6. Because they participate in soccer to have fun, they want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.

### Common Coach Themes

1. The coach should be able to effectively teach and communicate his knowledge of soccer to his athletes because the athletes will listen to and respect the coach.
2. The coach should develop a good relationship with each of his athletes through an open-line of communication based on care about issues on and off the field.
3. Due to the nature of the sport and the athlete, the coach should allow his athletes the freedom to make decisions off the field and when playing in games.
4. The coach should treat each athlete with equal fairness, but differently because each athlete is different.

### Interpretations

In relation to the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions were drawn. Interpretations of each conclusion, in association with previous research, are provided. The conclusions begin to define coaching style preferences of male soccer athletes at Upstate New York, Division III, colleges.

#### Theme #1

*Soccer athletes want their coach to provide them with training and instruction. They will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.*

It is usual for college soccer players to want their coach to provide them with training and instruction (Gordon, 1986). Results from the current study support this statement in that every athlete preferred to have a coach who could provide them with the skills, techniques, and tactics of soccer. For example, when participant 3 was asked what

he looks for in a soccer coach, he said the following. "The first thing I look for in a coach in any sport is, of course, a knowledge of the game... that they have played the game and that they have had the experiences that we are having at the time... Someone that the athletes look up to and that they recognize their talents." In a similar fashion, participant 5 directly stated,

The most important thing I want from my coach is to have him teach me about the game of soccer. It's a very complex game and there are many different ways to approach (the game). I think that my best coaches are the ones who can teach me something new about the game because it ultimately makes me know more about soccer and a better player.

It is clear, due to the complex and sophisticated nature of soccer, that these athletes preferred to have a coach that could help them increase their technical and tactical knowledge of soccer. The sport of soccer involves eleven field players on a team, each moving in a fairly complicated manner, and often at the same time. While the ultimate purpose of soccer may be to score goals against the competition, there is no conventional way to attain this goal. There are in actuality a number of strategies that can be incorporated into a particular game plan. While many of these athletes may not be apt at the technical or tactical portions of soccer, they do realize the degree of expertise that is needed to properly analyze the aspects of the game and to communicate these to them.

Chelladurai and Carron (1983) found that male, basketball athletes' preferences for their coaches to train and instruct them reached its highest level when they competed on the college level. Although the current study examined soccer, results would support Chelladurai and Carron's (1983) findings. Many of these athletes have developed a strong

passion for the sport and a sound understanding of the technical and tactical aspects of the game before college. They have made a conscious decision to compete on the college level and have an interest in furthering their knowledge, learning more about the technical and tactical parts of soccer. College soccer athletes not only have the physical attributes to be competitive athletes, but also the mental capacities to be able to learn more about the sport. In a sense, these athletes want to learn more about soccer from their coach for their own benefit, to become better athletes by improving their knowledge of the game.

The reasons why these athletes preferred to have a knowledgeable coach are then more easily understood. These athletes believed that they would listen to a knowledgeable coach. They would listen to the coach and what he said about the physical, technical, and tactical aspects of the game because he would help them to know more about the game. Similarly, these athletes also wanted to play harder for a knowledgeable coach because they respected the talents of an expert coach. Again, they respected the coach's knowledge of the sport because he would likely make them better athletes. As a result, they want to try harder for the coach to show their appreciation for the coach's teachings.

It also seems apparent why these coaches employed this highly important preference to the athlete. They noticed that their athletes would respect them and listen to them when they were able to communicate their knowledge to their athletes. This is not surprising. An individual will usually listen to someone who has more expertise and knowledge in a given subject matter. In fact, in a study based on a quantitative design, Gordon (1986) found that a soccer player's satisfaction with his coach occurred when his

coach supplied him with quality training and instruction. Similarly, Chelladurai (1984) found that when the coach supplied training and instruction beyond the expectations of his athletes, in this case for college wrestling, basketball, and track and field, his athletes were extremely satisfied with their coach.

### Theme #2

*Soccer athletes want their coaches to provide them with social support. They will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.*

Results from this study support this statement in that every athlete expressed the preference that their coach be concerned about their welfare on and off the field and have positive interpersonal relation with them. For example, participant 2 directly stated: "My coach needs to understand me by asking questions about my life." Participant 3 also said the following about his coach's social support: "With me he's been really good about helping me on and off the field, you know? My grandmother was sick last year and he would ask me about that. He would ask about classes. To me, in particular that makes me feel good like I'm an important part of the team, you know? I want to do my best for coach because he cares about me." Similarly, participant 4 stated: "I want to be able to relate to my coach, you know, so that he knows what's going on in my life. I don't want an aloof kind of a coach."

It is not uncommon for college athletes to want to have a good relationship with their coach and their coach to be concerned for their well being (Carron & Chelladurai, 1983; Garland & Barry, 1988; Schliesman 1987). Many of these athletes are experiencing extensive time away from their original homes for the first time. They may be accustomed

to relying on the support of a parent or relative during confusing and/or difficult social experiences. As a result, they look to their coach as a substitute for this support. In some instances, they may not be seeking or offered support in other realms of their college lives. For example, participant 1 said: “(My coach should be) almost a father figure, kind of a guy. Your teachers here (school) really don’t do much beyond the classroom to help you and I don’t get that.”

Participants 1, 3, 4, and 6 reported they would feel like they were part of the team when social support was evident. For example, participant 3 reported,

When my coach talks to me about stuff that has little or nothing to do with soccer... like school work or other sports, it makes me feel like I am important, that I’m recognized as a human being, not just a soccer player. It makes me feel like I am part of the team. Even though it’s a team sport, it’s important that I am recognized for who I am...

Participants 2, 4, and 5 believed they would give their greatest possible athletic effort to a coach who provided them with social support. For example, participant 5 said, “When the coach makes me feel wanted, then I will give my most. I mean that I will do everything in my power to play my best brand of soccer because the coach cares about me.” It seems clear that when their coach fulfills their preference for social support, they will feel like they are an accepted and an important part of the team and will try their best for their coach simply because they feel recognized and supported by him.

Again, it seems apparent why soccer coaches attempted to develop positive and caring relations with their athletes. The coaches reported that their athletes respected and listened to them when they developed a relationship based on welfare for their athletes.



Whether or not the cause of employing this type of behavior was a conscious decision by the coaches is not of relevance. Instead, when the coach appeared to care about his athletes on and off the field, his athletes wanted to reciprocate his effort with increased effort on the field. It seems apparent, therefore, for soccer coaches to consistently approach and express to their athletes concern for their well being both on and off the field.

### Theme #3

*Soccer athletes want to participate with their coach in decisions pertaining to practice methods, player personnel, and game tactics and strategies. They will feel like they are part of the team and want to play as best as they can play.*

Results from this study suggest that all athletes preferred to be included by the coach when making decisions about structuring practice, playing time for different athletes, and strategizing against competition. For example, participant 5 directly stated: "I like it when my coach asks me what we should work on in practice and who should be playing in games. It is also important for him to find out what was working and what wasn't working when I am playing in a game."

This appears to be in support of Gordon's (1988) study of decision-making styles in college soccer. He found that university soccer athletes preferred the head coach to make decisions in virtually all situations and especially those pertaining to performance matters (i.e., training routines, team selection, and team tactics). Interestingly, he also found that the same athletes preferred the coach to consult with them more often to gather

their input on these performance matters. These athletes wanted their coach to make final team decisions based on their consultations with the coach.

It is clear from this study that these athletes wanted to be involved in the decision-making process on issues pertaining to training and playing effectiveness. While the semantics in their reasoning differed slightly, all the athletes indicated they would feel more a part of the team when their coach asked them to participate in decision making. As a result, participants 2, 4, and 6 also expressed that they would try to play to the best of their abilities. It should also be noted that participant 4 expressed that his coach should be the one who has the authority to make final decisions. He preferred his coach to have the final say in such matters.

It is interesting that the coaches provided little or no insight into their athletes' preferences for participation in specific decision-making processes. In fact, results from the coaches' interviews provided no reference to why their athletes were not included in making decisions. However, coaches did discuss including the captains of the team in some decision-making processes. This appears to be in support of Gordon's (1982) study that found coaches, from six different sports, not believing that athletes knew enough about university-level athletics to warrant decision-making capabilities.

It is not clear why the coaches from the current study chose not to allow their athletes to participate in making decisions pertaining to performance matters. However, it might be wise for the coaches to consult with their athletes more explicitly and certainly more often on soccer issues, even though they may reserve the final decision for

themselves. Being consulted with and feeling “part of things” would make the athletes feel they are being involved in the decision-making process. If the athletes perceive they are getting what they prefer, then they will be more satisfied athletes because of the perception-preference congruence. This appears to be in direct support of the multi-dimensional leadership model (Chelladurai, 1978; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978). It proposed that athlete performance and satisfaction were related directly to how closely these behaviors coincide and that similar preferred and actual coaching behavior affects performance levels positively.

#### Theme #4

*Soccer athletes want their coach to be authoritative for a number of motivational purposes.*

It is not uncommon for male athletes from interdependent sports (e.g., basketball, hockey, soccer, etc.) to want their coach to demonstrate authority and control over the team (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Garland & Barry, 1990; Gordon, 1988; Terry & Howe, 1985). Results from this current study support this statement in that all the athletes preferred their coaches to be authoritative at times. For these athletes, authority meant that the coach made it clear that he was the team leader; he took charge and control of the team. The coach’s authority was primarily recognized when he directed his team towards reaching a specified goal and when he ordered his team towards that goal.

The athletes expressed this preference for motivational reasons. One, it provided them with the intensity and focus necessary in order to attain a specified goal. For

example, the coach made certain that the team was training with enough intensity and focus to be prepared for an important competition. Two, it gave them a direction to follow. For instance, the coach made certain that the team worked on a particular skill or strategy during training for a future competition. Therefore, it can be argued that the athletes looked to their coaches for motivation.

Apparently, the athletes prefer an authoritative coach when they perceive that the situation warrants one. They seem to realize that they would not be able to fully provide the necessary direction, intensity, and focus all the time for themselves. Therefore, they want a coach who can and will do it for them. For example, participant 2 said: "When it comes right down to it, the coach should have the authority to make sure the team is on the same page... He is the one with the expertise and ability to see what we need to do as a team to have more success. We are not professionals so we need somebody to do this for us."

While there is no concrete evidence from the coaches' common themes that might shed light on why these athletes prefer authoritative behavior from the coach, one of the coaches described his reasoning for using authoritative behavior with his team. Consistent with the athletes' reasoning, he reported being authoritative with his athletes as a means of maintaining accountability. When his athletes were not meeting the effort and intensity levels as expected, he emphasized the importance of these performance levels.

#### Theme #5

*Soccer athletes want the coach to yell at them during practice for motivational*

*purposes, but not during games because they will ignore the coach.*

Interestingly, all of these athletes preferred their coach to yell and scream at them when they were not expending the necessary energy to reach a specified goal during practice. They gave a license to their coach to yell and scream at them during practice when effort levels were not acceptable. For example, participant 3 stated: "So if your working your ass off, you expect them (your teammates) to be working their ass off and if they are not, then that is where the coach should come in and say something. I mean practice is the time for the coach to yell at you and tell you what you need to do to get your ass in gear."

But, this does not mean that the coach should consistently yell at his athletes. Instead, as participant 5 stated, "The coach should really pick and choose the times he yells at us to make his points meaningful." Again, these athletes need someone to monitor their intensity, focus, and effort levels because they are not capable of doing it themselves. It is interesting to note that to date there have been no other studies that discuss athletes' preferences for having their coaches yell at them.

During competition, however, these athletes reported a preference for their coach not to yell or scream at them. In fact, all the participants communicated the ineffectiveness of this coaching behavior. For instance, participant 4 said,

But when I'm playing I don't want my coach running up and down the side-lines yelling at me about what to do with the ball or what type of run to make. He will only make me nervous and unable to focus in on what the hell I'm doing out there. I had a coach who constantly yelled during games and after a while everyone on the team just blocked him out and tried to forget about him.

It is difficult for a coach to communicate tactical or technical information to an athlete during a competition. An extremely dynamic environment is created during a soccer match that involves multiple decision-making situations for individuals that occur in short periods of time. It is not possible or realistic for coaches to try to specifically direct individual athletes at specific moments. For those coaches who yell and scream at their athletes in an attempt to provide direction will find this situation even more difficult to control. Instead, coaches should provide technical and tactical advice during practice sessions and the halftime of a match in order to prepare or adjust an individual and the team for match competitions. This sentiment was directly expressed by participant 6 when he stated, "The coach should not yell during games, except maybe at the referees. He should do his yelling at practice and make adjustments for games at the halftime."

#### Theme #6

*Soccer athletes want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience for them.*

The results from this study also support this statement in that five out of the six athletes expressed a preference for having fun when playing soccer. There is no current evidence in the literature to support these athletes' preference for their coach to make soccer playing enjoyable. The participants also proposed a number of different ways their coach could make the soccer environment enjoyable. Similar to Horne and Carron (1985) and Weiss and Fredricks (1986), the athletes in this study suggested that the coach give positive feedback during training and games. They also reported that their coach should

let them play in soccer games during practice. Results indicated that these athletes did not want to be involved in repetitious drills during practice because they found it monotonous and boring. In addition, athletes wanted to be able to “joke around” with their teammates and coach. This sometimes relieves the stress to win and creates a relaxed environment that allows them to have fun and enjoy themselves.

This preference appears to be consistent with the NCAA Division III philosophy for the student-athlete. Academics should be the focal point for the Division III student-athlete, while athletics plays the role of a supplemental outlet for the student-athlete. While academics and athletics do not have to be mutually exclusive, most of these athletes expressed that they attended a Division III institution primarily for academic benefits. They participated in athletics because it was something they enjoyed doing, they received some degree of satisfaction from participation. In fact, participant 2 directly expressed this belief, “... it’s Division III, it’s not our life. It’s something fun to do.” Expressing similar sentiments, participant 4 said:

Let’s face it. I’m out there to have a good time. I mean, I want to enjoy what I’m doing. If I feel like it’s no fun, like a job, I’m not going to care as much and probably not try that hard all the time. We’re not professional players, it’s Division III soccer and the coach should keep that in mind. I know you have to work hard. I’m not saying that you always have fun, but in general it’s got to be fun. I want to look forward to going to practice everyday.

The college experience is generally regarded as a time for learning and growing, self-conceptualizing, developing positive relationships with faculty, peers, and administrators, and perhaps equally important, a time for having fun.

For a university soccer program at the Division I level, many of the athletes are

playing for an athletic scholarship. This places pressure on them to perform well in order to maintain their scholarship status. It also requires them to focus more on the athletic part of their college experience and, too often, less on the academic aspects. This may, in turn, force the athlete to envision playing soccer in an unpleasant manner, one that must be done in order to receive an education, rather than as an enjoyable experience. This is not the case in Division III intercollegiate athletics. It is not that Division I soccer athletes are not capable of having fun, but there might be possible repercussions of being involved in athletics for money rather than the sheer pleasure in participating in a sport.

One of the coaches addressed this preference for enjoyment when he claimed that the coach should ultimately create an environment that could be enjoyed by his athletes because they would try harder when the environment was fun and relaxed. People usually excel at work, athletics, hobbies, and other fields of human endeavor when they are enjoying what they are doing. They do not consider a prescribed task as meaningless or unpleasant, rather, they complete the task with full effort and vigor simply because they like it. In fact, participant 4 directly stated, "When you enjoy something you are going to do well at that thing."

The concept of freedom also emerged from the coaches' interviews. In a certain sense, the coaches defined fun and enjoyment as freedom for these athletes. In other words, these coaches maintained that their athletes were merely expressing a preference for freedom when expressing a preference for fun. For example, they want to have the freedom to decide when they can joke and fool around with their fellow teammates. The



coaches were also using the term freedom to describe the opportunities for their athletes to express themselves. They contended that soccer athletes are generally more individualistic than other athletes and the sport of soccer is a uniquely free, thinking game. As one of the coaches stated, "It's a player's game, not a coach's game." Therefore, the athletes get enjoyment from the game because they are able to express their individual character and make various playing style choices on the field.

## Chapter 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study investigated the coaching style preferences of soccer athletes on successful Northeastern, Division III, soccer teams. A qualitative phenomenological research design was utilized to assess the coaching style preferences of these athletes. Specifically, male, soccer athletes ( $n = 6$ ) and head soccer coaches ( $n = 2$ ) were interviewed, using an in-depth, semi-structured interview format. This qualitative inquiry allowed the athletes and coaches to describe in detail any thoughts, feelings, or beliefs they had regarding coaching style preferences. Results provided insight into and understanding about coaching style preferences of Division III, college, soccer athletes.

With greater insight into athlete perceptions comes a greater understanding of their preferred coaching styles. The greater the understanding, the greater the potential for applying some of these coaching style preferences in practice sessions and competition. By learning about the factors that influence soccer coaching style preferences, soccer coaches can be more knowledgeable and better prepared to implement the most effective coaching style in terms of athlete satisfaction and performances in intercollegiate soccer.

Specifically, emergent themes suggest that Division III, soccer athletes want their coach to be experienced and enthusiastic about the game, to provide personal support both on and off the field, to be receptive to input concerning techniques and tactics, and to emphasize the enjoyable nature of the game. Division III, soccer athletes also desire their

coach to be motivational in terms of hard work, intensity, and direction through authoritative and democratic behavior. As a result, these soccer athletes felt a stronger bond to their team and attempted to participate to the best of their abilities.

### Conclusions

Six common themes emerged from the athletes' interviews and data analyses:

1. They want their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer to them. As a result, they will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.

2. They want their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he is approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cares about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.

3. They want a democratic coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and they will play as best as they can play.

4. They want their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.

5. They want their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they will be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they want the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling results in their trying to ignore the coach.

6. Because they participate in soccer to have fun, they want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.

These themes provide insight into the coaching style preferences of college soccer athletes. However, it appears it would be significant to investigate each theme separately.

Future studies could attempt to better understand each theme by focusing on one theme at a time. For example, these soccer athletes want a coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics and game strategies. What exactly makes a coach democratic? When and how often should the coach approach his or her athletes for their input? What if the coach feels like their input is incorrect? By investigating each theme more in-depth, there might emerge more information to enhance and further support each theme.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Coaching style preferences and the reasons for having these preferences contribute to the ongoing understanding of the effectiveness of various coaching styles. Although these results add to this understanding, there are several issues that remain to be addressed through future research. It would seem logical to begin with a follow-up to the present phenomenological study and design. Knowing the coaching style preferences of Division III, soccer athletes and understanding why these preferences exist is useful information for college soccer coaches. Replication of the investigation of the coaching style preferences of college soccer athletes would be useful in furthering our knowledge about coaching.

Future replication research should include more subjects and interviews conducted throughout the course of the athlete's competitive season. With more subjects, it would then be possible to more fully examine the applicability and generalizability of the common themes. As currently reported, results are not generalized outside the subject pool of applicants. Also, with additional interviews throughout the competitive season, a more detailed account of the athlete's coaching style preferences and reasons for these preferences would be possible. It is possible that individual perceptions of coaching styles may change in relation to winning and losing, changes in playing time, and fluctuation of cohesion levels.

It has been shown that when the athlete's preference for a coaching style is in harmony with the actual coaching style, a degree of satisfaction and performance effectiveness emerges from the athletes (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai, 1978; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978; Gordon, 1988; Schliesman, 1987; Weiss and Fredrichs, 1986). Therefore, it is also recommended that future research examine the actual coaching styles being exhibited by coaches from the athletes' points of view. This study did not investigate the type of coaching styles being experienced by soccer athletes, instead what they preferred in a coaching style. Again, using similar qualitative methodologies and study designs, the perception of the coaching styles that athletes are currently experiencing could be compared to the coaching style preferences of these athletes. The current study did not set out to examine this perception-preference relationship. However, it would be interesting and perhaps more significant to investigate one of the facets of athlete

satisfaction in relation to the discrepancy between perception and preference.

It may also be important to further qualitatively assess the coaches' reasons for employing specific coaching styles. This study was primarily designed to investigate the coaching style preferences of soccer athletes and reasons for these preferences. Any emerging information from the coaches was used merely as supplemental evidence to help understand the coaching style preferences of their athletes. Future studies should include more coaches and a greater focus on a coach's rationale for use of a particular coaching style.

It must be noted that having a preference does not always mean that the preference is justified. A preference is simply a preference. While it may be desirable, it may not be realistic. Perhaps these athletes do not have the maturity or the knowledge to realize what coaching styles are most beneficial for them or perhaps they are being naive when they make preference statements. For example, an athlete may prefer to have a laissez-faire coach, but in actuality he needs an authoritative coach to make sure he is training properly. Perhaps coaches shouldn't take into account the coaching style preferences of his or her athletes. The coaches usually are the ones with the expertise in soccer. Perhaps because of this expertise and experience they know what is best for the athletes they are coaching. In any case, soccer coaches' perceptions of their coaching style needs to be further qualitatively investigated.

This study also investigated two highly successful intercollegiate soccer programs that have been consistently ranked nationally for the past decade. It is possible that the

athletes preferred their current coaching style because of the team's success in terms of wins and losses. They could actually prefer other styles of coaching but ignore them due to the program's success. Future studies could be completed at universities and colleges with both successful and unsuccessful soccer programs. It is possible that preferences for coaching styles vary depending on the overall success of the programs.

The concepts of enjoyment and fun need to be examined more extensively. Although the present study showed that athletes preferred for their coaches to make playing soccer enjoyable and fun, it did not address specifically what they meant by fun and enjoyment. Does fun involve hard work? Does fun involve attainment of goals? As previously discussed, there is no current literature that effectively deals with these concepts for Division III soccer athletes.

The concept of interpersonal relations of the coach and athlete needs further investigation. While the present study showed that athletes preferred having a positive relationship with their coaches, it did not address or provide the differences in the various coach-athlete relationships. While, it appears that the coach should treat each athlete with respect and genuine care, it is impossible for the coach to act the same with each athlete simply because each athlete is unique. Having a better understanding of the actual relationship between coach and athlete seems to be an important factor in determining the type and quality of relationship between that coach and athlete. By further assessment of the different coach-athlete relationships, a more complete and holistic understanding of coaching styles and preferences can be gained.

Although much more research is needed to enhance the application of the present findings, the results provide insight into coaching style preferences of Division III soccer players and their reasoning for these preferences. At the same time, there is much more to be gained by continuing in this line of research. Several recommendations have been made in the hope of adding to the results and conclusions already discussed and to serve the soccer coach in finding the most effective coaching style for his athletes.



## APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
FOR ATHLETES**1. Purpose of the Study**

To provide an in-depth description of the coaching style preferences and the rationale for having coaching style preferences by Division III, college soccer athletes.

**2. Benefits of the Study**

- a) By participating in this study, the subjects will have a better understanding of their soccer coaching style preferences.
- b) To supply college soccer coaches with a better understanding of soccer coaching style preferences of Division III, soccer athletes.

**3. What You Will Be Asked To Do**

- a) Subjects will be given a semi-structured interview concerning their soccer coaching style preferences. Interviews will be recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed.
- b) Subjects will also be observed by the primary researcher during various practice and competitive situations.

**4. What You Can Expect to Happen as a Result of Your Participation in This Study**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for subjects participating in this study. This study does not present any physical, psychological, or social risks to the subjects. Subject's participation will have no effect on their playing status.

**5. If You Would Like More Information About the Study**

Please contact Dawson L. Driscoll at (573) 341-4102.

**6. Withdrawal from the Study**

Subjects are allowed to withdraw from the study and the interview process at any time and without any penalty.

**7. How the Data Will Be Maintained in Confidence**

Names will not be mentioned nor published in the final project.

I have read the above and understand its contents. I agree to participate in this study and to have the interview session taped with the primary researcher. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

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Signature

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Date

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR ATHLETES

1. Describe what you look for in a coach?
2. Why do you think that this style is best for you?
3. What factors, past or present, contribute to these decisions?
4. How do you feel about yourself under this type of coaching style? Why?
5. Describe what style of coaching you like at practice? Why?
6. Describe what style of coaching you like during competition? Why?
7. Describe what style of coaching you like during an important competition like a championship game? Why?
8. What style of coaching do you believe that you are currently experiencing?
9. How does this style differ from your preferred style of coaching?
10. What aspects of this style are best for you?
11. What aspects of this style are bad for you?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to share concerning the coaching style you are currently experiencing or other coaching styles that you have experienced?
13. How have you felt sharing this information with me?

## APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
FOR COACHES1. Purpose of the Study

To provide an in-depth description of the coaching style preferences and the rationale for having coaching style preferences by Division III, college soccer athletes.

2. Benefits of the Study

- a) By participating in this study, the subjects will have a better understanding of their soccer coaching style preferences.
- b) To supply college soccer coaches with a better understanding of soccer coaching style preferences of Division III, soccer athletes.

3. What You Will Be Asked To Do

- a) Subjects will be given a semi-structured interview concerning their soccer coaching style preferences. Interviews will be recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed.
- b) Subjects will also be observed by the primary researcher during various practice and competitive situations.

4. What You Can Expect to Happen as a Result of Your Participation in This Study

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for subjects participating in this study. This study does not present any physical, psychological, or social risks to the subjects. Subject's participation will have no effect on their playing status.

5. If You Would Like More Information About the Study

Please contact Dawson L. Driscoll at (573) 341-4102.

6. Withdrawal from the Study

Subjects are allowed to withdraw from the study and the interview process at any time and without any penalty.

7. How the Data Will Be Maintained in Confidence

Names will not be mentioned nor published in the final project.

I have read the above and understand its contents. I agree to participate in this study and to have the interview session taped with the primary researcher. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

---

Signature

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Date

## APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR COACHES

1. Describe the style of coaching that you are currently implementing?
2. Why do you feel that this is the most effective style of coaching?
3. Specifically, how does this style of coaching affect the players?
4. How does this style of coaching create an environment so that players can be sufficiently motivated to perform at their best levels?
5. What factors contributed to implementing this style of coaching?
6. Have you used different styles in the past?
7. Why have you changed coaching styles now?
8. Does your style of coaching change according to the given situation?
9. Do you feel that this style of coaching is a reflection of your personality or a consciously chosen action?
10. Do you believe that the players are understanding and receptive of this style of coaching? Why or why not?
11. If not, how would you change their perception of the coaching style?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share concerning your coaching style or other coaching styles?
13. How have you felt in sharing this information with me?

## APPENDIX E

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 1

1. He wants his coach to have a good knowledge of the game and be able to communicate his knowledge to him and, as a result, will earn his respect and he will try harder for him.

2. He wants his coach to have a good relationship with him by being approachable to discuss issues on and off the field. Then he will feel like he is part of the team

3. He wants coach to allow him the freedom to play his own style in games because this will show him that the coach has confidence in him and he will also feel more confident.

4. He wants his coach to choose the appropriate times to yell at him and his teammates for motivational purposes during practice, but constantly berating him and his teammates at practice and games will cause them to be distracted and eventually lead to team dissention.

5. He wants his coach to be authoritative at times to show who is in control to provide direction for him and his team.

6. He wants his coach to be democratic by being open to input about practice and strategies for games because he will feel like he is a part of the team.

7. He wants to have fun playing soccer by his coach giving him positive feedback.

## APPENDIX F

## HIGHER ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 2

1. He wants his coach to be enthusiastic and know the game well and be able to communicate his knowledge to him because he will respect the coach and listen to what his coach has to say.
2. He wants his coach to have a good relationship with each him by showing that He cares for him on and off the field because he will want to try his hardest for his coach.
3. He wants his coach to yell at his team only at the appropriate times during practice, but rarely at games because this will create a negative environment and the team will eventually lose its respect for the coach.
4. He wants his coach to make the playing environment fun by providing positive feedback and allowing him to play during practice because he plays soccer to have fun.
5. He wants his coach to be open to discuss issues about the team because he will feel accepted and want to play his best.
6. He wants his coach to show the team that he is in control to provide direction and focus for the team.

## APPENDIX G

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 3

1. He wants his coach to have a good knowledge of the game and the ability to recognize talent and work ethics of his teammates because he will respect him and want to improve his own game.
2. He wants his coach to have a good relationship with him based on care and respect on and off the field so he can discuss individual and team problems and feel like he is an important part of the team.
3. He wants his coach to provide direction, appropriate fitness, motivation, drill variation, and explain the reasoning behind drills during practice.
4. He wants his coach at times to ask to him for input in regards to practice and game tactics, times when he needs to take control and be demanding of the team in order to motivate his athletes for important games.
5. He wants his coach to pay special attention to each athlete on the team so he will feel important to the team and know what he needs to improve and work on in order to be better.
6. He wants his coach to yell at the appropriate times during practice to ensure that he and his teammates are playing up to their potentials well, but rarely at games because he will eventually lose his composure and respect for his coach.
7. He wants his coach to create a positive and fun environment by playing often

during practice and allowing time for him to joke around with his teammates because he wants to have fun when playing soccer.



## APPENDIX H

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 4

1. He wants his coach to develop a good relationship with each athlete that is based on an open-line of communication and, as a result, he will get the most out of his athletes because they will respect him.

2. He wants his coach to be open to and encourage input from the team in regards to player personal, tactics, and team climate because each athlete will feel part of the team and, as a result, give greater effort.

3. He wants his coach to have the authority to make final decisions in regards to player personnel and strategy in order to provide direction and focus for the team.

4. He wants his coach to give him the freedom to incorporate his own playing style into the team's overall playing style because he will enjoy the game more and give greater effort.

5. He wants his coach to demonstrate knowledge of the game because will earn the team's respect and they will listen to him

6. While he does not want his coach to yell at him athletes during games, there are appropriate times for the coach to yell at him especially as a motivational tool for important competition and to increase effort levels.

7. He wants his coach to provide a fun playing environment for him especially by providing positive feedback, playing during practice, and letting him joke around with

other teammates because he will enjoy playing the game more.

## APPENDIX I

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 5

1. He wants his coach to be knowledgeable about the game and be able to communicate this knowledge to him so that he will listen to the coach and want to listen to his coach.
2. He wants his coach to set high performance goals for the team so they are challenged to be the best they can be.
3. He wants his coach to develop a positive relationship by demonstrating that he cares for about issues facing him on and off the field because he will be motivated to try his best.
4. The coach needs to be honest with his athletes in terms of basing playing time on talent and effort, not merely character.
5. He wants his coach to ask him and his teammates what they should work on to improve, who should be playing, and how they should be playing because each athlete will feel part of the team.
6. He wants his coach to take control of the team in order to provide the needed intensity and focus for success, while allowing them the freedom to play their own style.
7. During practice, he wants his coach to know when to yell at the team when it is not playing up to its potential.

## APPENDIX J

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 6

1. He wants his coach to have a good relationship and communication with him on and off the field because he will feel important to the team.

2. He wants his coach to have an expertise tactically and demonstrate enthusiasm for the game because he will be more dedicated to improving and to the team.

3. While he wants his coach to be authoritative in order to provide direction, focus, and intensity for him and his team, there are other times when he wants his coach to be open to and encourage his input because he will feel part of the team and, as a result, give greater effort on the field.

4. He wants his coach to create a fun environment to play soccer by giving him positive feedback and letting him joke around with his teammates because he plays soccer for its enjoyment value.

5. He wants his coach to be vocal, provide positive feedback, maintain intensity and focus, and provide a variety of drills during practice because the his interest, focus, and effort levels will be greater.

6. He wants his coach to be vocal during games providing tactical information and adjustments, but not yelling at him for making technical mistakes because he will be distracted when playing.

## APPENDIX K

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 7

1. The coach needs to be a good tactitioner and be able to teach his knowledge of the game to his athletes because they will respect him and then listen to what he has to say.
2. Due to the nature of soccer, the coach should allow during practice and games the freedom for his athletes to make their own decisions about how to play because it will improve his athlete's decision-making abilities.
3. The coach should be constantly trying to improve his relationship with each of his athletes by establishing an open-line of communication because they will respect him and try to play their best for him.
4. The coach should structure practices so he can positively influence his athlete's decision making choices.
5. The coach should treat each athlete with equality, but different because they are individuals.
6. The coach should ultimately create an environment that can be enjoyed by his athletes because they will try harder when the environment is fun and relaxed.

## APPENDIX L

## HIGHER-ORDER THEMES:

## PARTICIPANT 8

1. The coach should develop a good relationship with each of his athletes through an open-line of communication based on care about issues on and off the field because his athletes will respect and listen to their coach and they try hard for him.
2. The coach should treat each of his athletes fairly, but differently because they are individuals.
3. The coach should have a good knowledge of the game and be able to teach this knowledge effectively to his athletes because they will respect him and listen to what he has to say.
4. The coach needs to be authoritative when detailing expectation levels and for providing direction for the team.
5. Due to the nature of the sport and the athlete, the coach should allow his athletes the freedom to incorporate their own style of soccer when playing in games because they will enjoy playing and try harder.
6. The coach should use the game of soccer to teach his players about the lessons of life.

## APPENDIX M

### COMMON ATHLETE THEMES

1. They want their coach to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about soccer and able to effectively communicate his knowledge of soccer to them. As a result, they will improve their game, respect their coach, listen to him, and try harder for him.

2. They want their coach to have a positive relationship with them by showing that he is approachable to discuss any issue facing them on or off the field and be able to communicate to them that he cares about them as individuals and athletes. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and want to play to the best of their abilities.

3. They want a democratic coach who is open to and encourages input from his athletes about practice methods, player personnel, tactics, and game strategies. As a result, they will feel like they are part of the team and they will play as best as they can play.

4. They want their coach to be authoritative and take control of the team at times for motivational purposes: to provide intensity, direction, and focus for them.

5. They want their coach to choose only the appropriate times to yell at them during practice so they will be motivated to play up to their potentials. But, during a game, they want the coach to remain calm and not constantly yell at them for mistakes. Game yelling results in their trying to ignore the coach.

6. Because they participate in soccer to have fun, they want their coach to make playing soccer a fun experience by using positive reinforcement, incorporating play into practice, and allowing them to joke around at times.

## APPENDIX N

### COMMON COACH THEMES

1. The coach should be able to effectively teach and communicate his knowledge of soccer to his athletes because the athletes will listen to and respect the coach.
2. The coach should develop a good relationship with each of his athletes through an open-line of communication based on care about issues on and off the field.
3. Due to the nature of the sport and the athlete, the coach should allow his athletes the freedom to make decisions off the field and when playing in games.
4. The coach should treat each athlete with equal fairness, but differently because each athlete is different.



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