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EDITED BOOK:

Learning to Mentor in Sports Coaching: A Design Thinking Approach

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The Coffee Club

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Section I: Empathy

Step One: Background

Context of the conversation: The conversation in the following chapter revolves around an initial conversation between an experienced head coach (novice mentor but experienced coach) and two less experienced coaches (mentees) before the start of the new season. All three coaches are involved in coaching women's rugby, a growing team sport for women in the UK, however their coaching jobs put them in an adversarial position as their respective teams compete against each other in the university sport context.

The mentor has known both mentees for over ten years, both as players and coaches. The mentor and two mentees have played and coached together at various stages in their careers. All have participated in a mentoring programme within their sport, run by their National Sporting Organisation. They have benefitted from the technical and tactical input offered by this programme, including performance analysis, strength and conditioning and nutrition. All three coaches decided that they needed to consider developmental aspects that were non-rugby specific, their own coaching skills, hence the formation of 'The Coffee Club', an informal mentoring group.

Location: The conversation highlighted below took place in a staff and student coffee shop at the University where the coach mentor works. It occurred prior to the start of the new University competitive season, when all three coaches had more time to plan.

Timing: The mentor and mentees met for just under an hour. Below is an 8-minute extract from their conversation.

Focus: The aim of this initial face-to-face conversation between the mentor and both mentees was to consider how they wanted to structure and implement a mentoring programme. This

was a new experience for all the participants; so, the mentor guided this conversation to establish the ground rules for 'The Coffee Club'.

Biography Sports Coach Mentor: The mentor (**pseudonym Louise), 39, is the coach of the University Women's Rugby Team, one of the target sports at the University. Louise is an ex-International Rugby player, representing her country at the Women's World Cup, as well as playing professionally in Australia. She is a UKCC Level 3 coach in rugby union and has coached Scotland Academy, Scotland U18, Scotland U20s, Scottish Student 7s, GB Student 7s and international invitation 7s teams. She was also Scottish Women's Rugby Coach of the Year in 2007 and University Coach of the Year in 2014. She counts herself as fortunate to have travelled the world coaching in Dubai and Hong Kong. This year the University team were league champions as well as winning the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) Championship final, the most prestigious competition in student rugby at a very rowdy Twickenham.

Although Louise has considerable experience as a player and a coach she has never acted as a mentor but feels that this is now an appropriate time for her to start.

Biography Sports Coach Mentee. The mentee (**pseudonym Sarah), 27, is a recently retired International Rugby player, amassing over 25 caps and winning a number of club titles. She has working with the National Sporting Organisation while playing but has now decided to coach and has taken a position as the coach of a University Women's Rugby Team. She has been 'fast-tracked' into coaching as an ex-player but feels she still has much to learn.

Biography Sports Coach Mentee. The mentee (**pseudonym Jill), 29, is another recently retired International Rugby player, gaining 12 caps during her playing career as well as representing her country at the Women's World Cup. She also was a successful 7s player at

International level. She is currently working within a University environment as the assistant

coach of the Women's Rugby Team.

Step Two: Extract from Mentoring Conversation

The following is an excerpt from the first meeting:

Louise: I hope you both know that I'm new to this….I've never done it before. I'm not really sure what we do or how we get this whole process started.

Sarah: Perhaps we could just recap where we are at the moment – what do you think?

Louise: That sounds like a good place to start. Do you both agree?

Jill: Yes – sounds good.

Louise: Shall I start and then you can both chip in when you think I have missed something important. OK, so we are all looking to develop as rugby coaches and we are all coaching teams that will start competing next month in the University leagues. We also have club commitments but those are not as 'important' as the University teams which is really the 'day job'! We want to think about our practical coaching and how we can make things better for the players, the teams and ultimately the performance. I think to do this we need to be open, honest and not afraid to make the tough calls by questioning each other – why we did things in a particular way. I've been 'appointed' as the mentor because I've been at this for the longest and I've also coached both of you. But I'm also very happy to be replaced at some stage if we feel that is the best way forward for all of us….

Jill: I think you are the obvious person to be the mentor – I wouldn't know where to start. You are actually doing this now, in my opinion, if I have any questions, or just need some reassurance then I know you are at the end of the phone or What'sApp.

Louise: Are you OK with this too Sarah?

Sarah: Yes, I think it will be good and we can re-evaluate at some point.

Louise: So where do we start? I was thinking that we might want to think about some strengths and weaknesses that we might want to improve but leaving out the technical and skills and drills part because we can get that from other places. I think the first thing I need to do is to find out what a mentor is supposed to do and work from there. I am new to this but I think it could be a very good learning opportunity for all of us if we get this initial stage right.

Sarah: That's a tricky one – it's difficult sitting here trying to decide what my strengths and weaknesses are. I mean, I feel it's actually easier when I am coaching to think 'I didn't do that as well as I thought' or 'the players didn't get what I was trying to put across' but it is really hard to sit here and try to figure out what my strengths and weaknesses are.

Jill: So how do we do that? I'm not clear on what we actually do but I agree it is difficult.

Louise: Well I think there are a couple of things we can do. How about we each bring a specific incident, something that didn't work, to our next meeting. That way we can discuss each incident and see if we can come up with answers. That would make it very relevant to our own coaching too, I mean I think that there are some things that I keep trying to do and they don't always work. I have tried to approach them differently – sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall – but sometimes it works. Perhaps we need to figure out what makes the difference.

Jill: I'm not so sure that there is an easy solution to every issue….

Louise: I don't think there are easy answers but I think that is really what we are trying to get out of this – answers to the harder questions. And if that is what we are thinking then a more practical issue is when are we going to meet? We have a heavy coaching schedule, work commitments so is this worth making the time for? And if yes, then how often and for how long?

Sarah: Can we play it by ear, I mean, could we agree a time each week say?

Louise: Are we going to be able to manage every week? Are we going to be able to set a time each week that we all can stick to? I think we should try.

Jill: Is once a week too often? Should we try once a fortnight?

Sarah: I think once a week to start and see how it goes.

Louise: But let's stick to coffee time – one hour max! That way we need to focus.

Step Three: Empathy Mapping

Empathy Map for the Mentor

- **Mentor Say:** The mentor makes a concrete suggestion around the development of the mentoring group. She encourages a problem solving approach

- **Mentor Think:** She is trying to alert both mentees to the complexities of coaching at this level

How about we each bring a specific incident, something that didn't work, to our next meeting?

I don't think there are any easy answers

Sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall

We have a heavy coaching schedule, work commitments so is this worth making the time for? And if yes, then how often and for how long?

- **Mentor Feel:** There was a real feeling of frustration from the mentor but related to **her coaching** situation

- **Mentor Do:** She is providing practical guidance to the mentees about potential commitments required for active buy-in to this process

Empathy Map for the Mentee (Sarah)

- **Mentee Say:** The mentee suggests that context is important - it is hard for her to relate to situations more generally.

- **Mentee Think:** There is evidence of this mentee considering the benefits of this mentoring programme.

It's difficult sitting here trying to decide what my strengths and weaknesses are.

I think it will be good and we can re-evaluate at some point

I feel it's actually easier when I am coaching to think 'I didn't do that as well as I thought' or 'the players didn't get what I was trying to put across'.

- **Mentee Feel:** Again specific instances have more resonance with Sarah and may be needed to aid development

- **Mentee Do:**

Empathy Map for the Mentee (Jill)

- **Mentee Say:** The mentee has some sense of what mentors do

- **Mentee Think:** Jill reflects on the mentor's experience and her own perceived lack of experience.

You are actually doing this now, in my opinion

I think you are the obvious person to be the mentor - I wouldn't know where to start

You are actually doing this now, in my opinion, if I have any questions, or just need some reassuarnce then I know you are at the end of the phone or What'sApp.

So how do we do that? I'm not clear on what we actually do.

- **Mentee Feel:** Jill demonstrates her appreciation of the mentor's involvement in her development

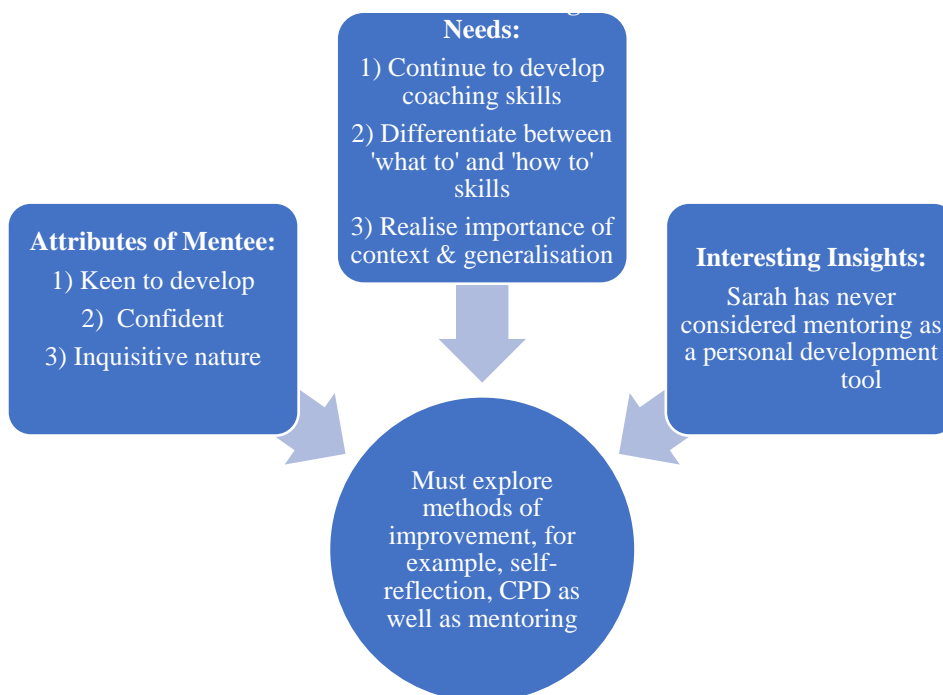- **Mentee Do:** Jill is needing clarification on specific actions for:
  - the process
  - her actions

Step Four: Define the Problem Statement for the Mentor and for the Mentee

Problem Statement for the Mentor

Mentor Learning Needs:

1) Establish process.

2) Enable support to 2 mentees with differing needs

Attributes of Mentor:

1) Considerable coaching experience

2) Empathetic

3) Established relationship with mentees

Interesting Insights:

The mentor has started an MSc in Sport Coaching and wants to implement some of the new ideas into the mentees coaching practice.

How do I set up this new mentoring programme?

Problem Statement for the Mentee (Sarah)

Needs:

1) Continue to develop coaching skills

2) Differentiate between 'what to' and 'how to' skills

3) Realise importance of context & generalisation

Attributes of Mentee:

1) Keen to develop

2) Confident

3) Inquisitive nature

Interesting Insights:

Sarah has never considered mentoring as a personal development tool

Must explore methods of improvement, for example, self-reflection, CPD as well as mentoring

Problem Statement for the Mentee (Jill)

Mentee Learning Needs:

) Continue to develop coaching skills

2) Differentiate between 'what to' and 'how to' skills

3) Attain more confidence

Attributes of Mentee:

1) Keen to develop

2) Hard working/conscientious

Interesting Insights:
Jill appears to be lacking in belief in her own abilities as a coach and questioning her practice as well as others

Must be more confident in her abilities as a coach

Section II IDEATION: Two-way critique:

Step: Journey Map of the mentoring conversation

Phases of Conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☺		☺	☺		☺	☺		☺	☺	
☹	☹			☹			☹			☹

1. *'I hope you both know that I'm new to this….I've never done it before. I'm not really sure what we do or how we get this whole process started.'* **Low Point** ☹

2. *..'so we are all looking to develop as rugby coaches and we are all coaching teams that will start competing next month in the University leagues.'* **High Point** ☺

3. *'I think to do this we need to be open, honest and not afraid to make the tough calls by questioning each other – why we did things in a particular way.'* **High Point** ☺

4. *'I wouldn't know where to start.'* **Low Point** ☹

5. *'I think it will be good and we can re-evaluate at some point.'* **High Point** ☺

6. *'..we might want to think about some strengths and weaknesses that we might want to improve.' '* **High Point** ☺

7. *'…it's difficult sitting here trying to decide what my strengths and weaknesses are. I mean, I feel it's actually easier when I am coaching to think 'I didn't do that as well as I thought' or 'the players didn't get what I was trying to put across' but it is really hard to sit here and try to figure out what my strengths and weaknesses are.'* **Low Point** ☹

8. *'How about we each bring a specific incident, something that didn't work, to our next meeting. That way we can discuss each incident and see if we can come up with answers. That would make it very relevant to our own coaching too,..'* **High Point** ☺

9. *'I don't think there are easy answers but I think that is really what we are trying to get out of this – answers to the harder questions.'* **High Point** ☺

10. *'We have a heavy coaching schedule, work commitments so is this worth making the time for?'* **Low Point** ☹

Low Point 1—Conversation phase 1:

This conversation is initially to discuss the formation of 'The Coffee Club' – a new mentoring situation for all involved – mentor and mentees. In this situation, the 'new mentor' is pointing out her lack of knowledge and experience in this area, possibly to re-affirm this to both Jill and Sarah to avoid difficulties at a later stage within the mentoring process. Mentoring has been suggested as a development tool in a number of different contexts to sport coaching, such as nursing; however, there is a lack of information about "how to" mentor based on evidence (Jakubik, Eliades & Weese, 2016). Many mentoring programmes, especially informal processes, do not require or suggest any type of learning or induction programme for new mentors – there appears to be an expectation that coaching experience will suffice (Nash, 2003). It might be advantageous to both mentors and mentees if there was an understanding of the scope and limits of the mentor and mentee role, the aims and outcomes of the programme, as well as training to develop the skills and attitudes required for effective mentoring. Ideally this training should be provided before the start of any mentoring, not the position that Louise finds herself in during the initial conversation. According to Straus, Johnson, Marquez and Feldman, (2013) this lack of experience on the

part of the mentor can contribute significantly to an unsuccessful or less effective mentoring relationship as the mentor may not possess relevant knowledge, skills, or experience.

High Point 1—Conversation phase 2:

At this stage of the conversation, Louise is setting out her vision of the outcomes for this mentoring programme, as well as outlining the time constraints that both mentor and mentees are facing. A willingness to share hopes, fears, concerns and ambitions can be a very powerful tool in mentoring, especially at the initial stages of developing a relationship (Clutterbuck, Kochan, Lunsford, Dominguez, & Haddock-Millar, 2017). Programmes that fail to establish and agree on a tightly focused and clear core purpose – in this case the development of rugby coaches in female rugby – are more likely to be successful so it may be appropriate for Louise, Sarah and Jill to spend some time deciding how this coach development will be evaluated. Interestingly, since few women are in leadership positions in coaching, they are more likely to be mentored by men however a strength of this situation is the mentor and mentees are all female, working to develop in a male dominated sport with female athletes (Acosta, & Carpenter, 2014). Researchers have identified career and psychosocial functions that women considered important in developing effective mentoring relationships, which suggests a female mentor as a role model can be perceived as a woman that has successfully overcome discriminatory barriers to career advancement (Picariello, & Waller, 2016). To clarify this overarching goal the mentor and mentee need to agree what they hope to achieve and why, adding some specific criteria. Furthermore, consider why this is important to them in the context of developing their coaching craft.

High Point 2—Conversation phase 3:

In this excerpt of the conversation, Louise stresses the need for everyone to be '*open, honest and not afraid to make the tough calls*'. Recent research highlights the need for coaches to be

open to mentoring programmes, including learning communication skills, such as questioning, scheduling time for personal interaction with other coaches aimed at creating relationships, as well as discussing professional successes, coaching issues, and other relevant questions associated with developing their coaching craft (Swanson & Deutsch, 2017). Coaches can work in very different environments, even within the same sport, in this instance rugby, and the mentor needs to be able to facilitate coach learning by contextualising abstract theory into actual coaching environments (Nash & McQuade, 2014). For this to operate effectively Louise, Sarah and Jill will have to essentially 'park their egos' and be able to question practice, decision-making and encourage self-reflection.

Low Point 2—Conversation phase 4:

Jill's interjection into the conversation demonstrates her lack of confidence in the mentoring process and maybe also her coaching ability. Mentoring has been shown to contribute to reinforce self-regulation, maximise engagement in individual and group activities, and promote social support while enhancing self-confidence (Petosa & Smith, 2014). Women are consistently represented as unconfident in their own skills and coaching abilities, especially in a masculine sport such as rugby (Fielding-Lloyd & Mean, 2011). Sport, and sporting organisations, in this case rugby, needs to create an environment that values women coaches and makes them feel part of the sport and, in turn, this may improve confidence and positively influence their desire to develop further (Norman, 2014). However, if coaches, such as Jill, have not been involved in similar challenging situations previously, perhaps a lack of confidence is to be expected.

High Point 3 —Conversation phase 5:

Louise specifically asks for Sarah's input here and Sarah contributes very positively within this phase of the conversation, looking to the potential benefits of this mentoring opportunity. The legendary US coach, John Wooden, is reported as seeking out proactive coaches, interested and motivated in their own personal coaching journey, to mentor (Yaeger, 2016). The engagement of everyone within the process is essential, perhaps this is the aspect John Wooden was looking for in the example above. Mentoring is considered to stimulate numerous benefits in organisational contexts theorising that mentored individuals experience greater job satisfaction, higher levels of organisational socialisation and the more motivation shown by the mentee can lead to greater levels of success (Hoffmann & Loughead, 2015).

High Point 4 —Conversation phase 6:

Identifying strengths and weaknesses can be a useful first stage in self-evaluation that can in turn lead to developing skills of self-reflection. Within sport coaching, there are a number of problems that are poorly defined and context-specific, all pointing to Schön's characterisation of reflective practice, as problems are generally not easy to solve and require careful analysis of all components and context (Schön, 1987).

As previously mentioned, mentoring is advocated as a coach development tool to connect theory to practice, however, a many ostensible mentoring programmes struggle to make that connection (Nash & McQuade, 2014). A more helpful approach might be to consider the mentor, Louise, as a facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities, through which skills can be developed. Skills such as analysis, decision-making, critical thinking and evaluation, all encapsulate the need to reflect and make sense of what has been learned (Sternberg, 2003).

Low Point 3—Conversation phase 7:

The difficulty in identifying strengths and weaknesses after the coaching encounters, highlighted by Sarah, demonstrates the need for self-evaluation and self-reflection mentioned

above. All professions are founded on a base of specialist knowledge and understanding, principles and perspectives, professional responsibilities, professional skills and professional reflection (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2016). Whilst sport coaching has made enormous strides in this regard developing the key skills of both coaching and professional practice would help with self-reflection (Knowles, Borrie & Telfer, 2005). The mentor should be assisting the coach to utilise many different types of knowledge to solve coaching problems and the first stage must be to recognise them, both during and after the coaching session (Gilbert & Jackson, 2004).

High Point 5 —Conversation phase 8:

Louise suggests that a way to resolve the issue around identifying strengths and weaknesses is to each note 'a specific incident' during a coaching session, that they could discuss during the mentoring meetings. She emphasises that this would be 'very relevant to our own coaching', in other words, contextualised. Studies in other team sports, such as basketball, have concluded that effective mentoring is more likely when the mentee coaches are encouraged to work with different coaches and supported to become self-directed learners (Koh, Ho & Yizhe, 2017). This proposal by Louise could suggest that she is encouraging Sarah and Jill to become more self-reliant but including structured help, or scaffolds, along the way to aid their learning (Nash & Sproule, 2011). A number of researchers have highlighted the importance of these facilitators, or mentors, guiding the self-reflective process in coaches (Culver & Trudel, 2006; Koh, Mallett, & Wang, 2011; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007).

High Point 6 —Conversation phase 9:

Louise is clear in stating that there are no easy answers to coaching problems, as coaching has been recognised as a constantly changing, multi-facetted activity, challenging coaches to

make evidence based decisions in the best interests of their athletes (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2011). In environments where answers are hard to find, and often layered with complexities, such as rugby coaching, it seems inevitable there will be some robust discussion around different approaches to issues.

For this to occur the mentoring environment will need to encourage open and honest discussion, however the skills of the mentor are key in both establishing and maintaining this type of atmosphere of mutual, respectful sharing.   Much has been written about the coach-athlete relationship but there is little about the relationship between coaches as it exists in a mentoring relationship (Hampson & Jowett, 2014).

Low Point 4—Conversation phase 10:

Coaches constantly complain they never have enough time, especially with their athletes or teams so they feel they often have to prioritise – mostly this does not include making time for their own personal development (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2017). This perceived lack of recognition of their own importance in the coaching process is worrying as it can lead to burnout and coaches ultimately leaving their sport. Louise, the mentor, who raised this point, should be rather be emphasising the importance of coach learning and development through a mentoring process.

Section III DEVELOPMENT: Lessons learned:

Step: Rewrite the Mentoring Conversation

Louise: I find this opportunity to work with you quite exciting. I see mentoring as a process and a dynamic relationship between mentor and mentee. What I mean by dynamic relationship is that it we work together and challenge each other to promote the idea that we are in this adventure together and it is not a one-way process. We will learn from each other in this process. So, some questions. What are you expecting from me in this mentoring process? What are your responsibilities? What are you most excited about? What are your concerns? How do you want me to help you become a better coach?

Sarah: …… Yes!

Jill: …… OK

Louise: Shall I start this first session? Please chip in when you want to add something or you want some clarification or elaboration. OK, so we are all looking to develop as rugby coaches and we are all coaching teams that will start competing next month in the University leagues. We also have club commitments but those are not as 'important' as the University teams which is really the 'day job'! We want to think about our practical coaching and how we can make things better for the players, the teams and ultimately the team performance and well-being. I think to do this we need to be open, honest and not afraid to make the tough calls by questioning each other – why we did things in a particular way? I've been 'appointed' as the mentor because I've been coaching for the longest and I've also coached both of you; so, it is nice that we have established a positive rapport with each other. Just as I will be providing you with feedback, I also welcome feedback on how I am mentoring – we are all learners in this process.

Jill: I think you are the obvious person to be the mentor because you are an experienced coach and as you said we already have an established working relationship, although this is different. If I have any questions, or just need some reassurance then I know you are at the end of the phone or What'sApp. I really like the idea of open conversations and helping and challenging each other.

Louise: Are you OK with this approach to mentoring Sarah?

Sarah: Yes, I think it will be good and we can re-evaluate at some point.

Louise: So where do we start? So our focus will be on how we coach? I was thinking that we might think about some strengths and weaknesses in how we coach… that is, leaving out the technical and skills and drills part because we can get that from other sources. I think the first thing we need to do is to get this initial stage right.

Sarah: I am looking forward to thinking more about how I coach and the impact on the players' development. That's a tricky one – it's difficult sitting here trying to decide what my strengths and weaknesses are. I mean, I feel it's actually easier when I am coaching to think 'I didn't do that as well as I thought' or 'the players didn't get what I was trying to put across' but it is really hard to sit here and try to figure out what my strengths and weaknesses are.

Jill: Strengths and weaknesses: So how do we do that? I'm not clear on what we actually do but I agree it is difficult.

Louise: Well I think there are a couple of things we can do. How about we each bring a specific incident, something that didn't work, to our next meeting. That way we can discuss each incident and see if we can analyse the incident and then think about how we might do it differently next and why. That would make it very relevant to our own coaching too, I mean I think that there are some things that I keep trying to do and they don't always work. I have

tried to approach them differently – sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall – but sometimes it works. Perhaps we need to figure out what makes the difference.

Jill: I'm not so sure that there is an easy solution to every issue….

Louise: I don't think there are easy answers but I think that is really what we are trying to get out of this – deeper reflection on these important issues and potential answers to the harder questions. And if that is what we are thinking then a more practical issue is when are we going to meet? We have a heavy coaching schedule, work commitments so is this worth making the time for? And if yes, then how often and for how long?

Sarah: Can we play it by ear, I mean, could we agree a time each week say?

Louise: Are we going to be able to manage every week? Are we going to be able to set a time each week that we all can stick to? I think we should try.

Jill: Is once a week too often? Should we try once a fortnight?

Sarah: I think once a week to start and see how it goes.

Louise: But let's stick to coffee time – one hour max! That way we need to focus.

Commentary on the reworked mentoring conversation

The conversation reflects a general lack of self-confidence by mentor and mentees. The opening commentary by Louise demonstrates the lack of confidence in her role as a mentor and specifically what tasks and the process she should employ. This lack of self-confidence might reflect a lack of preparation and/or limited guidance from knowledgeable other/s in preparing for this meeting. Nonetheless, it is considered important that the mentor establishes a good rapport with the mentees and set the scene for establishing clarity on the mentoring process and key responsibilities for both mentor and mentees. The importance of role clarity

and an understanding of the underpinning principles in the way the mentor-mentee relationship can be developed are imperative to establishing effective mentoring outcomes (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). Of course, a key outcome of the mentoring program is to develop the self-confidence of the mentor and mentees (Petosa & Smith, 2014). The initial conversation reflects some uncertainty but importantly also some hope that they will share this journey in becoming a better practitioner.

The potential of this mentor-mentee relationship is contingent upon honest and transparent conversations, which is fostered by the confidence of the actors to discuss coaching issues with a confidante (Mentor) who is trusted by the mentees (Mallett, Rossi, Rynne, & Tinning, 2016; Occhino, Mallett, & Rynne, 2011). Coaches learn their craft through engagement in everyday work tasks. These learning opportunities, which are mediated through proximal and distal social guidance in a socio-cultural context shaped by norms, practices, and values (Billett 2001; Mallett, Rynne, & Billett, 2016). Hence, the importance of social guidance by a knowledgeable and trusted other can foster the coaching craft of an early career coach; if, (and only if) the coach is a willing participant (personal agency) in contributing to the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship (Billett 2001; Mallett, Rynne, & Billett, 2016). In this case the two mentees, Jill and Sarah, seem quite keen to be involved in the mentoring program (personal agency) but lacking awareness and some detail about what it will entail. The early engagement of the mentees in the program is pivotal to its success and therefore the mentor needs to clarify the tasks and responsibilities to elucidate the process but also send a clear message that she is there to help them in a climate of some assuredness and positivity. This need for the mentor to portray confidence in her role is considered imperative to developing this mentor-mentee relationship from the outset. Louise's engagement in 'surface acting' (i.e. deliberately deceive others through overt behaviours to mask how we are truly feel without deceiving ourselves) (Hochschild, 1983;

Potrac & Marshall, 2011; Potrac, Mallett, Greenough, & Nelson, 2017) is important to setting the tone for the relationship and modelling appropriate behaviours (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2017). Importantly, it is necessary for coaches to learn to surface act in their coaching practice (Potrac et al., 2017); e.g., presenting as confident when the team is playing against a superior opponent.

In any mentoring relationship there should be consideration that the needs of early-, mid- and late-career coaches might vary. In an Australian study of high performance coaches, who were mentoring scholarship coaches, they reported that the most valued sources in the first two years of coaching were on-the-job experience (learning through doing), experience as an athlete. In the middle part of their career the most valued sources reported were on-the-job experience, experience as an athlete, reflection, and tertiary study; whereas, in the last two years mentor coaches reported the most valued sources to be on-the-job experience, reflection, consultants, and discussions with others (Mallett, Rynne, & Billett, 2016). Whilst what coaches most value at different time points in their careers might vary, these mentoring conversations are potentially generative in coaches becoming more expert (Mallett, Rossi et al., 2016) and to situate their learning and reflect on their practices with the guidance and support of a mentor or confidante.

The key points we make arising from this mentoring conversation highlight the importance of confidence from both mentor and mentee, and especially the mentor in establishing a positive environment in which the mentees can potentially flourish. Louise should portray confidence (surface act) in her ability to support both mentees, despite some self-doubt about the tasks and challenges ahead. Sarah appears to have more confidence in her abilities than Jill but both need to have confidence in the benefits of mentoring. In order to maximize the effect and effectiveness of mentoring programmes, coaches, whether mentors or mentees, some training must be provided to enable all involved to benefit from the

process. If mentoring programmes are going to fulfil more than ' a tick in the box' for National Sport Organisations (NSO) then NSOs have to accept responsibility for the initial training and development of the mentors, as well as induction of the mentees.

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