

Article

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The wow factor in coaching: transporting the learner with C.A.R.E.

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Keywords: *coaching environment, coaching philosophy, coach education.*

Abstract

The paper is a typology of three elite level golf coaches, presented in a storied format using a creative nonfiction approach. The stories are based upon data collected through observations and interviews over the course of a year. In order to further decontextualize [protect] the subjects and aid generalization to support coach learning, a second layer of analysis was performed. Some caricatures emerged from the data and were developed using a transport metaphor to demonstrate how each coach impacted upon their players' sporting journey. The interviews highlight many commonly held assumptions about professional practices in sports coaching that warrant further critique by anyone wishing to bear influence in the player development domain. Finally, we present a CARE framework which, keeping to the metaphor, will help each coach to build a better E-CAR.

Introduction

This Journal, JQRSS, has pioneered new expressions of qualitative research methodology throughout its annual publications. Many innovative representations of data have been submitted to peer review. These have been supportively critiqued, enhanced by the process, and later published in order to contribute to the growing field of methods that can be utilized to share researchers' interpretations of the data with which they are so embroiled. The first author has been a major beneficiary of this process and has used the journal's examples (Hughes and Palmer, 2010; Nickless and Palmer, 2014) and support from the editor to stimulate his own venture into this new world of research possibilities (Grecic and Palmer 2013; Grecic, 2017).

A stated outcome of many of this Journal's papers is that others may be inspired to take up the good fight as I have done and experiment themselves using its examples to guide future explorations. The associated aim of attracting and supporting other researchers to enter this learning space is at the heart of this particular paper. Here the second author was encouraged to experiment with a creative nonfictional writing style to portray the essence of his coaching interviews and observations of three highly respected and experienced golf coaches working in US Collegiate golf. The work of

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Smith, McKinnon and Williams (2015) has guided this exploration. We have adopted their definition of Creative Nonfiction (CNF) (p.61) and their advice on its characterizing traits (p.69) to shape our practice. In addition, we have utilized Gerard's recommendations on the five key elements to include when undertaking CNF research (Gerard, 2004). In this particular paper Creative Nonfiction is being used to ensure the anonymity of the very famous subjects whilst not detracting from the valuable lessons to be learned from examining their professional practice in situ. The initial interview data and observational notes were then collated to construct three storied accounts of his experience for further analysis. At this stage the data were read and re-read in order to familiarise with the early interpretations. The data were then subjected to a second layer of interpretation as the stories were perceived and meaning made from a different perspective.

Finally, a metaphor was sought to link the three stories whilst also emphasizing the differences between the three subjects. Stimulated by a Physical Education paper recently critiqued (Soloman and Garn, 2014), a transport metaphor was selected for this purpose. The stories were shaped by this creative lens to further elucidate the learning episodes so the reader could more easily synthesise the message. Although all three subjects had been incredibly successful in their respective golf coaching careers, an evolution seemed evident in how each put their coaching philosophy into action. One statement in particular from the stories resonated strongly, 'a motivational bus driver'. It was this comment that cemented the idea of the transportation metaphor which helped to form the interpretations and re-presentation of the original interviews. The three stories that follow demonstrate just how wide a spectrum of personal philosophies and coaching practices exist within the US Collegiate golf industry. We first see a traditional ex-player's view and value judgements on what it will take for his own players to be successful. We appreciate that a transition has taken place from 'driver' to 'navigator' in the coach's career but his practice and guiding role is still shaped by his previous playing experience. Many of his beliefs forged during his playing time seem to hold him back from letting go of control and push him more towards a 'co-driver' role in the process of athlete development.

Our second subject is a planner, a facilitator and a manager. He professes an individualized approach but actually groups his players as effectively as possible to maximize his influence despite his lack of knowledge about the game or the coaching process. He adopts a servant-leader mentality but again this is based on a pre-conceived idea of what his players may need. He takes his players on a journey with various pre-planned stops where he can utilize 'experts' in the field to do the coaching for him. Our final coach is less interested in personal accolades and aligns more to the 'make myself redundant' brand of coaching. He attempts to support his players become independent, autonomous self-learners. Despite his altruistic ethos this coach

is still irrevocably shaped by the expectations of the sport in some of the practice design he adopts regarding competition. We invite and encourage you to make your own elaborations to our stories shaped on your own coaching appreciation.

Coach biographies

The first author is a teacher, coach, and Director of the International Institute for Golf Education. He has enjoyed various golfing roles including Performance Support for England Golf, Education Director for Core Golf, and various golf consultancies around the world. His PhD was achieved in the domain of high level golf and he has various publications in the golf coaching field.

The second author played Collegiate golf for a Division 1 (D1) School (Highest level in US University sport) and later became an assistant coach and eventual Head coach at two different D1 schools. He currently has two golf businesses which provide consultancy and services in regards to players securing golf scholarships with the major US golf schools. Academically he has 2 Master degree qualifications and is an active researcher and publisher in golf coaching practice, player attributes, skill acquisition and golf management.

Together the authors have recently researched golf coaches' learning journeys, the US golf talent pathway, golf coaches' use of different practice methods, and jointly developed an on line coach learning certificate 'Golf Coaching Praxis' with Dr Rob Neal (another respected golf practitioner and researcher).

The stories...

College Coach #1 – Brad Bean The champion race driver turned navigator

As I turned into the golf course I was excited to visit with Brad Bean. 'BB', a legend, had been in the coaching world for 25 years plus since retiring from an illustrious professional playing career. During this time Brad had led his teams to 40+ tournament titles and multiple successes at the National Level including many appearances at the National Championship Finals.

Although it had been a colder winter, the whole facility looked impeccable, spotless, just as you would expect from a high end, incredibly expensive, private golf club. As I parked, my eyes scanned the facility which included an indoor training and research centre, which must have been at least 2,000 square feet, a lush golf range and a humongous short game area with multiple greens and bunkers immaculately prepared. Wow, I thought to myself, a lot better than my college days in Division 1! As I got out of the car and approached the door, there stood Brad waiting for me. Dressed in a crisp white short sleeved, cotton button down shirt, black trousers and

glistening black shoes, I couldn't help but try to read each of his programme's sponsor labels which adorned his chest pocket, collar and sleeves. 'Hello sir! Glad you could find the place and happy you could make it' said Brad as his huge powerful hands removed his Aviator style sunglasses and engulfed me with a stern hand shake. Brad was in his early 60s now but looked tanned and athletic. His short black hair was well groomed and slightly pulled back into which now rested his gold rimmed sunglasses. His left wrist wore a gold Rolex watch above a strangely white left hand – a clear giveaway that Brad had not fully given up his playing days. (Note to reader: right handed golfers wear a single glove on their left hand when hitting most shots in order to improve their grip on the club.)

'It's my pleasure sir! I am very grateful you could take some time to talk to me about your programme and all the success you've had. I am so excited to be here' I replied. As we entered the main building, my eyes were greeted with an impressive collection of trophies and plaques from his own and his team's previous tournament wins.

'Here is a little trophy room with some of the stuff we have accomplished over the years' said Brad as he pointed out several of his most memorable players and wins before heading down the hall to a large office adorned with even more plaques and trophies. 'So, sir, what can I tell you about college golf?'

'Well I am curious to learn more about your philosophy on coaching. Can you tell me a little about what you do with the players?'

'Well son, the philosophy is simple; the cream rises to the top. Since I retired from playing the Tour, I've been doing this! I won a lot and now we have won a lot and produced a lot of talented players. Although I know the swing as well as anyone, my job is to teach those players how to compete and give them other talented players someone to compete against' explained Brad.

'So, what does that look like day to day, Coach?' I asked.

'As I say our job is to make the cream rise to the top; to help these young people develop their games to take to the Tour and have success like I did. My experience helps me help my players get to where they wanna to be. My experience tells me that to be a Tour player you need to not be afraid to go low. We provide these young men the environment to test their games at a world class facility, against top competition each day. We push them and help them develop the skills to learn to break par and win'.

'How about range time?' I pondered as I jotted down these comments and remembered the outstanding facilities I had been wowed by upon arrival.

'We expect our kids to have the skills already and come in with the ability to shoot under par. Each player in our programme is going to have some time for skill development but most of the time is going to be competition. I know what works. In my programme qualifying is ALWAYS 18 holes. 9 holes does not teach you anything;

to be a top player, a young man must learn to produce prolonged periods of consistent play and ultimately to finish tournaments’.

‘Have you always done things this way?’ I asked.

‘No sir. When I was a young coach, I had qualifying but I also had a lot of range time or open practice; times when the kids could determine what they wanted to work on. I did it for a couple years and figured something out; it was too easy. These young men are always looking for a crutch or search for a secret. Giving them time made it too easy or allowed them to get off track. When I changed the system to almost all playing, things changed. I got them heading in the right direction again. Kids learned to value the skills related to score like determination and focus. They also learned to play regardless of their moods or attitudes. Golf became hard which pushed some kids away, but it also made some kids a lot stronger. Those are the ones that have lead me here and been the foundation of this programme’.

‘Interesting... That’s an interesting philosophy. When you play, do you always play stroke play, and the same tees?’ I asked.

‘The secret to golf is to turn 6 into 5 or 4 into 3, and so on. Playing golf is the only way to learn that skill son. That is what made me successful and that is what’s gonna help them. So, you want to get the kids on the golf course as often as possible. For us we play about 25 different courses during the semester (over approximately 100 days) so the kids get different looks. We also play lots of different games. My favourites are trying to shoot 60 or better from the red tees, 3 clubs and a putter from 6600 yards, the rough as out-of-bounds and worst ball’ he said with a chuckle. ‘Good old worst ball will tell you who can or cannot play golf, that’s for sure’.

‘What other things do you demand of your players?’ I asked.

‘When they are here, they just need to compete. This thing we are asking is really hard and I get that. I want my players to make sure they are getting lots of rest too so that they have the energy to work hard and follow my directions. I know what works and I’m always reviewing how the players are doing and modifying the route accordingly. I sit down with each one and go through their plan with them, what they need to do, by when and how? That is how I get them to be successful. Sometimes they don’t believe in themselves as much as they should. That is when I become a motivational bus driver taking all my team along for the ride’.

We walk out from the office past the driving range to a spot where we can see three groups of players out on the course playing a dog-leg of holes that snake around our central viewing position. I can see each player meticulously taking out a note book pre and post shot, scribbling some additions then placing it back in their golf bags. ‘What are the guys doing’ out there?’ I ask pointing at the players.

‘Looking at their charts, our plans, noting the decisions they have made and the outcomes of those decisions so I can review everything with them later tonight’.

As we continue to stand there watching the players stoically going through their monitored routines I ask Brad, ‘You have been doing it for a long time, what still motivates you?’

‘I am blessed to work with great young people who are highly motivated. Being around them, every day is exciting. I get a front seat to watch some amazing things and although I demand a lot of them, I really care about them as people and want them to succeed’ explained Brad. ‘I’ve invested a lot of time in them all. I’ve got to know them. It is a team effort and I want us to be successful’.

He pointed over at the short game course and a 4 ball that were competing against each other. ‘I know all of those guys and just what they need ‘to make it big’.

I looked over to the players, paused and thought, then asked ‘what’s the best advice for a junior golfer then looking to become a professional?’

Brad paused a second and then said ‘Be all in. You are only young once and it is important when you have the time and the energy that you relentlessly pursue your passions. Too many young people spend time thinking or considering different options when they need to have big dreams, have help in selecting the right ones and then tirelessly pursuing them... I guess that’s where I come in!!!’

Coach #2 – Bubba Belt The team’s bus driver

When did these schools get these amazing facilities I thought to myself, as I made my way down a long driveway to another state of the art college facility to see Bubba. My eyes scanned the practice area and like in my previous interview visit, this college team also had a restricted area reserved for practice which featured a large lush range, short game area and 4 huge buildings (all with massive copies of the school’s logo placed on, over or around them). I parked, looked over at an extensive putting green where 12 red and white clad golfers were practicing holing out from various distances. I pulled out my mobile and dialled Bubba. ‘Hello sir, I’m here’ I said as he answered the phone. As my eyes returned to the building I could see a school logo encrusted door swing open and suddenly, he was there, grinning at me.

‘Brendan, how are you sir?’ he said as he extended his hand.

Bubba was a smart, slim Afro-Caribbean gentleman dressed head to toe in the school colours (bright red and white shirt, red trousers, white golf shoes and red and white baseball style golf hat) all plastered with the school logo and programme title.

‘I am great sir, thank you so much for having me here today. The facility looks amazing!’ I replied.

‘Yes sir! If you cannot be motivated to practice here, well you are just not that into golf’ declared Bubba with a massive smile. ‘Please follow me, let’s grab a seat and have a drink. What can I get you? Coke? Ice Tea? Water? Coffee?’

‘A water would be great’ I replied as we enter the building and turned directly into a large open area which like my previous trip to such a facility was adorned with numerous trophies, celebratory photographs and memorial plaques celebrating a truly successful golfing heritage. Bubba walked over to a large stainless-steel fridge, opened it and pulled out a water and a Coke before returning and delicately handing it to me. ‘Here sir. I hope this is ok. Now, I understand you are here to interview me about my coaching background and my experience, is this right?’

‘Yes sir, I am trying to learn more about college coaches, their philosophies, and what they do. I know you have had an illustrious career and I am curious to know more what you do?’ I responded.

‘Well, I have been blessed you know to work so long here at Big Red School. I started here almost 40 years ago as an assistant baseball coach, then did track for 15 years and have been with the golf team now for almost 20 years. Amazing really to be so lucky to be involved with so many great young people and such a special institution’.

‘What do you think has made you so successful?’ I asked.

Bubba thought for a second and then looked me straight in the eye and said ‘Coaching the person. Understanding each kid; their families, their situations, their dreams, what motivates them and earning their trust. Having them know that you are really invested in their future. That you are willing to help them become the best version of themselves by allowing them a safe place to fail. To feel like when they do, they are going to get the right feedback to keep going, and that there is a programme that will help them become the best they can be’.

‘What do you mean about the right feedback?’ I asked.

‘So here is a coaching nugget for you; no two teams are the same. Each team is totally unique, and you need to learn to understand them. For example, you might have a team of perfectionists with lots of motivation. When they play bad, they don’t need to be yelled at, they need to be picked up, made to feel secure and safe. You could also have a group of cocky S-O-B’s. They might need their egos put in check occasionally, which may involve a good yelling or extra hard work-out. Those are just two examples, but the point is that you cannot just have one philosophy’.

‘So how do you know what the team is going to be like’ I asked.

‘Coaching is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get’ said the coach as he chuckled. ‘Early in my coaching career, I would have all these expectations for different teams, especially when I thought I did an excellent job recruiting. Then something weird would happen; those would be my worst teams and my teams which I would have less expectations of would often become my best!’

‘That sounds really weird. Any idea why?’ I asked.

‘That’s the art of coaching, Brendan. When I was looking at the team on paper, I was considering individuals, not the team. How the players interact has an enormous impact on the performance of the team. For example, if you bring in two exceptional

Freshmen but have poor leadership, it is likely the team will not perform as well. Or if you have too many talented players, say 7 or 8, and only 5 travels, then you begin to have problems because players are not getting enough reps and there is too much pressure to play well. Or if your best player (by a lot) is a bad leader, that can be a problem too, because it opens the leadership role and sometimes it is filled by no one which can lead to divisiveness among the team', explained Bubba.

'Wow, that's really interesting. You also mentioned the programme, is that some sort of safety net that supports the players?'

'Well I would describe it as a collection of support opportunities that I have developed over the years'.

'Could you tell me a little about what they are and how they work?' I asked.

'Yes, it's a path that has been developed during all my years here. I've worked with some amazing people in many sports as I say and I've learned what these people can offer my players now. I have a network of visits and stopping off points during the season that my players can pick and choose from. They aren't obliged to take the trips but each one has been planned to offer something for their future development'.

'Such as' I wondered.

'We go and see Bob at the Elite Performance Centre in New Town who offers a full bio-assessment for each player. We travel to Florida to see Joe who will profile their mental health. We pop into X-GOLF who will re-measure and re-fit all the players' clubs. We go to see Sandy at South Shore who puts nutritional plans together and shows the players how to cook healthily at his facility there. There is a whole schedule for the year which the team travel to together. These are people who I know and trust and have built up a good relationship with over the years. If any of our guys want more help we have special rates we can tap into with each of our preferred partners too'.

'Impressive, that seems very comprehensive. What about the role of competition in the programme? How is that built in too?' I ask.

'Of course competition here is a team and individual imperative. We have to put a team out in tournaments, but support the individual development too so selection of who gets on the travel team is crucial. Every year at the beginning of school I do a mandatory six-round qualifier, one round at each of our home golf courses. This gives me some data on the players and allows me to let everyone play with each other. I watch carefully how the students interact and start to gauge the team dynamics. Then based on that, I have a team meeting and let everyone know what the rules are for qualifying for the team for the semester.

'Wow, that must take a lot of thought!'

'It certainly does, and it's not science. I am always trying my best to figure out the team and what is best for them. It's hard because qualifying is so much different. The older kids have such an advantage having played the course so many more times before than the underclassman. They also have more experience in tournament play.

So, it makes it hard and that's why a couple years ago, I decided that I would host a couple times per year. This way I have three events on the calendar where everyone plays. This gives me interesting insight into how players perform in qualifying versus during a tournament' explained Bubba.

'Wow, that's a really cool idea. What do you do about the other aspects of the game, like golf swing?' I asked as I look out of the window to see Bubba's red and white clad team now lined up on the range hitting shots to far away targets.

'As you know, I am not a golfer and so I don't really get into it myself. However, I do make sure I speak to my players about why they want to change their swing if that is what they are doing? I'll sit down, buy them a drink and then ask them why? When I ask why, I learn a lot about what they are really trying to accomplish which helps me take them to see the right people. Often, they come back to me a couple days later and let me know that I can take the day off as they don't really need to go see one of my contacts, but were just having a dreadful day and feeling insecure!'

Coach #3 – Byron Banks The Car Designer / Engineer

'Hey Byron, I'm Brendan, how are you?' I said as I strolled into the office at Sharp Line Golf School. No trophies, commemorative photos or memorabilia adorned the room here. Instead I was met by a bank of plasma screens hung on a central wall, each spewing out streams of numbers which seemed to continually update second by second, next to a list of twelve players' names. Below the screens and around the bright white room, just four black, thin desks were pushed against each wall, each had a computer docking port and little else on their surface. A metal office chair neatly pushed underneath, and a few large fluffy bean bags scattered around them on the black polished floor. This obviously was not a typical golf school like those visited for my previous interviews.

Indeed, Byron's appearance too was far from what I had expected of a stereotypical Collegiate golf coach. Byron was a wiry fellow with small features, a balding grey hair line, and round, thin rimmed glasses perched on the end of his nose. His dress was distinctly un-Golfy too, sloppy brown jumper, baggy green camouflage trousers which allowed the slightest of glimpses at the black and white skater trainers that poked out from underneath.

'Hey Brendan, pleasure to meet you. Thank you for coming today to visit us and learn more about our programme. Really happy to share with you some things we do to help our kids improve!' responded Byron.

'Fantastic' I replied. 'Maybe you could start my sharing a little about your coaching philosophy please?'

‘Great. Ya, so I am all about Dweck’s growth mindset and information. I want to help my players keep learning and improving. I want to provide my players access to the best information and resources. I want them to not be afraid to fail but to see it as data collecting; an opportunity to learn, remember and execute better next time. I want my players to be independent decision makers out there where it matters. We do the testing, prototyping, designing and redesigning here so that the players can be the best they can be in competition. For example, here at Sharp Line we have an indoor training centre with 3 hitting bays. Each hitting bay has cameras, force plates, and numerous other receptors to collect as much data as possible. We also have software which allows us to crunch the numbers and the players to easily share this information with their home coach, while always keeping me in the communication loop. We also provide each of our players a full, itemized schedule for the semester on the first day of class. This way they know exactly what we are doing every day and everywhere. I think it’s really helpful for them’.

‘wow, very comprehensive’, I say.

‘I also demand the players on the team learn and use as much technology as possible. One example would be the special green reading training called *Better Aim*. Every Fall we spend a week teaching them and we provide special electronic yardage charts for each tournament from *Strike-a-Line* downloaded straight to their E watches. These products have each course and green precisely charted, so the students can apply their *Better Aim* knowledge out on the course, input their own process data and record the outcome. Their watches collect real time data which feeds back to us here in our office which we analyse. We then package a report which we send back to the player who can review it at their leisure, take out the learning points and use it to modify their play next time out’.

‘We also bring in speakers at least once a semester to share their ideas with the players and develop new creations and adaptations to the technology on offer. On top of that we also have our own sports performance team who are available any time the players need feedback and all our trainers are Level 5 Master accredited’, described Byron with a look of proud satisfaction on his face.

‘Very impressive indeed, sounds like the students have some tremendous resources here. Can you help me to understand what role you play in helping them?’ I asked.

‘Great question. Both me and my assistants work hard to support our players by providing feedback to them on their swing and tendencies on the golf course and then by providing other helpful insights and learning opportunities. We are also big on the mental game and have both sport and clinical psychologists who help the players understand themselves and the decisions they make in life and on the golf course’.

‘This must all require a huge investment from the School?’

‘Yes it does. About six years ago I fought with our athletic administration to add highly qualified staff to our programme because I wanted the players to have access

to the best people and the best information. So, our players are lucky to have access to them and get individualized programmes. We also have our life coaches come in on certain days and give presentations on both the principles and practice of learning and being comfortable with failure. As Dweck promotes, we let them know they aren't the finished article 'yet' but they can be if they keep experimenting and learning from their mistakes. So, with that, plus our practice schedule, facilities and a great education, this is a really special place!' said Byron.

'Sounds like the players really get access to some great resources in a number of different areas and lots of structure' I responded. 'Can you tell me what you do during an average practice?'

'Great question again. Here, let me show you our practice schedule for the semester then we can pop over to see some of the guys doing their 'learning work'. As you can see we have lots of days when the players have analysis and review sessions, putting and short game training, technology up-skilling, physical training, mental health sessions, mental skills training, life management skills, 'genius days' where they can concentrate on any area they like, and playing days'.

'What about the playing days?' I inquired as we leave the office to take a tour of the School's facilities.

'Those are days we just play, but we play with a purpose. We have a set of special school tees. The players know their own correct tees that are set at an appropriate challenge point, and they go out and play for a score. For them to get a team bag, they must break par from those selected tees. Until they do, they have to use the bag they came with!' explained Byron with a smirk on his face. 'On these days we want the players to put what they have learned into practice and review what progress they have made. We really want a balance between playing under pressure, becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable, and being able to use the experience to support their development'.

'Lucky, they did not have that when I was in college, I would have never gotten my bag' I said with a grin.

'Oh you would have Brendan. We would have designed a programme around your specific needs, monitored your progress and revised the plan to ensure you achieved your goals and made that score!'

As we have been walking and chatting I have noticed various student golfers practicing on their own in different spaces around the facility. Each player surrounding themselves with various forms of technological gadgets to replay, review, analyse, record their efforts and transmit the data to the School office. Each seems to be hitting their shots in groups of three with very different outcomes. I point out my observation to Byron who explained the process.

'Those players are all in what we call the building stage of the learning zone. They are experimenting with hitting three different types of shot to various targets each time. They are using the gadgets there to collect data which helps them

recalibrate their next attempts. They are really still at the Prototype stage, we are helping them to build their game, provide them with the structure and opportunities to individualise, learn and make their own decisions without the fear of failure. An opportunity to learn and build new systems and processes that will help improve their play. Of course we put in some signposts and way markers for them to recognize along the way but when the pressure comes they need to be autonomous and utilize the information they have to make the right decision and then execute that decision effectively’.

‘Wow. The student athletes are certainly very lucky to have access to so many great resources here. I want to thank you for your time and say I really appreciated learning more about you and your programme’. I shook Byron’s hand again before heading back to the car to reflect on what I had just experienced.

Discussion

Much has been written on the roles, responsibilities, behaviours and types of coaching that exist in sport. In the stories above we present our own transport typology of 3 coaches, their philosophies and behaviours. We refer to them as 1) The Driver turned Navigator, 2) The Team Bus Driver, and 3) The Car Designer. Each in their own way hopes to develop successful players of the future. Each prioritise different areas that they believe have most influence on the players’ journey.

Continuing the theme of linking coaching practice to the transport analogy, one may ask exactly what are our three coaches trying to create other than winning golfers? A common aspiration for many who work in sport and education is to develop the *whole player* or *person* in which one has invested so much time and effort. The first author’s work in coaching and Physical Education offers a C.A.R.E. framework: that is, equal focus on developing the

Cognitive,
Athletic,
Relational and
Emotional domains,

to guide this coaching/teaching intention. In this transport context a more apt acronym would be for each coach to aspire to build their own E-CAR. Here there will be an (E) self- aware, self-motivated, confident, competent, resilient player in the E-CAR’s cockpit. This player will be able to autonomously (C) scan the environment, sense perceptual cues, creatively formulate options, then make and execute effective decisions under pressure in competition. He/she will have (A) the coordinative structures, balance, agility, mobility, stability and fitness level (engine), to make the move or moves selected. Finally, the player will have (R) the social and emotional intelligence, communication skills, leadership, empathy, understanding to deal with success or failure in a public domain and share lessons learnt with their support crew.

In closing: first author reflections

The intention of this paper is based upon a pragmatic philosophy and a desire to make a difference to the sports coaching field whilst continuing to develop my own use of qualitative methods. In so doing I wish to encourage more scholars and practitioners to experiment with this *research vehicle* too (I couldn't resist – sorry!). The value of narrative and creative nonfiction has gained great support in the last 10 years providing authentic inspiration for truth-seeking authors to share their messages (Wright, 2017), whilst also being recognized as a methodology that can be generalized to the wider population in order to have maximum impact (Smith, 2017). Personally I have been extremely encouraged over the last few years by how my own interpretation of this method has been received by the professional coaching community (Grecic and Palmer, 2013; Grecic, 2017). I have been contacted by coaches about my research and have witnessed it being cited and built upon in academic terms, but also embedded in coaching practice and used by others to stimulate professional learning. I hope this piece and the manner in which the data are exhibited allows the reader to identify the major themes from these coaching stories and consider how these may present themselves in their own specific contexts. If this can contribute in some way to coaches' own reflections and adaptations to their practice, then this style of qualitative representation is further strengthened by such a common need.

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JQRSS Author Profiles

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Reviewer Comments

These stories and the research rationale to create them, shows significant advances in a means towards understanding the genuine subtleties of professional golf coaching at this level. Indeed, the forensic social analysis given here seems to be the most fruitful way of revealing what's going on, possibly for others to learn from if they are willing or able to change their ways in this high-pressured elite atmosphere. What emerges from these accounts is that there are a complex interplay of motives, experience, personality types and environmental conditions constantly at work, affecting the guidance for an individual, which may be specific to any one coach and any player at any given moment in time. What these stories show is that these shifting sands of what counts as good advice seemingly cannot be copied as a magic formula for success; e.g. a 'Mr X Method', or reduced to a 'Y System', or even a neatly stated 'Z philosophy'. The social complexity of elite golf coaching seems particularly resistant to scientific reduction - an emotionless tally of figures for averages of scores, yardage, successes and losses may afford limited information as to what a player needs to play well. Using the authors' metaphor, the stats and figures about a new car are not the most reliable data to determine your purchase or future engagement with that vehicle... you've got to get in it, ride it, feel it, see yourself in it, to help you make a decision. The authors point to a CARE pedagogy which in this paper places Emotions in the 'driving seat'. At last! I think this has mileage as a strategy for meaningful gains in player/coach happiness and player/coach success, not least because their messages (research) are (finally) in the most accessible format for the very people they hope to reach, discuss and relate to. At last, they are speaking the same language to fuel their ambitions. These researchers understand that putting 'deisel' in a 'petrol' sports car is not a good strategy if you are expecting peak performance.

