

*Accepted author version for:*

*Cruickshank, A., & Collins, D. (2015). The Sport Coach. In I. O'Boyle, D. Murray & P. Cummins (Eds.), Leadership in Sport (pp. 155-172). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.*

## **Chapter 12**

### **The Sport Coach**

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#### **Chapter Objectives**

After completing this chapter you should be able to:

1. Understand some of the core differences between coaching requirements in participation and performance domains
2. Discuss diverse models of sports coaching and how these differ in terms of their emphasis, strengths, and limitations
3. Describe a range of key factors which impact on the coaching process and how these can be integrated through a focus on professional judgment and decision making
4. Describe some crucial skills that can help coaches to understand and manage the complex and dynamic environments in which they work and best lead performers

**Key Terms:** Coaching process; Professional judgment and decision making; Adaptive expertise; Nested thinking

## **Introduction**

With the previous sections of this book having provided an overview of leadership theories and their application in sport management, we now open this section on leadership as applied in the context of sports coaching. To lay the foundations for later chapters, as well as provide a point of comparison and contrast with the previous section (note that organisational and sport participation/performance settings are similar but not identical!), this chapter will firstly introduce the sports coach and outline the requirements of this role across participation and performance environments. We then provide an overview of models that have attempted to conceptualise the coaching process, culminating in a focus on coach decision making. In the third and final section, we identify and discuss some core skills that help coaches to make consistently effective decisions when leading sports performers and teams.

## **Introducing the Sports Coach**

While undertaking a host of supporting activities, the primary role of the sports coach is to develop and optimise the performance of individuals and teams. This mainly involves the coach organizing practice sessions and training schedules, supporting the development and refinement of physical, technical, and tactical skills for competition, and leading the performers or team throughout a season and beyond. In addition, however, a great deal of communication and support work should also go on outside the direct training environment. It is the subtle but optimum blend of these two types of coaching, direct and indirect, which characterise the best coach-leaders.

In terms of the specific requirements of coaches (i.e. their work in the 'direct' training environment), these will clearly vary in relation to the nature of the goal for the performer/team (i.e., performance or participation), the aim of the governing

body/organisation/club, the nature of the sport, and the level of competition. For participation coaches, the focus will usually be tipped in favour of promoting positive sporting experience to a greater extent than performance outcomes. As such, participation coaches are required to *generally* focus less on results and more on the interpretation, development, and well-being of the performers/team. Indeed, rather than winning and/or outperforming others (although these will still be factors!), coaches in this setting may also often work to foster individual and interpersonal skills that benefit individuals in their sporting and wider social contexts; for example, developing resilience and teamwork that can be applied at school/in their job. Coaching effectiveness will therefore be gauged against the delivery of these types of outcomes as well as how individuals generally feel about their participation (e.g., “Did I have a good time?” “Have I learned something new?” “Am I getting better?”).

For coaches operating under a performance remit, the focus will instead be tipped in favour of promoting performance outcomes to a greater extent than positive sporting experience. As such, performance coaches are therefore required to *generally* focus more on systems and processes that enable peak performance and competitive success than individual well-being. Indeed, although coaches in this environment will still look to foster positive broader individual and interpersonal skills, these are seen as the means to achieving the main goal of objective success (i.e., not the main goal itself). Coaching effectiveness will therefore be gauged more closely against performer/team evolution, their execution of performance, the consistency of this execution, and their hard results. This should not be taken to mean that participation coaching involves a greater percentage of indirect work (i.e. that done away from the immediate training environment) than performance coaching. Rather, as we will explore later, the judgement of what to do, how much, when and how is the crucial variable.

## **Conceptualising the Coaching Process**

As outlined by Lyle (2002), the coaching process can be considered a purposeful series of goals, activities, and interventions that are designed to improve the performance of teams and athletes. Although the prior section outlined some broad criteria that can define effectiveness in performance and participation domains, we must emphasise that identifying markers of successful coaching is an inherently difficult task due to the subjectivity of the coaching process, the variability of sporting outcomes (e.g., performer development and results) and, of course, the length of time which may be involved before the efficacy of the coaching process can be truly evaluated. For example, the ‘making’ of an Olympian may take 12-16 years, with several coaches contributing to the performance ladder. As a result, it is usually much better to look at the quality of the process (what is being done against logically derived criteria) than the outcome of how well the performer is doing. Indeed, the best coaches do not necessarily work with the best performers/teams, or performers/teams who seem to be having the best time. Unfortunately, before this was commonly acknowledged, coaching literature was dominated by a behaviourist approach that aimed to develop definitive coach profiles (through assessing coaches of successful performers/teams) which could then be prescribed to those learning their trade. In this way, expert coaching behaviours were perceived to be distinct, observable, measurable, predictable, controllable, and generalizable. However, as asserted by many coaching researchers (Cushion et al., 2006; Nash and Collins, 2006; Nash et al., 2012), this behaviourist approach was based on a flawed assumption that coaching expertise can be simply copied and reproduced. With a focus on *what* (apparently) good coaches look like, it also overlooked the actual *process* of coaching (i.e., *how* coaches work) and, even more crucially, *why* (and *why not*) particular methods were used.

In a move away from the traits of (apparently) effective coaches towards the coaching process itself, a number of models have been developed to define and operationalize coaching effectiveness. Following the classifications of (Lyle, 2002) and Cushion, et al. (2006), these models can be considered as either ‘of’ or ‘for’ the coaching process. Models ‘for’ coaching have typically been developed through the critical review and integration of prior theory and research (Franks et al., 1986; Fairs, 1987; Sherman et al., 1997; Lyle, 2002). In their review of coaching literature, however, Cushion et al. (2006) argued that these models are overly simplistic and often fail to account for core features of effective practice. More specifically, with their primary focus on the sequential structure and function of the coaching process (i.e., “do this, then this, then this”), important social dimensions such as the quality of coach-performer interactions have been overlooked or downplayed (Borrie, 1996; Jones et al., 2004). Finally, as shown by various authors in coaching (e.g. Abraham and Collins, 2011) and sport science (e.g. Martindale and Collins, 2010) the complexity of the coaching environment suggests greater benefit from a focus on “the why” of the coaching process.

In terms of models *of* coaching, and in contrast to those ‘for’ the process, these have been developed via the assessment of expert/successful coaches but not carefully evaluated against established theoretical ideas. More specifically, Cushion et al. (2006) argued that work in this area – despite adopting a more holistic approach – has positioned coaching as a largely implicit and uncontested process (e.g., Côté et al., 1995a, 1995b; McClean and Chelladurai, 1995; d’Arrippe-Longueville et al., 1998). Indeed, although complexity and context receive greater recognition, these models still present coaching as a one-way activity in which performers are passive recipients of coach knowledge and direction.

To address these shortcomings in models for and of coaching, Abraham et al. (2006) took the middle ground to develop a model ‘for’ coaching that was then assessed by expert coaches (who could comment on its depiction ‘of’ coaching). Rather than attempting to prescribe “ideal procedures” or represent all interacting factors, the resultant model instead centred upon the *knowledge* that underpins effectiveness. More specifically, Abraham et al. identified that coaching excellence requires extensive knowledge of:

1. the performer(s) (i.e., through an understanding of scientific disciplines such as sport psychology, biomechanics, nutrition, motor control, etc.)
2. the techniques and tactics of the specific sport
3. pedagogical principles (i.e., the systems and processes of performer learning and development)

By encouraging coaches to explicitly and simultaneously consider the performer/team, sport, and learning environment in practice situations, this model promoted a more holistic approach to coaching that moved beyond the design and delivery of drills. Indeed, by considering these three areas in tandem, this model promotes a “breadth-first” approach to problem solving and the generation of “best-fit” solutions. Within this conceptualisation, the coaching process is therefore depicted as a continual series of goal-based decisions.

Although useful for promoting a focus on coach knowledge and decision making rather than “prototypical” personality characteristics and behaviours, evidence has gathered to suggest that Abraham et al.’s (2006) model does still not fully reflect the multidimensional nature of coaching (Abraham and Collins, 2011). In addition, Cushion et al. (2006) described the challenges of coaching models which focused on pedagogy alone:

The coaching context is more than an individually dominated setting and a place for learners to simply ‘acquire’ sport skills. It also often doubles as an interactive workplace, is consequently racked with competing egos, hierarchies, constraints and opportunities and is, in its own right, an intricate, multifaceted and wide ranging social system. (p. 90)

This quote also relates to the ideas of direct and indirect coaching, introduced earlier in the chapter. Similarly, but with a particular focus on politics as well as social factors, Potrac and Jones (2009) have further argued that coaching is “as much about careful personal negotiation, orchestration, and manipulation, as about improving the performance of individuals or the team” (p. 566). Based upon these assertions, social and politically-oriented researchers have argued that environmental complexity means that accurately modelling the coaching process is neither viable nor desirable. Additionally, Thompson et al. (2013) have stated that “[social] context is not just a passive backdrop to action. Rather, action both shapes and is shaped by context, making both mutually determinative” (p. 13). Notably, the importance of social context is also emphasized by many leadership theories presented in this book (e.g., multidimensional model; contingency theory), where greater emphasis is placed upon *how* actions are delivered rather than *what* actions are delivered.

Returning to a knowledge perspective, research that stresses the importance of social and political contexts (and argues that the coaching process cannot be accurately modelled) raises the suggestion that effective coaching may be driven by “gut feeling” and instinct; or *tacit knowledge*. Tacit knowledge is considered to be that which is implicitly acquired via everyday experiences (i.e., the coach is not consciously aware that they have acquired it) and is difficult to articulate after it has been applied (i.e., coaches aren’t often consciously aware of why they acted in a certain way: “I just did it!”) (Sternberg, 2003). However, as *expert*

coaches have been shown to possess more knowledge of their domain than novices (or those who are less expert), such tacit knowledge and “coaching automaticity” is not the product of any innate “gift” but rather a detailed *declarative* knowledge base (i.e., understanding of the “whys/why nots” of coaching). Indeed, we have yet to meet any expert coach who has little prior coaching experience or who has not continuously reflected in and on this experience! As the second author has stated in prior work, “many of the coach’s actions appear instinctive but are actually based on a complex interaction of knowledge and memory of similar situations, honed by years of experience and reflection” (Nash and Collins, 2006, p. 472).

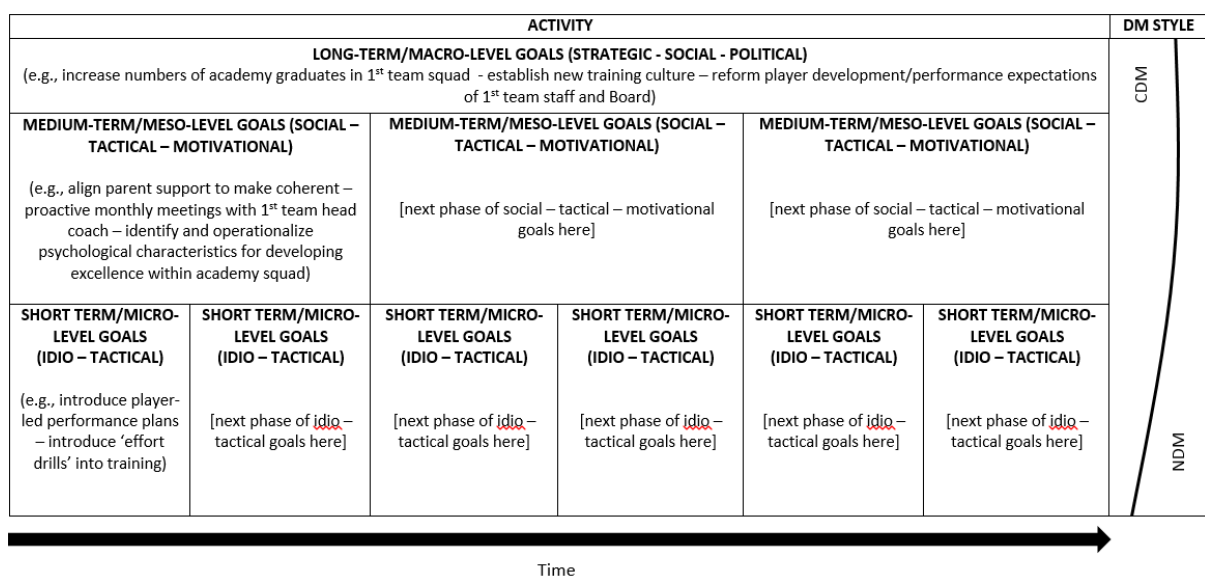
### **Understanding and Enhancing Coach Effectiveness through Professional Judgment and Decision Making (PJDM)**

Given the dynamic and complex environments in which coaches must work, as well as the need to assess, manipulate, and respond to evolving and unique contexts, expert coaching will therefore be underpinned by a PJDM approach to both personal development (largely indirect) and performance (largely direct) factors. PJDM reflects the choices and chains of decision making by coaches that relate to assessing issues which require attention, identifying and evaluating different solutions, selecting suitable courses of action, and continually monitoring and modifying these courses of action. Indeed, as coaching is a context-dependent decision making process that must handle “shades of grey” rather than “black and white” situations and challenges, a focus on PJDM presents a logical, constructive, and impactful route for understanding and enhancing coach effectiveness. Significantly, this approach does not overlook or downplay the pedagogical, social, and political elements of coaching. Instead it acknowledges that all of these facets play a key role in shaping the coaching process but in an integrated (not isolated) way. In this manner, coach decision making (and ultimate effectiveness) requires a joint consideration of pedagogical principles



against the prevailing (and anticipated) social and political context. To amalgamate pedagogical, social, and political approaches to coaching, Abraham and Collins (2011) therefore outlined a new model to “scaffold” coaching practice and research. Figure 1 offers a simplified version of this model.

Figure 1: Simplified model outline to “scaffold” coaching practice and research (Abraham and Collins, 2011).



Supporting adaptive expertise (or the ability to perform effectively, flexibly, and innovatively in unstructured and unpredictable situations; Tozer et al., 2007), Figure 1 outlines the structure for a multifaceted and multi-level form of coach planning and execution that is underpinned by *nested thinking* (cf. Abraham and Collins, 2011; Martindale and Collins, 2012). As part of this integrated approach, coaches are encouraged to prepare and deliver coherent actions across the micro- (e.g., day-to-day), meso- (e.g., month to month), and macro- (e.g., year to year) level of their behaviour. In this way, any day-to-day decisions and actions are *simultaneously* locked into targets/plans for that week, which are locked into targets/plans for that month, which are themselves locked into targets/plans for that quarter,

year, and so on. In short, the key point is that optimum “in situ” decisions and actions (i.e., those made in the “here and now” *and* shaped by social and political conditions) will be those which work to previously established and coherent short, medium, and long term agendas. Focusing on one of these agendas alone will, more often than not, result in reduced efficiency and effectiveness (even though this might not be instantly apparent – think of coaches who have achieved notable early success but then stuck to this “winning formula” instead of anticipating and preparing for later challenges). In this vein, Abraham and Collins (2011) have described how effective in-situ decision making arises from deliberate and extended “off-line” analysis, critical planning, cognitive experimentation (cf. Schön, 1987), detailed evaluations, and critical reflection that focuses on the development of declarative understanding. Effective coaching (and coach leadership) is therefore characterized by the use of both naturalistic (i.e., quick and cue/feeling-based) *and classical* decision making (i.e., the deliberate and slowed down process that explores a range of different options to then select the most logical, structured, and impactful option for action). Importantly, use of both classical and naturalistic decision making applies to *every* element of the coaching role (i.e., pedagogical, social, and political). Promoting a systematic approach that is structured around broad conceptual ideas (i.e., the “scaffolding” concept mentioned above) rather than prescriptive actions (i.e., do this, then that, then this), nested action therefore enables coach flexibility but contextualized against clear pedagogical, social, and political objectives; or, as described by Kahneman and Klein (2009), “skilled intuition” (note the difference from just “intuition”!)

Of course, this is not to say that nested plans should be rigidly and arrogantly adhered to once they have been initially developed (leaders who would be described by Tetlock, 2005, as “hedgehogs” and behaviour considered as “complexity absorbing” by Ashmos et al., 2000).

Indeed, the challenges of coaching are so complex and dynamic that a continual revision and adjustment of these plans is pivotal (requiring a leadership style which Tetlock, 2005, describes as “fox-like” and behaviour considered as “complexity adapting” by Ashmos et al., 2000). Additionally, engaging in experimentation rather than simply copying and pasting previously successful decisions or actions is also vital (Schön, 1991). In short, the really effective coach is almost always looking for better ways to do it. Only the imminent challenge of a major competition inhibits this drive and, positively for the upcoming performance, creates a stability from which high level achievement can spring.

### **Excellence in Practice – Exemplar Skills to Support Coach Leadership**

Building on the theory presented thus far, we now highlight some (not all!) key skills that can help to make nested coaching work (and thereby enable fox-like/complexity adapting leaders). These are *multidirectionality*, *emotional intelligence*, *socio-political awareness* and *micro-political literacy*, *context manipulation*, and a *broad behavioural repertoire*. As this chapter aims to offer a general overview of coaching and raise some broad implications for coach leadership, we provide brief examples of these skills in action within each subsection rather than through one case study.

#### **Multidirectionality**

Given the importance of context in decision making, including social/interpersonal components, recent research has begun to illuminate the merits of a *multidirectional* orientation when leading performers and teams (in either an individual or team sport environment). Indeed, while much coaching research has focused on coaching as a one-way process and, more recently, on the relationship between coach and performers (e.g., Hampson and Jowett, 2014), other work has pointed to the need for (and benefits of) a 360-degree

approach (Cruickshank and Collins, 2012, 2014; Cruickshank et al., 2014). In the case of coaching, leading performers will require additional considerations of those who operate *alongside* the coach (e.g., assistant coaches, sport science and medicine support staff), *above* the coach (e.g., head coach, team manager, or the Board of Directors), and *in parallel* to the coach (e.g., parents, fans, the media). For example, take the following excerpt from Thompson et al. (2013) regarding a fitness coach who struggled to establish himself within a professional football team:

While Adam was clearly influenced by context, he nevertheless consciously attempted to influence the structures in which he operated . . . . In order to deal with his vulnerability and to protect his professional interests, Adam sought to create working conditions where the quality of his collegial and professional interactions would allow him to fulfil his role in an effective and meaningful manner . . . . Hence, he tried to develop functional relationships with the Manager, the senior physiotherapist and the goalkeeping coach; those he identified as the critical reality makers within the environment.

Pointing to the use of micro-political action (more on this below), this quote clearly conveys how coaching effectiveness can be supported and validated (or perhaps undermined; see Collins and Collins 2011) by those who are not the primary target of the coach's technical knowledge (i.e., performers). The need for a multidirectional orientation is particularly apparent in coaching roles within performance sport. Indeed, it is well established that parents play a crucial role in performer development and that the media carry major influence within elite sport environments (Bloom, 1985; Kristiansen et al., 2011). In this way, a multidirectional perspective acknowledges the power, agency, and interaction of *all* other stakeholders within the specific and broader coaching environment; and that this power,

agency, and interaction constrains the actions available to the coach. It also works to ensure that coaches continually acquire social and political information which constantly shape and refine their macro, meso, and micro plans (as per the nested approach described earlier). As an immediate and simple implication, leaders will have more impact when (consistent) messages are sent through a variety of routes.

### **Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

Given the role of emotion in shaping the nature and development of interpersonal relationships and group functioning, recent work has pointed to the benefits of emotional intelligence in coaches (Latimer et al., 2007; Meyer and Fletcher, 2007; Thelwell et al., 2008; Chan and Mallett, 2011a; Barlow and Banks, 2014). Indeed, EI has been found to promote effective coping with challenges and tensions (e.g., Jordon et al., 2002; Jordon and Troth, 2002) and has been conceptualised as both a useful trait and a specific ability. In terms of the former, EI is considered to be related to stable personality and behavioural dispositions rather than intelligence as it is conventionally defined (i.e., cognitive ability) (Petrides and Furnham, 2000). Alternatively, EI has also been conceptualised as the ability to detect emotions, their meanings and relationships, and to then use these skills as a basis for reasoning and problem-solving (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). More specifically still, managing the interaction between emotion and cognition is supported by four integrated “branches” (p.10):

- the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion
- the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought
- the ability to understand emotion and emotion knowledge
- the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth

Considered in these terms, EI revolves around the perception, monitoring, employment, and management of emotions in oneself and others and is therefore built upon self-awareness (Griffin and Moorhead, 2007; Haime, 2011). Indeed, without the ability to recognise and regulate one's own responses (through either reappraisal or emotion suppression: Grandey, 2000; Gross and Thompson, 2007; Augustine and Hemenover, 2009), coaches will struggle to consistently select the best option or delivery style when interacting with their followers – particularly in times of conflict or tension. With a lack of sufficient EI, they may also be less confident in applying the best option or delivery style (Thelwell et al., 2008; Hwang et al., 2013).

While sport-specific research in coach EI is still in its early stages, with more work conducted on leaders within non-sport environments, it has long been acknowledged that effective coaching (especially indirect coaching) requires the ability to understand and control emotions (Hanson and Gould, 1988; Gould et al., 2002). Indeed, it is a highly face valid assertion that coaches should possess the ability to appraise and apply a variety of situation-specific emotional responses (e.g., when facing conflict with a performer during a training session). Given that effective coaching relies on interpersonal and social awareness, the “soft” skill of EI offers a valuable route for improving sports performers'/teams' learning and performance. Incidentally, recent work has noted the benefits of intra- and inter-personal emotion abilities and regulation strategies (i.e., monitoring and managing the emotions of oneself and others) across *all* levels of a sport organization (covering performers, coaches, team management, non-sport performance personnel: Wagstaff et al., 2012). While our focus in this chapter is on the general merits of EI and not its outcomes, it is important to note that effective emotion regulation does not mean that all experienced emotions are positive in

nature. Indeed, negative emotions (e.g., anger) *may* be beneficial in certain contexts (Hanin, 2011); just as socially undesirable behaviour might be more beneficial than socially desirable behaviour in certain contexts (something which we will come onto later in the chapter).

In sum, and given that effective decision making requires a sound understanding of interpersonal dynamics, a high level of EI can help coaches to focus the lens through which they perceive their environment, explore the rationale for action, and then make effective performance-impacting choices (Chan and Mallett, 2011b). Indeed, without this ability (or trait), interactions with others will be somewhat constrained and critical opportunities for promoting “emotional insight” and “emotional contagion” in one’s followers missed.

### **Socio-political Awareness & Micro-political Literacy**

Linked to emotional intelligence, another key skill of effective sport coaching lies in the ability to read and respond to social and political conditions. Indeed, as leading any level of sports performer and team can be a socially complex and contested task, the ability to evaluate and deploy actions against broader socio-political constraints and objectives has been forwarded as a core feature of planning and executing coherent behaviour (Abraham and Collins, 2011; Collins & Cruickshank, 2014; Cruickshank and Collins, 2014). With links to Hogan and Hogan’s (2002) notion of sociopolitical intelligence, Potrac and Jones (2009) and then Thompson et al. (2013) have shed particular light on the need for socio- or “micro-political literacy”; the skill needed to read and integrate oneself into the “micro-political landscape”. Consider this further extract from Thompson et al. on the fitness coach mentioned earlier:

Adam's stigmatisation appeared to partly result from his inability to read the social frames within which action occurs . . . [i.e., the often unconscious structures which guide the perception of reality] . . . . Adam then, appeared to misconstrue or ignore the regularities and rules that guided contextual practice, and the meanings such rules held for the staff at Hollington F.C. . . . He had not understood or correctly read the implicit, taken-for-granted forms of knowledge that give order to everyday interactions. This proved to be a costly error in light of the pressurised, unstable and often paranoid world of professional football. (p. 14)

Emphasising yet again the need for more than sport and role-specific technical knowledge, we have also found repeated support for micro-political literacy in our own research in elite team leadership. For example, a Head Coach of a UK professional football team noted how their failure to convey appropriate political sensitivity led to their eventual sacking:

[To upgrade] all three [training] pitches would cost something like £65,000 . . . [and] it was decided [by the Board] to do one pitch . . . . Yet they built one of the corners up of the [stadium] as a media center and . . . restaurant for £1M . . . . I don't see the logic in it . . . and I made my feelings known . . . I'm not saying that cost me, but maybe . . . banging on about [it] was something that didn't help. (Cruickshank & Collins, 2014, p. 25)

Given the pervasiveness of social and political issues, such as this example, coaches have therefore been advised to critically evaluate the broader socio-political goals of their practice (e.g., "managing upwards" to one's line/top manager to secure or sustain resources that enable programme development). In this way, coaches can then take greater control of their socio-



political environment rather than simply react and tolerate the constraints imposed upon them; a skill now described in the following section.

### **Context Manipulation**

Beyond awareness to prevailing contexts, coaching excellence is also reflected in the ability to proactively manipulate contexts in one's favour. More specifically, as performers (or any implicated stakeholder for that matter) will have an opinion on coach-led processes, as well as the opportunity to act on this opinion, expert coaches will work to minimise/control this potentially incessant (and performance-detracting) contest. Drawing upon ideas from behavioural economics (Thaler and Sunstein, 2003), some of our own recent work has revealed that coach effectiveness (in high performance environments at least) is linked to an ability to shape the context in which target individuals make decisions rather than directly confront or negotiate these decisions themselves (Cruickshank et al., 2013). In this way, the often tricky challenge of agreeing what is "right" or "wrong" for everyone can be somewhat avoided as individuals instead base their choices on what is perceived to be *normal* or *desirable* (rather than requested or demanded). For example, during a period of notable success, the management and coaching team at Leeds Carnegie rugby union team created physical, structural, and psychosocial contexts which: a) encouraged players to make their own decisions with regards to engaging with performance-optimising or performance-impairing behaviour; but b) be more likely to engage the former (Cruickshank et al., 2013). Highlighting this approach, a specialist coach discussed how publicly presented performance data worked to increase performer work rate without any overt coach demand or request:

I had a board up there where . . . I'd put their tackle completion up, so it was all there black and white for everyone to see and that really generated a lot of interest . . . I've

heard a lot of blokes coming in and saying “oh I’m only just one tackle off, I don’t want to miss any this week I’ll remember that.” (Cruickshank et al., 2013, p. 282)

On a structural level, the same individual also described how the development of a balanced squad (rather than recruitment of a few “superstars”) promoted high performing behaviours:

There are . . . two good players competing for every position . . . so there are a lot of pressures on the players to make sure they are in peak physical condition . . . they understood they were in a position where they could [drink alcohol if they wanted to] but they wouldn’t get away with it. (Cruickshank et al., 2013, p. 283)

In sum, the proactive manipulation of context can work to create and, to an extent, control the coaching environment so that stakeholders are more likely to offer a safe level of contest. For many effective coaches, this is achieved through the design and application of cleverly designed drills which offer ‘social encouragement’ to a player towards a certain role or set of behaviours. The addition of indirect coaching interactions, as mentioned above, is less common but a valuable addition to shaping team behaviour.

### **Broad Behavioural Repertoire**

As effective coaching relies on the ability to read, manipulate, and respond to context, it follows that coaches (should they wish to be considered *expert*: Nash et al. 2012) cannot rely on one leadership style alone. Indeed, one style will best match one particular context; not a range of contexts. We leave it to following chapters to fully illuminate some pertinent leadership styles for sports coaches and so focus here on a recent research development that emphasises the need for a broad behavioural repertoire.

More specifically, and challenging the dominance of “bright” (or socially desirable) leadership behaviours (e.g., transformational theory; Bass, 1985) recent studies have highlighted the additional and integrated use and perceived benefits of “dark” (or socially undesirable) behaviours (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Before considering some of these behaviours in detail, and in keeping with the opening chapters of this book, it is useful to clarify the difference between dark side *behaviours* and dark side *traits*. Dark side *traits* have been described as those which occupy the mid-point between “normal” (e.g., Big Five) and pathological traits (Paulhus and Willaims, 2002). As such, “one might consider them personality quirks that do not greatly inhibit day-to-day functioning, but [that] may cause severely negative outcomes in particular circumstances; such as during leadership social interactions” (Harms et al., 2011, p. 496). Perhaps most simply, these traits are also “viewed negatively by most individuals in society” (Judge et al., 2009, p. 864). Notably, however, dark side traits do not feature in destructive forms of leadership alone. Indeed, although less prevalent, they also feature in fundamentally constructive approaches. As an example, Davies (2004) has reported that the transformational style was associated with the dark side traits of *imaginative* (i.e., acting and thinking in creative and at times odd or unusual ways) and *colorful* (i.e., wanting to be noticed and the center of attention).

Indeed, many organizational researchers agree that dark side traits in a leader can actually improve follower functioning and performance. As other examples, positive links have been reported between Machiavellianism and legislative development as well as hubris and innovation (Judge et al., 2009). In contrast to the negative impact that dark side *traits* may have when they are repeatedly displayed in overt behaviour (i.e., continual narcissistic acts), sport-specific evidence suggests that the use of short-lived and contextually appropriate dark

side *behaviours* can bolster leader effectiveness and performer/group success (Fletcher and Arnold, 2011; Bennie and O’Connor, 2012; Collins and Cruickshank, 2012; Elberse & Dye, 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2014). Interestingly, these findings match those which indicate that, in some scenarios, bright traits can actually be ineffective or even counterproductive (Judge et al., 2009).

Treating coaching as an innately complex and contested activity, the use of dark side behaviours by coaches is perhaps unsurprising. Indeed, we have already touched upon the micro-politics that coaches must engage in, often involving much “face work” to promote personal value, power, and respect amongst peers and performers (Potrac et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2004; Jones, 2006). Our recent investigations with Head Coaches (and other leaders) of elite sports teams have also pointed to the use of other dark side behaviours (Cruickshank and Collins, 2014). Table 1 provides examples of these behaviours (note that their “darkness” is borne from the view of the followers or targets of coach action).

Dark Side Behaviour	Definition	Exemplar Quote
Machiavellian behaviour	Manipulative, deceitful, cunning, and exploitative acts to further personal interests	[Introducing more conditioning work for the players] came . . . at the same time as Ryan Giggs’ [yoga] DVD . . . . [So I just] made a point of, “have you seen this?” . . . Three or four players [then] came to see my analyst . . . and he got the DVD . . . [Then when] even the most ardent of [cynics] . . . sees four then six or seven people doing it . . . and getting results, ultimately something is going to click . . . . So from having

		three or four in the gym before training all of a sudden eight or nine were in [without overt demands].
Sceptical behaviour	Cynical, distrustful, and doubting others' true intentions	[For] developing a good team . . . you can start through the [senior players] . . . . With some senior players [however] . . . it's your old enemy isn't it; keep your friends close but . . . keep your bloody enemies even closer! . . . [Failing to do so] may well have been a mistake that I made at [previous team] and perhaps is something that I've learned from.
Social dominance behaviour	Preference for hierarchy, achievement, and control, as well as projection as a highly and consistently competent figure	Sometimes you don't want [players] to question everything, you just want them to do what we want them to do because we are the ones that have spent the hours looking at film and deciding the best way [to approach a game]. . . . There might have been times where we really encouraged their participation . . . but we probably just needed to tell them [at other times], "this is the way we are doing it; end of!"
Performance- focused ruthlessness behaviour	"No compromise" approach to the promotion of the team or group's vision, values, and	[Young modern players are] moaning away behind the scenes, and that's what you're going to get these days . . . . Society's made it, for every young man or young person, to have an excuse for failing; there is an excuse for everything now.

	standards	<p>There's a syndrome for people being lazy, rude.</p> <p>You come from a broken family? I don't give a **** . . . . I come from X; people getting stabbed and smacking each other so don't give me that ****. I've never been in trouble in my life, and all my mates have never been in trouble with the police.</p>
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Of course, and as per the consistent message through this chapter, use of dark leadership depends on making the right decision: in short, *any* style has to be appropriate and targeted rather than just following a prescription or an example from someone else.

### **Summary**

As we hope to have emphasized throughout this chapter, coaching is a highly complex and dynamic activity. Additionally, we have also stressed that the coaching process involves much more than developing and refining the technical and tactical skills of sports performers and teams. Indeed, through the need to consider and address a host of other factors, most notably those of a social and political nature, coaching is a multidimensional task that relies on the ability to make coherent and impactful decisions across the multiple levels of practice. In this way, and reflecting its potential to account for all of these key features, a professional judgment and decision making approach has been forwarded as the most appropriate and parsimonious for guiding the work of both coaching researchers and practitioners (Abraham and Collins, 2011). In particular, nested thinking can be used to explain and support coach effectiveness by providing a means to develop well-considered systematic plans that guide both long term/macro-level strategies and in-situ processes. Shifting from *what* coaches have

to do towards *how* they can best achieve this, we then described some key skills that revolved around understanding and managing the complex and dynamic contexts of coaching. While a host of skills not mentioned here are also important, such as reflective practice (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001), we chose to focus in particular on *multidirectionality*, *emotional intelligence*, *socio-political awareness* and *micro-political literacy*, *context manipulation*, and a *broad behavioural repertoire*. We hope that our illumination of these skills provides a foundation on which readers can now consider the content and messages of the following chapters.

### **Review Questions**

1. What are some of the core differences between coaching requirements in participation and performance domains? And what others differences might exist but haven't been discussed here?
2. How do the models 'of' and 'for' coaching differ between each other and what are the limitations of both?
3. How does a focus on professional judgment and decision making provide a unifying focus for coaching researchers and practitioners?
4. You are the coach of a professional soccer club's under 14 squad and have decided that, even though your assistant coach disagrees, you need to improve players' effort in training – how might you use the exemplar skills outlined in this chapter to achieve this goal?

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