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Examining Preferred Coach and Athlete Leadership Behaviors

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Coaches and athlete leaders are two vital sources of leadership on sport teams. While researchers have identified that athlete leaders and coaches share leadership responsibilities, research is warranted exploring how often athletes want each type of leader to display leadership. As such, the aim the present study was to compare preferences for athlete leadership and coach leadership behaviors. 193 kinesiology students who were current or former athletes rated their preferences for leadership behaviors using the coach- and athlete leader-versions of the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and Differentiated Transformational Leadership Inventory (DTLI; Callow et al., 2009). Results from a repeated measures MANOVA showed a significant difference in preferences for athlete leadership behaviors and coach behaviors, $F(12, 181) = 23.05, p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .396$; partial $\eta^2 = .604$. Specifically, participants reported a greater preference for coaches to exhibit training and instruction ($p < .001$), democratic behavior ($p < .001$), positive feedback ($p = .016$), individualized consideration ($p < .001$), inspirational motivation ($p < .001$), intellectual stimulation ($p < .001$), fostering acceptance of group goals ($p < .001$), high performance expectations ($p = .015$), appropriate role modeling ($p < .001$), and contingent reward ($p < .001$) more frequently than athlete leaders, and for athlete leaders to exhibit more autocratic behavior than coaches ($p = .002$). No significant differences were reported for social support. Findings highlight that athletes want leadership displayed very often, and that coaches are viewed as the primary source of leadership.. These findings can inform coaches and athletes about how to more optimally display leadership on their teams.