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2 **Drivers for Change: Reflective Practice to Enhance Creativity in Sports Coaches**

3

4 Christine Nash<sup>1</sup> & Dave Collins<sup>1,2</sup>

5 <sup>1</sup> Applied Coaching Research Group, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

6 <sup>2</sup> Grey Matters Performance Limited, Stratford upon Avon, United Kingdom

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13 Corresponding Author:

14 Christine Nash

15 Email: C.Nash@ed.ac.uk

16

### 17 **Abstract**

18 Reflective practice has become a standard component of coach development programmes,  
19 almost taken for granted. This research examines the links between long-term reflective  
20 learning and the application to, and ongoing effect on coaching practice. Twelve elite sport  
21 coaches, from a range of sports, previously took part in a reflective intervention. Nine months  
22 after the intervention these coaches participated in semi-structured interviews, specifically,  
23 we were interested in what, if any, drivers for change had arisen from critical reflection. Data  
24 from the interviews revealed three key themes: extended role of the coach; evolution of  
25 decision-making; and creativity and innovation. Reflective practice must be a tool for coach  
26 development but to be an effective tool it must be utilised to its full effect, as it has the  
27 potential to drive change and encourage creative thinking and practice within sports  
28 coaching.

29

30 **Keywords:** Innovation; applied practice; expertise; critical thinking

### 31 *Assumptions in Reflective Practice*

32 Most people who have attended a coach education course or participated in coach  
33 development will have heard about the benefits of reflective practice (RP). Indeed, in many  
34 ways RP 'has become a 'taken-for-granted' part of coaching that is accepted enthusiastically  
35 and unquestioningly and is assumed to be 'good' for coaching and coaches' (Cushion, 2016,  
36 p. 1). Undoubtedly thinking deeply about coaching practice is a positive, however RP should  
37 include a critical element, often referred to as *critical* reflection. Schön (1983) presents RP  
38 simply as the ability to reflect on one's actions in order to engage in a process of continuous  
39 learning. Could this infer, however, that the critical element is unproblematic or that coaches  
40 are able to challenge their practice as a matter of course? If so, this is surely problematic,  
41 especially since Schön also emphasises the importance of the practitioner as an active  
42 experimenter. It is safe to say that within coaching RP is a very commonly suggested tool but  
43 we would suggest that there is little guidance as to how to make the best use of it.

44 In mainstream education, reflection has long been used to integrate theory with  
45 practice, facilitate self-discovery, and is often considered a cornerstone of the profession  
46 (Dye, 2011). Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) suggested five elements to  
47 practitioner reflection: practical (tools to help reflection), cognitive (reflection on  
48 professional development), affective (reflecting on learners and their progress), meta-  
49 cognitive (reflecting on beliefs, personality, and identity) and critical (consideration of wider  
50 socio-political issues). Notably, however, these elements are not currently part of the offering  
51 within coaching and coach development. Within coaching, RP has been used as a support for  
52 critical analysis of coaches' beliefs, knowledge, and decision-making skills (Trudel, Culver &  
53 Werthner, 2013). Strategies such as self-assessment and assessment, specifically focused on  
54 the pedagogical action of coaches, can encourage them to reflect on their own practice,  
55 stimulating professional learning (Paquette et al., 2014). There is little evidence of systems

56 and practice built into formal or informal coach learning, as Werthner and Trudel (2009)  
57 pointed out coaches think about their practice but very rarely adopt RP. Reflecting on these  
58 omissions, we maintain that RP should be integral to the coach education and development  
59 process, but not as evidence suggests it currently exists.

60 *What should we get from RP?*

61 Dewey (1910, p.6), often credited as being the first in the RP field, considered reflective  
62 practice as ‘the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of  
63 knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it’. This suggests a questioning of practice,  
64 based on knowledge gained from theory and experience. In this regard, reflection has been  
65 associated with higher levels of learning, enabling the ability to contemplate, integrate and  
66 improve upon existing knowledge (Di Stefano, Francesca, Pisano & Staats, 2023). By  
67 encouraging questioning and the examination of personal assumptions, focused reflection can  
68 enhance perspectives that help with understanding the complex and ambiguous situations  
69 facing many professionals, including coaches (Faller, Marsick & Russell, 2020). Given the  
70 ‘messiness’ surrounding coaching practice at all levels, RP must be considered a vehicle for  
71 sensemaking.

72 RP can also be of use within situations requiring decision making, as reflecting back  
73 is an extremely effective method of reasoning forward (Mortari, 2015). Schön’s (1983)  
74 theories of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action have been used within many domains  
75 with documented benefits. Simply put, reflection-in-action refers to decision-making that  
76 occurs quickly and, at least seemingly, intuitively. Consider the coach in a competitive  
77 situation, deciding to make a key substitution or change tactics, in an attempt to vary play.  
78 Reflection-on-action occurs after the event and, using the same scenario, would encourage  
79 the coach to think about what caused the situation, what options were available and whether

80 they made the best choice in the situation. More recent work carried out in hockey and netball  
81 by Richards, Collins and Mascarenhas (2012) demonstrates the effective use of in-action and  
82 on-action RP to develop coach and team understanding, highlighting the connection between  
83 the deliberative practice environment and fast-paced competitive arena. Importantly,  
84 however, effective intuition in high level coaches is often associated with an automatic  
85 recourse to post hoc on-action, used as a process of internal audit to check what was done  
86 (Collins, Collins & Carson, 2016). Therefore, we would advocate RP as a method of  
87 checking and enhancing decision-making.

88 *What more can we get from RP?*

89 There is no doubt that judicious use of RP can drive growth. Within medical environments,  
90 for example, the practice of critical reflection on decisions and performance has been shown  
91 to lead to innovation and the generation of new ideas for treatment and patient care (Sims,  
92 Hewitt & Harris, 2015). For example, Ng and colleagues (2022) discovered that during the  
93 uncertainty posed by Covid, practitioners had to develop new approaches to cope with the  
94 complexities presented by the pandemic. They advocated an approach based on RP and  
95 adaptive expertise to help professionals respond and innovate in the appropriate manner by  
96 carefully combining the two approaches, to adapt to unknown circumstance and drive change  
97 in practice. Hatano and Inagaki (1986) conceptualise adaptive expertise as different from  
98 routine expertise being the ability to apply flexible problem-solving approaches and generate  
99 new solutions as the context demands. By combining RP with adaptive expertise, these  
100 medics were moving away from reliance on clinical checklists and solving problems  
101 themselves.

102 Schön considered that problem solving should abandon scientific principles and  
103 theories, and ‘search, instead, for an epistemology of practice that is implicit in the artistic,

104 intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability,  
105 uniqueness, and value conflict' (Schön 1983, p.49). Faced with unexpected and puzzling  
106 situations, practitioners could make initial assumptions that, when coupled with experience,  
107 guided further investigation. By embracing these more tacit solutions coaches may not  
108 always understand or appreciate why they then take the actions they do. So, despite  
109 widespread acceptance and recognition in the field of RP, there have been criticisms of  
110 Schön's view due to lack of clarity (Eraut, 2004) and difficulties in application to practice  
111 (Ekebergh, 2007). Despite this analysis there are identified benefits associated with RP being  
112 utilised in other fields so we suggest the link with adaptive expertise, the innovation and  
113 creation of new ideas can be drivers for change in coaching.

114 *How might we work towards these goals?*

115 Within the discipline of sports science, Woods and colleagues (2022, p3) ask 'Can we  
116 support intellectual freedoms of professional development for academic sport scientists–  
117 encouraging them to explore beyond the 'already known' of their discipline–potentially  
118 leading to genuinely novel, creative and practically useful insights for the broader (sporting)  
119 community?' This approach is encouraging, or promoting change, with the goal being the  
120 growth of the profession. The key rationale for advocating the inclusion of RP in sport  
121 coaching is a positive change, encouraging similar evidence-informed practice.

122 In a previous paper Nash et al (2022) showed that coaches do not necessarily engage  
123 in critical reflection, or if they do, they are not always aware that is what they are doing. They  
124 used an intervention to change coaches' perceptions of and use of reflective practice. We  
125 wanted to follow up on that to see what effect increased and prolonged use of critical  
126 reflection would have on coaching practice. Specifically, we were interested in what, if any,  
127 drivers for change had arisen from critical reflection. All the coaches interviewed were  
128 actively involved in critical reflection but what had this meant for their practice?

129 **Methods**130 *Participants*

131 The recommended sample size for a small qualitative study involving interviews is between  
 132 six and twenty (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Participants were twelve high level coaches, from  
 133 various sports (see Table 1) (M age = 44.58, SD = 4.27). All were recruited by personal  
 134 contact (Thomas et al., 2007) to take part in one-to-one interviews and, prior to this study,  
 135 had been coaching at national level for at least ten years (M = 15.75, SD = 3.60). Participants  
 136 had participated in a long-term reflection promotion intervention and had incorporated RP  
 137 into their coaching for at least a year prior to these interviews. To protect their anonymity,  
 138 we have used the term sport category rather than name the sport. Institutional ethical approval  
 139 was secured prior to data collection commencing and informed consent was obtained from  
 140 each participant.

Coach	Sex	Sport Category	Age	Years Experience	Highest Level Coached
1	Male	Net/Wall	41	13	National
2	Male	Net/Wall	51	22	National
3	Female	Net/Wall	43	14	National
4	Male	Team Invasion	47	16	National
5	Male	Team Invasion	43	13	National
6	Female	Team Invasion	46	15	National
7	Male	Team Invasion	53	21	National
8	Female	CSG	37	12	National
9	Female	CSG	49	21	National
10	Male	Combat	42	13	National
11	Male	Target	48	14	National



12	Female	Individual Aesthetic	47	15	National
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Table 1. Participant Coach Details

141

142 *Data Collection*

143 Coaches were interviewed in depth to ascertain their current use of RP, the benefits they felt  
 144 had accumulated and what they perceived that RP had contributed to their practice. We  
 145 piloted the interview schedule with two coaches prior to data collection, however these  
 146 responses were not included for analysis. Each interview lasted between 50-60 min.  
 147 Questions were deliberately left open, focusing on their continued use of RP since  
 148 participating in the original intervention (Nash et al, 2022). Against the purposes of the study,  
 149 one central question was ‘what impact has RP had on your coaching practice?’ Other  
 150 elements asked participants to consider what changes had occurred as they continued to  
 151 implement RP into their coaching. Against these purposes, the nature of the interview  
 152 allowed the researcher to guide the discussion, while at the same time, enabling the  
 153 participant to highlight the areas they felt were important.

154 *Data Analysis and Credibility*

155 Once the interviews were transcribed, an inductive thematic analysis was completed in  
 156 accordance with the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process enabled data  
 157 credibility by: (a) the independent coding of the data (i.e., investigators’ triangulation); (b)  
 158 the checking of the categorisation process by two researchers experienced in qualitative  
 159 methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); and (c) examination by participants of the researchers’  
 160 scripts and their interpretation to ensure that the data collected was authentic and reflected  
 161 their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). This practice of member reflection—the opportunity for  
 162 coaches (members) to reflect on and, if appropriate, query particular aspects of the  
 163 interpretation of the data they provided represents good practice in qualitative research

164 (cf. Smith and McGannon, 2017). As advocated by Creswell (2009), the process was carried  
 165 out with analysed data rather than transcripts. This was important to retain diversity and  
 166 produce the higher level, overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006), while also offering  
 167 participants the best opportunity to contribute to the picture generated.

168 **Findings**

169 Data from the interviews revealed three key themes arising from 97 meaning units gathered  
 170 from the 12 participant coaches. These themes were: extended role of the coach; evolution of  
 171 decision-making; and creativity and innovation. The derivation of these higher order themes  
 172 is shown in Table 2. There were no differences found between gender of coaches, type of  
 173 sport coached or length of time spent coaching.

Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes	Data Extract
Extended Role of the Coach	Influencer Explore Marketing Own it (warts and all)	I have become an evangelist for different ways of coaching. I just see the endless possibilities, the different options that I can try. I need to sell the new ideas, the continual advances in thinking. I weigh up the pros and cons and then I ask myself 'will this work for us'
Evolution of Decision-Making	Tacit/Intuitive Automaticity (to be avoided) Understanding what I am seeing No right answer	I would go with a gut feeling Stick to the game plan – that was the plan – it would work. I am better at seeing what is happening in a match and making a call based on my observations I have realised that there is no such thing as the 'right answer'
Creativity & Innovation	Logic v Creativity Challenge the rules/norm Change is good What if questions	I have ripped up the rule book, completely discarded my plan and gone with my gut Innovation in coaching, new ways of doing things, different approaches can't be repeated all the time, or it becomes normal practice Building on new ideas, new ways to do the same things I find myself also asking the 'what if' question – I find this helps me discover new ways of doing things

174 Table 2: Summary of Themes Developed from Analysis of Interviews

175 *Extended Role of the Coach*

176 All the coaches were still enthused about their roles, developing their players and teams and  
 177 trying to learn; however, they were also clear that they now viewed their role in a wider

178 context. This theme reflected the change in or at least, greater recognition of, cognitive  
179 processes rather than a more initial ‘action’ orientation previously reported (Nash et al.,  
180 2022). Coach 8 noted,

181 I love coaching, I just think about it all the time...how to solve problems, how to get  
182 better. I’ve been involved in [my sport] for over half of my life but I’m not tired of it,  
183 not burnt out like some I know. I just see the endless possibilities, the different  
184 options that I can try. It’s like being on the beach and searching for crabs under rocks  
185 – you never know what rock they are going to be under but you gotta keep flipping  
186 rocks.

187 This notion of incorporating different aspects into practice, whilst documenting the process of  
188 change within their role was highlighted by Coach 2 reflecting:

189 I used to try all the new ideas that I saw other coaches doing. Now I find that I am  
190 being more selective, I weigh up the pros and cons and then I ask myself will this  
191 work for us? Knowing what questions to ask makes an enormous difference and if it  
192 doesn’t work, try again.

193 Participants reported that they were constantly thinking about how they could enhance  
194 their practice as Coach 11 said: ‘I love thinking about things in the abstract – it doesn’t even  
195 need to be a problem – it’s more like how can I make this better? We achieved what we  
196 wanted so now what? How do we get to the next stage?’ Rather than remaining static in their  
197 coaching practices, these coaches were engaging with different types of thinking, such as  
198 problem solving, and advocating change. This was reinforced by Coach 4 who thought:

199 Coaching is tough, really tough, and just re-hashing old solutions based on repeating  
200 existing patterns of behaviour and traditional thinking will not allow me, or my  
201 players to develop. I need to sell the new ideas, the continual advances in thinking.

202 This expansion of the coaching role was referred to by all of the coaches with the recognition  
203 that the more they used RP, the more perspective they gained on the myriad of possibilities  
204 they could use in their coaching. Coach 12 reported: ‘my role is evolving – I feel that on the  
205 mats during practice I have become an evangelist for different ways of coaching. I encourage  
206 everyone to explore new moves that work for them. I believe that since I have been practising  
207 reflection that I am less constrained and I’m taking on more as a coach.’

### 208 *Evolution of Decision-Making*

209 A critical component of coaching at every level is decision making, more importantly,  
210 evaluating all the available sources of information and making the appropriate decision,  
211 informed by RP. Coach 5 said ‘I think I am better at seeing what is happening in a match and  
212 making a call based on my observations – quickly. I used to question myself all the time but  
213 now I can make decisions assertively.’ Experience with RP also builds confidence as Coach 7  
214 thought ‘I trust my decisions more now that I can see I’m basing them on evidence. Before I  
215 would go with a gut feeling, but I’m reflecting back on previous decisions, evaluating them.’

216 This confidence, built by the practice of reflection enabled these coaches to change  
217 direction, in this specific case, patterns of play. As Coach 6 reported ‘When we lost a goal, I  
218 used to tell the players to stick to the game plan – that was the plan – it would work. Now I  
219 use setbacks as an opportunity to re-evaluate the game plan. An opportunity to react to the  
220 opponents’ game plan - much more proactive.’ Similarly, Coach 1 thought:

221 I have realised that there is no such thing as the ‘right answer’. Everything is shades  
222 of grey and very context dependent. Unlike some of the things I hear, pushing this  
223 way or that approach, I now deliberately deliberate on what is best. I have learned to  
224 embrace the grey!

225 Some coaches offered insight into their solutions to perceived issues with their players or  
226 teams. Coach 7 summarised their ideas, saying,

227 We decided that the players need to be put under more pressure but the drills that we  
228 normally used were just not offering enough opportunities for decision making. So,  
229 we took this one step further and introduced cage football – really the survival of the  
230 fittest – nowhere for players to hide.

### 231 *Creativity and Innovation*

232 Critiquing practice, as these coaches were doing, encourages thinking about professional  
233 advances, as well as the evolution of personal practice, often leading to innovative outcomes  
234 (Tassone et al., 2018). This was manifest in a variety of ways, such as challenging the norm.  
235 For example, Coach 3 viewed more sharing of ideas and discussion as a potential way  
236 forward, saying,

237 Some coaches I know view knowledge as power and refuse to let other coaches benefit  
238 from their experience, whether that's observing sessions or having a discussion around  
239 some issues. I've never felt like that, but I think I have developed more understanding  
240 of why now. Innovation in coaching, new ways of doing things, different approaches  
241 can't be repeated all the time, or it becomes normal practice. So, you have to keep  
242 thinking, keep creating. People can't copy that!

243 This element of critique was extended by the what if questions, leading to thought provoked  
244 change. As Coach 6 reflected,

245 I like to ask the 'so what' question but now I find myself also asking the 'what if'  
246 question – I find this helps me discover new ways of doing things. I really enjoy this  
247 freedom of thinking – almost like shedding constraints and really indulging in some  
248 blue skies thinking.

249 Similarly, Coach 12 asserted,

250 Reflection is now an indispensable part of my practice – it involves observing,  
251 developing, digesting planning and being in touch with my alter ego. To be creative I  
252 need to be confident in myself and my practice and that has been a big change.

253 Thinking about concepts of challenge and change were indispensable tools for these  
254 coaches. Coach 10 said,

255 Some of my best ideas come from challenge, from complex situations and difficult  
256 people. I really feel on occasions I have ripped up the rule book, completely discarded  
257 my plan and gone with my gut. It doesn't work all the time but when it does – wow!

258 In similar fashion, Coach 4 observed

259 I feel that I have completely changed my thinking. I used to be all about the next step,  
260 the rational, tried and tested approach, so don't rock the boat. Now I am much more  
261 willing to take a gamble, try something different. It may only work once or twice but it  
262 disrupts the game and that is a plus. Keep the opposition guessing.

263 The concept of new ideas and pushing boundaries was also prevalent in this group of  
264 coaches. For example, Coach 5 thought,

265 I never say 'you can't do that!'. I'm usually like 'what are we going to try here that is  
266 unexpected?' The players love it – it's different for them too and not repetitive skills  
267 and drills but building on new ideas, new ways to do the same things. It keeps me  
268 motivated too.

269 Other coaches in this study offered more abstract thoughts, typified by Coach 1 'to be  
270 successful as a coach today, I need to be resilient because there are so many  
271 conflicting demands so generating creative approaches is crucial.'

### 272 Discussion

273 The aim of this study was to examine how the continued use of RP affected coaches practice;  
274 specifically, any changes that they saw as ensuing from this practice. Despite the varying  
275 contexts these coaches were operating in, individual sports as well as team invasion games, as  
276 shown in Table 1, they all espoused similar principles when discussing the benefits of  
277 continuing RP.

278 According to Collins and colleagues (2023, p.11), when it comes to changing  
279 professional practice, there is a certain amount of buy-in or “selling” required, which is an  
280 established and expected component of the applied sport science support process’. According  
281 to these coaches this holds equally true while driving change within the coaching arena. These  
282 coaches had to become the agents for change, as exemplified by Coaches 4 and 12, who  
283 recognised the need to market, or sell, new approaches to everyone involved, athletes,  
284 colleagues and the wider club or organisational community. This incorporated functioning as  
285 an influencer, as these coaches felt responsible for spreading their new knowledge to all  
286 involved, although they acknowledged that there were also risks associated with this process.  
287 However, RP helped each of them to determine the likely success of various approaches, which  
288 made the change process easier to manage.

289 The recognition that their role as a coach was evolving was attributed by the participants  
290 to their deeper thinking while employing RP. They were able to see more options, as  
291 highlighted by Coach 8, ‘the endless possibilities’, ask relevant questions according to Coach  
292 2 or constantly searching for new ideas to develop their coaching. As coaches gain more  
293 experience their role can change, often as a result of coach education or professional  
294 development (Neelis, Faucett & Thompson, 2020), however these coaches were using RP to  
295 evolve their own practice, driven by the need to solve challenges within their coaching practice.

296 Sport coaching has long been considered a decision-making practice and interestingly,  
297 these coaches identified improvements in their decision-making ability as a result of their  
298 continued use of RP. Klein's (2017) decision-making model considers this diverse nature of  
299 experiences among experts by generally describing that a situation recognition task should  
300 result in four by-products: relevant cues, typical actions, plausible goals, and expectancies.  
301 Coach 5 exemplified this by referring to his trust in his observational abilities and resultant  
302 actions. Equally, Coach 6 referred to the changing of outcomes and expectations based on her  
303 reaction to the scenario evolving in front of her during competition. She attributed RP with her  
304 newly acquired ability to change direction/focus by reacting to the unfolding patterns of play  
305 and her confidence in taking decisive action to call the changes.

306 The coaches in this study reported abstract and conceptual thinking, coupled with  
307 enhanced decision-making directly related to their coaching context. Coach 1's notion of  
308 'embracing the grey' was recognition of the complexities at this level of coaching (Collins et  
309 al., 2022; Szedlak et al., 2021). RP enabled these coaches to see beyond the tickbox, recipe  
310 following representations of problem solving often presented in coach education courses  
311 (Lowry et al., 2023). This searching for answers to problems of practice denotes  
312 characteristics commonly observed in those at an elite level in many different domains (Nash  
313 & Collins, 2006). However, these coaches were using their enhanced RP skills to interrogate  
314 their own practice, combining RP and flexibility associated with adaptive expertise (Ng et al.,  
315 2022). Their questioning and critical thinking was developed, enabling them to select the  
316 most appropriate response to problems and then re-evaluate, often tweaking to better suit  
317 their context. This deep learning and application has been associated with improvements in  
318 professional practice (Collins et al., 2012).

319 Due to their standing, these coaches could be viewed as leaders in their sports; people  
320 that other coaches approach for their thoughts and ideas, influential within their sport. The



321 coaches were open about their ideas, not viewing knowledge as power, as suggested by  
322 Coach 3. According to Sternberg (2006), generating ideas is a component of creativity, but is  
323 also part of the bigger picture, of understanding why. Coaches 4, 6, 10 and 12 all referred to  
324 increasing confidence, connecting the dots and challenging the norm as benefits of RP,  
325 whereas fear of failure is an inhibitor to creativity (Lee et al., 2017). This realisation by  
326 Coach 10 that the ‘rule book’ does not always allow for diversity of thinking, added to the  
327 pushing boundaries reported by Coach 5 closely relates to the representation of possibilities  
328 advocated in creativity by Martin and Wilson (2017).

329 Vaughn and colleagues (2019, p.2090) refer to the ‘challenge of developing creativity  
330 to enhance human potential is conceptualized as a multifaceted wicked problem due to the  
331 countless interactions between people and environments that constitute human development,  
332 athletic skill, and creative moments.’ The coaches in this study were not anticipating  
333 creativity and innovation as an outcome of continued use of RP, and given the complexity of  
334 coaching, especially at the elite level, should we consider RP as a driver for change?

335 The reported consequences of creative thought and innovation can have benefits for  
336 both organisations and individuals, including increased engagement, motivation, problem  
337 solving and collaboration (Wong et al, 2018). If this creativity is an outcome that can be  
338 encouraged in sport coaching through critical reflection, then it should be encouraged by  
339 coach developers and sporting organisations.

### 340 **Key takeaways for coaching practice**

341 RP is advocated as a key tool for coaches and many studies have highlighted the importance  
342 and benefits associated with embedded practice. For example, the importance of values (Peel  
343 et al., 2013), transformative practice (Dixon et al., 2013), self-awareness to (McWilliams,  
344 2019), critical thinking (Hamblin et al., 2022), and quality of coaching practice (Da Silva et

345 al., 2022) have all been investigated. However, the aim of this research was to ascertain what  
346 effect increased and ongoing critical reflection would have on coaching practice. At present  
347 the benefits associated with RP appear to be more adhoc than systematic and implemented.

348 Coaches must be encouraged to reflect, however, if our aim is to raise the quality of  
349 coaching practice, we must do more than that. RP must be a tool for coach development but  
350 to be an effective tool it must be utilised to its full effect. This study demonstrates that  
351 continued, regular use of RP enhances problem-solving, decision-making and a deeper  
352 appreciation of the extensive role of the coach. Coaches should aspire to expertise but should  
353 also be introduced to the tools that will help them achieve this status.

354 With a study of this type, there will always be limitations, often in demonstrating  
355 cause and effect. The long term nature of the initial intervention and subsequent follow up  
356 indicates that these participant coaches perceived sufficient value in the RP process to  
357 continue with the practice. It would be useful, if a similar study was to be conducted, to  
358 monitor any resulting changes in behaviour, pre and post intervention and follow-up.  
359 Similarly, it may be helpful to see if the athletes working with these coaches had noticed any  
360 changes in longer term coaching behaviour and approach.

361 RP has the potential to drive change within coaching practice and the generation of  
362 new ideas, innovation and creativity will allow coaches to emulate experts in other domains  
363 by fostering critical thinking and questioning of practice. The critique of practice is  
364 important, but the depth of analysis is key to the changing of practice, the willingness to  
365 follow this new thinking into action. The all-important question of ‘why am I doing this?’  
366 closely followed by ‘what if I changed [this element]’ would be beneficial for all coaches to  
367 use on a regular basis. Sport coaching, especially at the elite level is concerned with  
368 challenge and change – we suggest RP can support this.

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