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TEAM COHESION IN SPORT

Critical overview and implications for team building

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Introduction

Team unity or cohesion is one of the cornerstones for helping a group of athletes achieve a common goal (e.g. Pain and Harwood 2009; Yukelson 1997). In fact, empirical research has indicated that coaches feel that team cohesion is directly linked to improvements in team performance and success (Bloom *et al.* 2003; Carron *et al.* 2002a). One of the most effective ways for coaches to improve team cohesion is through the implementation of team building activities (Bloom *et al.* 2003). According to Woodcock and Francis (1994) an effective team building program can lead to the following six outcomes: (1) team leadership being coherent, visionary, and acceptable; (2) team members understanding and accepting their responsibilities and roles; (3) team members dedicating their efforts to the team's goals and objectives; (4) a positive, empowering climate surrounding the team; (5) team members making better use of their time and resources during meetings; and (6) team members being able to identify and correct team weaknesses.

Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to critically review the area of team cohesion and team building in sport. This chapter will provide readers with an overview of cohesion research as applied to sport coaching by examining how cohesion has been conceptualized and measured, and its relationship to performance in sport. Further, this chapter will also provide a critical overview of team building research in sport and implications for team building research by examining Carron and Spink's (1993) team building model and approaches to team building. The chapter will conclude by highlighting potential future directions in the area of team building.

Critical overview of team cohesion research

Cohesion has been viewed historically as the most important small group variable (Golembiewski 1962; Lott and Lott 1965). As a result, researchers have attempted to define