

Elite Coach Perceptions of Cohesion on Coacting Teams

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the knowledge and perceptions of elite coacting sport coaches as applied to team cohesion. Six experienced university cross-country running coaches who achieved high levels of success and recognition were purposefully chosen and interviewed for this study. Results demonstrated that these coaches valued cohesion and felt it played an integral role in developing team success and satisfaction, despite facing barriers such as intrateam competition and rivalry. Purposeful recruiting, choosing effective team leaders, setting and monitoring team goals, and encouraging social events were some strategies utilized to enhance cohesion and establish positive relationships among teammates. These findings provide a greater understanding of the knowledge of elite coacting coaches and cohesion.

Key words: Competition, Cross-Country Running, Personality, Team Development, Varsity Sport

INTRODUCTION

North American intercollegiate sports attract considerable media coverage and fan support, primarily with high profile *interacting* sports. Interacting sports involve teammates training and competing alongside one another while combining each player's diverse skills in an interdependent pattern of teamwork to achieve a common goal, as occurs in American football and hockey [1]. However, approximately 40% of Canadian collegiate sports are characterized as *coacting* [2]. These athletes also train alongside one another, travel together, and provide social and motivational support to each other. However, coacting sports differ from interacting sports because their athletes simultaneously compete against both opponents and teammates, as occurs in cross-country running, track and field, and swimming [1]. In other words, coacting athletes compete independently for individual recognition but also contribute to an overall team score. As a result, researchers have suggested that cohesion could be extremely difficult to develop and foster in such settings because of the importance placed on both individual and group objectives [3-5].