

Roles, responsibilities and relationships of full-time university assistant coaches

Charles-Antoine Sinotte, Gordon A. Bloom and Jeffrey G. Caron

Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

ABSTRACT

Little empirical research has focused specifically on the assistant coaching position. The purpose of this study was to explore the roles, responsibilities and relationships of assistant coaches in Canadian university football. Six full-time assistant coaches were interviewed and the results from the inductive thematic analysis revealed the importance of coordinating one of the team's units and recruiting prospective student-athletes. Additionally, participants stressed the value of building relationships in all aspects of their profession, including with their head coaches and student-athletes. Findings from this study provide a preliminary understanding of the assistant coaching position, and could help inform research, theory and practice regarding the assistant coaching position, as well as assist in the development of coach education geared specifically towards assistant coaches.

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Coaches play a crucial role in the development of athletes of all ages (Bloom, Falcão, & Caron, 2014). Coaches' roles and responsibilities range from providing detailed and accurate feedback and motivation (Carpentier & Mageau, 2013), to teaching technical, tactical, physical and mental skills (Côté & Gilbert, 2009), to developing personal relationships with their athletes (Olympiou, Jowett, & Duda, 2008). For example, former American university head coach John Wooden believed the fundamental principles of teaching were the same in the classroom and on the playing field and he often spoke about the personal relationships he developed with his athletes away from the basketball court (Nater & Gallimore, 2010). In order to fulfil their numerous roles and responsibilities, head coaches often rely on their assistant coaches (e.g. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Nater & Gallimore, 2010; Rathwell, Bloom, & Loughhead, 2014; Solomon, 2001, 2002). For example, Gilbert and Trudel (2004) noted that coaches often rely on their assistant coaches for player evaluations, competition strategies, and the organisation and planning of practices. Likewise, Rathwell and colleagues (2014) found that university head