



Desired coaching behaviours of elite divers during competition

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ABSTRACT

A great deal of research on coach-athlete interactions during competition has focused on team sports, something which does not consider the many contextual differences between team and individual sports. Diving is an individual sport where recurrent intermittent breaks between dives in competition provide athletes and coaches with opportunities to communicate and interact during an event. The purpose of this study was to understand elite divers' perspectives of their coaches' behaviours during competition. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documents with six national team springboard and platform divers. A reflexive thematic analysis of the data revealed that athletes and coaches carefully developed and implemented individualised routines to deal with the pressures of competition. Athletes discussed the importance of trust and understanding with their coaches as crucial elements to facilitate performance in a high-risk sport. Athletes also found it particularly challenging when they felt their coaches were frustrated, disappointed, or giving up on them. From a practical perspective, our findings are useful for coaches and athletes in similar sports with intermittent breaks throughout the long day of competition, such as track and field, snowboarding, freestyle skiing, and weightlifting.

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Coaching effectiveness has been defined as “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts” (Côté & Gilbert, 2009, p. 316). More specifically, this definition is comprised of three major components including coaches’ knowledge, athletes’ outcomes, and coaching contexts. Coach knowledge includes (a) professional knowledge, which refers to the large body of specialised coaching knowledge, (b) interpersonal knowledge, which includes the ability to create and maintain relationships, and (c) intrapersonal knowledge, which is the understanding of oneself and the ability for introspection and reflection. Athletes’ outcomes, including competence, confidence, connection, and character/caring, have the potential to improve because of effective coaching practices (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Lastly, coaching contexts involve the unique settings (e.g., participation versus performance coaching)

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