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The Career Markers of Elite Basketball Coaches - A Qualitative Analysis

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Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Ottawa  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Sport Studies

Ottawa, Canada, 1995



Robert J. Schinke, Ottawa, Canada, 1995



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I would like to thank my parents for their love and support through thick and thin. My father, who is also my former coach, has played a special role in my development. He has instilled in me a love of sport, competition and coaching. From my mother, I have acquired a love for people and the outdoors. It is from their lessons that I wake up every morning enthused and ready to meet each day. I love them both dearly.

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**The Career Markers of Elite Basketball Coaches - A Qualitative Analysis**

### Abstract

In-depth open-ended interviews were conducted with six elite Canadian basketball coaches. The purpose of the interviews were to delineate the development of these coaches from their first athletic experiences to their current elite coaching status. The average age of the coaches was 51.5 years, and they had coached for an average of 19.7 years. The results of the present study identified the following seven chronological stages: early sport participation, national elite sport, international elite sport, novice coaching, developmental coaching, national elite coaching and international elite coaching. As novice athletes, they were influenced by parents, sport instructors and an accessibility to physical resources. Eventually, all became elite level athletes with high levels of commitment, talent and passion for sport. Some athletes chose to pursue their athletics to the highest international level, and therefore became national team members. When athletic careers ended, the coaches searched for possible ways to remain affiliated with sport. The novice and developmental coaching stages reflected a search for appropriate coaching philosophies and skills. Concurrently, the developmental coaches sought out additional theoretical and applied knowledge from coaching science courses and more knowledgeable master coaches. Due to their winning records and formalized coaching procedures, those sampled were all hired to work with university basketball teams. The differences between the national and international elite levels were minimal. However, those who opted to become international level coaches made a conscious decision to prioritize competitive results over all else. The implications of this research will provide basketball coaches and sport scientists with one possible blue print for the professional development of elite coaches.

### Career Markers Of Elite Basketball Coaches - A Qualitative Analysis

Until recently, much of sport literature has been devoted to studying the autobiographies and attributes of elite athletes (Bird, 1990; Bloom, 1985; Orlick & Partington, 1986) or methods of performance enhancement (Lynch, 1992; Orlick, 1986a; 1990). There has also been biographical literature published on elite expert coaches (Mellen, 1989; Riley, 1993; Walton, 1992). Though there is an interest in the success stories of world class coaches, scientific research is not available on the evolution of great coaches from their first sport experiences to their current levels of expertise. Further, the development and knowledge of coaches have not been systematically compared across autobiographies. Successful professional coaches such as Scotty Eowman, Bobby Knight, and Pat Riley have had unparalleled success when it comes to producing winning sport teams, and a systematic analysis of their approaches would enhance the knowledge of fellow coaches, sport psychologists, and sport consultants.

Each of these eminent coaches has had unique athletic and coaching opportunities that have led to elite coaching positions. Once their experiences and evolving philosophies of coaching are identified, expert coaches could be seen as an important source of information in order to provide a road map for the development of future elite coaches. Also, the study of expert coaches would strengthen coaching education and certification programs by revealing personal traits and knowledge leading to eventual elite level coaching positions. Thus, developing coaches would gain a stronger idea of the required skills necessary to become an elite level coach.

Coach education programs have been implemented in Australia, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States (Campbell, 1993), but their effectiveness remains questionable (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1995). In fact, when Gould, Giannini, Krane, and Hodge (1990) studied the educational needs of American elite coaches, they found that only 46% of respondents believed that "...there exists a well defined set of concepts and principles for coaches to use." (p.337). One could only question whether the same beliefs exist among Canadian coaches.

Though the Canadian National Coaching Certification Program does have progressive coaching levels, it is apparent that the knowledge of expert Canadian coaches was not solicited and added to its curriculum. As a result, Côté, et al. (1995) studied expert gymnastic coaches, an individual sport, in order to understand the structure of their knowledge. Having analyzed the interviews of 17 expert gymnastics coaches, Côté et al. found that knowledge from the transcripts could be categorized into the central components of competition, organization, and training. He also found the peripheral variables of contextual factors, the athletes' and coaches' personal characteristics influenced a coaches' knowledge and delivery of information. Nonetheless, the development and perspectives of elite basketball coaches, a team sport, have remained untapped until the present. What athletic and coaching experiences facilitated eventual coaching philosophies? How did coaching styles evolve from early coaching experiences to the present, and why? At which developmental stage did coaching components emerge for the first time? How did these coaching components formalize at the elite levels?

The objectives of this study are twofold: On one level, this research will delineate the career demarcation stages of six expert basketball coaches selected by Basketball Canada. On a second level, this study will outline factors that influenced their coaching philosophies and also flesh out the evolution of their coaching knowledge. Based on their experiences, it is hoped that formalized coaching programs and mentor coaches will gain a better understanding on how to produce and enhance the knowledge of aspiring team sport coaches. This research will also provide sport scientists and coaches with a better understanding of intervention and instructional techniques when working with developing coaches who have as their objectives the aim to coach at an elite professional level.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to define the career markers and attributes of expert basketball coaches in a similar manner to Bloom's (1985) research on the development of world class athletes. Where Bloom emphasized the development of the performer, this study will outline demarcation points in the development and maturation process of expert coaches in

basketball. Second, the current study will also attempt to explain the acquisition and development of coaching components commencing with early athletic experiences, and culminating with current coaching practices.

### Assumptions and Limitations

As in all research, the present study does have some limitations, however attempts have been made to minimize each one. One concern was to ensure that information provided by the coaches was trustworthy and accurate. The interviewer also had to ensure that questioning was carried out to the point of redundancy, or saturation, to ensure that as much pertinent material as possible was included in the interview. These concerns were guarded against throughout the interview process by questioning all subjects to the point of redundancy, and during the data analysis by establishing trustworthiness of the content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1987).

The interviews were not conducted by the actual researcher, however, the data analyst worked closely with the interviewer as a research assistant and data analyst, and thus had as strong feeling of the content as is possible without conducting the interview personally. Furthermore, the analyst listened to the cassettes of all the interviews, and viewed all notes taken throughout each interview. When comparing the interviews of the elite coaches, the analyst found that one coach's interview amounted to one third of the total interview manuscripts. Therefore, the analyst made a concerted effort to compensate for this weakness by representing all the coaches equally during the results section.

Finally, the purpose of the present research provided an in-depth analysis of the original expert coach study conducted by Salmela (1994a). While Salmela provided an initial overview of four team sports, the immediate analysis provided an in-depth understanding of the development and knowledge of Canadian basketball coaches. Nonetheless, both studies shared the purpose of tracing the trends of elite coach development from the same sample. Therefore, the analysis of the data was not being used for a secondary purpose. Instead, its aim was to analyze one sport in detail, therefore remaining sport specific.

### Significance

Until recently, studies of sport psychology have emphasized the importance of performance enhancement while focusing on the development of the athlete. At present, there appears to be a growing interest on the development of coaching staff as researchers recognize that coaches could play a significant role in the development of athletic skill and performance. It is crucial that more studies be conducted to isolate the development and attributes of elite coaches so that developmental models of coaching could be implemented to provide coaching programs with a general road map in order to educate novice coaches systematically. Specifically, no studies have provided an in-depth examination on the professional development of coaches commencing with their childhood sporting environments, and then culminating with high performance coaching positions. The aforementioned variables are analyzed in relation to their roles in the evolution of the expert coaches sampled. Thus, the aim of this research is to take a small step forward into uncharted territory.

### Operational Definitions

Expertise. Expert was defined as a minimum of 10 years of deliberate practice in their field of specialization (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993).

Expert coaches. Coaches who were selected by peers in Basketball Canada based on successful university and international level results measured by successful win / loss records, more than 10 years of coaching experience at the elite level, and experience working either in university programs or with national teams.

Stages of development. In the case of this research, each phase depicted a stage of professional advancement in the development of the expert coach. Current trends in knowledge and coaching behavior were identified in each chronological stage of career advancement.

## Review of Literature

### The Developmental Model - A Starting Point

The conception of a talent development model in sport and other performance domains was first introduced by Bloom (1985). Through in-depth structured interviews, Bloom studied the athletic development of world class tennis players, Olympic swimmers, as well as expert artists and scientists. The Bloom study was significant in that it identified stages of performer's development processes commencing with the initiation to sport, and culminating with the athlete becoming an elite level performer. Moreover, in Bloom's study, similarities were evident in all fields studied. Some of the similar components across domains included transition phases for the athletes and the demands imposed by teachers / mentors at each level. Since studies have been limited to the development of athletes, Bloom's model will be employed as a point of reference for the current study.

### Stages of Commitment for Athletes

During an athlete's development, Bloom found that their progress was interrelated with personal desire and incremental phases, each characterized by increases in commitment. The subjects depicted in Bloom's study underwent three clearly demarcated levels of commitment while they developed as athletes. The first stage was termed the initiation stage or introductory phase, the second stage was typified by the performers developing more commitment or getting hooked to their areas of interest, and in the final phase, the subjects became obsessed by their chosen sports.

During their initiation as children, the subjects became involved and remained motivated mainly from the enjoyment derived from the sporting activity, and the support received from parents and coaching staff. Bloom stated that "...they mostly played because it was fun, they enjoyed it, and they got attention for playing..." (p.232). Thus, the children aspired for proficiency in their field without the pressure and objective of competition. Thus, according to Bloom, a healthy supportive environment coupled with pleasurable initial experiences in sport were prerequisites to becoming committed to a field of interest.

Bloom found that as the athletes became "hooked" by their sports, they shifted priorities and placed more emphasis on skill development and performance. Larry Bird (1990) former player for the Boston Celtics reminisced about when he first began to compete seriously in high school, and described the stage of development as follows: "Once I started getting seriously interested in basketball, I listened when Jonesie told me something...I was able to recover every piece of instruction" (p.27). Due to an increase in commitment level and focus, the athletes became motivated by continued improvements, and they placed greater emphasis on continued practice. According to Bloom, the shift in emphasis to a more serious approach was due to the athletes realizing that "...the demands of the instruction at this level required a great deal of practice time" (p.245).

Finally, the performers became obsessed by their fields of specialization, and thus they focused on their ambitions to perform. Larry Bird described the intensity of his early love for basketball as follows: "My whole life still revolved around basketball. I liked girls, but I was really in love with basketball and nothing else was close" (p.47). In this final stage of development, the athletes had experienced success, and became aware that they were standout performers. In essence, they acknowledged themselves as superior performers to their teammates and fellow competitors, a phenomenon supported by Bloom's (1985) findings. Due to their self-perceptions of uniqueness, these performers set themselves apart from the norm, and thus isolated themselves from their peers. As radical as the changes of behavior were in the final stage of athletic development, they were also an integral and necessary part of the performer's maturation process.

Related to the varying forms of commitment and motivation of athletes during each distinct stage of development, the performers required different coaching approaches reflective of their personal and performance needs.

#### The Coach's Relationship with Athletes

Bloom illustrated the relationship between coach and athlete at each developmental level. During the initiation phase, early sport instructors instilled and nurtured in the child a sense of

interest and passion of their domain, and were extremely encouraging in the performer's attempts at performing the skills. In fact, the athletes' interest and enthusiasm in the subject matter were of more importance than their performance level. Coaches thus took a genuine interest in their students "...usually because he perceived the ... player as being motivated and willing to work hard, rather than because of any special physical abilities" (Bloom, 1985, p.225). Furthermore, many of these coaches were acquainted and on friendly terms with the performer's family before any instruction began.

The second stage of the development was characterized by a greater emphasis on formal training and emphasis on exercises for skill development. In collaboration with their parents, the students often changed teachers and coaches in search of higher caliber mentors to learn the more intricate skills needed in order to perform at higher levels. Thus, competition emerged as a method of measuring performance level and skill development. The relationship between student and teacher altered as the athlete started to become self-directed. The role of the coach was then to balance technical content with positive reinforcement.

The performers transition to the third stage of development was characterized by a full commitment to the performance field. Unlike the first two stages, the final stage was indicative of the performer taking full responsibility for the attainment of the highest performance levels. The relationship between athlete and mentor was more collegial and emphasized respect as the performer searched for an individual to evaluate and provide feedback of performance as opposed to a earlier guardian like figure whose purpose was to motivate and encourage the athlete.

### Expertise in Coaching

Though numerous studies have examined the development and attributes of expert performers, few studies have explored the development of expert coaches/teachers. The following section will examine previous some research on the development of expert coaches/teachers.

Developmental stages of expert teachers. Berliner (1988) suggested that experienced physical education teachers underwent five levels of development prior to becoming experts. As

novice, the teachers based their knowledge on theoretical principles. After two to three years of professional experience, the teachers were "advanced beginners" and constructed teaching strategies relying on theory and some personal experience. During the third stage, the educators continued to improve their applied teaching knowledge, but they were still unable to orchestrate their classrooms without preplanning their strategies. In the fourth stage, the teaching approach progressed from a cognitive to an automated state based on previous teaching experience. Finally, some reached a higher conceptual level of interpretation where they created a unique and personalized holistic approach to teaching employing intuition and previous classroom experiences. Therefore, Berliner found that teachers progressed through a natural sequence of stages before they reached the highest metacognitive level of development. Berliner thus judged levels of expertise based on the automation of skills and the integration of knowledge.

Conversely, it also became evident that 20 yrs. of teaching experience did not necessarily equate with becoming an expert teacher. "Experience does not equal expertise" as Barrett, Sebren and Sheehan pointed out (1991, p.97). Thus, professional development experienced by teachers was contingent on their receptiveness and ability to adapt their approaches to their students and curriculum. Barrett et al. also stated the following: "Experience changes constantly, hopefully improving teaching behavior as experience increases" (p.97).

Developmental stages for expert coaches. Salmela, Draper, and Desjardins (1994) identified the transitional stages of 10 interviewed expert ice hockey and field hockey coaches. From their data, six transitional stages of development emerged: diffused involvement in sports, initial coaching role, the passive to active transfer of coaching knowledge, the established coaching role, the specialist coach and finally, the coach who has eminent awareness. First as athletes, all the coaches played many sports and were highly committed and dedicated to their early athletic experiences. When they began coaching, many taught a variety of sports which helped them gain basic coaching experience. This was also supplemented through contacts with mentor coaches and coaching clinics. For example, Pat Riley (1993) described his quest for knowledge as follows: "The reason I became an assistant coach was to gain more knowledge about the

subtleties of coaching..." (p.62). When they attained their first established coaching positions, the coaches specialized in one sport. Being regarded as "eminent", the coaches had successful winning percentages, became mentors to other aspiring coaches and became innovators within their sports.

Based on the work of Salmela et al. (1994), it was evident that in ice and field hockey, expert coaches underwent a lengthy learning process prior to becoming master coaches. However, in the hockey disciplines, there was no evidence that master coaches had to previously be expert athletes. There was however a need for the expert coach to have a strong passion for sport and refined observational skills in order to analyze each component of the skills in their sports (Dodds, 1994).

Developing expertise in performers. Researchers of human expertise were interested in "identifying the content, structures and processes that are responsible for skilled performance" (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell 1995, p.6). In the expert - novice paradigm (Chase & Ericsson, 1982; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Ericsson & Smith, 1991) researchers have attempted to study the competency levels and demands imposed on experts and novices in the performance in specified domains. These studies permitted researchers a method of observing elite and novice performance within a controlled environment.

The principal means to developing expertise according to Ericsson, et al. (1993) was based on undergoing a minimum of 10 years of deliberate practice. While studying elite musicians, but also referring to research with expert chess players, and athletes, Ericsson and his associates hypothesized that to facilitate the development of expertise, their education should balance deliberately set instruction from expert teachers with specifically designed practice programs that the developing student could carry out. Deliberate practice was defined by Ericsson and his colleagues as "activities that have been specifically designed to improve the current level of performance" (p.368). The actual activity was felt to be strictly task related, as opposed to only being enjoyable. In essence, due to the demands placed on the performer throughout deliberate practice, skill improvement was the only objective.

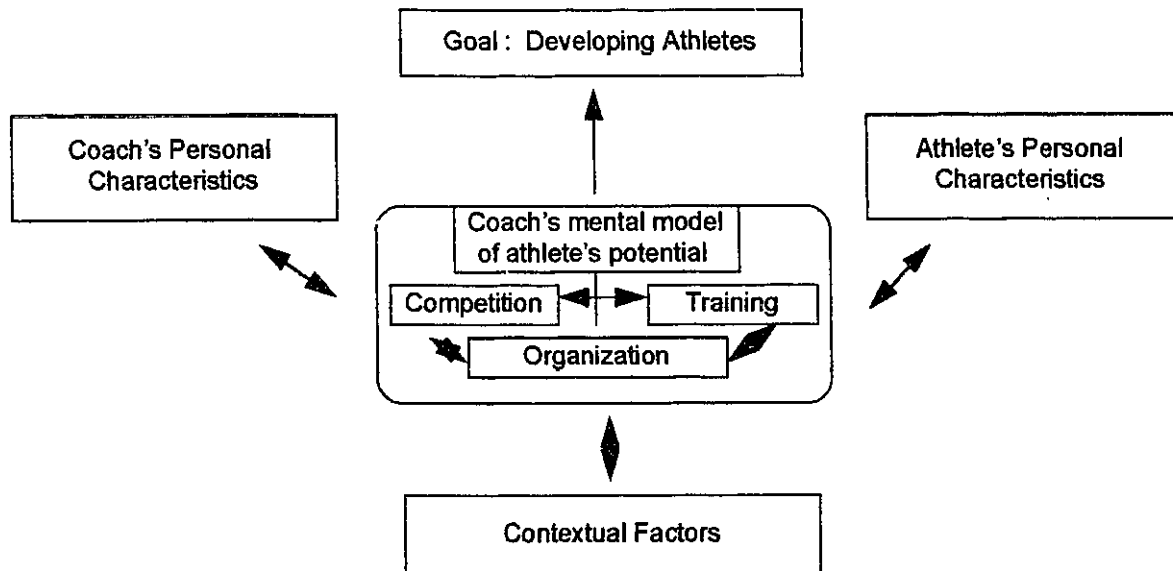
Based on the premise of deliberate practice, Ericsson et al. studied the performance levels of pianists and violin players. In their first study, different groups of violinists were interviewed, with one group comprised of potential professional musicians (n=14), another group was made up of good performers with less capability than the best performers (n=10), a third group represented musicians who would most likely become music teachers as opposed to performers (n=10), and a fourth group was comprised of international level musicians (n=10). Each group of musicians was interviewed and evaluated based on 22 criteria in order to account for the differences in their performance levels. Despite the differences in performance, the three groups of younger musicians shared several commonalities including the age after which they first received music lessons, and the number of years playing experience. Results revealed that of the three groups of music students, the two highest groups practiced 24.3 hours per week as compared to the weaker group who spent 9.3 hours per week. Comparing the two strongest groups of student performers, the best students had accumulated 7,140 hours of practice by the age of 18 as opposed to 5,301 for the lower level students. Thus, it became evident that the number of hours of practice were indicative of performances level once subjects received the opportunity to practice over an extended amount of time.

Should Ericsson's developmental model of expertise be correct, then coaches could conceivably evolve into elite level coaches with sufficient hours of coaching exposure and deliberate practice in their specific sport domains (Salmela, 1994b). Similarly, coaches could produce elite level athletes by providing the athletes with training exercises requiring deliberate practice amounting to at least 10,000 hours over the course of 10 years. Conversely, a coach could detract from an athlete's development by denying the athlete the correct practice exercises to produce elite level skills.

Though the quantity and quality of practice facilitated higher performance levels in performers, there are also components of an expert coach's knowledge that could enhance the performance of athletes. Thus, the purpose of Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria and Russell's (1995) model was to identify the conceptual knowledge of expert coaches.

### Conceptualization of Coaching

The coaching profession appeared to be a profession lacking in definition (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1995). Though there is a vast quantity of information on coaching, few systematized conceptual models regarding teaching processes and developmental models of coaches are available. Côté et al. studied 17 expert Canadian gymnastic coaches in order to provide a sport specific conceptual model of their knowledge structure. All coaches studied had at least 10 years experience in the coaching profession, at least one gymnast to the international level, two other gymnasts to the national level and were recognized as experts by the Canadian Gymnastics Federation. Côté et al.'s conceptual model included the following central and peripheral categories: competition, organization, training, the coach's and athlete's personal characteristics and contextual factors, the athletes personal characteristics. The combination of the aforementioned coaching components all played a role in the development of athletes.



**Figure 1:** A conceptual model of the coaching process (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell (1995))

Côté et al.'s (1995) research contributed to sport psychology research on two levels. On one level, they provided the sport researcher with a study where data was gathered and analyzed

employing qualitative methods. Second, they identified the conceptual and operational knowledge of expert gymnastic coaches. From its results, the aforementioned study affirmed that expert coaches have crystallized coaching procedures, and it is with these methods that expert coaches develop elite level competitors.

Therefore, it became apparent that athletes do not develop in a vacuum. Even the most committed athletes require the guidance of an expert coach in their field. The coaching profession is developing, and coaching certification programs have emerged in Canada, England, Germany, and Russia (Campbell, 1993). Though the aforementioned programs are in place, the profession requires an understanding of successful coaching methods in order to enhance the development of coaches and athletes alike. Studies that identify and define the development and knowledge of expert coaches will make a significant contribution to the development of future coaches, and thus sport in general.

The present study will adapt Bloom's (1985) model of three stage talent development, and shift its emphasis from the performer to the coaches of team sports, basketball in specific. The stages of athletic and career demarcation will emerge from the interviews, and thus be inductive in nature. This study is a building block on the studies that came before it, and its contribution to the field will be unique. Salmela, Draper and Desjardins (1994) provided a preliminary model on the knowledge development of coaches in team sports. The current study, however, will study the career development of elite coaches beginning with first athletic experiences, and culminate with the coaches becoming experts in their profession. It is hypothesized that successful elite basketball coaches develop their coaching approaches over the course of their lives - both before and during their professional careers. Thus, it is the purpose of the present study to determine the career development stages of elite level basketball coaches along with the coaching components that emerge at each stage.

### The Coaching Components

The review of expert coaching materials was limited to the following: 1) the demands and responsibilities of coaches as related to athlete physical skill development and refinement in

training, 2) the development of psychological skills for practice that could lead to better performance results, and 3) the interaction between the coach and athletes during training. Each of these components plays a role in the facilitation of athlete performance, and therefore becomes central to the coaches knowledge and career development.

### Coaching Demands And Responsibilities

The role of coach is a complex task at the best of times. According to Martens (1990), the role of coach varied from being an educator, an administrator, a physiologist, and an empathetic listener. Often times, the role extended beyond conventional teaching and management skills to parenting, friendship, and the role of family members. The purpose of this section was to delineate some material on the multi-faceted roles and responsibilities of coaching.

### Mentoring

Bloom (1985) noted that for every stage of an athlete's development, there were certain requisite characteristics expected and delivered by successful coaches. Bloom discovered that as the athlete progressed in skill level, coaches became more technically demanding. While the mentor was more reassuring during the early stages of development, feedback became increasingly technical as the individual progressed from one stage of development to the next. Despite the individual's stage of development, mentors "...demonstrated the ability to affect change through dedication and teaching skill" (p.8). Therefore a mentor was defined as "...a wise, loyal advisor; a teacher, a coach" (Perreault, 1990, p.36). Salmela (1994a) studied expert coaches from four team sports, and identified that many elite coaches were also mentored during their early professional development. Regardless of whether the individual was a developing athlete or a less experienced coach, the mentoring figure had distinct characteristics that facilitated learning. The responsibility of mentoring can be subdivided into the mentoring of athletes, and the mentoring of less experienced coaches.

Mentoring athletes. Often times, a coach's leadership skills extended beyond the development of athletic talent. According to Walton (1992), the role of the elite coach included being a mentor to athletes. As an example, Walton cited Doc Counsilman, the former American

national swim coach who became deeply interested in the personal lives of his athletes, their academic results and their personal goals. He thus extended his coaching role beyond skill development to a more supportive personal role. Supporting Counsilman's methods, Bloom (1985) postulated that performers were not born with the conviction to become world class performers. Talent was nurtured in a supportive environment by adults who had a belief in the youngster long before the performer acknowledged personal talent. The role of mentors involved teaching integrity and strength of character, self esteem, and positive values in general. Perreault (1990) stated: "To learn how important our actions are in how we [play the game] is the job of our coaches, our mentors. These individuals have to be able to instill the desire to win but not without teaching the graces of how to accept defeat." (p.36).

Mentoring developing coaches. Salmela (1994a) conducted interviews with 21 elite level expert coaches of basketball, volleyball, field hockey, and ice hockey to identify their development from early athletics to expert coaches. In most cases, each expert coach was influenced by several mentor coaches, and thus provided with clear examples of teaching techniques and interpersonal skills. Moreover, "most expert coaches were fortunate to have spent time as an apprentice with a more experienced coach..." (p.9). Dodds (1994) postulated that given the opportunity to observe master coaches, novice coaches would learn both the more pertinent and less salient components to teach their students, while also learning effective interaction skills. Thus, through observing more experienced coaches, the future experts learned the intricacies needed in order to evolve from novice coaches to the national and international levels (Bloom, Schinke & Salmela, 1993).

#### Skill Development and Refinement

Expert coaches can be denoted by their ability to optimize athlete learning. Throughout the training process, the coach demands maximal effort from the performer (Dodds, 1994), a variable Ericsson et al. (1993) stressed as essential when producing an expert performer. However, it also became evident that with each stage of athletic development, unique pedagogical and interpersonal approaches to teaching were required in order to facilitate the athlete's learning. Regardless of performance level, coaches developed and refined athletic skills on a daily basis

through instructional feedback (Rothstein, 1979). Yet, the coach realized that there were appropriate times to deliver these specific corrections (Chamberlin & Lee, 1993; Keele 1986), and that their expectation levels were determined by the skill levels of their athletes (Bloom, 1985).

A chronological approach to skill development. According to Bloom, as the athlete progressed in skill level, either the coaches' style evolved, or a new coach was found. During the early years, the coach was extremely encouraging, and the content of instruction was introductory with an emphasis on fun as opposed to winning. Research conducted by Smoll and Smith (1989) added that when the coach's outlook was result oriented at the earliest stage, it was caused by a coach tying results with the coach's personal identity. During the middle years, emphasis centered on talent development, and therefore, the coach provided detailed technical and training curricula, and expected a serious commitment from the athlete. Often times, well known skilled coaches were sought during the athlete's later years of development. Their focus was centered on total commitment, an inordinate amount of practice, and the students' ability to refine already acquired skills. In essence, both coach and athlete shared in the purpose of refining the athlete to a level comparable with other elite performers. Therefore, information feedback permitted increasing significance in skill development.

Daily skill corrections. According to Rothstein (1979), "information feedback was the single most important variable governing acquisition and performance of motor skill" (p.220). John Wooden, the former eminent basketball coach of UCLA postulated that the coach "must come (be present), see (diagnose), and conquer (correct)" (1980, p.5). Though Wooden elaborated that other variables were involved in skill development, detailed corrections appeared to be central to successful performance.

Ericsson, et al. (1993) recognized the importance of skill correction when the teacher's mission was to enhance performance level. They suggested that the primary task of the expert coach was to "...organize the sequence of appropriate training tasks and monitor improvement to decide when transitions to more complex and challenging tasks are appropriate" (p.367).

Regardless of whether the performers were novices or experts, a primary objective of the coach

was to systematically enhance performance skills. Scotty Bowman, coach of six winning Stanley Cup teams, found that a continual revision of expectations helped shape the direction of skill performance levels. His approach was straight forward: "... the more they won, the harder Bowman tried to find fault with them...the higher his intensity grew" (Swift, 1993, p.64). Thus, the onus was on the expert coach to devise individualized curricula for the performer, and continuously devise new performance goals for the athlete. As the performer progressed in skill level, the coach had to revise and develop new exercises to facilitate continued learning and meet the demands of the student. Salmela (1994b) forwarded that it became the role of both aspiring athlete and elite level coach to allocate sufficient daily time for structured practices whereby exercises were deliberately developed, practiced, monitored, and then revised to continuously develop the abilities of the performer.

The purpose of feedback according to Magill (1993) was to "compare the outcome of a just performed movement with the goal of the movement" (p.195). Therefore, the correction of each skill should be assessed by its immediate adjustment, while using the future direction of the skill as a reference point. Though the information content was essential in skill development, the process of communication and error correction was also significant.

### Team Management

Team management in itself had many components that together helped determine the success or failure of a sports program. Included in team management were seasonal plans, athlete selection, and predetermined daily workouts (Martens, 1990).

Athlete selection. The selection of players was often predetermined by the coach's playing philosophy and personal style of play (Cousy, 1970; Moore & White, 1980; Schinke, Draper & Salmela, 1994; Wooden, 1980). There were many factors that determined the selection of basketball players including determining factors and individual characteristics. Determinant factors included the athlete's quality of play, finding the appropriate players to fill the given positions, choosing the appropriate combination of players and finding competent replacement players. Each athlete selected could be evaluated based on skill level and personal characteristics

including physical attributes, experience, motivation, and receptiveness to instruction (Wooden, 1980).

Little was written on team selection, and when it took place in reference to the commencement of competition. Orlick and Partington (1986) postulated that selections could be carried out within a time frame where the athlete could optimally prepare for a predetermined competition. Thus, the actual timing of selection either enhanced or diminished individual performance, and at the same time, decreased the cohesiveness of the group (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993). Once team selection had taken place, practice plans were employed to create a structure for athletes to eventually refine their skills, and create situations where team members could practice as a group.

Seasonal plans. Seasonal plans provided the coach with a structure in order to set realistic goals in a chronological two stage process. First, long-term goals were determined and agreed upon by the athletes and coach at the beginning of the season. Based on predetermined long-term goals, intermediate goals were then delineated, and served as a measure of assessment. Once the seasonal objectives were determined, one of the coach's functions was to break each season down into preparatory and competitive segments (N.C.C.P., 1990; Schinke et al., 1994). Each segment of the season was composed of elaborately planned sub-stages, with different goals for each stage. The preparatory phase was subdivided into a general preparatory phase where basic skills were taught, and a specific preparatory phase where sport specific simulations were introduced. The competitive element of the season was sectioned into a pre-competitive, a competitive, and a tapering phase. In the pre-competitive phase, the demands of simulations increased during practices as did the levels of intensity. During the main competitive phase, competitions were employed to evaluate athlete performance levels and coaching strategies. In essence, competitions were used to evaluate performance goals prior to the most important tournaments. Tapering or "peaking" prior to major competitions served as a time for decreased training loads and rest and reflection.

The eventual performance outcomes throughout the season whether they were fitness levels, the quality of skill execution, or performance results, were contingent on both the coach and athlete alike buying into the goals in the seasonal plan. Thus, according to Chuck Daly, former coach of the Detroit Pistons, there are only two ways to succeed: "...identifying your goals, and then developing a method to reach these objectives" (Daly, 1991, p.38). There were various considerations which determined the ingredients found within a seasonal plan including the following: 1) lessons extracted from the previous season, 2) the instructional objectives for the season, 3) the exercises that helped an athlete meet predetermined instructional objectives, and 4) a pre-organized instructional methodology with exercises that progressed in difficulty, thus facilitating the development of the athlete (Martens, 1990).

Practice planning. Once seasonal plans are set and athletes are selected, daily practice plans become a means through which daily practice plans are carried out. Planning can be defined as "activity that precedes instruction, is concerned with how instruction will be presented, and is based upon anticipation or expectation of ...events" (Placek, 1984, p.40). According to Martin (1991), daily practices served a twofold function: 1) fundamentals are reviewed and enhanced, and 2) team members are provided with the opportunity to practice their combined skills through simulated competitions. Therefore, one can argue that "planning involves the development of ends - goals and objectives - valuable to the student, which are obtainable but not without deliberate instruction" (Morris & Stiehl, 1985, p.30). Jeffrey (1988) also recognized that practice planning provided the coach and athletes with clear cut daily goals, and thus measures of evaluation at the end of each workout. Martin (1991) and Moore and White (1980) hypothesized that the quality of practice determined the quality of performance in competition. Therefore, practice schedules became crucial as coaches determined which skills would be applied at any given time throughout the season for each opposing team (Moore & White, 1980).

Though planning was an essential part of coaching curriculum (Jeffrey, 1988; Martens, 1990; N.C.C.P., 1990; N.C.C.P., 1988), the structure and amount of written content differed as coaches gained more experience. Barrett, Sebren, and Sheehan (1991) analyzed the practice plans

of a physical education teacher starting with plans formulated in teachers college, and then comparing them to plans employed during the physical education teacher's first and second years in a school setting. The researchers also videotaped the teachers during a lesson at the start of the first year, and at the end of the second year of teaching. Results revealed that there was a gradual shift from detailed plans with specific teaching methods averaging 224 words per plan, to an average of 56 cue words. The results were evidence that the physical education teacher no longer elaborated reminders in order to teach the skills. Moreover, practice plans were no longer rigid and unnegotiable, and the videotapes revealed that there was an increase from 17 content points per instructional lesson to 23. Though subject matter during daily training sessions was not completely pre-planned, the objectives for each session were. To summarize, a stronger base of conceptual knowledge for the athletes and subject matter and practice plans altered during the practice sessions to meet their immediate needs.

Goc-Karp and Zakrajsek (1987) compared the planning models of college physical education professors using both open and closed ended interviews (n=59) with those of high school physical education teachers using both open ended (n=28) and closed ended interviews (n=36). Kendal's coefficient of concordance W indicated that there was agreement in both groups ( $p < .05$ ). The university professors prioritized the most important aspects of planning in order of significance as follows: the development of learning objectives were most significant, followed by learning activities and the development of delivery strategies, organizational time, space, and equipment. Reflective of their teaching approaches, the college professor's believed that developing teachers should emphasize improving skill and fitness levels of students, developing well organized plans to facilitate the learning process, and select the appropriate activities to meet these criteria. The high school teachers emphasized organization as being the most significant factor followed by space and equipment accessibility, learning activities, and learning objectives. Though the teachers emphasized level of skill performance, participation and enjoyment were strong concerns. Similar to the results of Bloom's (1985) study, Goc-Karp and Zakrajsek found that the professors, like the coaches of elite performers, taught an "...ends-means planning process

that sequenced objectives, content, methods, and evaluation" (p.389) in order to facilitate practice. The high school teachers, similar to the recreational coaches in Bloom's study also emphasized a combination of skill development, participation, and enjoyment.

Pre-season training. Pre-season training was an opportunity for a coach to transmit knowledge which emphasized technical skill development (Martens, 1990; N.C.C.P., 1990). Skill development was defined as "a knowledge of the fundamentals of the game, and the ability to properly execute these fundamentals" (Wooden, 1980, p.119). Wooden believed "in learning by repetition to the point where everything becomes automatic...the best teaching is repetition day after day throughout the season" (Walton, 1992, p.56).

Therefore, the development of skills followed a specific development pattern. First, they were introduced as unfamiliar skills to the athlete. Later, they evolved from the cognitive phase of problem solving through the associative phase where the learner related action and outcome. Finally, the skills were automated by the athlete, and therefore required little monitoring and correction (Thomas, Thomas & Gallagher, 1993). According to Jeffrey (1988), once skills are automated, physical simulations are used as part of daily practice to tactically apply new skills in a competition simulation. The underlying skill development taught during the pre-season then became a foundation on which competitive performance was built.

#### The Development of Psychological Skills

The expert coach's responsibilities extended beyond teaching skills. The coach's ability to transmit sport psychology skills also played a central role in team sport. According to Watt (1979) and Schinke, Draper, and Salmela (1994), sport psychology played a role on such variables as leadership style, the delivery of instructional content through communication skills, motivational theory, and group dynamics. Each of the above mentioned variables was perceived as crucial to performance enhancement and thus should be discussed.

Leadership style. Leadership style was defined as a leader's ability to "behave in certain ways by the demands and constraints placed by situational characteristics" (Chelladurai, 1993, p.647). Characteristics such as the athlete's need for achievement, recognition, competency level,

and social support, played a role in the coach's selection of a leadership style (Chelladurai, 1993; Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1988; Orlick, 1986b). Therefore, it was evident that successful coaching had to balance sport specific knowledge with positive interactive behaviors between coach and team members. Moreover, Chelladurai hypothesized that the level of group performance and member satisfaction resulted from a coach's ability to implement "...required, preferred, and actual" (p.647) behavior depending on each individual situation.

Chelladurai, Haggerty, and Baxter (1988) studied the decision style preferences of 22 collegiate coaches (7 females and 15 males) and 99 basketball players (53 females and 46 males) from various Ontario universities. Results revealed that both males and females preferred more participation than did their coaches. Based on their findings, Chelladurai et al. hypothesized that the quality of decisions were related to the groups' acceptance of those decisions. Another interesting result that emerged from this study was that as the outcomes of decisions became more consequential, athletes preferred a more autocratic coaching stance (Chelladurai, 1993; Chelladurai, et al., 1988; Horne & Carron, 1985). Therefore, one could hypothesize that autocratic coaching style along with the coach's ability to sell the appropriate team vision played an increasingly important role when performance outcome was highly valued (Schinke, Draper & Salmela, 1994).

Communication skills. Martens (1990) defined communication as the sending and receiving of messages. Messages could then be categorized into either verbal or nonverbal behaviors; more than 70% of the time communication fell into the nonverbal category (Martens, 1990, p.20). Therefore, it became evident that coach-athlete communication extended beyond instructional content to its process. Smith, Smoll, and Hunt (1977) designed an assessment tool in order to measure the quantity and forms of coaches' communication skills. Included in the 12 delineated categories were the following: positive reinforcement, non reinforcement, punishment, the ability to ignore mistakes, and general technical instruction. Through the use of this assessment tool, coaches were more easily monitored, and researchers were better able to understand and define the preferred approaches of selected coaches. The question then becomes what forms of coach-

athlete communication enhance coach efficacy, and therefore become formalized as the coaching approaches of highly successful expert coaches.

Mancini and Avery (1980) forwarded that successful coaches used more verbal than nonverbal praise as compared to less successful coaches. Seagrave and Ciancio (1990) conducted a similar study and found that coaches with the best win - loss records "had a greater praise to scold ratio 12.56%:5.24%" (p.295) than did less successful coaches. Moreover, they also found that the instructional content of these expert coaches exceeded that of the average coach. Lacy and Goldston (1990) studied 10 high school basketball coaches and found similar results, 49.6% of the interaction between coaches and athletes appeared to be instructional in nature. Therefore, the studies cited found openness of communication central to the coaching profession, and thus a positive relationship between positive feedback and success rates existed.

Though communication was conducive to the development of skill enhancement, communication included both process and content, both contributing to coaching strategy. Gould, Hodge, Peterson, and Giannini (1989) considered the relation between coaching strategy and the self-efficacy of athletes. A sample of 101 elite wrestling coaches were surveyed in the first study, and results were categorized into 13 distinct criteria including instruction-drilling, modeling confidence for their respective athletes, speaking positively, liberal use of recognition, and employing conditioning related drills. Employing Likert Scales measuring one to five representing increases in usage, Gould et al. found that the greatest contributors to performance enhancement were instruction drills (M=4.78), acting confident (M=4.59), encouragement (M=4.53), and physical conditioning (M=4.43). From these results, it was notable that instructional drills and physical conditioning were central variables when linked to performance outcome. Encouragement and positive modeling also emerged as important variables to performance outcome. In essence, coaches at the elite level balanced positive feedback with instructional drills and effective practice, all serving as motivators for elite level athletes.

Motivation. According to Martens (1990), and Burton (1993) the easiest way for a coach to motivate an athlete was by helping them meet their goals. Goals varied among athletes,

however, there was evidence that the performers were intrinsically motivated (Vallerand, 1983). For some, competitive results took priority, others were intent on mastering skill levels regardless of competitive results, while others sought social approval (Roberts, 1984). Inversely, coaches who requested that their athletes play a role within the team which was incompatible with the athlete's personal goals, detracted from the performer's motivation (Newburg & Perrin, 1993). Motivation was thus defined as "Motivation is that force within the individual which impels or moves toward action" (Gauron, 1984, p.22). In essence, "If you understand what your athletes' needs are, and you are able to help them fulfill these needs, you possess the key to their motivation" (Martens, 1990, p.43).

A study on 423 volunteer coaches in youth sport conducted by Gould and Martens (1979) rated the importance of 16 coaching clinic topics employing Likert Scales from 1-5. They found that motivating youngsters was rated second in importance with 72% of coaches strongly agreeing on its importance ( $p < .05$ ). The only coaching component rated higher among 76.7% of the sample of volunteer coaches sampled by Gould et al. was the coach's responsibility to teach sport specific skills to the athletes.

Recent social cognitive theories on achievement motivation forwarded that there was a positive correlation between behavior, goal setting, and self-perceived ability (Duda, 1993). Therefore, coaches enhanced self-efficacy by adopting strategies to fit the needs of their athletes, and thus further motivated the individual or team (O'Block & Evans, 1984). According to Mellen (1989), regarding Bobby Knight, "His entire philosophy is founded on the principle of developing in each student a recognition of his abilities and then an insistence that he realize them, consistently, efficiently, and without respite" (p.89). Strategies to improve self efficacy included ensuring the continued success of the athlete or team through appropriate high level instructional content, selecting specific predetermined goals which the athletes found desirable, focusing on technical improvement instead of outcome, provision of positive feedback, encouraging positive self-talk of athletes, and modeling confidence (Gould et al., 1989; Roberts, 1984).

In that basketball is a team sport, motivation extended beyond individual interest to the group as a whole. A team can be defined as "a social unit with a task that requires a set of persons to accomplish, no individual members can do it alone" (Zander, 1982, p.67). As a result, it was only natural that individual's focused on team outcome, while personal rewards became a byproduct. Pat Riley (1993) stated: "...great teamwork is the only way to reach our ultimate moments, to create the breakthroughs that define our careers,.. " (p.15). The emphasis of motivation in many cases was then placed on group success; which in turn facilitated shared goals (Zander, 1982). Therefore, when teams implemented realistic yet challenging goals for their group, they were better able to assess group performance and strive to meet their goals (Yukelson, 1984).

Group dynamics and team cohesion. In some cases, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts. Team cohesion was defined as "a dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of goals and objectives" (Carron, 1982, p.124). Groups that rate high in group cohesiveness tended to be comprised of individuals sharing interests and enjoying each others company on a social level (Bell, 1985). Moreover, teams that scored high on group cohesion had a tendency to accept and share in team aspirations (Cox, Qiu, & Liu, 1993). Pat Riley (1993) and Hanrahan and Gallois (1993) postulated that in successful teams, group members shared and contributed to a sense of oneness because it directly benefited individual members. In essence, all team members bought into an agreed upon team vision (Schinke, Draper & Salmela, 1994), or what Riley termed "a covenant".

In order to develop team cohesion, four variables appear to be needed: Cooperation, high interaction, team stability, and team homogeneity (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993). Cooperation was central to team success as individual's coupled individual goals with those of the team, thus avoiding individual oriented aspirations, or what Riley (1993) termed "the disease of me". Though team sports varied in their level of cooperation such as equestrian or basketball, as the need for interaction during performance increased, the more central the need for team

cooperation became (Goldman, Stockbauer, & McAuliffe, 1977; Miller & Hamblin, 1963; Riley, 1993).

Team stability was also a determining factor in the development or erosion of team cohesion. Teams with high turnover rates, for example professional ice hockey teams, were deprived of sufficient time to develop any form of team cohesion (Chelladurai & Carron, 1978). Conversely, Carron and Chelladurai (1979) forwarded the position that remaining on a given team too long was as harmful as departing from the team too soon. Factors of team homogeneity such as ethnic background, religion, and socioeconomic status were other dimensions that played a role in team cohesion. A team's ability to share in personal beliefs and common backgrounds thus enhanced a sense of oneness (Cox, Qiu, & Yiu, 1993; Carron, 1988). All of the above variables played their roles in the enhancement of the team climate, and a central area of interest to the expert coach.

The interaction that occurs within a team, also known as group dynamics, includes the interpersonal relationships between a coach and athletes (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Fisher, Mancini, Hirsch, Proulx & Staurowsky, 1982). The interaction between player and coach is not an easy one, as the level of performance increases, the exchange between athlete and coach undergoes considerable changes. During an athlete's entry years into the sport, the coach is concerned with instilling enjoyment and basic fundamentals. As both athlete and coach worked at the higher elite levels, the focus appeared to be more goal-centered (Bloom, 1985). Nonetheless, underlying all tasks related to training, there was a strong personal interaction between coach and athlete.

Team climate and leadership shared in a symbiotic relationship. Often times, studies on team climate revealed that there was a clear demarcation point between the perceptions of coaches and athletes (Chelladurai, 1993). Coaches perceived the team climate as more positive than the athletes they coached (Horne & Carron, 1985). Fisher, et al. (1982) postulated that the coach was best positioned to affect team climate and was in fact more in control of team climate due to stature and position on the team. The coach's influential power was a determining factor in

team dynamics due to a stronger power base than the athletes being coached (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993).

Nonetheless, the coach - team compatibility contributed to mutual satisfaction, resulting in increased group cohesion (Carron & Bennett, 1977). A comparison of satisfied teams as opposed to less satisfied teams revealed some interesting findings, when taking into account the variables of praise, acceptance, allowance for questions, information giving, coach augmented directions and criticism. Satisfied team athletes interacted in their training environment using more verbal and non-verbal responses than less satisfied teams (31.7%). These athletes interacted by processing input obtained from their environment, and responded accordingly. Less satisfied teams interpreted input from their surrounding environment far less (26.1%), and thus were more mechanical in the execution of their sport. There also appeared to be a negative correlation between higher amounts of instructional content and overall team satisfaction. Less satisfied teams received 31.8% instructional content as opposed to 22% in more satisfied teams. Moreover, coaches of successful teams provided athletes with more positive verbal feedback (12.3%) than did coaches of less satisfied teams (4.3%); findings congruent with that of Weiss and Frederick (1986).

Interestingly, Weiss and Friedrichs (1986) examined a sample of 251 collegiate basketball players and their respective coaches ( $n = 23$ ), and found that the leader's behavior influenced team satisfaction. More specifically, coach's democratic behaviors and ability to provide social support were positively correlated with team satisfaction ( $p < .05$ ). The coach's ability to provide social support to team members was also found to be a non significant contributor to win / loss ratios.

From the above results, trends were evident that the coach played a significant role in the development of a positive team environment, but social support had little direct impact on performance level. Though coaches could not affect performance level directly through team climate, they facilitated the positive interaction among team members.

The relationship between group cohesion and performance was not as easily correlated as variables related to team climate. Coaches who were interested in fostering a positive team

climate aspired to create a strong camaraderie among team athletes in the hope of "stimulating individual athletes to work extremely hard in order not to let their teammates down" (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993, p.674). Studies conducted assessing the relationship between levels of team cohesion and performance revealed that group cohesiveness and winning performance were positively correlated ( Carron & Ball, 1977; Landers, Wilkinson, Hatfield & Barber, 1982; Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993).

The question then became whether performance was positively correlated to team cohesion, or whether team cohesion was a direct by-product of positive performance. It was found that as quality of performance and quantity of success increased, the team became more attractive to its members, which in turn enhanced team cohesion (Carron, 1980). Therefore, the outcome of a competition could either add or detract from positive team interaction (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993). From the above information it was evident that there was an interactive relationship between team members, their coach, and performance results. Thus, in team sports, commitment became a central variable when related to performance.

Research conducted by Schinke, Draper and Salmela (1994) provided a more holistic view of team building. They conducted in-depth interviews with 11 elite level basketball and ice hockey coaches, and found that team building was comprised of several variables implemented at different times throughout the season. During the pre-season, the expert coaches formulated team visions and selected athletes with suitable styles of play and compatible philosophies with that of the coach. Once the team was selected, they bought into a team vision by the coach and then refined to suit team needs during the early season. By the mid-season, teams reached varying levels of cohesion contingent on the compatibility of individual and team goals. Varying levels of performance throughout the late season either added or detracted from the team's level of cohesion. The coach evaluated team performance and cohesion in the post-season, which directed team building for the following year. Therefore, team cohesion and competitive outcomes were the end result of a season long team building process (Figure 2).

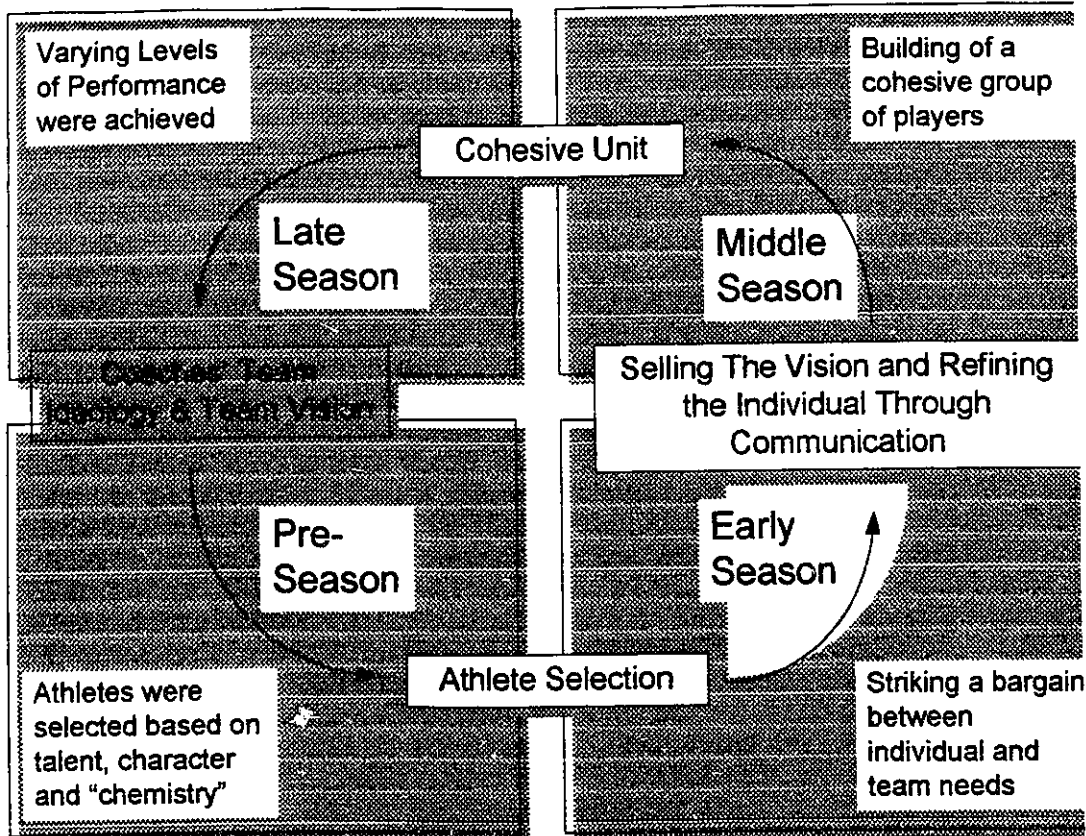


Figure 2: The conceptualization of team building as a seasonal process (Schinke, Draper & Salmela, 1994)

In summary, there were many components associated with being an elite coach. There are clearly stated responsibilities such as planning, team selection, skill development, and team management. All of the aforementioned tasks are processes that are necessary in order to facilitate a functionally well organized team. There are also interpersonal skills that the coaches assume throughout the season. Included are mentoring athletes, being a strong leader, facilitating team cohesion, encouraging open communication among the athletes and the coach, and thus facilitating an enjoyable and healthy learning experience for the athletes. Due to a diversity of coaching responsibilities, the coaches often needed to acquire appropriate coping skills.

#### Stress Management

According to Partington (1988), the role of a coach included being competitive, committed, instilling confidence in athletes, nurturing their students, being a receptive listener, representing content that could be understood and processed as part of a more general mental plan, remaining

open minded and playful, being systematic in approach, and finally being capable of instilling a positive "on site" image to enhance the confidence of the athlete. Based on Partington's intuitive views, the role of coach was psychologically and physically demanding. When these variables were experienced simultaneously they could inevitably lead to stress.

Stress was defined as a "strain or discomfort resulting from an external event acting on an individual" (Wishnietsky & Felder, 1989, p.69). The responsibilities of coaching varied from coping with win - loss records to issues of role conflict, in which they were expected to be both parental figure and coach. Along with the coach's divergent responsibilities, Wishnietsky and colleagues found that coaches had an unclear mandate from which to carry out their tasks. A study conducted by Kahn, Wolfe, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) revealed that 24% of the variance for perceived burnout was associated with the status ambiguity of the coach's. Moreover, other studies isolated additional significant contributors to stress in coaching.

According to Taylor (1992), there were three sources of stress for coaches: personal, social, and organizational stress. Personal stresses included self-doubt, physical health, and inadequate skills. Social concerns included problems interacting with the athlete's parents, inner team conflict and a lack of general support from those in the surrounding community. Organizational stresses were a combination of a large time commitment, heavy job responsibilities and administrative concerns, thus reaffirming the coach's role as a multifaceted one. The role ambiguity experienced by coaches often times contributed to retirement or withdrawal from coaching.

Wisnietsky and Felder's study (1989) attempted to isolate reasons leading to the resignation of coaches in high school settings. To better understand factors that contributed to job resignation, Wisnietsky and Felder contacted 142 high school superintendents, people directly involved in the hiring, firing and resignation process of secondary school coaching staff. From the 124 questionnaires returned to the researchers, results revealed that the largest contributors to coach resignation were insufficient income, stress and time demands, the teams poor performance and problems with administration. These components are important to the career development of expert coaches due to the expectation levels of university and national

team administrators. Inevitably, developing coaches would have to learn methods of dealing with coach related stress.

Based on the results of the previous study, the following suggested by Wishnietsky and Felder: 1) that coaches be made aware of the stresses, long hours and drawbacks of coaching prior to entering the profession; 2) coaches should be trained to develop positive communication skills with their athletes; 3) coaches should be trained in stress management skills; and 4) as educators, coaches should continue to attend coaching workshops in order to remain current in the field and avoid professional burnout.

Though being a professional coach had its drawbacks, there were also distinct advantages. The attractiveness of coaching was summarized into three factors: the desire to help young athletes develop, love of the sport and the opportunity to produce successful athletes (Martens, 1990). Once committed, coaches remained involved in sport by maintaining realistic expectations from the profession, having realistic expectation levels of performance levels and remaining aware of benefits coaching (Zitzelsberger, 1991). Therefore, the question became how could coaches be provided with ample educational needs and stress management skills in order to function fully in their profession? Moreover, once those attributes were attained, how could coaches remain current and enthusiastic in their profession?

Gould, Giannini, Krane and Hodge studied 130 expert American national team coaches in order to identify their educational needs. Results revealed that 95% of elite coaches believed in mentoring less experienced coaches and were prepared to do so. Moreover, 97% were prepared to attend coaching science courses to gain a better understanding of more general professional practice. Interestingly, only 46% of the sample believed that "...there exists a well defined set of concepts and principles for coaches to use" (p.337). Therefore, coaches needed a combination of sport science taught in an academic setting coupled with an opportunity to learn from expert coaches in the field. Gould et al. thus stated that it was imperative to develop a systematic framework employing applied and theoretical elements for the future development of professional coaches.

Therefore, it is evident that the roles and responsibilities in coaching are many. The significance of this study will be its ability to identify how coaches are initiated and have developed the tools to become elite level educators in sport. Through the demarcation points of expert basketball coaches, the reader will be provided with a better understanding on how coaching approaches including the components outlined above were acquired and refined from the expert coaches' early athletic experiences to their current elite coaching practices.

### Methodology

#### The Subjects

Subjects for this study were six expert Canadian basketball coaches: five who previously or presently have coached national basketball teams and coached successfully in the university setting, and one who has successfully coaching at the highest university level at the present time. All the coaches in this sample were identified by Basketball Canada as being expert coaches based on criteria including the number of years experience at the elite level, win/loss records, international coaching experience, and peer evaluation. The average age of the basketball coaches was 51.5 years, and they had coached at the elite level for an average of 18.83 years. They therefore met Chase and Simon's (1973) criteria for expertise of having at least 10 years elite basketball coaching experience.

Table 1  
Number of years coaching experience at the elite level

<u>Coach</u>	<u>Years Experience</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>International</u>	<u>Gender of athletes</u>
B1	29	12	17	M
B2	17	17	0	F
B3	15	15	14	F
B4	26	26	13	F/M
B5	17	17	0	F
B6	14	14	8	F/M
<u>M</u>	19.67	16.83	8.67	

### Interview Technique

The "interview guide approach" as described by Patton (1980) was employed in this particular research to gather data using a combination of structured and unstructured methods. Predetermined general questions were devised by Salmela (1994a) at the University of Ottawa in collaboration with officials of Sport Canada and the Coaching Association of Canada. The purpose of the interview guide was to extract the influences, approaches, and attributes of the expert basketball coaches as they evolved in their coaching careers. Questions included in the interview guide covered the following categories: the development of the expert coach from childhood onward, the qualities needed to develop elite level athletes as related to training and competition, and reflections on coaching.

**Table 2**  
**Sequence Within the Interview Guide**

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**PRE-INTERVIEW BRIEFING (10 min.)**

**Key Points:**

- Introductory comments
- Purpose of the study
- Recording explanations

**ATHLETIC AND COACHING DEVELOPMENT (30 min.)**

- Becoming involved in basketball
- Athletic experiences
- Mentors and the early development of a personal philosophy
- Early coaching experiences
- Educational experiences
- Career opportunities and transitions

**CURRENT COACHING PROCEDURES (60-90 min.)**

- Coaching philosophy and approach
- Training and competition considerations

**THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF COACHING (10 min.)**

- Recommendations for the future direction of coaching and basketball
- 

### Chronology within the Interview Format

A predetermined general chronology was employed in the interview format of all six coaches to study the development of their coaching knowledge from its inception during early athletics through their first coaching experiences to elite level coaching positions. The interviews

were subdivided into four sections: Section one was a pre-interview briefing conducted by the researcher. Section two focused on factors learned from early athletic and coaching experiences which contributed to current coaching knowledge and philosophies. Section three explored the coaching approaches of these elite level coaches in both training and competition. Section four explored the possible future directions of basketball and coaching from the perspectives of the interviewed experts. All stages of the interview process will now be defined.

The pre-interview briefing provided an opportunity for the researcher to define the general purpose of the study, and thus provided the coach with a general guideline for pertinent material to discuss. Another objective of the initiation phase was to establish a baseline rapport of friendly, informal conversation. Finally, the investigator asked whether it would be possible to record the interview; to attain an exact record of the dialogue, and take notes, so that questions could be formulated throughout the interview which would further clarify the content of each coach.

Section two provided a chronological understanding on the development of the expert coaches from their initial athletic experiences to elite level coaching positions. Basic themes such as first experiences with sport, experiences with coaches as an athlete, other experiences that helped sway the individual toward the coaching profession, early teaching appointments, experiences and styles and the integration of all these at the elite level.

Section three provided an understanding of elite level coaching procedures both in training and competition. The objective was to identify the similarities and differences between the elite coaches both on the interpersonal and instructional levels when working with team members. Furthermore, the interviewer elicited how early athletic and coaching experiences directed the eventual formalized approaches of these expert coaches.

The fourth and final section of the interview centered on feedback from the six expert coaches pertaining to the future direction of basketball coaching. Included in this section were suggestions from the expert coaches for the future development of basketball based on what they perceived to be the needs of coaches, athletes, the National Coaching Certification Program and the sport in general.

Due to the inductive nature of the interviews, responses to general questions led the respondent and interviewer into more detailed areas of concern. The only rigid criterion for discussion in the meetings were that the topics remained central to the development and methods of expert coaches. Thus, the interview guideline (Appendix B) only provided a general direction for each interview. Thus, the results that emerged from the data, whether they were similarities or differences among the coaches, were a direct reflection of the sampled six elite coaches.

### Context of the Interviews

After reading and signing the expert coach consent form, interviews were carried out by an experienced researcher, and sport psychology consultant to several national teams. The interviewer had met one of the subjects while at university, and knew one as a professional acquaintance, but had never met the remaining four subjects prior to the interview. Also to be noted, the interviewer had not acted as a consultant for basketball before that time. The researcher's lack of familiarity of the expert candidates was seen as an advantage since no information was considered as obvious. All interviews were conducted in English, the first language of all selected coaches. The length of interviews varied from coach to coach, but most interviews were approximately from 1.5 to 3.0 hours in length, with one interview lasting 7 hrs.

Four of the six interviews were conducted in the offices of the respective coaches, one interview was carried out in the coach's home, and the final interview was conducted in a hotel room.

### The Interviewers Interpersonal Approach to Questioning.

Neutrality and rapport. Neutrality from the standpoint of an interviewer was defined as not "reacting with either favor or disfavor to the content of what I am being told" (Patton, 1987, p.127). Patton elaborated further that though the interviewer should not react to the content of the information, one must "care whether the person is willing to share with me what he or she is saying" (p.127). Thus, the researcher became an active listener throughout each interview. Verbal support such as paraphrasing further enhanced the quality of the interviews. Moreover,

the interviewer was an open and receptive listener which in turn facilitated the coaches' sharing their knowledge and passion regarding coaching.

Concise and pertinent questions. Asking questions that are clearly understood is equally important as the content of each interview (Patton, 1987). As a result, the interviewer's formulation of questions were as precisely worded as possible. Therefore, the intention of the interviewer was to extract as much information on each coach's knowledge of working with athletes in basketball, and how the coaches acquired this knowledge over time. Also, the terminology employed by the interviewer was sport specific for basketball, and well understood by the coach. As a result, both coach and researcher were using the same frame of reference throughout each interview. Therefore, miscommunication between coach and interviewer was minimized.

Persistent interviewing. There were certain concerns during the interview process to ensure that the information extracted from each expert coach was as exhaustive as possible. As a result, the general direction of questioning was predetermined prior to the interviews. The terminology used by the expert coach was redefined and elaborated on by the interviewer whenever any content appeared confusing, or lacking in detail, i.e., "probing" (Patton, 1987, p.125). Detailed probe questioning included the basic "who", "what", "where", "when" and "how" because a complete picture of specific instances was needed for the purpose of this project. The question why was omitted from the research as it would have assumed a cause and effect relationship, and thus complicated the analysis and its findings (Patton, 1987).

Thus, the content of information was clearly understood by the researcher, an issue that directly benefited the analysis and results. Each coach was then questioned to the point of redundancy so that little information would be overlooked by both researcher and expert coach (Côté, 1993). Therefore, it was the objective of this research to provide the reader with a clear and detailed understanding of each coach's professional development and personal style when working with athletes.

After the completion of each interview, each expert coach was asked whether any important information was overlooked during the interview process; ensuring that the gathering of data was exhaustive. The combination of the precautions mentioned above added to the credibility of the data collection.

Debriefing. The interviewer debriefed the coach in case the coach had any specific questions or comments regarding the format of the interview. Debriefing also included mailing all coaches a copy of the cleaned up transcript for authentication prior to any form of analysis. Each coach later received a copy of the text segmented into meaning units and tagged for verification along with a letter of explanation (Appendix C). The above precautions were taken so that revisions; deletions, additional comments and reflections could be added prior to commencing the data analysis.

#### Data Preparation

In total, 296 pages of double spaced manuscript was collected. All raw data were transcribed precisely from original cassette to typed format immediately after the completion of each interview. Changes to the manuscripts were revised to remove names and locations; thus not threatening the anonymity of each coach.

Once data was transcribed to paper, each manuscript was read and edited by the researcher for spelling and grammatical errors. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to become familiar with each manuscript, and constantly question the "validity, plausibility and trustworthiness of the interview process" (Côté, Salmela & Russell, 1995a). The steps mentioned above prepared both the content and its researcher for the eventual analysis of the data.

#### Data Analysis

The central objective of this analysis was to clarify, and to interpret the developmental processes and knowledge of expert basketball coaches. Smith (1990) suggested that research clarified itself best when information was categorized into distinct sections. Thus the analysis and interpretation of the data exposed the similarities and differences among the six expert basketball

coaches. In essence, the data analysis was inductive in the sense that categories emerged from the data itself rather than from any preconceptions.

### The Categorization of Data

The first step in the analysis process was to cut and tag all data into free standing sections of text termed meaning units (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Tesch, 1990). The process involved "a detailed examination of the data to identify topics which best described particular segments of text" (Côté, 1993, p.59). Krippendorf (1980, p.57) stated that "unitizing involves defining [information bearing] units, separating them along their boundaries, and identifying them for subsequent analyses" (Appendix D). Thus, when content in the interviews stood out as meaningful in itself, it was isolated as a separate unit of text from the material that surrounded it. During the second step, each unit was tagged from its perceived meaning, however the text was often later redefined after numerous in-depth readings by the researcher.

Creating consistent tags. Once all manuscripts were tagged, the second stage of analysis involved creating consistent tags for similar meaning units by listing and then comparing and contrasting their content, the initial step of contextual analysis. The similarities were drawn among the assorted "tag units" so that their content could be compared with that of other meaning units from the same coach and other coaches. Similar tags already categorized by their developmental phases were further clustered by their content (Côté, Salmela, Baria & Russell, 1993). All material was therefore "re-contextualized" into a "preliminary organizing system" (Côté, 1993, p.60).

Conceptualization of tagging process. Once tags were created, similarities and differences were compared between individual meaning units along with the characteristics that made each unique. From the analysis of structured content, the research attempted to identify and define the development of the pre-selected coaches, and delineated the process and content of each elite basketball coach's knowledge. Because the focus of the research was to identify the knowledge and attributes of the coaches as a group and as individuals, similarities and differences between coaches emerged.

### Trustworthiness During The Analysis

Informant checking after the interviews. Once the analysis was completed, the transcripts were sent to the coaches for verification and authentication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In all cases, a manuscript with all tagged meaning units was forwarded to the expert coaches for verification and feedback. In all cases, the content of the interviews remained unaltered other than grammatical corrections and the illumination by the coach of sensitive topic areas that would otherwise have been damaging to the subject.

Electronic data handling. All meaning units were decontextualized from Microsoft Word for Windows, and copied into a customized version of Borland's Paradox for Windows, a program specifically designed to compare segments of qualitative data based on the procedure outlined by Côté, Salmela, Baria, and Russell (1993). As all data was handled with the use of custom designed programs for the purpose of the research, chances of losing sources of pertinent information were kept to a minimum. The trustworthiness of data was also safeguarded by tagging each meaning unit by coach, demarcation stage and up to four levels of tagging from general to specific implications.

### Dependability and Confirmability

Qualitative research, as stated throughout this study, was inclusive in nature, and thus continuously strengthened as details emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Tesch, 1990). Nonetheless, all inductive changes to the research were overtly stated in the results section for reviewers. Furthermore, all changes were grounded or integrated into the data "so that the interpretation remained as close as possible to the informants' realities" (Côté, et al., 1993, p.12). In essence, the categories were easily recognized from the original manuscripts, and categorization appeared to be a logical step derived from the raw data (Côté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995a).

Credibility of the data interpretation. The dependability and confirmability of the data was contingent on whether the underlying theme of the data could be extracted by external readers

(Lecompte & Goetz, 1982). Therefore, a six step reliability check was carried out on the results of the data.

Initially, the researcher and peers underwent several workshops on the process of data analysis with Dr. John Salmela, and Dr. Jean Côté. During the sessions, information and constructive feedback were provided regarding how to identify and tag meaning units, and how to edit text while retaining its pertinent content. As a follow up, analysis techniques were further delineated in data analysis techniques found in Côté and Salmela (1994) outlining the intricacies on methodology of data analysis for qualitative research. Afterwards, meetings including the researcher and peers from the coaching research team were carried out (approximately 12 in total), where feedback and evaluation was provided by Dr. John Salmela and Dr. Jean Côté on the tagging process and directions of the research process. Then, the researcher and one peer compared 51% or 394 of the 774 meaning units analyzed. The purpose of the exercise was to establish consensual agreement of the tags allocated to the meaning units. Moreover, the reevaluation of the meaning units was an opportunity to compare all meaning units and tags to ensure that all matching pieces of text were tagged with generic labels in each category (Appendix F). Thus, the purpose of this stage was to ensure that the researcher's perspective was representative of another researcher in the field. Finally, meaning units from the respective coaches were compared with each other in every stage of career development, and then the development of each coach from first sport experiences to current levels of expertise were discussed in detail (Appendix A).

## THE PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objectives of this research were twofold: on one level, the research elicited the professional development process of expert basketball coaches from their childhood sport experiences to their current professional elite coaching positions. Second, unique lessons were extracted on how they were treated by coaches when they were athletes, and how they in turn worked work with athletes throughout the coaching stages of their development. To reveal the

similarities and differences among the coaches, they were compared across stages of their athletic and coaching careers.

In order to flesh out factors contributing to each coach's development, youth sport experiences were taken into account. Reflecting on their athletic experiences, the coaches elaborated on the communities they resided in as children, the influences of their family members, and lessons learned from their coaches. As developing professionals, those sampled were influenced by a combination of mentor coaches, athletes, theoretical education's, as well as their mates and children. Finally, the coaches matured into elite level coaching experts with crystallized personal philosophies which they implemented when working with athletes in training environments. Throughout their evolution's, these coaches learned lessons that either reinforced or altered their coaching approaches and teaching procedures in sport. For the purpose of this paper, the development of their leadership styles, and communication skills as related to goal setting, problem resolution, and interpersonal skills were analyzed. Due to heavy responsibilities as coaches, most discussed how the negative repercussions of their professional lives impacted on their personal lives. All of the aforementioned components influenced the results and discussion of this thesis.

#### The Nature of the Data

Once the analysis of the data was completed, 778 meaning units represented the six in-depth qualitative interviews. From the meaning units derived from the transcripts, 330 represented coaches of men's teams, and the remaining 448 meaning units represented coaches of women's teams. Through the use of inductive analysis, all text was regrouped into seven developmental stages. Moreover, the coaches' roles discussed in this paper were grouped into athletic influences and the development of coaching components. During their athletic careers the future coaches learned lessons from initial sport experiences and significant others. Beyond the aforementioned, the coaches emphasized the importance of their love of sport and alluded to the emergence of initial coaching characteristics. When they began to instruct in sport, the coaches identified the influences of theoretical and applied education's and the hardships they experienced

at each respective coaching stage. Finally, the coaches also elaborated on the process of how their teaching styles evolved from the novice to elite coaching levels.

The results commenced with early athletic involvement and early environmental factors, and then extended into distinct stages of coaching development. Based on the analysis, the following stages emerged: Early Sport Participation, National Elite Sport, International Elite Sport, Novice Coaching, Developmental Coaching, National Elite Coaching, and International Elite Coaching. Each of the aforementioned stages was unique and was thus linked to specific professional tasks and career appointments.

### The Demarcation Stages Defined

Early sport participation. Early sport began with the first informal community recreational sport experiences and culminated with competitions up to the provincial or state championship level. Initial sport experiences varied contingent on accessibility to coaches, parents, available resources in their community and general areas of the athletes' interest.

National elite sport. Elite level athletes were defined as competitors representing either lower level professional teams, their universities or provinces in national level competitions. Athletes graduated to this performance level from high school and community level sport experiences.

International elite sport. In order to fulfill the requirement of an international caliber athlete, coaches had to be listed to a national team. As a result, those who met the qualifications were representing their respective countries in a team sport.

Novice coaching. Novice coaching was defined as any sport related coaching position that was not associated with formal competition. Initiations to teaching sport were fulfilled either at primary schools, community recreational centers or as players / liaisons with university coaching staff.

Developmental coaching. The transition to developmental coaching was distinct from novice coaching positions in at least two of the following three ways: coaching positions were at

the high school level, coaches were hired to work with competitive juniors below the elite levels, or they were hired on a part time basis by an elite team for a trial period.

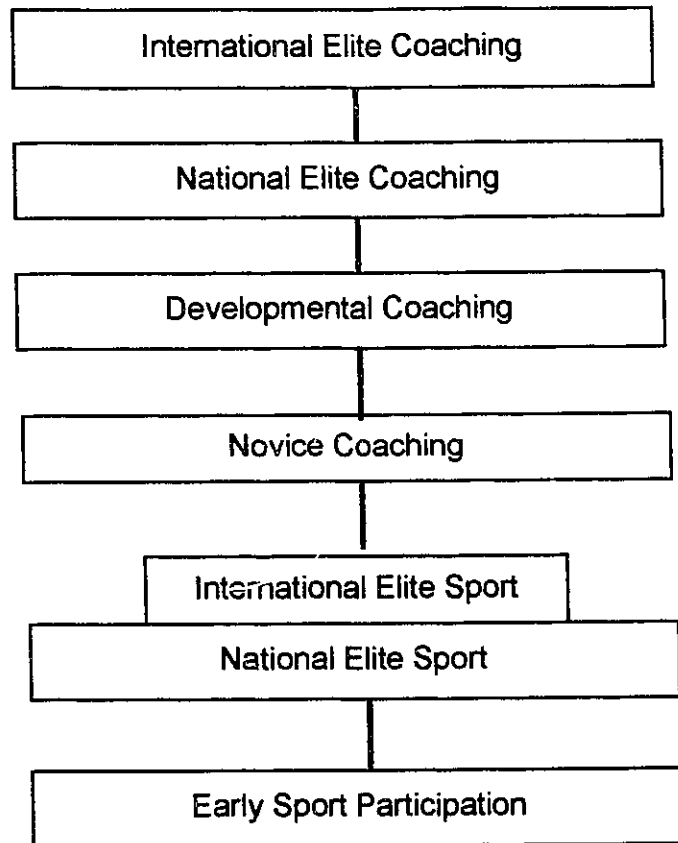
National elite coaching. Coaches attained national elite level coaching position by either working with university teams or provincial teams at national level competitions. In both instances, the coaches were refining elite caliber competitors as opposed to the recreational level athletes and entry level competitors encountered in previous coaching stages.

International elite coaching. International level coaches were defined as those who worked with national teams at either the World University Games, Pan-American Games, World Championships or Olympic Games. Therefore, these coaches prepared athletes for high profile international level competitions.

Table 3  
Meaning Units Subdivided by Development Stage and Coach

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Quantity By Coach</u>						<u>Total</u>
	<u>B1</u>	<u>B2</u>	<u>B3</u>	<u>B4</u>	<u>B5</u>	<u>B6</u>	
1. Early Sport Participation	8	7	9	7	7	4	42
2. National elite sport	3	3	11	6	3	5	31
3. International elite sport	0	0	4	2	0	7	13
4. Novice Coaching	10	16	4	1	5	0	36
5. Developmental Coaching	35	10	5	4	13	6	73
6. National Elite Coaching	14	53	22	15	66	22	192
7. International Elite Coaching	166	0	40	35	0	56	297
<b>Total Meaning Units</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>684</b>

Though there were 784 meaning units in the actual data base, however, only 684 meaning units were employed in the analysis. The remaining text was classified as future recommendations for coaches. Recommendations were excluded from the analysis as they were not directly related to each coach's professional development. All of the aforementioned stages were then defined and supported by quotations from the interviews.



**Figure 3:** The athletic and career markers of elite Canadian basketball coaches

#### Early Sport Participation

##### Initial Sport Experiences

Often times, sport orientation was directly influenced by early sport environments. For instance, some became involved in basketball to gain acceptance by their peers. Others opted to play basketball because it was the most easily accessible sport in their community. Therefore, some eventual coaches were involved in basketball as a first sport experience, and then remained committed to the sport. Similar to the findings by Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993), the current study recognized the importance of access to environmental resources to facilitate eventual expert performance in sport.

- My parents didn't come out to a lot of the games because they worked when I played. Every Sunday I would be in the back yard, and the hoop was right against the house. I made a terrible racket practicing. I was extremely good. I was able to go and practice for

three hours on my own. Maybe my brother would be there, but I would usually play by myself. (B3)

- I first began playing basketball in a native village because there was no hockey there. No one there could skate, there were no rinks and no skates. So I really had to shift into basketball. (B4)

Others were initially introduced either to a variety of sports or first became involved in either one or many sports other than basketball. These coaches were also able to extract fundamental lessons from early sport. Similar to those who were initially involved in basketball, these eventual coaches were directed by early experiences with coaches and environment.

- I had a very good coach in high school, but only in football. I wanted to play other sports, it is certainly not whether I was any good because once you were a football player you made the basketball team and the baseball team. (B1)
- One of the people who had a fairly big influence on me was my football coach. The influence has maintained itself in some of the things that I do and believe in. He was a very fundamental coach. (B2)
- When I was young, I never played basketball. I am from Britain, therefore I am a soccer player and track athlete. Basketball was an activity that wasn't really considered a sport, so I never really learned the game as a youth or a college student. (B5)
- I played every sport just like about everybody else did in those days. We played in a very disorganized way rather than in a formalized way. I just loved sports and this was where I spent all of my public school and high school years. (B6)

### Learning From Significant Others

Many of the eventual coaches acknowledged the importance of their family members and initial coaches. Experiences encountered with first coaches were elaborated on in detail, unlike the information regarding parental influence, which was brief and often times incomplete. Nonetheless, it appeared that these were the two most prevalent factors contributing to the coach's initial sport experiences as athletes.

Presently, research in sport has rarely looked at the beginning of the performer's career. One exception was Bloom's (1985) study which identified the supportive influence of the performers' parents and coaches. Bloom recognized that parents and coaches both played roles in the development of the early sport participant. On one level, parents were supportive on the emotional and financial levels. On a second level, the role of the coach was to encourage the child during the learning of new skills by crafting an appropriate training environment (Martens, 1990; Salmela, 1994a). Further, a strong understanding was gained on how and to what extent parents and coaches influenced the developing athletes in this earliest demarcation stage. The current study's results were similar to those of aforementioned studies as it also recognized the influences of parents and coaches on the early sport participant.

Parents. Only three of six coaches actually mentioned family influence as a contributing factor in the development of their initial love of sport. When family members were mentioned, they were said to have provided the eventual coach with material resources and life values which became part of each coach's teaching philosophy.

- You have got to remember too, that in the beginning most guys didn't go to school. When I talk about high school, most people didn't go to high school, they quit. I would have done the same but my parents never went to school and they knew school was important. My parents were a major influence that I think helped me all the way, and I think that was very healthy. I wasn't aware of their influence at the time. It was the key. (B1)
- Even in high school I was different from everybody else. If there was a game on TV that took precedence over everything. My parents were understanding enough so that I could watch an NBA game on Christmas morning. (B3)
- I grew up always very competitive, whether it was my mother's influence or her mother's influence. My competitiveness was channeled into basketball but I wasn't very good because I got a late start. (B4)

Coaches. Regardless of sport domain, the subjects were strongly influenced by their early experiences with first coaches. The coaches working with novices provided these youngsters with

a personal coaching philosophy which was acquired by observation. Lessons were extracted on how best to teach and approach their athletes. Specifically, some coaches adopted and employed the teaching style of early coaches and mentors due to its positive impact on them and their teammates similar to the findings of Salmela (1994c).

- I think it took me a couple of years to really start to appreciate the man. He was a very kind man, and quite gentle when he dealt with you. He didn't seem to deal with you on a personal basis in the first year that you played for him. Whether he waited or you had to gain his trust, or whatever it was, it took a while before he dealt with you on a more personal basis. (B2)
- I started playing basketball in high school. I was lucky that I had a very committed and supportive coach. I was allowed to play all the time and I fell in love with the game. (B3)

The positive impacts of early coaches extended beyond enticing the developing athlete to participate in sport. Early coaches also taught their athletes positive values such as how to stretch their limits and achieve personal goals. These early lessons were integrated into the athletic, and later, the coaching philosophies of the expert coaches similar to the findings of Salmela (1994a; 1994c). The current research, goes beyond Salmela's work, since it also identified, that at each demarcation stage different lessons were gained. At this particular level, the lessons was learned by observing the behaviors and philosophies of coaches.

- I learned from him that you have to drive yourself into areas that you normally don't want to go to and to fatigue yourself. Once you get into fatigue, you will learn how to deal with it. You learn a lot of things about yourself, and I have carried that into my belief on how we train kids. (B2)
- That made me think that people can accomplish things. We were just a bunch of kids from a small town, with good leadership, and we worked our asses off. If you do things correctly you can probably compete, anybody can compete if you put your heart into it, and prepare properly. (B4)

Often times, lessons were deduced on how not to coach based on negative experiences with early coaches. In fact, hardships and humiliation experienced from early lessons played a significant role on eventual coaching philosophy. Often times, the coaches promised themselves that they would never replicate the behaviors of the coaches they learned from when they were athletes.

- My high school coach was a disciplinarian. You weren't allowed to talk or breathe during practice. In basketball, someone would say "Nice play." He would respond that it is not a god damn debating society, you are here to play basketball, so shut up. It was definitely intimidation. (B1)
- I didn't like the fact that he would not explain things to you, and the fact that he dealt very little on a personal basis. That was something I didn't want to emulate. It is like anything else, there are lots of things that you see and you don't like, and you separate those from the things that you do like. (B2)
- I had some examples of some not so good teachers. I had one guy who couldn't teach his way out of a paper bag. (B4)
- My phys-ed teacher was the guy that I remember most of all. Although he was a fairly good coach in the sense that he put in time, I remember mostly negative things. He wasn't a very encouraging person, so he discouraged more people than he encouraged. (B5)

### Love of Sport

Nonetheless, all eventual coaches had an initial dedication for sport regardless of early experiences. Though there was no interest in the coaching profession at the early sport participation stage, there was a great deal of passion for sport. Many of the eventual coaches were intrinsically motivated to develop their athletic skills, and moreover, they enjoyed their early athletic experiences beyond what would be considered normal.

- To get somebody who was obsessed with the game as I was is very unusual. A lot of the top coaches were that way as players, and that is why they are still in it. When I played

there were no summer camps. I used to scour the newspapers every summer looking for some basketball that was going on anywhere. (B3)

- I think that like most elite players we tended to do extra. We would run cross country and things of that nature in order to be in the kind of shape you had to be in to play games like soccer. (B5)
- I don't know whether I selectively didn't go to sports as I look back on it, I didn't say I'm not going to that sport because I probably won't make it, that never occurred to me. I was always successful and comfortable in sport. (B6)

Even at the earliest stage, these future coaches expressed a stronger passion for sport than many of their peers. Perhaps as a result of their athletic commitment, those sampled were determined to improve their skill levels and eventually become elite level athletes. Many of these examples of love of sport relate to Bloom's (1985) second stage of performance development, that of being hooked. To Bloom, levels of the performer's development were intertwined with levels of commitment. Similarly, the present research has noted that early levels of commitment were prevalent even during initial sport experiences. The expert coaches interviewed believed that their commitment attributed to eventual elite sport performances.

### Initial Coaching Characteristics

There were often early indications of evolving roots of philosophies of coaching even during the early sport participation stage. Some coaches recognized that they were already in possession of effective interpersonal and leadership skills. Others coaches recognized that they were more committed and motivated to their sports than their peers. These components became seminal ingredients for the development of future coaching philosophies.

- When I was young, I played a lot of sports, I was especially good in baseball and dealing with people. (B1)
- I could have been better had I had a little more positive reinforcement when I was younger. His coaching style was very autocratic, very much do as I say, as opposed to this is why we

do these things. I realized that you did not really learn to conceptualize the game with that sort of approach, you just learned to do it. (B5)

- So this is the thought that I would follow through in this field which I enjoyed. It followed that you were better and knew more than others. I was really good in this area. So being comfortable and supposedly very good in these areas was a natural for me. (B6)

### Concluding Remarks on Coaches as Early Sport Participants

Many lessons were derived from the early sport participation stage. Parents and various resource constraints determined these athletes accessibility to sport opportunities and coaches. Early sport instructors taught these future coaches employing both positive and negative teaching styles. Based on experiences learned from early coaches, the interviewed coaches emulated certain behaviors and chose never to repeat others. However, there was evidence of the roots of eventual coaching philosophies even at this earliest stage of their athletic development. The fundamental lessons learned at this stage of their development included extreme levels of love of sport, commitment, motivation and communication skills. Therefore, the lessons acquired at the early sport stage seemed to be fundamental to the eventual professional development of these future coaches.

### National Elite Sport

#### Initial Elite Level Athletic Experiences

All of the expert coaches sampled were athletes who eventually developed into elite level competitors. In fact, five of the six coaches competed at the university level, while the remaining competed at national level competitions. All coaches thus had elite level experience as an athlete prior to ever working with elite level athletes. However, these future coaches' elite level experiences were not always in basketball, but sometimes in other sports. Nevertheless, these elite level experiences did help enrich their coaching visions.

- I got through school, I was in university and I wanted to be a doctor. One of my friends changed my life. I was playing in this Eastern League, which is now a continental league. This was the way I got started. My friend was traded to a team that was all black, and he

didn't want to be the only white guy on the team so he brought me along. I was about 15 or 16, and they put up with me, but we used to make money. I made about \$10 a game, and I would go home with \$30 - 40 at the end of a week-end. (B1)

- I went to university and played football. My first year playing was not a good experience. I played three years, and although the last two years were very competitive, the first year was absolutely atrocious. (B2)
- In university the other players were not as committed as I was though we did have a special and committed core. I think it was the first time many of us had this opportunity and we thrived on it. (B3)
- I was lucky enough to have played all positions. I was a forward in high school and in college. Then I switched and played two years as guard and when I changed universities, I played center. So I saw and played the game from all those different perspectives and therefore I understood them all quite well. (B4)
- I was considered to be a fairly elite soccer player in (location) and in my own mind I felt that I could probably play the game at the professional level. I played at a fairly elite level and when the realization came that I wasn't going to play pro, I decided to go to school. (B5)
- During the time I was playing junior Bs, they wanted me to play junior A's. That was at a time when there were only 6 NHL teams. I was about to graduate and I had to make a decision so I chose to remain in sport. Those kind of experiences meant that I was in sport 100% of the time, 365 days of the year. (B6)

The research conducted by Bloom (1985) identified three stages in the performer's development, the final one culminating in world class performance. Both Bloom and the results of the current study included elite level performance in their developmental models. Bloom's third stage of elite level performance spanned the athlete's commitment of becoming an elite performer to the realization of some form of world recognition in sport, the arts or the sciences. In the present study, two separate levels of elite level performers were identified, one operating at

university level competitions at a national level, and a second level performing internationally as a national team member. Despite a lack of previous literature examining the link between former elite level performers and elite level coaching, both appear to be related. Moreover, lessons gained by these former elite level athletes varied substantially, and seemed to help prepare them for eventual high performance coaching positions.

### The Developmental Evolution Of Coaching Characteristics

The expert coaches acknowledged the significance of personal elite level athletic experiences, and their contribution to the development of an eventual coaching philosophy. There were lessons learned on the professional opportunities in sport, how to plan practices, remain versatile and play several different positions on the court, the importance of selecting committed athletes and general philosophies regarding winning and losing. These lessons were learned through a combination of detailed observation and being an active participant in daily lessons as they unfolded. These were fundamental components of eventual coaching philosophies.

- I liked the opportunity to make the calls while playing. It probably helped me later because I spend a very long time preparing for games. I broke down things piece by piece and put them back together. Doing that I understood them better. I could relate it to the crew I was working with at that time. Later on, I approached my players the same way: we would take skills apart piece by piece and put them back together again. I think that is probably where that started to come from. (B2)
- In university the other players were not as committed as I was. We had a special and committed core. I think it was the first time most of us had this opportunity and we thrived on it. Every team you go on there is the core and then there are the periphery people who aren't as committed. If you are lucky enough to get that real majority often you are going to have an awesome team. (B3)
- I played the game from all the different positions. I was in the process of shaping a coaching philosophy from my experience on the floor and in the classroom. I didn't model myself after any one person, I tried to steal things from each person and still be myself. (B4)

Few studies have emphasized the development of expert teachers and coaches. Research that has looked at expert - novice developments in teaching recognized that educators based their initial teaching methods on knowledge acquired from theory and academic curriculum (Berliner, 1988). However, it became evident that in the coaching profession, by the elite athletic stage many of the coaches had achieved a strong applied understanding of how to work with teams on issues which included conflict resolution, long and short-term planning and tactical strategies for competition. The acquisition of these fundamental lessons helped the expert coaches to prepare, whether consciously or unconsciously, for a life of successful coaching. Therefore, some of the eventual expert coaches were concurrently both high level athletes and novice coaches.

### Learning From Coaches

At the elite stage, these former athletes no longer emphasized the importance of their parents. However, there was a continued mention of elite level coaches contributing to the development of their sport philosophies. As stated previously, lessons acquired as elite level athletes included the development of mental toughness, emotional control and the art of clear communication.

- He found a committed group then he just pushed us in practices and in games to make sure we were never satisfied with our performance. He taught us to simulate stressful situations in practice, and showed us that we could handle them like running more than we thought we could and still living. It was part of the next step of what needed to be learned at the elite level. (B3)
- He was a good fundamental teacher and he helped get me emotionally under control. I was very intense and competitive. He helped me get my act together in terms of what was acceptable conduct and what wasn't in sport. These were tough lessons for me. Not that I was a complete idiot, but I was probably more physical, intense and more or less emotionally controlled in the game. There's an arousal level that's acceptable and once you step over it you're not in control. Control is ultimately important. He swore and screamed

at me about technical fouls. These were tough learning experiences but in the long run valuable in terms of personal nature. (B4)

- Half of that stuff that he ran he had collected without knowing. Most of it was just perfect in terms of team organization when we practiced. To his credit, he broke the drills down in a way that I felt was good learning language. I had some idea of what he could do for an athlete. I'd already made up my mind that I was going to be a coach by then, but that convinced me. (B6)

#### Concluding Remarks on Coaches as Elite Athletes

In this particular sample, all coaches were involved in elite level sport as athletes before or while they were novice level basketball coaches. The lessons acquired during this stage of development differed from lessons learned at the earlier recreational level. At the elite level, the sample no longer emphasized the importance of parents and environmental constraints. When observing their own coaches, these sampled coaches emphasized the importance of coaching subtleties such as practice planning, athlete selection, stress management and coping with performance setbacks.

Previous literature studying the development of expert teachers considered them novices when they first began to teach (Berliner, 1988). For example, Barrett, Sebren and Sheehan (1991) found that as physical education teachers gained experience, their daily lesson structures became more flexible to problems which arose during the lessons. The current study, however, identified that the expert basketball coaches acquired their teaching knowledge long before they became coaches. Therefore, some coaches became elite level professionals before they acquired 10 yrs. of coaching experience due to previous inordinate amounts of athletic experience at the early and elite athletic stages. Therefore, some of the expert coaches in the current study exceeded Chase and Simon's (1973) 10 yr. measure of expertise by more than their initially measured elite coaching experience.

## International Elite Sport

### International Athletic Experiences

Though it was not a necessary requirement for a coach to have competed internationally, two of six expert coaches eventually competed as members of a national basketball team prior to beginning their coaching careers. Therefore, the international elite sport level was included as a developmental stage for some of the coaches. There was no certainty as to whether the international experience of these former athletes contributed to their coaching abilities. Nonetheless, in this sample, the former national team athletes eventually coached national teams. Also of note, an additional coach qualified and tried out for a national basketball team, and this coach also later coached a national basketball team.

- When I went on to university, I was definitely one of the top players in the university and in Canada. I was used to being captain and a lot of things came about, like leadership. I was always captain of my high school teams, so I just developed into a leader, whether it was formal as a captain of a team, or whether trying to organize games in the Spring and Summer. (B3)
- I was playing two sports together at that time, playing basketball and hockey. The high school wouldn't allow me to play two sports so I didn't play either at high school. I went downtown and played for intermediate team and played junior hockey. I played one week of high school basketball and some city league ball, and then ended up in the Olympics. (B6)

### Concluding Remarks on Coaches as International Elite Athletes

Three of six coaches were invited to try out for the national basketball team. Of those, only two succeeded in reaching the pinnacle of amateur level sport by representing Canada internationally. When comparing the two former international level athletes, it became apparent that one aspired to represent Canada, and was driven by the objective of reaching the highest performance level even from the earliest athletic stage. The other international level athlete felt

that natural talent was the most significant contributing factor to an eventual national team position.

Both of these coaches eventually became Olympic, Pan-American and World Championship team coaches. While competing at this level was not a prerequisite to international coaching, it did provide these two coaches with an understanding of the standards needed to train for international level competition.

### Novice Coaching

#### Transitions from Performing to Coaching

Some coaches were certain that they wanted to make coaching their life long profession. Others initially intended becoming doctors, lawyers, or other types of professionals before becoming hooked on the coaching profession. Thus, it became evident that not all the coaches sampled were initially committed to coaching as a life long profession.

- My friend had an older brother who coached many teams in basketball. He couldn't get away from his civil service position, and he wouldn't leave it and coach. My friend sat me down, and said "Look get this straight, I am a lawyer, you don't have to be smart to be a lawyer, but you got to really want to be a lawyer. You want to be a coach, so quit screwing around with this doctor stuff. (B1)
- I was taking a geography degree, but I was thinking about teaching and eventually committed to it. At that point I was more in charge of the football defense. I had to do a lot of the defensive signals so I had to get more involved in understanding things. I would do videotapes and scouting reports and break it down for my crew of linebackers. Eventually, I was the one who made a lot of the defensive calls in the games. I had to do a lot of preparation and that took me into offense sequences. I was probably preparing myself whether I knew what I was going to do later or not. I really enjoyed it. (B2)
- One of my coaches was the coach of the men's team at university. He was a very driven and committed coach, who wanted to keep learning. I would go along with him to coaching clinics even before I was a coach. I was still playing when I saw how much these two

people worked on constant upgrading and education. At that time I didn't even know I wanted to coach, I just knew that I loved basketball. (B3)

- Nobody was guiding my destiny. I was doing what I thought was practical. I took courses that I thought would best equip me to be a coach. I had the luxury of having a whole bunch of different coaches who had all kinds of different personalities and philosophies, and I played the game from all the different positions. I was in the process of shaping a coaching philosophy from my experience on the floor and in the classroom. I didn't model myself after any one person, I tried to steal things from each person and still be myself. (B4)
- I always wanted to teach phys-ed but coaching in Britain at that time was not really something that was regarded as a profession. It was just part of being a phys-ed teacher. Sport clubs were not coached at that time, they had players who basically organized themselves. I knew I wanted to be involved with phys-ed but coaching was not a specific thing for me. (B5)
- I don't know whether I selectively didn't go to sports as I look back on it, I didn't say I'm not going to that sport because I probably won't make it, that never occurred to me. I was always successful, so I go back to always being successful and being comfortable. It was the area for me to be in. (B6)

### Initial Coaching Positions

Initial coaching experiences varied between the eventual expert coaches. For some, their full time positions included general physical education and academic teaching responsibilities in a public school setting. Others coached several sports at a community recreational level, while another developing coach assumed a leadership role while playing on an elite sport team, and thus taught by example while simultaneously accepting some coaching responsibilities.

- I know how I started coaching. My first position was as a phys ed teacher in a public school, and I still remember the names of the players. I picked the first team I coached at that school. They had never played basketball before and I had never coached basketball

before - this was going to be a great move on both our parts. I had a book by Adolf Rupp and in it he told you how team work should be. (B1)

- I don't know if I fell into that leadership role or if I worked my way into it without trying. I was not a very boisterous person but I was a lead by example player. I was very hard working, a blue collar player. I was very team oriented, I got along well with people and I think the coaches identified with me - so I evolved into being captain. They knew that whatever I said to the players, I was going to work harder than anybody else. (B2)
- I felt like I was almost a step above the players, because I was older and I knew my coach so well as a friend. Also, I was always the one that would go to my coach and negotiate things for the team. I wasn't afraid to let him know that a player was unhappy, and how we can help that person. I was starting to feel like I was almost an assistant coach, I was in on a lot of the decision making. (B3)

Previous literature outlining the expert coach's development has been scarce, however, a study of team coaches in ice and field hockey conducted by Salmela, Draper and Desjardins (1994) described initial coaching positions. According to Salmela et al., coaches first worked with a series of sports before focusing on one. The present study also identified that some coaches first taught a number of different sports, however, it also acknowledged that in some instances, early coaching responsibilities occurred informally while the developing coach was a member of an elite level team. For those who were players with coaching responsibilities, their teaching involvement was sport specific, but was also diffused in a different way: they were still striving to improve their own competitive performances.

#### Early Hardships While Coaching

Despite their early experiences as athletes and their love of sport, several coaches experienced early hardships due to a general lack of coaching knowledge. In other instances, the novice coaches had no playing and little theoretical experience in basketball prior to initial involvement as a coach. As a result, knowledge acquisition both in terms of content and process occurred concurrently while educating developing athletes.

- I had no idea about how to do tryouts or anything. I don't know if we even had a try out, but I do know that a major part of it was to go through and say "all right, we are going to need 2 of you, and this one big guy". I was their first coach and they knew absolutely nothing about basketball, so I always remind people that just being there sometimes is enough. (B1)
- We did a lot of hollering and we were like Mutt and Jeff on the bench. It was a lack of knowledge for what we were doing. We were expending all this energy and yelling at these kids because they weren't doing what we had taught them. I know people were telling us how funny we were because they would watch us. It was not a good combination because we were exactly the same. We had no mellowing effect or anything. We both went off screaming and yelling and we were coaching a lot of kids at a very tough school. Although it was a lot of fun, I don't think that they learned a lot. (B2)
- I went into a small town of 850 people and they'd just won a provincial title in basketball. The first question I was asked was, "do you know basketball?" I lied, and said of course. Fortunately that was in September, and basketball didn't start until November. So for two months I read everything I could lay my hands on and I talked to everybody that knew anything about the game and tried to learn as much as I could. For the next four years, I coached and learned through experience. I went to all the clinics, read all the books, and talked to everybody that knew about the game. I was there for 4 years and in the 4th year we won a provincial title. (B5)

Those coaches who had no previous experience with the sport of basketball before starting their coaching professions underwent an adjustment period where they gained fundamental knowledge on the game similar to the novice teachers of Berliner (1988). After several years of novice coaching, the eventual expert coaches became more flexible in their teaching approaches, and the coaches also gained a stronger conceptual understanding of the sport similar to Berliner's second stage of teacher development termed advanced beginners. The present paper recognizes

that coaches do undergo cognitive shifts in knowledge throughout their novice coaching experiences, and that these are variables that contribute to their professional upward mobility.

### Working With Athletes

At first, the coaches experimented with several different coaching approaches while working with their athletes. The different facets discussed in this section included the type of leadership style displayed by the coach, general communication styles, their ability to motivate their athletes and their initial coaching philosophies and perspectives.

Leadership style. During the novice coaching stage, athlete centered philosophies were evident in the coaching styles of several coaches. In some cases, being a leader extended beyond working with the athlete on the court. In essence, some coaches recognized that they were teaching the athlete values that extended beyond athletic skills. The evidence of an athlete centered philosophy became a baseline for their eventual coaching approaches as they evolved into expert coaches. Others had to revise their coaching styles and this developed from a further understanding of what entry level athletes needed.

- I'd say practice ends at 5, and you would go home to eat. I said "you go home and I will be here at 7 o'clock tonight and we will do math together." It gave me the chance to do review stuff which is usually the problem with young kids. It ended up there were 3 of us there 4 nights a week Monday through Thursday to help any of the players. One thing I felt good about was that our players did better than the average in the school, and everyone of them graduated. (B1)
- I don't know if I fell into that leadership role or if I worked my way into it without trying. I was not a very boisterous person but I was a lead by example person. I knew I worked very hard, I was very team oriented and very positive all the times. (B2)
- When I coached basketball in a competitive summer camp, I used to get the kids together and say how tough we were going to be the next day, that we were not going to be intimidated and that none of us were going to back down from anything and that we were

going to dish out as well as we took. These were Canadian kids in a really tough environment. (B4)

These future expert basketball coaches understood the importance of motivating their young athletes whether it was to do school work or compete against other competitive teams. Similarly, a study on volunteer coaches conducted by Gould and Martens (1979) found that the motivating of youngsters was ranked second highest of 16 coaching components rated in order of importance. The only component that was rated higher by the sample of volunteer coaches was their mandate to teach their athletes sport specific skills. The expert basketball coaches in the current study however, emphasized their interpersonal styles and values when working with athletes as the highest of priorities.

Though most of the coaches would eventually emphasize performance outcomes at the elite level, only one coach discussed performance results at the novice level. When Smoll and Smith (1989) conducted research on the leadership styles of youth sport coaches, they hypothesized that each coach's self-perceived professional role determined the coach's eventual teaching style. In the present research, some viewed themselves as winning coaches, and when they were unable to meet their personal objectives, they punished their adolescent athletes. Others saw themselves as teachers of values which included having fun and cooperating with peers, and as a result, their perceptions of winning and losing were entirely different from those of their colleagues. Regardless of whether they overtly discussed winning or losing with their athletes, the novice coaches vacillated on their interpersonal approaches to teaching. Several of them did have to rethink their coaching objectives, and whether their methods of coaching were helping the coaches meet these professional goals.

Communication. For some, part of the early coaching hardships included a difficulty balancing positive reinforcement and critical feedback when working with their athletes. Most were initially overly critical of their athletes' performances, and emphasized technical content. These approaches would eventually be modified and tempered, and coaching approaches became a balance between critical feedback and positive reinforcement.

- The problem you run into as you start coaching is you are more into plays and patterns and stuff like that than you are into players. I think everybody goes through that because it is easier to tell 5 guys what to do than to talk to one person. (B1)
- We did a lot of hollering - like Mutt and Jeff on the bench. It was a lack of knowledge for what we were doing. We were expending all this energy and yelling at these kids because they weren't doing what we had taught them. I know people were telling us how funny we were because they would watch us. I would be up and down the floor. I would sit down and he would get up and we would go back and forth. There was no mellowing effect or anything. Although it was a lot of fun, I don't think that they learned. (B2)
- I was always known to be brutally frank. You always knew what I was talking about, but you didn't always know what players were talking about. Sometimes young kids are intimidated and they are so tense that they don't know what is bugging them the most. Those kind of scenarios made me really doubt how good our information translation was. I really had a big problem with information, communication and the translation of it. I don't think that this problem was just restricted to 9 to 12 year olds. (B6)

Previous literature designed for novice coaches have supported the importance of developing a flexible, receptive and approachable coach, especially when working with young children (Haslam, 1988; Martens, 1990). However, some of the coaches from the present study, similar to the novice teachers in Berliner's (1988) research, found it difficult to be flexible in their early approaches due to a lack of alternative coaching behaviors from which to choose. These skills however would continue to be learned in the developmental coaching stage and eventually turn into a crystallized coaching approach at the elite levels.

#### Concluding Remarks On Novice Coaches

Initial coaching opportunities fell into three categories: the novice coaches either taught various sports in public schools, recreational settings, or accepted leadership roles with some coaching responsibilities while still competing. It was not always initially obvious that their

involvement in coaching extended beyond part time employment or a school setting into what it eventually materialized.

Due to the necessity of using methods based on trial and error, these coaches were able to experiment with various coaching styles before eventually settling on a comfortable coaching approach later in their careers. From their early errors, the coaches learned how to better motivate their athletes. Central to their evolving philosophies, coaches began to understand their athletes as people, and thus began to understand that each athlete was unique both in temperament and skill level. These were lessons that would later prepare them to coach higher level competitive teams.

### Developmental Coaching

#### Transition To Developmental Coaching

Unlike the earlier teaching perspectives at the novice level, the developmental stage was typically where coaches were hired for their coaching skills. By this stage, all the coaches were committed to their profession. Though some of their appointments occurred by chance, the coaches' explicitly stated their commitment and love of coaching dedicated basketball players. Inevitably, tournament results were taken more seriously by the coaches as they began working with competitive teams.

- One of the kids I coached in church school said that the high school coach just left or was fired. His uncle was on the board, and he told his uncle what a great coach I was. I don't know if he called me or I called him. (B1)
- I was coaching football at high school for the first couple of years and then I got out of that and into basketball. What happened was they changed the season to a summer league so I had more free time. The lady coaching the woman's team at our high school became pregnant and took a maternity leave, and they were stuck without a basketball coach. At that time I was coaching the junior boys teams with a friend, which we coached for a year, and I just took the girls team. I have stayed with women ever since. (B2)

- We moved out here after I graduated and my former coach and I eventually coached a university team. I'd had my next back operation and I wasn't able to work. I had a fusion and I was laid up. It was just circumstance and luck, there was a part time position available here. It was 1 1/2 to 2 hours a day with no travel, it was right up my alley to stay in basketball and to get into a little bit of coaching. I became an assistant with the varsity team. The next year the varsity coach retired. I was lucky being in the right place at the right time. Then the last 10 years the job grew from 2 hours a day to a full time position. (B3)
- I didn't like being in the gym with people that weren't very good athletes or didn't want to be there. I didn't enjoy teaching a multitude of activities and it just didn't turn me on at all. It wasn't demanding. So I singled in on one sport, and it was then that I realized that I enjoyed coaching and that it was what I wanted to do. (B5)

The developmental coaching stage was the first time the coaches were able to attain professional positions as coaches, often times only focusing on basketball. These findings were consistent with the research of Salmela, Draper and Desjardins (1994). However, Salmela et al. identified levels of involvement and knowledge which differed from the professional demarcation stages of the present research. Though Salmela and colleagues studied field and ice hockey coaches, and this paper studied basketball coaches, both sets of results identified that evolving expert coaches returned to university or formalized coaching programs before attaining elite level coaching positions.

#### Acquiring Theoretical Knowledge From University Courses

From the expert coaches interviewed, three of the sample returned to school in order to attain a masters degree in sport science. This was one possible way of enhancing their conceptual understanding of sport, or expanding their knowledge of coaching / teaching principles. This phenomenon was part of a general trend where the coaches sought more knowledge of sport principles. Therefore, education became one way of gaining a better understanding of basketball related knowledge.

- I had more graduate courses than anyone in the history of the school. For elementary phys ed I would take advanced phys ed because I couldn't go to school during the day. I had to take high jumping, baseball, football, and horse shoes. I still remember horseshoes; nearly failed horseshoes because I couldn't make a shoe turn two and a half times. But I understand the concept, if you are going to teach phys ed, you have got to be able to teach people how to do these things, and you have got to do them to a certain level. (B1)
- When I decided that I wanted to be a university coach, I was lucky because I was in the first year of my masters. However, the coach of the women's basketball team had retired and that the job was open. My high school coach came back to university to study. I was asked to coach the women's team and he helped me. (B4)
- After four years of coaching, I went back to university to pursue my master's degree. I had no intention of coaching at all. I was just going there to do my master's degree and that was it. Then I planned to go back into teaching. (B5)

Reflecting on previous educational experiences, one coach regretted not having a higher level of education. There was a recognition that a better understanding of physical education and biomechanics would have further enhanced coaching ability.

- Looking back over my coaching career, I would have started earlier if I had any inclination that it was this much fun. I would have gotten more serious about school earlier, maybe even gotten a phys ed degree. I'm not saying that it would have helped me with my communication, but it would have helped with some of the biomechanics. I think I would have started earlier because I see some of these coaches coming into University at 23, 24, 25 and they have actually got 20 years to do this. That is probably one thing I would do over. (B2)

Similar to Berliner's (1988) study on expert teachers, most of the basketball coaches sampled had an undergraduate degree which provided them with an early theoretical understanding of their domain. Due to the nature of the coaching profession, these basketball coaches, however, returned to school in order to satiate a thirst for further theoretical knowledge.

The coaches wanted a more complete coaching package which included detailed knowledge of sport sciences to supplement their applied coaching experience.

### Acquiring Theoretical Knowledge From Mentors

Regardless of whether they chose to return to school or not, four of the coaches were mentored by elite master coaches. The remaining coaches may have been affiliated with mentor coaches at the developmental coaching stage, however, they did not reveal that information during the interview process. Mentoring became another opportunity to satisfy the need to learn for these developing coaches. Of the coaches mentored, they were selected by master coaches due to a combination of coaching potential and compatibility of personal affinity. Each coach was thus provided with the opportunity to obtain quality coaching knowledge from a creditable applied source. As a result, all were able to gather a conceptual understanding of fundamental coaching principals. Though all coaches learned complex coaching knowledge from their mentors, these external sources of knowledge were then integrated with their own personal philosophies.

- A guy I had played with as an athlete, wanted me to be his assistant coach, and he was a genius. I really learned a lot from him. He was the coach at my old high school, a job you would dream to have. I think it was just before my service, he brought me in to be his assistant. (B1)
- I observed this coach because he was the godfather of basketball. He returned to university. He was much like another coach I had as an athlete; they could have been brothers in their approach to the game. I watched, he was very much like my former coach, very stoic, very severe looking, scary looking sometimes, he scared the hell out of people because he was large, kind of distant looking, and he drilled these kids to the nth degree. (B2)
- As a young coach you think you know everything and this is the way you are going to do things. The good coaches become more flexible as they get older. As a young coach I

thought I knew how it was to be done, like my mentors, and yet I didn't have the personality that they had. It took me a number of years to form my own approach and style. (B3)

- I took an advanced basketball course with a knowledgeable coach. I did pretty well and at the end of it I got a phone call and he asked me to come in and see him. I sat down and he said that he had been impressed with my work in the class and he asked me if I wanted to assist him. This kind of blew my mind, so I said: "Yes, that would be a great opportunity." That is how my career in coaching began. I worked with him and I just found it opened up a whole new interest for me; the way he coached, his management style, his organization, and all of the things that he did really caught my interest. (B5)

The expert basketball were provided with an invaluable opportunity to observe their mentors and acquire lessons on both coaching content and process. It was through observation that many coaches gained a better understanding of how to work best with athletes, a finding echoed by the developing team coaches in Salmela's (1994a) study and the expert teachers in Dodds (1994) study. The research of Salmela, Draper and Desjardins (1994) identified mentoring as a separate career marker from the coaching position involved in while the coach was being mentored. Due to the nature of the present paper, coaches were mentored and learned from these more experienced coaches while they coached at the high school level.

### Working With Athletes

During the novice coaching stage, the basketball coaches focused their teaching on physical skill development. In the developmental stage, the coaches attempted to remedy previous coaching inadequacies by tempering their previous skill centered approach with more interpersonal communication. Though they further emphasized technical improvements, the coaches eventually realized that athletes were best motivated through a balance of critical feedback and positive reinforcement. Beyond their professional responsibilities, the coaches also ensured that their team members attended high school, and encouraged their players to apply to universities and colleges.

Leadership style. Along with the evolution of their general coaching philosophies, the coaches provided positive reinforcement intermittently to their players because the athletes became intrinsically self-motivated and self-directed. The coaches also recognized the importance of team effort to cultivate higher levels of team cohesion. Even though the coaches were building the athletes in both talent and character, they perpetuated a team philosophy whereby each athlete became part of a greater whole - the team. Their changing leadership style extended beyond impressing cohesion on the athletes. Most attempted to teach their developing athletes that sport was not always innately enjoyable. Nonetheless, the coaches aspired to provide their athletes with valuable lessons that could be applied both in sport and life.

Ultimately, the coaches felt the need to motivate and instill confidence in their athletes. Where in some instances the coaches led by example, in others situations, they facilitated an environment that was in itself motivating. Regardless of the specific situation, the coaches recognized the importance of establishing a structured learning environment.

- I was still very enthusiastic but I don't think I hollered as much. I don't know whether they cried the first couple of times, but I wasn't abusive. With the guys, I was more of a cheerleader than a coach. (B2)
- Even in the junior high level your practice should be well organized, it should be demanding. The kids must attend, they must have fun, try hard, learn the nuances, skills and fundamentals of the game. (B4)
- I think I can make it relatively clear, when I first began to coach high school I was quite ideal, I really had a feeling that I had a task and I had to make people understand how wonderful it was, just like I felt it was wonderful. (B6)

During their developmental years, the expert coaches gained a better understanding of how to motivate their young athletes. There was an understanding that with adolescents, the coaches had to craft a training environment that was both educational and enjoyable. Similarly, a study conducted by Fisher, Mancini, Hirsch, Proulx and Staurowsky (1982) examined the importance of coach - athlete interactions and team climate. They found that the most central roles of the high

school coach included establishing a balance between leader support, cohesion and task orientation.

When the correct amount of structured learning and appropriate values were instilled in the athletes, the coaches witnessed varying levels of team cohesion. This phenomena eventually played a central role in their leadership styles at the elite levels.

- We ended up being about 30 and 5. We traveled a lot and we had one player, a 7 footer who was a pretty good player. We were traveling along and I asked, " How many points a game did you average last year?" So he said "I got about 35." I said "and what did your teammate get?" He said that he got 3 or 4. Well now, both players were getting about 30 and 25 respectively. So I asked how come the other player didn't get any points last year? "Because I wasn't giving him the ball last year, and I wouldn't give him the ball this year, if it wasn't for you". So I asked him whether it was due to my great coaching that they were now playing as a team. (B1)
- My next break was when I coached for about 5 years in high school. We were really successful, again I was in a good school with good athletes, and our style of play really turned everybody on. I took some flack, even in our own school because at that time nobody thought that we should be running around enthusiastically when somebody turned over the ball and high fiving each other. (B2)
- We needed other things, a conceptual understanding and a management style that was more conducive to cooperation as opposed to authority." (B5)

The coaches began to conceptualize their team visions, and as a result, sought better approaches through which to motivate their athletes.

Communication. As previously stated, communication in the developmental coaching phase became a balance between positive reinforcement and technical corrections. As some of the coaches began to work with adolescents, they realized the importance of setting boundaries with their athletes. One coach in particular acknowledged that one of his roles as coach was to assume some parenting responsibilities. It thus became the responsibility of this coach to ensure that their

players attended school and after school practices. This concern had to be clearly expressed to athletes through clear and concise communication. Concurrently, the coach had to sell the athletes on the positive value of the sport experience they were advocating. It thus became the role of the athletes to buy into the coach's philosophy. Communication was the means by which this coach attempted to express his leadership style.

- I also felt that I had a challenge. I used to come by and pick him up in the morning, nobody knew that. I'd say "Is my player up and ready to go to school?" His mother would say "No, he is not up he is not feeling good." I would say "You tell him to get up and to come to school, we have a doctor at school." I never knew if we had a doctor, it never got that far. (B1)

There were another instance where a coach's communication style had to be revised in order not to lose respect of the athletes. In particular, one of the male coaches began to work with female athletes during the developmental coaching stage. The coach soon realized that women required a different approach to the male athletes formerly encountered.

- I started to expend less energy in a cheer leading fashion, as opposed to now directing and encouraging. If a kid missed a shot, you would yell "Come on, make that shot!" If you did that with this crew of girls, they just kind of looked at you and then you wouldn't get anything out of them. So I stopped that very quickly. I started to ease off, and become more of a coach and less of a cheerleader. This was still at the high school level. (B2)

Research conducted on successful high school and university coaches by Seagrave and Ciancio (1990) emphasized the important balance between instruction and praise, approximately in a 3:1 ratio, when working with novice participants. During the developmental coaching level in the present paper, the coaches seemed to alternate between scold, praise and instructional feedback. However, all the coaches eventually found the methods of communication that worked best for them. Therefore, the formalized coaching approach evident in Seagrave et al.'s findings were not formalized by the expert basketball coaches until a later coaching stage.

### Building the Individual's Skills

At the developmental stage, the athlete's physical and mental skill levels were developed. These fundamental skills would eventually be refined at the elite levels. Psychologically, the athletes were taught high levels of confidence and self-esteem in order to compete at an optimal level. Physically, the players were provided with fundamental skills that were eventually enhanced and refined. The athletes were also provided with strategic styles of play that they were able to implement in lower level competitions.

- As far as establishing systems of play, we need an overall system. We have to say we are going to do certain things, then we have to look at the talent and put them into this kind of semi-organized structure. While we are doing that, we start concentrating on the individual skills that can be added, and sometimes we go a whole different direction. (B1)
- I started getting back in to what I call a relaxed intensity. I did the same thing with the regional teams. My teams became known as very tough defensively, very fit, tough, and hardworking. My teams became known as very up tempo teams, and eventually I just built on it. (B2)
- We used to get the kids together and say how tough we were going to be the next day, that we were not going to be intimidated and that none of us were going to back down from anything. We were going to dish out as well as we took. (B4)

As developmental coaches, the eventual experts understood that beyond developing athletes, they were also helping to build confident people. Similar to the coaching philosophy espoused by Martens (1990), the coaches attempted to instill their athletes with self-confidence, a team orientation and a strong work ethic. The balance between these components would eventually resurface as requirements to successful teams at the elite levels.

Along with increases in commitment, the aspiring coaches realized that their profession demanded more time from them as they involved themselves with competitive teams. The developmental coaching level was therefore the first time where the coaches personally encountered the pressures associated with coaching.

### The Developmental Coach's Personal Life

Most coaches did not discuss problems regarding time and stress management until later stages in their coaching development. However, in two instances, coaching responsibilities impinged on the coaches' personal lives at the developmental coaching stage. As a result, the coaches became aware of the pressures associated with their chosen profession while still working at the high school level.

- I once lost a game when I was coaching high school. I lived on the third floor, came home at one in the morning, and threw the clock up against the wall because it was ticking too loud. The next morning my father told me that he was woken up by some idiot throwing a clock because he lost a dumb game. He said that I would be out in the street if I destroyed anything else in his house. (B1)
- I was teaching courses within the department; a full load of courses. I didn't coach at all for two years. I had actually made a conscious decision not to coach because at that time my marriage was in trouble. I was having problems with my marriage and I thought it was necessary for me to give up that to spend time trying to straighten this mess out. (B5)

Literature on coaches' abilities to separate their personal lives and professional frustrations reinforced the lessons learned by the expert coaches during their early coaching years. A study of 142 American high school coaches conducted by Wishnietsky and Felder (1989) found that coaches sometimes had difficulties with their families and mates because they brought work related issues home. Inevitably, these pressures led to resignations in 34.8% of the sample. A study conducted by Taylor (1992) revealed similar findings to that of Wishnietsky et al. Often times, coaches experienced pressure due to an accountability for poor team performances and the diverse responsibilities that became part of their profession. Findings from the present study were of no exception. The expert basketball coaches also encountered typical coaching difficulties, but they were more prevalent at the elite coaching levels.

### Concluding Remarks On Developmental Coaches

The developmental stage was distinctly different from the novice coaching stage. Coaches began to establish a coherent leadership style when working with athletes. Their approaches were communicated to the athletes, and reflected a structured and concrete leadership style. There was concern that the athletes be committed to the rules and guidelines espoused by the coach, whether it was attending school regularly or buying into training methods. It thus became the role of the coaches to sell their philosophy to the athletes, and this in turn directed the philosophy and goals of team members.

The coaches themselves received either mentoring or a formal academic education, and were thus able to gain a stronger understanding of theoretical and applied coaching knowledge. Thus, the developmental coaching stage became an opportunity for the coaches to experiment with the knowledge they were acquiring, and implement it in a practical setting. There were moments where coaching approaches had to be adjusted to fit the athletes with whom they worked. In those instances, the coaches were obliged to find better ways to integrate their newly acquired theoretical knowledge with previous experiential knowledge. In other cases, there were realizations that some theoretical knowledge did not suit their personal coaching approaches; and as a result, were eventually discarded.

### National Elite Coaching

#### Transition To Elite Level Coaching

The first opportunities of working at the elite level were often times obtained by chance. Though all coaches aspired to attain elite level positions, their acute awareness of possible opportunities were based as much on intuition as ambition. In some instances, initial elite coaching assignments were with provincial teams. However, in such instances, provincial team appointments were precursors to eventual university positions. Synonymous with their elite coaching assignments, coaches also had a solid conceptual understanding of the game as well as a formalized system of coaching they called their own.

- The reason that I got the job was that things had not been going well for the team. I didn't want to inherit the things that I could afford not to have. Though they wanted to hire an assistant coach for me, I was not going to hire him or anybody else that had been involved with the program in the past. I ended up getting the job anyway. I thought I couldn't do it, but I also felt that I was not going to get locked into something that I didn't want to do. (B1)
- A high level coach came and watched a couple of our high school games and one day he said to me, "I'm taking the year off, do you want to take my team for a year?" I said "yes" and he never came back. I took one year away from my high school job, then another because he didn't come back the second year. Finally, he decided he wasn't coming back at all. I just stayed put. I think my coaching was formalized by then. I had developed a personal and strategical style of coaching. (B2)
- A coaching position at a university became available and I jumped at it. The next year I became an assistant with the varsity team. The following year the varsity coach retired. I was lucky being in the right place at the right time, and I didn't have a full time job, it just fell into my lap. Then the last 10 years the job grew from 2 hours a day to a full time position. (B3)
- I had an opportunity at the end to go on with a women's university team to the nationals and win. I was fully committed to coaching by that time. I had the opportunity to go from there to another university. I became the head coach at that university when I was 24 years old. I completed my master's thesis and gave my oral presentation one day, and was a faculty member the next day. I was stepping into the world of university coaching." (B4)
- After I had been away from coaching for a year, I was climbing the walls. I couldn't stand it and so I decided I wanted to coach high school again. Fortunately, the guy who was coaching at this university went to another university, so I applied for his job and got it. This is how I started at the university level. (B5)

National elite level coaching appointments were equated with Salmela, Draper and Desjardins' (1994) established expert ice and field hockey coaches and Salmela's (1994a) mature level coaches. However, the results of the present paper differed from that of Salmela as it further defined mature coaching into two distinct levels of elite coaching. At the national elite level, the basketball coaches often times lacked confidence in their coaching abilities. Despite not always being aware of how much they knew, the coaches already had the knowledge to function as elite level professionals.

#### Entry Elite Level Coaching Assignments

With three of six coaches, initial elite level coaching positions were a shared responsibility. As a result, several elite level coaches experienced a gradual transition to higher profile coaching positions. This provided some coaches with a gradual transition to elite level coaching. Shared coaching responsibilities were beneficial to the recently appointed elite level coaches. These appointments allowed the coaches an opportunity to employ their coaching partner as a sounding board and as someone to share the pressures of higher level coaching with.

- We went and scouted hard on a Tuesday because we were going to play them on a Friday, so we watched the other university team play. There were 25 people in the gym for a college game, I couldn't believe it. Before I came to this college, I knew our opponents had a school, but I didn't know they had a basketball team. I said to my partner, "these are 4 games we are expected to win, we've got to produce successful results." (B1)
- I got involved with the Ontario Basketball Association representative for our region because the provincial coach got into some problems with the provincial team. He was coaching one year and they did not want him back the next year. Some of the kids loved him and some of the kids hated him. So myself and another coach, our men's coach now, took over the Canada Games Team. (B2)
- When I decided that I wanted to be a coach at a university I was lucky because I was in the first year of my masters degree. The women's basketball coach had retired and the job was

open. My high school coach had come back to that university to study. I was asked to coach the women's team and he helped me. So we worked together that year. (B4)

### Mentoring developing coaches

However, all coaches eventually became self-sufficient elite level coaches. Thus, they were able to implement their own personal philosophies of coaching with a university level team. Due to their success as elite level coaches, three of six coaches began mentoring less experienced coaches working at lower levels. Thus, it appeared that coaching was a cyclical process whereby coaches who were initially mentored eventually became mentors to developing coaches. They accepted mentoring roles as part of their responsibilities as elite level coaches. Mentoring was therefore perceived as an opportunity for the coaches to reciprocate to the coaching profession.

- An important part of my job as a university coach is to deal with high school coaches. I help coaches learn to develop players: I accept this as part of my job. My responsibilities include helping aspiring coaches through clinics, bringing them to games and letting them come to practices. (B2)
- To develop young coaches, it is important to get them early. The best way of developing coaches is working with a mentor. Here we have a really good situation, they work with us and they go to the coaching institute. It is a good situation, a good idea. (B3)
- I drive my assistant coaches so they work to death, which is what I picked up from my former mentor. If I am going to help them become better coaches, I have got to demand things from them right now. I presently have one of my ex-players with me as an assistant coach. She thought I was tough when I was a coach, but this is even worse. I said to her "Do you want to coach or not? Do you want to be able to help kids or not?" The bottom line is that I am interested in helping coaches become better coaches. (B5)

Beyond recognizing mentoring other coaches as one of their responsibilities, many of the expert basketball coaches enjoyed mentoring aspiring coaches because it was an opportunity to share their passion of coaching with an interested and receptive novice coach. Several of the experts interviewed suggested that mentoring be formalized into a national mentoring program.

Similar findings surfaced in work conducted by Bloom, Schinke and Salmela (1994). The latter identified recommendations made by expert team coaches (n=21) to improve team sport coaches' training, and its results revealed that mentoring was the most commonly proposed recommendation. As a result, the elite level coach employed apprentice coaches as assistants, and both worked together to improve the performances of elite level athletes.

### Working With Athletes

The national elite level was the first opportunity for the basketball coaches to focus solely on building and refining their athletes' skills. The responsibilities of these coaches were many. They refined their player's previously acquired skills, while they also taught their teams new skills and tactics in order to compete successfully at the university or provincial level. The coaches were also aware that their responsibilities extended beyond producing a successful competitive team. They wanted their athletes to develop positive life long values from their sport experiences, so the coaches also encouraged their athletes to maintain healthy social lives. Sometimes, coaches even assumed the role of parent to the athlete - university student in residence.

Leadership style. In the novice and developmental coaching stages, these elite level basketball coaches experimented with leadership styles which varied between overly encouraging and overly disciplined. At the university level, the coaches had crystallized philosophies which were reflected in their leadership styles. The expert basketball coaches made it perfectly clear that they had the final say on team decisions and objectives. Nonetheless, athletes were always involved in the decision making process as the coaches knew that the welcoming of athlete input facilitated a buying in process to the coaches' seasonal plan. This process motivated the athletes to strive for performance excellence.

- I think I am personable yet demanding. Kids want to play for me. I think I motivate kids to go beyond whatever they think they can go to and still get the best out of them. I do it in a way that my athletes and I stay relaxed. I really believe that you have to put the athlete in environments where they feel comfortable that they can fail. You don't want them to fail, but if they do fail it is not a major crime. (B2)

- Discipline is not self-imposed. On the court, discipline is coach imposed. I would discipline someone for some action or behavior depending on what I think it deserves, and what is best for the team and for the person." (B3)
- The key is to be able to create the environment where you have high standards and expectations if you're going to be a high performance coach. Obviously, this starts at a level where people are getting serious. (B4)
- Players are much more relaxed and play better when they are not playing with fear. I have a much better relationship with the team, the assistants and my colleagues, and I am much happier coaching. I find that I love what I am doing more now than I ever did before, and every year gets better because I am so much more relaxed. However, I am no less intense, organized, or demanding than before. (B5)

The expert coaches expected more commitment and higher performance levels from their athletes at the elite levels. As a result, training environments became more demanding on the athletes, and the coaches were more autocratic in their leadership style. Similarly, when Chelladurai, Haggerty and Baxter (1988) studied the decision style preferences of collegiate coaches and athletes, they found that coaches and athletes alike opted for the coaches to decide on issues related to performance outcome and accountability. Furthermore, as the consequences of decisions affecting team performance increased, it became evident that the coaching style of the collegiate level coach was more that of a benevolent dictatorship.

One of the necessary strengths the expert coaches needed was an ability to find palatable ways of selling their athletes on the team's vision. The study conducted by Schinke, Draper and Salmela (1994) studied the expert basketball coaches from the current study as well as high performance ice hockey coaches (n=11). They identified that a team's direction was determined during pre-season meetings with the athletes. Even though the athletes were made to feel involved in the decision making process, the decisions were directed by the expert coaches alone. Similar to the views of Pat Riley (1993), coach of the New York Knicks, the expert basketball coaches of the present study were aware that they required athlete support in order to successfully

implement seasonal objectives. These intentions for the season were communicated to the athletes throughout the season.

Communication. Leadership styles were directly influenced by each coach's communication style. The coaches set the direction for their teams' philosophies and eventual goals. However, it was crucial that they share their team visions with the players, and that they have their athletes buy into the predetermined direction of the team. To sell the athletes on team goals, the coaches communicated employing a combination of carefully chosen words spoken in the right tone, with the correct amount of eye contact.

- Team wise, we talk about and do a lot of things. For example, the history and tradition of this team, why people come to play here, and what is expected of this team and why it has done so well for so long. We talk about some common characteristics that people have brought to this team over the years. They would do that and we would talk about team goals. There is a playoff date, there are certain things that they can hang their hats on. These are the dates that determine certain goals for us. (B2)
- I think it is critical, especially with today's kids. You can't bully them or brow beat them, you have to coax them, convince them, define standards and let them know when they don't meet those standards. I just think you have got to do it in a much softer way so that they almost think it is their decision as opposed to your decision. I have completely changed my management style, that is the first thing and my coaching style has just evolved. (B5)
- As I got better and more professional, I knew that my decisions became more palatable. My delivery made it much more palatable, so there was compliance in there rather than a challenge. I think that is really an important criteria. (B6)

Therefore, the expert basketball coaches emphasized the importance of selling their athletes on a team vision, a view reiterated by Bell (1985). Bell found that one of the central functions of the expert coach was to facilitate a sense of oneness among team members by having them buy into a team purpose - goal. When Gould, Hodge, Peterson and Giannini (1989) considered the relation between intercollegiate coaching strategy and the self-efficacy of athletes, they found that

the 111 sampled elite wrestling coaches rated the importance of a coach's persuasive abilities below the importance of skill acquisition, goal-setting and physical conditioning. However coaches in the current study pointed out that the buying in process was a precursor to coach - athlete interactions, directing how the athletes would acquire and refine their skills to suit team needs. Once the expert basketball coaches were able to sell their athletes on a team vision, goal-setting directed training methods to produce specific performance results.

Goal-setting through communication. The procedure of goal-setting was a quadrennial and season long process oftentimes facilitated by a two-way communication between the coach and athletes. The coach began the season with general goals which directed athlete selection and skill refinement. On another level, the coaches involved their athletes in the goal-setting process to facilitate the athletes' ownership of team goals. Long-term goals directed the general philosophy and intentions of the coach and players. Short-term goals were employed as measures of evaluation, and thus ensured that the team was achieving the initially set objectives. These goals were flexible and often times revised over the course of the season and the athlete's university playing career.

- I am big on goal-setting. We spent a lot of time with our players on goal setting, theirs as well as mine. I remember I came home and put up a 3" x 5" card on my desk to define our goals. (B1)
- I make a commitment to those kids, and I mean that commitment. They in turn should be working to get better, to be as close to their potential in year five as they can possibly be. Then they are part of the team and they know that they are there for five years. So there is a give and take on both sides. It is carefully monitored so at the end of a year I can say to them this is what you said you were going to do, this is what we did to help you and this is what happened. Great! Now, next year this is what we are going to do. It is an ongoing thing. (B5)

Goals were a precursor to the beginning of university careers and season long training plans. Therefore, one of the responsibilities of the expert basketball coaches was to formulate goals that

were consistent to those of their university level athletes at the beginning of each season.

Research conducted by Schinke, Draper and Salmela (1994) also found that an appropriate match between the coaches' and the athletes' intentions minimized the danger of unrealistic goals being set by either party. Furthermore, both studies recognized that goal-setting was best implemented during essential times throughout the quadrennial and season long team building process.

Performance results were then employed as a measurement in the goal-setting process. Long-term goals, both quadrennial and seasonal, directed long-term plans for the elite basketball teams. They were oftentimes inflexible as the coaches and athletes had already bought into seasonal objectives. The only time they would have been altered was during a coach's self-evaluation in the post-season (Schinke et al., 1994). However, short-term goals were employed incrementally throughout the season. They were more flexible because the coaches adapted daily training procedures in order to provide athletes with the necessary feedback to meet seasonal objectives. Short-term goals therefore became a method of evaluation that provided input on whether short-term improvements were sufficient to meet long-term goals. These findings were echoed by research conducted by Burton (1993), in which long-term objectives, once determined, were rarely revised. Short-term objectives were more easily changed, and their level of difficulty could be made more challenging or obtainable depending on the judgment of the expert coach.

- We do a lot on performance goals, some individual and some team goals. As a team, performance goals include what we realistically think we could be doing by Christmas, how we should be playing, how we measure our progress, whether we are ranked number one or two, and how important that is. There is always tremendous pressure on us because we are ranked high every year. We play tougher games before Christmas than we do afterwards. We talk about that during the pre-season and what they think is realistic for our team. (B2)
- Through the years we set incremental goals. We have small goals, so they are not locking way down the road. They start talking about wins in their short-term goals but not in the long-term. They set a couple of goals like becoming the top rebounding team in the league and having the least number of turnovers. I think these are really good goals, not like

winning. Usually if you get those goals you are going to be pretty successful. What I say is you have got those goals, that is the easy part. The strategies for reaching those goals is the tough part. (B3)

Many of the expert basketball coaches emphasized the importance of performance oriented goals. It was their belief that when athletes were prepared with strong fundamental skills during training, positive competitive outcomes would result. Research conducted by Burton (1993) clarified that outcome oriented goals served to motivate athletes during practice. However, practice goals were more important to the coach and athlete: they served to help the athletes develop their skills to their potentials as performers. Both Burton's and the current study placed similar emphasis on the importance of process and outcome oriented goals: there was an understanding that process oriented goals and their attainment were the foundation for competitive outcomes.

All coaches directed the goal-setting process, and had the final say on expectation levels. Though they allowed the athletes to become involved in goal-setting, the goals for the team were determined before the athletes were ever elicited for their views and opinions.

- In reference to group setting goals, I wouldn't go into a meeting and say what is your goal this year? I would try and guide them, and some times I would feel pretty guilty like I was feeding them goals, and they would give them back to me. If they did that they were also taking a little bit of ownership of it as well, whereas if I just came in and wrote a goal on a board, they would just sort of go "yeah". (B4)
- What we do is provide a conceptual model for kids as to what it takes to be an elite athlete. We break down the physical component, the mental component, the technical, and the social components. We say "these are the things that we believe are necessary to be an elite athlete, and these are the things that have to be done in order to improve each component." Then we say in a progressive way, "these are the things you must do first. For instance, you must first do physical conditioning and develop an aerobic base." Then we tell them to work on anaerobics and so on. (B5)

- They see the big picture and then we break it down. The thing I have to do is keep reminding them of the big picture. We bring out the big picture about once a month, say guys this is what we need. Where are we? (B6)

At the national elite coaching level and above, the expert basketball coaches had skilled methods of communicating with their athletes. In specific, they had an ability to convince their athletes to buy into their teams' philosophies as well as stringent performance related expectations. Despite their autocratic coaching styles, and the discipline they imposed on their teams, the experts were also caring and supportive to their athletes. Both the present study and that of Salmela (1994a) found that the coaches were capable of balancing a task orientation with the ability to be an empathetic listener to athletes and support staff when they needed to adopt a supportive role.

Communicating with athletes on issues other than sport. The coaches were also available to their athletes in order to discuss the players' other personal concerns. Often times, the athletes experienced difficulties balancing their athletic responsibilities with their academic obligations. There were other instances where team members approached these coaches to discuss issues pertaining to their private lives. The coaches were involved with the lives of their athletes prior to elite level positions. However, they were able to allocate more time to their athletes at the national elite stage because they focused on a smaller number of performers.

- I might say to a girl that I want to see her tomorrow. She brings her log in and we take a look and see that she has had a real bad day and a really bad practice. I will say, "what happened yesterday, you had a bad practice?" She'll say: "I had a bad day." Then I say "how are you going to deal with it?" "Oh, I tried to put this out of my mind but every time we stopped I kept thinking about this stupid test." We will chat a bit, and after that, I will try to help her park her problems for a while. (B2)
- I can't say that any coach who says they never have discipline problems are lying. Any given year, you always have to deal with young people in a stressful environment. When

you are dealing with athletes you have to have some feeling about what is going on in their lives. (B3)

- We had a couple of kids from very poor families, but I talk to them and I relate to them really well. I tell them that I understand their problems because I have come from that environment. I was from a very poor family, we had no money. I understand them, but don't let it be an excuse for not being successful. I think by having been there and self disclosing to the athletes, they know that I can identify with their problems. I believe that is the key, knowing that you care. One of the coaches I respect always said they don't care that you know, until they know that you care." (B5)

Therefore, it became evident that these elite level coaches communicated with their athletes on many different levels. On one level, the coaches sold a vision to their athletes, facilitated discussions on goal-setting and critiqued their performance. While on another level, the coaches acknowledged that their responsibilities extended beyond sport specific tasks onto helping their athletes with personal issues. The expert coach's involvement in the elite performer's life was not a new phenomenon. When Walton (1992) surveyed successful collegiate, Olympic and professional coaches, the results revealed that many high performance coaches were involved in their athlete's lives beyond sport related issues. Furthermore, manuals and literature devised for expert coaches including that of Orlick (1986b) and Partington (1988) explained that a coach's lack of involvement in the athlete's personal life was often times interpreted by the high performance athlete as a lack of caring. The expert basketball coaches in the current study recognized the importance of communicating with their athletes on a personal level, and their caring became part of a more complete coaching package at the elite level. With the coaches juggling interpersonal and professional roles, they came into conflict with their athletes more frequently, and as a result developed stronger conflict resolution skills.

Problem resolution. The coaches experienced conflicts with their athletes long before they began to work at the elite level. However, the coaches were now working with older, more independent athletes not encountered prior to working at the collegiate level. Therefore, when

the coaches formulated their problem resolution strategies, they were especially careful to focus on sport specific issues. They were also more prepared to respond to the questions of their athletes and explain their positions because they had an inordinate amount of previous successful coaching experiences to draw on.

- I try and pride myself on how I treat my athletes. The biggest thing I had to learn coming through coaching is whatever happens in our practice or game situation, I have to deal with and discipline them in a way that I am dealing with their behavior, and not with them as people. I am not mad at them as people, I am annoyed at their behavior. You have to convince them that at the end of a tough practice that it was to help them as athletes. You are not mad at somebody off the court, you are just trying to help them get better and dealing with them for whatever athletic behavior they display. (B3)
- This kid said to me, "you know I am not very happy. I am not playing very much and I think I can play better than some of the players being used." When I started to break her concerns down I said "wait a minute, you focused on three different topics and they were as follows: you are not happy with me, your playing time is most important to you, you think that you are better than some of the other guys on the team. Which one do you want to deal with first?" The point is how do you dissect these things and get people talking about the thing that really bother them. (B6)

The expert basketball coaches under study shared similar listening and conflict resolution skills to Partington's (1988) profile of the ideal coach. Partington explained that the most important communication skills for the expert coach included becoming a receptive listener, responding only to the issues, and questioning whether they understood the issues correctly. The basketball coaches in this paper conducted themselves similar to what Partington suggested, however, some of them also acknowledged that conflict resolution skills with athletes' were acquired skills learned throughout their early coaching careers. Others had strong conflict resolution skills even as early sport participants.

With their strong communication skills, the expert basketball coaches were able to motivate and direct their athletes toward realistic, attainable goals. Concurrently, the coaches emphasized the importance of open communication on sport and non-sport related issues. However, it was understood by the athletes that they were expected to commit themselves to their sport programs and develop their physical and mental skills.

#### The Development and Refinement of Team Athletes

Before being selected to a university team, the athletes had previously acquired some fundamental athletic skills. However, at the elite level, coaches provided their athletes with strategic and psychological skills not obtained at the high school level. The roles of the coaches included the refinement of the athletes' fundamental skills, while also teaching them to implement a strategic style of play to suit the playing style of the team. While the athletes' skills were being refined, they were introduced to some psychological tools either by sport psychologists or coaching staff. The athletes were therefore provided with a balance between physical and psychological skills. These tools were required in order for the athletes to perform to their potentials as individuals and team members.

- As practice time we do a lot of cross country running for 6 to 8 weeks in the fall. You can individualize it a little bit, even then you want to run as a team. It is a little different to individual sports, some people get to play a lot and some people don't. The fitness levels start stringing out again and you get differences in fitness ability, so you have to be aware of that. Some of them have to do extra training, but that can be demoralizing in a team situation. You have to balance all those things because sometimes what you get out of the extra training you might lose out of team building, and team morale. It is a real juggling act that way. (B3)
- Regarding the technical part, we work with them every day as individuals. In the morning I will go in the gym and work with certain players and my assistant coaches will go in and do the same. We break down their shooting, their ball control, and their passing. It is very much a break down kind of situation, but what we find is that we have to rebuild their skills

because they have got terrible habits. If you watch my team play you will see that they all shoot the same way, however they are not robots. (B5)

- What we do is provide a conceptual model for kids as to what it takes to be an elite athlete. We break down the physical component, the mental component, the technical, and the social components. We say these are the things that we believe are necessary to be an elite athlete, and these are the things that have to be done in order to improve each component. (B5)

There were many similarities when expert coaches from the current study were compared with the university coaches surveyed by Gould, Hodge, Peterson and Giannini (1989). Both samples of coaches identified the holistic nature of elite level coaching which included a balance between instruction drilling, sport psychology methods and physical conditioning. Gould et al. however, asked their coaches to rank the importance of sub-categories from the aforementioned variables. Due to the qualitative nature of the current basketball study, the coaches provided the researcher with the same variables as that of Gould et al.'s quantitative survey thus supporting their research.

With their higher level coaching assignments, the expert basketball coaches had increased responsibilities and expectations from administration and athletes alike. Beyond teaching the athletes sport skills, they were also spending inordinate amounts of time teaching their athletes life skills which included how to resolve problems, budget their time, balance sport and academics, and work with others in a team environment. Inevitably, the expert coaches had to also become experts in establishing a balance between their professional and personal parts of their lives.

#### The Expert Coach's Personal Life

At the elite level, coaching was more than job, it was a lifestyle. Due to the mounting responsibilities associated with their professions, some coaches had difficulties allocating time for personal relationships. Others experienced an inability to detach themselves from coaching hardships when they returned home each evening. All eventually married mates who understood

the difficulties associated with coaching. Often times coaches chose mates who were either coaches themselves, former elite level athletes, or sport psychologists.

- Sometimes when you are sitting around you tell them that the hardest part of this job is your family life. How do you leave your family for 6 months? You might be able to coach as good as I could. You might be smarter than I am in offensive defense. You may be a good tactician, but would you want to leave home for 4 months - I don't. (B1)
- I don't have any children and I am married to a man who lives and dies for basketball coaching and understands it. He is very supportive and we spend a lot of our time together focusing on basketball, so I don't have to sacrifice a lot and neither does my husband. A lot of women in coaching have a really tough time as it is very demanding on their families. It is a very strange lifestyle because you are traveling a lot and you are away weekends. You are usually coaching through the supper hour, and it is hard for women to stay in it. I have got a situation where my career is allowed to flourish. My life is tied to my coaching. (B3)
- Most of my social affiliations have nothing to do with basketball, they are in business and music, so I have a good balance. I just manage my time so I can do everything I want to. We have a young baby, and I block off every Wednesday morning and don't come in to coach. The baby and I will spend the morning together because some nights I get home and she is in bed. I drop her off at the baby-sitter at 11:30 and that is our time together. I just manage to balance everything. (B5)
- The down side of coaching is that I am married for the second time, fortunately my second marriage I married a coach, so she understood and bought into all my ridiculous work hours. We have no social life as a couple. We have lots of social life as individuals, so it is a strange thing, we hope to eventually remedy that situation. (B6)

The expert basketball coaches pointed out that elite level coaching positions were synonymous with long working hours, lots of travel and time away from their families.

Concurrently, the elite coaches had higher expectation levels to meet, both personally and from their employers. These pressures became more difficult with the progression through each

coaching stage. Inevitably, several of the coaches suffered marriage difficulties and regretted that their professional hardships were imposed on their families. Similarly, Zitzelberger's (1991) study on expert Canadian coaches found that due to long hours and time away from family, the coaches' personal relationships suffered instability, sometimes ending in divorce.

There were, however, examples of coaches who seemed contented with their personal lives. In those instances, the expert coaches were often times married to mates who worked in a related profession. These coaches shared their passion for basketball and coaching with their mates. Literature on stress management for expert coaches identified the importance of the family's support, especially during times where the coach tended to travel extensively (Taylor, 1992). The coaches in the current study were aware of the importance of family support. One coach felt unsupported, and as a result, remarried a mate who also was a professional elite level coach.

#### Concluding Remarks On National Elite Coaches

During the novice and developmental coaching stages, these professionals struggled to identify their personal coaching philosophies and knowledge. They eventually firmly conceptualized their coaching styles, and were hired on as provincial team and university level coaches. Their elite level positions were coupled with mounting responsibilities. The coaches recognized the importance of emphasizing a balance between successful team performances while also fostering the healthy personal development of the athletes in their care.

At the national elite level, most athletes continued to place sport as second priority to their academic responsibilities. Inevitably, the coaches realized that they had to sell their athletes on a team vision that would foster athlete commitment. Though they communicated their goals to the team at the beginning of the season, they also facilitated an environment where their athletes felt an involvement in the goal-setting process. Once athletes bought into seasonal objectives, they were developed and refined to suit team strategies.

With the increase in coaching responsibilities, many coaches realized that their occupations strained, or at very least, placed major constraints on their personal lives. Some experienced marital trouble, and eventually remarried. Others chose mates that were either coaches, former

athletes, or sport psychologists. Only one of six coaches remained with a mate who was not professionally interested in coaching. Thus, most of the elite level coaches were married to people who understood the occupational drawbacks of high performance coaching.

### International Elite Coaching

#### Transition to International Elite Coaching

Five of six elite level coaches eventually achieved positions as coaches at the international level. From those selected to become international coaches, two were previously members of national basketball teams while a third was long listed to a national basketball team. Though reasons for upward mobility were not clearly stated, all coaches had creditable performance results as university level coaches prior to ever attaining their positions with national men's and women's basketball teams.

- I think we were in a fortunate situation because there are a lot of things driving this program. There was a lot of tradition, the people who were leaders in their 4th and 5th years were here as the young ones when we won national championships. We have a lot of perpetuity; deep down in the back of everyone's minds they want to win a national championships. (B3)
- We ended up playing 14 games against division I teams and winning 7 on their court. That established a real level of confidence in the players and it enhanced my moments as a coach because that was the best level that we could play in intercollegiate competition. We played division I teams, some of which were ranked in the top 20 in the U.S. and we held our own, never got blown out, with all Canadian players. That was a terrific thing to experience. (B4)
- When I got the opportunity to coach the national women's team, I had 8 years in high school and 5 or 6 years of university coaching experience. I was very successful at all times, winning and producing athletes and programs. People were applauding and I was doing a crackerjack job back then. I got this opportunity to coach the national women's team and I thought this was an opportunity to do something really ideal. (B6)

There were obvious changes in coaching philosophy when the two elite stages were compared, however these discrepancies were not to be confused with an improvement in the coaches' professional abilities. Some chose to further emphasize the importance of performance results, whereas others opted to continue coaching at universities and emphasized the importance of a balance between sport, academics and social life. Four of the five coaches who eventually coached national teams competed as elite level basketball players before they became basketball coaches whereas the remaining coach had little or no experience with high performance basketball before starting a professional careers.

When expert gymnastics coaches were interviewed in previous research conducted by Côté (1993), they cited the importance of previous athletic sport specific experiences as a prerequisite to coaching at the highest level. Other studies of expert team coaches including that of Salmela (1994a) argued that early sport specific athletic experiences were not essential to becoming an expert coach. The current study, however, did find a direct relation between elite athletic and coaching careers in basketball for all but one coach. Beyond early athletic experiences, those who opted to work with international teams also had distinct coaching methods when working with international level athletes.

### Working With Athletes

At the international level, coaches continued to refine the skills of their athletes, while also communicating with their athletes on issues that extended beyond sport. However, the emphasis at this level was on performance results. As a result, the coaches emphasized the importance of performance oriented goals, formalized team building exercises facilitating cohesion, as well as skill refinement exercises to polish and maintain previously acquired skills.

Leadership style. At the national elite level, the experts' coaching content and processes were a direct result of earlier athletic and coaching experiences. However, at the international elite coaching level, due to high expectation levels from administrative staff, media and the public, coaches became intolerant of poor performance. Therefore, the coaches emphasized the significance of successful performance results. This increase in task orientation was at the

forefront of coaching philosophies. Though the coaches were still concerned with developing well rounded contented athletes, their primary objectives were to produce successful performance results at international competitions.

- We understand now that respect is hard to come by. If somebody says that a person is not a good basketball player but I really respect him, it means I like him. The problem is if I am the coach and you are the player, you have a responsibility but mostly to yourself. I have a responsibility to myself, you, and my employers whomever they might be. (B1)
- When I am coaching, I am perceptive, sensitive to peoples situations, and other stresses they are under. I try to be positive most of the time. That is always something that coaches are working towards. I wouldn't say that I am always positive, I tend sometimes to be negative and I don't like it. I have high expectations of work ethic. I expect self motivation from my athletes and when it is not there I get frustrated. (B3)
- To me the area that we overlook in coaching is that you're supposed to be positive with everyone - only positive reinforcement will work. Well, life's not like that. Life is full of all kinds of brutal experiences. You can be the most positive person in the world but you'd better be prepared for some real intense pressure, pressure that you don't even know exists. Much of the pressure is self-imposed by your competitiveness, but also in dealing, coping and maintaining your focus. It's not easy to maintain your standards, while remaining human, to create an environment where everyone is trying to excel, where they are trying to achieve and do their very best. (B4)
- I don't think I will ever handle losses very well because I have always been in the mode of competing. When I make mistakes or when I don't do well or when I know that my product didn't do well because of some things that I didn't do well, it makes me feel badly. I am supposed to be in the position of creating excellence. (B6)

As stated previously, the coaches revised their leadership styles when they worked at the international level. There was a tacit understanding between coach and athletes that training and international competitions would not always be enjoyable experiences. The expert coaches were

concerned that the pressures experienced by their athletes at the highest competition levels would serve as motivational constraints similar to the hypothesis of Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993). The expert coaches learned that there were opportune times to both challenge and nurture their athletes, and that timing was everything.

- I think your basic ethics and values really help with leadership. You try to be a good role model and make sure that the athletes know you are in the public eye. To the athletes you are always trying to be principled. Therefore, whatever decision you make or feedback you give, you must be fair. Base it on your personal principles and values and ethics, then they will respect how you are dealing with them as people. In any game or competitive situation, if your basic ethical values are solid then your behavior and your attitudes will always come forth. (B3)
- I'm tempering drive with realism and some compassion and feel for the athlete. When you're working with athletes you have to make that experience an enjoyable one. Basically, some of it is not enjoyable. People enjoy performing close to their maximum. The key is to be able to challenge these people and get them to go on a journey with you to someplace that they've never been, and make that journey a rewarding experience. Most athletes who have gone through a tremendously demanding experience physically and mentally in training and in preparation sometimes don't like it. But, when they look back on it, they should place tremendous value on it, as it does a lot to shape their character and their will in other areas. (B4)
- My obligation, especially in the later years, was to make sure that they really had a comfortable feeling when they were in the women's locker room before a competition. (B6)

Despite emphasizing the importance of winning performances, two of the expert basketball coaches mentioned the importance of having fun with their athletes and facilitating enjoyable learning environments even at the international level. They believed that contented athletes performed closer to their potentials than did athletes not deriving enjoyment from their learning experiences; a position supported by Orlick and Partington (1986) as well as Partington (1988).

When Orlick and Partington studied the mental attributes of internationally successful Canadian athletes, they found that most Olympic medallists identified enjoyment as a key factor leading to peak performance. Similarly, the coaches from the present study wanted to make sport experiences enjoyable, and at the same time, effectively communicated their expectations to their athletes. However, they often recognized that an inability to also facilitate positive performance outcomes inevitably placed both the coach's and athlete's positions in jeopardy.

Communication. Prior to working at the international elite level, the selected basketball coaches tried to balance the creation of a positive experience for their athletes with athletic skill development and refinement. At the lower coaching levels, there was an awareness that many athletes had no interest in competing on a national team. Therefore, earlier expectation levels were not as demanding, and the communication style was positive and reassuring. Prior to the international level, coaches rarely spoke of benching or cutting their athletes from the team due to shoddy performances. At the international level, there was an unspoken understanding among the athletes and support staff that shoddy performances from uncommitted athletes were not tolerated. The coaches verbalized these standards and high expectations to their athletes continuously.

- Every once in a while, not often, we felt we didn't get maximum efforts from the players. If there was 40 minutes left of practice in scrimmage, we would call everybody in and always hold hands. We would remind them that if they had saved anything they were wasting their time. Don't save anything, don't anticipate what is going to happen because one of our things is to always give everything we have. (B1)
- I usually have a good system of graduating and keeping young people coming in. So, my young players are generally accepting to the fact that they have years ahead of them to work. The problem is when you get older players who aren't playing very much. It can really upset the whole team chemistry if some older players are unhappy. Those individuals who aren't as good, you tell them what they have to do to be as good as the better players. You tell them how they have to work, and to put in extra time. If they are unhappy you just

tell them what they have got to get done: if they get this done, then they have got a chance to play, if not, they have no chance of playing. (B3)

- A good coach is very intolerant of less than good performance. That doesn't necessarily mean that you're riding them all the time, but over time they will know what level of effort, commitment and performance you expect, and what level meets your approval. (B4)
- When we come out here, we should try to perform in a way that we have got a chance to win. Eventually I am going to talk to you about your skills, the mistakes you are making and about how we can win. Before we get there however, we have got to get you to understand that you must repeat the same stuff over and over again. The next two weeks in which we have five games, you are going to find you are uncomfortable because we are going to ask you to get it done or put in somebody else that will get it done. I am trying to do something that will lead to winning and will set a format for winning. (B6)

Therefore the most obvious difference when comparing the national and international elite coaching levels was a difference in the expectation levels of the expert coaches. The international level experts were caught between demanding higher expectations from their athletes and an understanding that their expectations were exceedingly difficult to meet. When the discrepancy in the expectation levels of Bloom's (1985) middle and Olympic swimming coaches are compared with that of the present study's national and international elite level coaches, the findings were the same. There were few differences in the instructional methods of both levels of high performance coaches, however the practices at the international level were more intensive and reflected the higher expectation levels of international level sport.

With an increase in demands and more accountability for performance outcomes placed on the athletes, the international level coaches knew that their athletes had to be completely committed to the team's vision. Similar to the national elite coaching level, athlete input was welcomed during discussion periods. However, at the international elite level, the coaches were more tolerant of their athletes voicing their opinions on coaching strategies and team visions similar to Bloom's findings on Olympic swimmers. This was due to the players having already

accumulated vast amounts of experiential knowledge and credibility as high level competitors. This in turn changed the coach athlete relationship to one of mutual respect with international coaches and their athletes, together striving for performance excellence.

- As far as the technical aspects we used in practice, we didn't tell everybody what we were going to do in practice. I think our athletes are familiar as to the tone of the practice. As to what we are specifically going to do, I think a little bit of mystery is nice. They know they are going to get something new once in a while, a little wrinkle. They also know also that they are going to have a lot of input into team strategies. If it is uncomfortable for us, but we are going to listen. (B1)
- To demonstrate leadership in coaching, I think it is exactly the same in business or sport. You have to communicate a vision of what is possible in your field and it has to be consistent and translated into a philosophy that you espouse. Then you have to be able to demonstrate your high level of commitment. You have to demonstrate the technical expertise to put a foundation in place which will allow you to approach greatness and a high standard in your pursuit. (B4)
- As I got better and more professional, I knew that my decisions became more palatable. My delivery made it much more palatable, so there was compliance in there rather than a challenge. I think that is really an important criteria. (B6)

At the international elite level, the importance of open and clear communication between coach and athlete was essential. The buying in process of the team was equated with what Riley (1993) termed the team covenant. Inevitably, the coaches required their athletes to buy into the team's philosophy, and their ability to sell the athletes on the big picture determined the team's commitment to the goal-setting process.

Goal-setting through communication. The national team coaches all described goal-setting as central to the team building process. Their team visions were unique in that there were explicit goals, and these were often process oriented. However, there was also an unstated understanding between the coaching staff and team members that the season's performance results were the

team's most important measure of success or failure. The goal-setting process began with seasonal objectives immediately after team selection. Short-term goals were then devised to provide the team with a direction and a means of evaluating short-term progress.

Some coaches aspired to upgrade the quality of team members, others spoke of providing the athletes they had with the best tools possible to compete successfully at the international level. However, the coaches were united in their view that they have the ultimate say on the goals that were set for their teams. Though they allowed their athletes to feel involved in the goal-setting process, the coaches were aware that they were most accountable for performance results.

- During the time I spend with the team, every decision I make is not about the player personally, and it is not about the dream we have for this team, it is about the athlete and the teams goals. I think leaders have to make very tough decisions because they have to consider at least those two points, where are we, what are our goals and ambitions and dreams and where you fit in. (B1)
- Through the years, we have small goals, so they are not looking way down the road. What I say is you have got those goals, that is the easy part. The strategies for reaching those goals is the tough part. (B3)
- No matter what goes on, the goals that are finally rationalized are the coaches goals. That person is probably the most loyal person to the team because the team's success is his success. The coach has this ability to modify them by saying "those are all good goals, but remember we are in the Olympics." Whatever goals the kids take will be brought into position in a very logical and rational fashion, but they end up being the coaches goals. (B6)

In the novice and developmental coaching stages, the experts often times took the athlete's well being into account when they determined seasonal objectives. At the international level, the expert coaches frequently only assessed the performances of their athletes, and whether their athletes were contributing to or detracting from the team's objectives. The coaches evaluated their athletes on their immediate ability to improve the team's performance. This policy was

mirrored by that of Scotty Bowman, six time Stanley Cup winning coach in professional hockey. Bowman was known to leave players off of starting rosters for an important game due to a shoddy performance in the previous game (Swift, 1993). Both Bowman and the international level basketball coaches interviewed arrived at their decisions by evaluating how each decision effected performance outcome. However, there was one distinct difference from Bowman's professional approach to that of the international coaches of amateur sport in the present study: the elite basketball coaches maintained strong interpersonal ties with their athletes similar to former great Olympic coach Doc Counsilman (Walton, 1992).

Communicating with athletes on issues other than sport. The coaches were sensitized to the underlying pressures of successful performance outcomes. However, they continued to apply their previously learned interpersonal skills with the athletes on and off the court. There was a recognition that at the national team level, the coaches had to provide their athletes with a listening ear in order to enhance their performance. The coaches understood that athletes performed at their best when they had access to an empathetic listener to share their concerns with.

- I figured that every day I had to spend some time with you one on one, and it is very hard to do. It is very hard to do with the team, we always figured we had about 20 people. I had to spend time with the doctor, the trainer, the best player, the worst player, anybody who was in our little world. (B1)
- Having the opportunity that these kids were totally committed and being in the environment where they were for 24 hours a day for 6 months that they would be in the program, I would help them with their fitness, diets, and rest. When they had downers mentally and emotionally, I would give them time to regroup instead of just saying "see you tomorrow and you had better be regrouped." (B6)

Therefore, the expert coaches were able to combine their abilities to listen to and motivate their athletes with more pragmatic decisions that produced successful performance results.

Similar to the world class coaches cited by Bloom (1985) and Walton (1992), even though the

experts emphasized performance results, the international basketball coaches also encouraged honest two way communication from their athletes. Inevitably, as the athletes were allowed to share their views with their coaches, a difference in opinion between the two sometimes occurred. According to Orlick (1990), the difference between coach and athletes was part of each national team's environment, however, the resolution skills of national team coaches and their athletes would either enhance or detract from levels of team cohesion.

Problem resolution. There was very little difference between problem resolution skills required at the national elite level and the international elite level. The coaches were interested in working out differences with their athletes, but insisted on being aware of the subject matter prior to the meetings. Similar to the national elite coaching level, there was continuing evidence that the coaches had the final say on altercations with their team members, however, the athletes were provided with more opportunity to vent their feelings.

- This kid whose father wrote me a nasty letter showed up at training camp the next year. I said to him "loosen up, you are here, you have got a tryout game, you have got the same chance as everybody else on this team." At that time he was in my room and I really skinned his knees about something. Later, the same guy said to me in the dorms "how are you doing coach?" I said "dynamite." The kid said to me "I can't believe that, I know you have got to feel as bad as I am, yet you are happy." I replied that I felt good because the disagreement was over with, and we were going to work things out. (B1)
- Leadership can be taught to some degree. You have got a lot of other factors weighing in there, like how they were brought up, their value system, as well as communication skills. Perceiving when there are problems, of understanding why, and trying to read a situation before it becomes a problem. Some people are better than others at that. I think conflict resolution can be taught like just learning how to behave in different situations. (B3)
- I always say look we need to talk or maybe you should come in and see me. A player will say, "I have to see you about something, its important." I would say "Fine, just give me the topic so I am ready because I always give you the topics so you can be ready." Try to get

these people to come in so that their concerns do not get built up which leads to trouble and an eventual loss of control. I did that earlier on and it was no good. (B6)

The coach's spoke of the importance of communication skills in order to sell a team's vision, maintain open honest relationships with their athletes and resolve team problems.

Communication, therefore, became a means of facilitating a functional training and a team environment where the athletes could compete to their full potential. Ultimately, the central function of the international level coaches was to refine the mental and physical skills of their athletes to compete to their potential, a view reaffirmed by Orlick (1986b).

The skill refinement of team athletes. At the international elite level, skill refinement included more than traditional physical skill refinement. With the allocation of administrative responsibilities to other support staff, these coaches engaged intentionally in detailed skill refinement on several different levels. On one level, they polished the individual's skills, while they also focused on the performance level of the team as a whole. At the international level, skill refinement extended beyond traditional physical skill acquisition. Athletes were also introduced to focusing skills, long distance travel strategies and energy conservation on and off the court.

- There are many components of the athlete's life we should be aware of. If they are having trouble at home or if they are having trouble in school, these will detract from performance. I don't want them worried about these things when they are in this gym. We tell people that they have to jump back and forth whether they like it or not. As soon as they get to that point, they can concentrate on basketball. (B1)
- Leading up to Seoul Olympics in 1988, part of our training was to get used to going across the Pacific, so we went to China for a while because Korea wouldn't let us in. Then we came back and went home for a while. Before we went to the Olympics in Korea, we had been in Korea twice and seen numerous movies of Korea. We wanted to know what it was going to be like driving down those streets. (B1)
- We have to know what the body is capable of doing and the physical parameters the we have got to expand to get there. In the process of doing that, you have to develop

tremendous concentration. It's a process by which you have to place standards that have to be met. They won't be easy standards, they'll be makeable, but if you are close to working to capacity then you have to take your players to those ends fairly regularly in their preparation. (B4)

- When we got into elite basketball, we started getting into energy conservation. I think that at the inter- collegiate level we might have done less of it than I did with the national team. With the national team we addressed this in detail, but that required a lot of time on the floor. We would standardize the way we were going to travel and make sure that we understood traveling and what it did to you. (B6)

The international level basketball coaches taught and refined their athletes in a variety of areas including mental focusing and the ability to cope with extreme physical conditions. During the present study, the coaches rarely discussed refining the basketball skills of their athletes. Similarly, Orlick (1990) discussed the preparation skills of Chinese and Indonesian badminton players, and it was found that the Asian badminton coaches also pushed their athletes to their physical and mental limits in training. Regardless of the nation or sport, training also extended beyond physical exertion to a team's familiarization of extreme changes in temperature, long distance travel and changes of diet. However, in basketball, the international coaches recognized that physical training and arduous journeys were not enough to create a tight knit team.

Team building and cohesion. When the expert coaches worked with their athletes, they understood that the combination of all team building components would lead to a well prepared team. A second aim was to facilitate an environment and feeling among the players that added to their athletic abilities. Though all athletes were regarded as individually talented, coaches acknowledged that the talent of individual athletes was not enough to compete successfully as a team at an international level. Therefore, through both formal and informal methods, the coaches fostered an environment throughout the years where teams became tight knit groups of players committed to shared objectives.

- As soon as the players are ready, we put our hands together and we go out. We don't talk about winning, we talk about playing our best and playing for the moment. We don't talk about winning it becomes the by-product of what we do. We are having fun, this is what we practiced hard for, let's go out and enjoy ourselves and each other. (B1)
- Conceiving and preparing the notion of team; your ultimate goal is to take the 15 people that you have and create more with it than one would expect you could. Whether that's your budget, human resources, staff, or your talent. If you've done a successful job as a coach, then some of the parts always look much better than what you thought you could have done with them on a talent level. But you have to take the talent that you have and organize it in such a way that it comes together in an extremely complementary fashion. (B4)

- One of the things that I always dealt with is team cohesion. Team cohesion is so much a part of the inside group rather than the support group. I don't know how, did I try to set the stage, did I push the stage, did I back off and let it develop? Yes, I did all three of those. Did I do it with the right timing? By the way timing was the most important thing. (B6)

At both the national and international elite coaching levels, the expert basketball coaches identified team building as one of their primary tasks. However, at the international level, the basketball coaches knew that they had to spend inordinate amounts of time to build cohesive teams in order to compete against the world's best. The international level coaches understood that they had to create a climate among team members whereby the athletes and coaching staff became a tight knit group. There was also a recognition that team building was a lengthy procedure, and that coaches had to select their teams allowing enough time for the athletes to become a cohesive, and tactically compatible team. These findings were mirrored by the research of Bell (1985) and Schinke, Draper and Salmela (1994) who recognized the importance of commencing the team building process long before competitive tournaments were introduced. An ability to work with their athletes and foster a cohesive, tactically well prepared team determined varying levels of international level success for the expert coaches at this level.

### Concluding Remarks on International Elite Coaches

Those coaches who worked at the international team level inevitably had to adapt their coaching styles to work with international caliber athletes. Where at the lower levels the coaches emphasized the acquisition of new skills, as national team coaches they focused on refining already learned skills with the objective of performing them at the highest level in international competition. There was evidence that the coaches emphasized performance as the primary objective. Athletes were expected to perform at the highest level continuously. Coaches constantly verbalized to their athletes the standards they were expected to achieve. The coaches' and athletes' inability to produce high level results both in practice and competition threatened their respective positions as members of national teams. This was a phenomena not evident at the lower coaching levels.

Nonetheless, the basketball coaches recognized and implemented the interpersonal skills they acquired previous to becoming international level coaches. They also allocated inordinate amounts of time off the court in order to speak with their athletes on a personal level. There was an understanding that even at the highest performance levels, the athletes required caring, empathetic coaches. Thus, even at the international level, relationships between the coaches and their athletes either enhanced or detracted from performance results.

### Overview of the Results and Future Directions for Research

The purpose of the present in-depth qualitative analysis were twofold: on one level, the present study identified and explained the athletic and career markers of expert basketball coaches. On a second level, the paper provided an understanding of the lessons learned at each demarcation stage, and also highlighted the evolution of their coaching philosophies when working with athletes. The next section will provide a synopsis of the general findings of this research along with some recommendations for future research.

### The Career Markers of Elite Basketball Coaches

Previous literature on expert development and career demarcation looked at either the development of athletes (Bloom, 1985), teachers (Berliner, 1988) or studied the development of

coaches commencing with first coaching positions (Draper, Salmela & Desjardins, 1994; Salmela, 1994a; 1994c). The present study distinguished itself from its predecessors because it took into account that experiences from both athletic and coaching careers ultimately affected expert coaching methods. When information was elicited from the expert basketball coaches, all emphasized that they began acquiring their coaching methods and philosophies as children, and to the present day, continued to revise and improve their methods and approaches when working with elite level athletes.

During the present study, three athletic stages were identified in the development of the expert basketball coaches. Early sport participation began with introductions to sport and ended with the athlete becoming either a university or semi-professional level athlete. Eventually all the expert coaches became elite level athletes, however, only four of six competed as basketball players. Of the elite basketball players, only three were invited to try out for a national basketball team, and only two were selected as international level performers. Therefore, in hindsight it was understood by the coaches that being an international level athlete was not a requirement for becoming an expert coach (Salmela, 1994a). Also, there were distinct differences among the coaches during their development as athletes.

The lessons gained from the athletic stages were immense. As early sport participants, the coaches observed their coaches, and learned how to inspire or discourage developing athletes while they also learned the fundamental skills of their sport. Concurrently, the coaches also learned the importance of setting high goals for themselves and striving to reach those goals. Due to athletic success as early sport participants, the present coaches eventually tried out for university or semi-professional teams, and all gained entry into higher level sport. Lessons acquired at the elite stage also took place on several different levels, but differed from early sport lessons. Through the guidance of strong coaching, these eventual experts were provided with the opportunity to refine their athletic skills while they also gained a better understanding of how to work with their teammates. In fact, all the coaches cited elite athletic experiences as their first encounter with team building strategies which included formalized goal-setting. Those who

became international elite level athletes already had a formalized system of play, and found that international level athletic experiences provided them with an early understanding of the pressures associated with international level training procedures and competitive pressures.

The transition to coaching was a relatively smooth occurrence for the interviewed expert coaches. Those sampled had an initial love for sport from their childhood similar to Bloom's (1985) developing athletes, and became committed to sport either during their athletic or early coaching careers. Some coaches knew they were going to be coaches as early sport participants. Others did not commit to becoming professional coaches until they were coaching at the developmental level. Regardless, when the athletic and career paths of the experts were analyzed, coaching appeared as an obvious decision for all coaches.

During the novice and developmental coaching stages, these aspiring professionals continued to gain their knowledge and coaching appointments in different ways. Some were introduced to coaching by accepting a player - assistant coach's role, while others became involved with coaching in either a public school or recreational setting. Those who were players - coaches adopted a lead by example method and served as facilitators of athlete and coach communication. Others had no previous knowledge of basketball before becoming novice level coaches, and therefore struggled and gained a fundamental understanding of basketball. Several coaches had strong interpersonal skills when dealing with athletes, where others initially experienced difficulty communicating with their athletes.

For all coaches, the developmental stage was the first position which included formalized coaching either at specialized sport camps, high schools or at universities on a part-time basis. Due to a high level of commitment, the developmental coaches sought applied and theoretical guidance from university courses, elite level mentor coaches, or both while they continued to coach. As developmental coaches, those sampled also took the competitive results of their teams very seriously, and as a result, began to set training guidelines for their team members. Therefore, during this stage coaches understood that they had to establish team rules and impose the final say on team conduct if they wanted their teams to perform to potential.

Due to high levels of success at the developmental level, all the coaches eventually decided to seek more challenging coaching positions with provincial and university teams. The transition to elite coaching came naturally to all those sampled, because as they put it, they all had acquired formalized coaching methods and philosophies through previous coaching and athletic experiences. At the national elite level, the coaches focused their energies on selecting, motivating and preparing their teams for national level intra-university competitions. However, all the coaches recognized that their responsibilities extended beyond producing athletes; they were also teaching team members fundamental life skills which included conflict resolution, time management and the balance between academic and sport responsibilities. Therefore, it was apparent that despite differences during earlier athletic and coaching levels, by the national elite coaching level all had similar formalized coaching methods.

All the coaches were successful at the varsity level, and five eventually became international level coaches. The most noticeable differentiation between the national and international level coaching was that at the international elite level, coaches made a conscious decision to prioritize performance outcome as their most important coaching mandate. The coach who opted to remain a university coaches was equally successful at the collegiate level to the international level coaches, but allowed athletes to establish a balance between sport and other life interests. The difference in the coaches' competitive orientations therefore helped determine those who applied for international level positions from the coach who chose not to.

#### Directions for Future Research

Reflecting on the research of Gould, Giannini, Krane & Hodge (1990), there was convincing evidence of a need for further research on elite level coaches. The present analysis on the professional development of expert Canadian coaches, similar to the previous work of Salmela (1994a; 1994c) as well as that of Salmela, Draper and Desjardins (1994) provided a better understanding on how coaches have developed over time. There was an understanding that coaches did not develop in a vacuum; they were nurtured in special learning environments (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Salmela, 1994b). Furthermore, similar to the findings

of Côté, Salmela and Russell (1995b), the current study acknowledged that expert coaches employed specific procedures when working with athletes at the elite levels.

Possible directions for future research on coaching development and expertise could explore whether expertise in coaching is exclusive to the elite level, or whether there are expert novice and developmental coaches capable of systematically providing a feeder system of athletes for expert coaches. Should there be expert coaches at all the levels defined by the present study, inevitably future research should examine their coaching methods. Ultimately, an understanding of coaching expertise at all levels would help improve and systematize coaching certification programs and produce competent and contented athletes and coaches at all levels.

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## Appendix A

The Development of Individual Coaches - A SynopsisCoach B1

The coach was first introduced to a variety of different sports. Due to a diversity of sport interests, initial lessons were learned from coaches across disciplines. More often than not, the lessons acquired from influential coaches were based on how not to communicate and treat future athletes. There were also instances where the coach learned the importance of clear and concise communication skills. Some of the coaches encountered lacked theoretical knowledge of the sports they taught. The coach was determined to gain both theoretical and applied education's.

Eventually, there was a transition from diffused sport involvement to a focus on basketball. As an athlete, this individual played at the elite level. Once elite level sport was experienced, the athlete became hooked by the sport. While involved in sport as an athlete, the eventual coach chose to become a professional. Both parents and peers supported the eventual coach to pursue coaching interests.

Novice coaching experiences were at primary schools. Here, the coach taught numerous sports while also teaching academic curricula. During novice coaching, the individual was also able to gain experience working with children in a recreational setting. Throughout this stage, coach B1 continued to look for an eventual high school position where competitive sport could be coached. It became evident to the coach that the orientation at the early coaching level was on teaching skills. While teaching at the primary school level, the coach sought a position with a competitive high school team. A desire to coach at the competitive level thus became the driving force for a higher level coaching position.

During the developmental coaching stage, the coach worked at several different high schools. Professional appointments always permitted upward mobility to more prestigious schools with better sport programs. There was a strong evidence of a crystallized general coaching philosophy. In specific, the athletes were mentored both on and off the court. The coach became committed to helping athletes graduate from high school, and encouraged them to

continue their education's at the university or college level. At this stage, the coach had two coaching mentors who were able to guide the development of the coaches' conceptual understanding of basketball. The coach was concurrently enrolled in a university physical education program, first at the undergraduate level, then at the graduate level.

Eventually, the coach applied to coach at the university level. The position was different from previous ones in that responsibilities centered on coaching one basketball team. Initially, the coach felt unprepared to coach at the elite level. There was an initial doubt to whether the coach would last one season at the elite level. Eventually, the coach achieved high levels of success. Similar to high school positions, the coach continued to upgrade coaching locations. High level positions were offered to the coach, and eventually, there were numerous prestigious university and international employment options from which to choose.

Finally, the coach applied for a national basketball team coaching position. Though the application was stumbled on by chance, the individual was immediately hired. The coach immediately looked after the financial concerns of the athletes before initiating teaching responsibilities. High levels of success followed, where the coach instilled in players the importance of team cohesion. Athletes were able to communicate with the coach on a personal level daily. There was a tacit understanding by the coach and support staff that athletes would only perform to potential when they were in an open and supportive environment. Though the coach believed in a comfortable sport environment, the baseline of the coaching philosophy was performance. It thus became clear that athletes were expected to perform at a high level continuously.

### Coach B2

This coach was initially introduced to a sport other than basketball. The first sport experience was a difficult but rewarding one for this coach. Early coaches physically drove this individual, and key lessons were learned as a result. There was a recognition that physical limits were meant to be extended, and no challenges were insurmountable. Results at competitions

provided the eventual coach with a first taste of regional success. Moreover, there was a recognition that tremendous sacrifice had to be paid in order to succeed in sport and life.

Eventually, the individual became a member of a university sport team. Though there was no mention of university coaches, important lessons were acquired. During the first year on the team, the team as a whole finished dead last in its division. Over the course of the coach's four year athletic involvement, the team matured into a successful team. From this experience, the eventual coach was able to identify the difference between how to prepare teams for winning results and also how to avoid sub-par performances.

Novice coaching responsibilities were accepted as part of playing responsibilities while in the senior year at university. The coaching staff and fellow athletes respected and accepted criticism from this person due to a visible work ethic and commitment to the well being of the team. From these early lessons, the novice coach recognized the importance of congruency between the instruction delivered and the behavior exhibited to the team. Concurrently, the coach became involved in basketball, playing in a city league.

During the development stage, the coach taught academics and basketball at the high school level. Coaching responsibilities were shared with a fellow professor. Both coaches lacked theoretical knowledge, and therefore detracted from the performance of their athletes. During competition, the coaches became over activated, and this also detracted away from performance results. Inevitably, the coach recognized the coaching inadequacies being committed, and remedied them. As the coach accumulated knowledge, coaching responsibilities were assumed single handed. At the same time, the coach simultaneously attended basketball clinics, read theoretical basketball books, joined coaching fraternities, and became involved with a mentor coach. The mentor was coaching at the university level, and provided the developing coach with a stronger understanding of athlete skill acquisition and applied competition strategies. Also of note, the coach chose not to replicate some of the mentor coach's philosophical views. The high school experience was a successful one for this coach, and eventually, an invitation was extended to coach a regional team at the provincial level.

Due to a successful record at the high school and regional level, the coach was approached to share provincial team coaching responsibilities with another coach. When the mentor chose not to return to the university, the coach applied for the job and was hired. The approach to working with athletes was a synopsis of previous experiences gained as a former athlete, and as a developing coach. The coaching approach was a balance between a strong work ethic, the ability to extend the limits of others, provide them with clear communication, and be available to them on and off the court as an empathetic listener.

### Coach B3

This coach was committed to basketball from first sport experiences onwards. The coach's early sport environment was conducive to athletic development. Family members played basketball with this person daily because the family placed a basketball net on the driveway outside their house. The potential coach practiced continuously rain or shine, and also envisioned playing against other players at an elite level. Basketball was a passion, and no one could deter this person from practicing at every spare moment. During high school, this person was selected to the basketball team. There was evidence of high levels of athletic potential, however this individual emphasized the significance of commitment and motivation in childhood years.

It was this potential that eventually facilitated a position on a university team while person B3 studied physical education at the same time. During university, the coach met one of two eventual mentors. The mentor worked the athlete and other team mates until they eventually became national university champions. At this level, the eventual coach learned the importance of selecting a committed core of players, and refining them by paying attention to meticulous details during practices and competitions. By observing the mentor coach, B3 learned the importance of developing an uncompromising standard of performance excellence from athletes.

Eventually, the athlete became the best performer on each university teams played for. As a result, the player was at the same time selected as a member of the national basketball team. The goal to compete at the highest amateur level was therefore obtained. This confirmed the importance of setting high goals, and then striving for them.

The introduction to coaching was similar to coach B2. First coaching experiences occurred while B3 was still competing in university. The coach was respected by coaching staff and team mates due to a balance between athletic potential and interpersonal skills. During this stage, the coach met the second of mentor coaches. The individual was fortunate to have both master coaches share coaching responsibilities. At this stage, valuable lessons were learned. The novice coach acted as a liaison between coaching staff and athletes. From this experience, the individual understood the importance of clear lines in athlete - coach communication. Whenever there were problems, the coach helped resolve differences, and therefore contributed to higher levels of team cohesion.

Little was said about the developmental coaching stage as it was an unpleasant time for the coach. It was at this stage that an athletic injury discontinued athletic participation in international level competition. The developing coach married a fellow elite level coach, and they relocated. It was at this stage that the individual applied for a part time coaching position at a university. The individual was hired on a trial basis, this eventually materialized into a full time elite level position. At this stage, the coach committed to coaching as a profession. There was the realization that love of basketball extended beyond a playing career to the sport in general. There was no better way to remain in basketball other than to coach.

The pressures of national elite level coaching were not a difficult transition for this individual. Previous lessons on communication, motivation, team cohesion and goal setting were combined and delivered to the athletes. The aforementioned variables were a successful combination, and as a result, they won several national championships. Inevitably, the coach was aware of what it took to succeed in competition prior to coaching at the elite level. It was just a matter of combining knowledge into a coaching philosophy, and then applying already evident interpersonal skills in order to sell athletes on a team vision.

After several years of successful full time university coaching, this individual was appointed to coach at the international level. The year that the data for this project was gathered, coach B3

was just recently appointed to coach a national team. Due to the youth of this coach, one cannot gain a full understanding of international level coaching philosophy yet.

#### Coach B4

This coach began playing basketball from first sport experience onwards. Due to this persons early community resources, there was an immediate access to basketball. Though the parents were not described as sport-minded, they instilled this individual with motivational skills and commitment. Both attributes were to be prevalent in both playing and coaching careers. The individual played on the high school basketball team. While in high school, the eventual coach met a mentor who had a substantial influence on playing and coaching philosophies. At this level, the individual was part of a team which won a provincial championship. Being from a small community, there was a recognition that commitment and deliberate practice were more important in order to overcome difficult odds in competitive outcomes.

Due to solid fundamental coaching in youth, the individual was selected as a member of a university team while studying physical education. At the time, the eventual coach met another coach who provided insights on how to remain composed in difficult competitive situations. This was a difficult lesson to learn, but a fundamental one for this future coach. At the time, the individual knew that coaching was to be the chosen professional career. No other profession avenues were considered let alone explored.

The coach did not elaborate on novice coaching experiences, however there was mention of coaching in a children's summer camp. This experience was categorized as developmental because all junior athletes being coached were at a competitive level, and were aspiring basketball players. The developing coach extracted a significant lesson at this stage which would direct lifelong coaching philosophy. The coach was working with Canadian athletes in an American coaching environment. The coach learned the importance of being exposed to the more difficult competition prevalent in the United States. The coach also learned the importance of fostering mental toughness in all developing athletes.

Invariably, when the coach was hired at universities, one of the visions set for the teams was to compete successfully against American Division I Teams. This coach was able to compete successfully against most American teams, and won the National University Championships numerous times throughout the university career. Coach B3 was fortunate that a former mentor returned to gain a better theoretical understanding of physical education. Both coaches shared the coaching responsibilities, and both studied motor learning at the graduate level. It was evident that early athletic and coaching experiences were combined into a formalized coaching philosophy. The coach instilled in the athletes a will to compete at their best, and succeed against superior teams, an attribute acquired during early athletic experiences. Similar to early athletic and coaching experiences, there was little said about interpersonal relations with athletes beyond team meetings. One example cited was the pre-season meeting where the coach would sell support staff and athletes on a team vision. Later meetings served the purpose of directing and redirecting the staff and players towards that team vision.

Due to high levels of coaching success at the university level, this individual was appointed the coach of a national team. During the first year coaching, some seasonal planning errors were made. In specific, B3 did not stay with the beliefs and tactics that helped originally attain the international position. There was little time spent on team building, the athletes were not committed to the program, and physical preparation was lacking. The coach therefore relented on the previously stringent personal philosophy in order to acquire the best performers as opposed to the most committed. Finally, the coach reflected and realized that athletic talent would have been surpassed by diligent preparation, a philosophy that had in the past helped this individual attain success as an athlete and then a coach.

#### Coach B5

This coach came from a different country where basketball was not acknowledged as a legitimate sport. Due to this constraint, initial sport experiences were in another sport discipline. There was no mention of specific coaches during the early sport stage. However, initial sport experiences did play a role in an eventual coaching philosophy. In the coaches' early sport

environment, the values of hard work, conditioning, as well as physical and mental toughness were emphasized. These variables were later emphasized at the national elite coaching stage.

The coach later developed into an elite level athlete in the first sport introduced to as a child. Competitions were experienced at an equivalent to Canadian provincial and national championship levels. These competitive experiences provided the eventual coach with a better understanding of pressures associated with elite level sport. At the time, the individual aspired to become a professional coach. The coach enrolled in a physical education program in order to acquire a better understanding of theoretical sport knowledge. Due to a lack of coaching positions caused by environmental constraints in B5's country, the coach immigrated to Canada.

Hardships were associated with novice experiences to the coaching profession. The coach was hired on to coach basketball, a sport unknown to B5. In the public school position hired on for, the coach was expected to have a strong understanding of basketball. The coach was aware that the ability to teach basketball was one of the criteria in the hiring process. Luckily, B5 was hired in June, and there were three months in order to gain a strong enough fundamental knowledge to teach its basic skills. Though coaching was one of the professional responsibilities, academic teaching was also expected. Coach B5 remained in this job four years, and eventually experienced coaching success at the provincial level.

After four years of coaching, there was a recognition that in order to further develop as a coach, a stronger theoretical knowledge of sport was required. Therefore, the coach studied graduate level physical education, and obtained a masters degree. It was during this stage that the coach met a mentor. The mentor coach was at the time the developing coaches' graduate teacher, took a liking to the developing coach, and extended the invitation to become an assistant coach for the basketball team at the university. From this experience, the coach received a solid understanding of how to balance applied and theoretical knowledge into a personal system of coaching.

After completing a master's degree, the individual applied for a university coaching position. There was a belief that the university position was unobtainable to the coach due to a lack of

qualifications. Nonetheless, the coach was hired on a full time basis, and remained there ever since. Similar to the other coaches at the national elite coaching stage, this one believed in balancing the sport and personal development of the athletes. The coach and athletes won numerous national championships, however, performance outcomes were secondary to the quality of skills taught. Players were built with a combination of solid technical, tactical, psychological, and interpersonal skills. This holistic approach was felt to be the coach's key to success.

### Coach B6

Similar to three of the other coaches, this individual was first involved in several different sports. No coaching influences were mentioned during the early sport participation stage. However, first experiences did play a significant role in the development of a coaching philosophy. From the very beginning, this coach competed successfully in all four sports available at the community level. Due to the coach's natural athletic ability, high levels of early success were experienced. As a result, the coach became hooked on sport as a lifestyle instead of as a passing interest.

The diversity of sport interests at the entry level were narrowed to two disciplines at the elite level; one of them being basketball. When the coach first began performing at an elite level, there was little chance of being selected to compete at the international level in one of the sports chosen. Therefore, the coach opted for the second sport which was basketball. At the time, the coach was enrolled in a university engineering program, and opted to change both institution and discipline. While at university, the coach was selected to compete on a varsity basketball team while simultaneously undertaking an undergraduate degree in physical education. At this level, the coach was introduced to a mentor coach who was known to produce Olympic level basketball players. During the national elite stage, sport experiences were gained by competing against high level American universities.

Due to a combination of natural athletic talent and access to high level coaches, the individual developed to the highest performance level, and was selected to represent Canada at the Olympic Games. While competing at the international elite level, the eventual coach gained

knowledge later employed by B6 as a coach for athlete selection. Though a baseline of talent was necessary in the athletes, the importance of strong fundamental coaching was acknowledged. Previous opportunities of competing at the international level provided the coach with a clear understanding of both the athlete's and coach's responsibilities at the highest levels of competition. This in turn eventually directed the high standards and expectations the coach demanded from athletes when coaching.

Due to the nature of this specific interview, little was said about the novice and developmental coaching phases. However, there was explicit mention that coaching positions were experienced at the high school level for eight years prior to becoming a national elite level coach.

Coach B6 was eventually hired to work with a university basketball team. There coach gained a clearer understanding of player and coach responsibilities. These responsibilities were instrumental in the coach's methods of boundary setting for the athlete's and support staff. Though the athletes were included goal-setting and planning process, their input was directed by the coach. The exercise of athlete participation was strictly part of having the athletes buy into a team vision. There was also a clear understanding that athletes did not even want to be part of important decisions due to the accountability and repercussion associated with it. Emphasis was placed on interpersonal skills with the athletes on and off the court. The coach made a point to be accessible to the athletes in order to discuss sport related and personal problems. All of these criteria were combined with an emphasis on the importance of developing and refining basketball skills.

After the combination of eight years university coaching and a strong undefeated record, the individual was appointed to coach a national team. This coach continued to communicate with the athletes on an interpersonal level. At this stage, the coach no longer perceived athlete questioning as a direct challenge. The coach hypothesized that the change in perception was directly related to a formalized coaching philosophy. Nonetheless, there was an awareness that ultimate decisions rested with the coach. Furthermore, there was one significant difference from

university level coaching to international level responsibilities. At the international level, athlete performance took priority over all else. When athletes were unable to perform up to expectations, they were replaced by players who produced immediate performance results. This approach to coaching was not necessarily a reflection of coaching philosophy. However, external pressure was placed on B6. As a result, there was no choice but to adopt a more result oriented coaching vision. In essence, there was an obligation to live up to the new mandate of presenting a competitive world class team.

## Appendix B

### General Interview Guide For Elite Basketball Coaches

#### How Did You Become An Expert Basketball Coach?

The fundamental thing here is how did you learn what you know, and what is the best way of acquiring this knowledge and these skills?

- Personal athletic history
- Formal / informal education experiences
- Major influences / moments later related to coaching
- Role of mentors
- Qualities of a successful coach
- Key moments in career
- What would you change?
- What wouldn't you change?
- How do you differ from other top coaches?

#### Training Considerations

Is it clear that effective training leads to successful competition? In what way do you personally prepare yourself and your athletes for each training session from a technical perspective? From a tactical perspective?

- How is your long term planning organized?
  - How is season planned?
  - How is training week planned?
  - How do you plan daily?
  - Teaching mental skills / technical skills
  - Giving feedback
  - Dealing with discipline
  - Can you think of your best ever training session? What happened?
  - Motivation / attitude in training
  - Monitoring goal setting
  - Dealing with athletes' stress
  - How would that preparation change for you in dealing with high or low skilled athletes, veterans / rookies, women / men, and amateurs / professionals?
- How could your knowledge or preparation of technical and tactical skills in training be best communicated to aspiring Canadian coaches?

#### Competition Considerations

Being able to "deliver the goods" when it counts in competition is a central part of the coach's task. In what ways do you personally prepare yourself and your athletes for each competition from a technical perspective? From a tactical perspective?

-What was the competition for which you were best prepared? The worst?

-Dealing with winning

-Dealing with losing

-Personal mental preparation for competition

-sources of stress or concerns.

How could your knowledge and skills in competition be best communicated to aspiring Canadian coaches?

What are the Qualities that You Believe are Necessary to Provide the Necessary Leadership to High Level Achievement in Your Sport?

Since coaching by definition is a social activity, and you are central to this group, what are the important leadership qualities that you possess, and how did you refine them?

-What crucial factors affect performance?

-Developing athletes - what needs to be done?

-Evaluation of talent

-Visions of coaching

-What are the main concerns of the players?

-Moral / ethical standards of conduct

-Fundamental, personal over-riding principles

-Team building

-Building of respect

-Relationships with players, coaches, family, media

-How do you effectively deal with sport administration?

Reflections of Coaching

As an established expert in the Canadian community, you have acquired a large body of specific skills and knowledge which has allowed you to achieve your present status. Could you share with us the major obstacles in your career, and how have you gone beyond them?

What do you see as the future direction of coaching?

-Is there any information, strategies, or experiences that aspiring Canadian coaches could benefit from in their education in order to rise further in the ranks of expert coaches?

## Appendix C

### Authenticating Interview Transcripts

Dear Expert Coach:

You will find enclosed your interview transcript that has just been transcribed and cleaned up to the best of our abilities. We have also blocked it into conceptual units which contain unique thoughts. This will hopefully allow you to assess the clarity and usefulness of each unit in isolation, rather than have it lost in a broader context. We have also "tagged" each unit based upon its content so that we can enter it into a data base which allows us to analyze the collective wisdom of all 22 coaches of team sports. For example, " \_\_\_\_\_, early coaching career, goals, having new members buy in".

First of all, would it be possible for you to re-read it, and make any necessary corrections, omissions, additions, or clarification's directly on the transcript? In some cases, you have already read a rougher version of this interview.

Secondly, would you either: 1) strike out anything that is not worth mentioning; 2) indicate text that is worthwhile; but may be either personally or politically embarrassing, but which you still believe needs to be said. We will put either "National Man's Basketball Coach", "Team Coach", or anonymous instead of your name.

Do not worry about the order of the text units since I will reorganize it into a more logical sequence. I will also send you the finished product once edited.

Thank you again for your valued participation in this project.

Sincerely,

John H. Salmela  
Professor and Assistant Director  
Graduate Studies and Research

## Appendix D

Questions From the Interviews and Responses from Meaning Units

How did you become involved in sport? (Early Involvement)

Basketball Coach B1

When I was young, I played a lot of sports, I was especially good in baseball And deal with people I don't have to concentrate on, and we get down and we would sit there. We will come in, sometimes we play games with the officials, we stay out, when the refs say come on in, if you can get away from the ritual. There is so much ritual in international ball that you can't influence officials. But we used to stay out until the referees would get upset with us about being out there, and my assistant would be there, so you could see the referee blowing his whistle and blowing his whistle, and anything that they would allow me to play.

Basketball Coach B3

I started playing basketball in high school. I was lucky that I had a very committed and supportive coach, like my brother. I was allowed to play all the time and I fell in love with the game.

What are the things that came out of your own personal history as a player that were important to you? (Early involvement, playing experience, mentor)

Basketball Coach B4

The next year we got a new coach, \_\_\_\_\_ and he had a tremendous influence on me as an athlete. Our training regime was tougher than most university training regimes by now. \_\_\_\_\_ grilled us into the ground training wise, then we won the high school championship in \_\_\_ that year, and you know from living there how big that is. That made me think that people can accomplish things. We were just a bunch of kids from a small town, with good leadership, and we worked our ass off. If you do things correctly you can probably compete, anybody can compete if you put your heart into it, and prepare properly.

How did your personal sport experience translate into your coaching at the high school level? (Early coaching, first competitive team)

Basketball Coach B2

I got involved in coaching like a lot of high school teachers who are trying to get jobs. Part of the hiring classics was: what can you do for us. The natural progression is that once you stop playing sports, you continue into it. When I started teaching high school I was still playing, I had moved to a senior league in the city with ex-university players and players who may or may not have gone to university. So I played 5 or 6 years for that league. So I was still maintaining an activity in playing a sport, but at the same time my high school situation demanded that I get involved coaching x amount of things.

How did you get involved at the university level? (Moving to another level, lucky break, building self confidence)

Basketball Coach B2

The university thing was a real lucky break. \_\_\_\_ just said to me one day, if ever you want to pick, by all means. No one else was closer to \_\_\_\_\_, or that close to him. He had a couple of kids that I had coached on his team, and I had been to his house a couple of times. We would sit and watch basketball, he wouldn't say a thing for two hours, just watch, a real social event. You didn't know what to do for a while, but after a while you understood, that is the way he was. Then he would say something, he might say something about, what do you do with, he'd ask you that, what do you think of, then you would talk about what you are doing. Then he came and watched a couple of our high school games, and one day he came to me and he just said, I'm taking the year off, do you want to take my team for a year. I don't know, best team in Canada, hey am I ready for this, yeah I think you will be OK. So I said yes, he never came back. I took one year away from my high school job, then took another, because he didn't come back the second year, then he decided he wasn't coming back at all. I just stayed put. I think my coaching was formalized by then. I had developed a personal and strategically style of coaching that I felt really comfortable with and I thought was successful.

At the university level, did the commitment come from you, or from the players? (Early coaching, committed athletes)

Basketball Coach B4

Those girls were so committed and they worked so hard. We found out what they would tolerate. They wanted to be good. We worked far harder than the men in terms of the training, they couldn't get enough. I think five of them went on to make the national team after that. So, we had some good athletes to start with and they were just waiting for the opportunity to get into the environment where they could compete.

How do you conceptualize training from a long-term perspective? (Mature coach, training, athlete mind set, total fulfillment of potential)

Basketball Coach B5

The tradition of this program first of all indicates to players that we are here for one reason and that is excellence. But my specific philosophy is that every player that comes in here comes in with a predetermined potential and my job is to get them as close to their potential as individual athletes as I can. If they want to be national team players that is their goal, if they just want to be good college players then that is their goal, but I have always taken the attitude that each individual athlete has to continue to work towards her potential. When she stops doing that then she has to leave the program because, once you have stopped growing, what is the point? You have taken up space that somebody else can have. To be honest with you that is something that rarely happens.

How would you best define your role as coach? (Mature coach, role of coach)  
Basketball Coach B1

I think is to become at least a consultant, where I am here to help you through your problems and then of course the ultimate is where we become partners, and I think that is where coaching is now. The successful coaches probably always have been partners, you and I are going to plan your future, since it is a team sport your future within this structure and that is very important.

Basketball Coach B6

I asked the girls one day, I talked to our captain about support staff and I said do you think I am support staff, and they said well no, you are not support staff, made me feel terrible because some how or another I had not been able to present the fact that was what I was. I said well that is all I am, I do know I make the important decisions on certain cases like selecting makes me extremely important. Once selected I should be less important. OK. Amount of playing time makes me extremely important to you, once playing time is established well then that is important and then we try to get roles and once again I fall back into a support role. You understand, but the young kids with their view for coaches had a hard time letting me be support staff. But everybody else was support staff, so I told the support staff we would have to get up at the very same time to eat, the same Stuff as these people, had to do all these things, so they know we are just part of the group and maybe at times a very lesser part of the group.

Is it a hard process planning each practice?  
Basketball Coach B3

The most important of everything is the practice plan, it takes time, my best practices are when I have taken the most time and I am not distracted. I probably plan best at home, rather than there, because here I would have people coming in all the time. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon if I start planning my practice and practice is at 4.30, I would probably be interrupted 5 times or 6 times and you just don't get a good flow. The most important thing to practice is having a really organized plan that you have spent time on. You have intensity plus you have some soft time, everybody is organized. You are going in it feeling organized, and that is probably when it goes the best.

Basketball Coach B3

I used to refer back to other years, but now I find that each team's needs are so different. What you need to do in practice is based on where you are with your team in a particular time of the year. What I need to do in the next practice is based on where we showed problems last weekend and what we have to fix up, and I have got to start to get them in good aerobic fitness. So it is a combination of what needs to be improved, and what needs to be introduced, like a new tactic, as well as where we are in our fitness and conditioning. So, I just started throwing out my practice plans from year to year, because I never referred to them, I would always go from scratch because the teams were different, and what they needed was different, so I would just do them all fresh.

What role do basketball coach's play during the game?

Basketball Coach B3

Basketball is the one sport where, there are not many sports where the coach is an active part of the game, they are probably not supposed to be, but the rules allow it, so you are making a ton of decisions. Very few sports is the coach allowed constant input to the players, in some ways that is good in a lot of ways that is bad, because you are still trying to control, you are constantly reminding, teaching, you are in their ears, you are in their heads, you are on the refs., and you know they allow a lot of that. There is a lot of it, and it is part of the game. There is a lot of action that goes on in basketball coaching in a competition more so than in most sports for the coach. We have to be a very big part of the game which is good and bad.

What do you see as the future development of coaching?

Basketball Coach B2

My feeling is when I deal with younger coaches, or coaches that are not at this level and would like to be that I would have really liked an opportunity to see, or get involved with some kind of an area where I could have seen what it is like to deal with the best kids, and the kinds of things that they do with the best kids. In fact we don't do a hell of a lot differently, the things that are here are very similar to the things that I do with my regional team or my high school. There is just more time to do it, you get a little bit more complicated and you get more things that you can do with them. I would think that would be part of it and somehow get back and get some experience. Get your elite coaches some how connected to the coaches in the ranks at the grass roots.

Appendix E

Demarcation Stages of Elite Basketball Coaches as the Data Analysis Unfolded

Phase 1: 1. Early sport

2. Early coaching

3. Elite coaching

Phase 2:

Athletics 1. Early sport

2. Elite sport

3. International elite sport

Coach 4. Early coaching

5. Middle coaching

Elite 6. National elite coaching

7. International elite coaching

Phase 3:

Athletics 1. Early sport participation

2. Elite athletics

3. International elite athletics

Coach 4. Introductory coaching

5. Developmental coaching

6. National elite coaching

7. International elite coaching

Phase 4:

Athletics 1. Early sport participation

2. Elite sport

3. International elite sport

- Coach
4. Novice coaching
  5. Developmental coaching
  6. National elite coaching
  7. International elite coaching

Appendix F

Generic Tags for the Meaning Units

While Coaching

1. Working with athletes
  2. Administrative variables
  3. Competition
  4. Personal life
  5. Chronology (pattern of development or transition)
  6. Athlete Characteristics
- 

While Playing

1. Athletic ability
  2. Environmental factors
  3. Learning from coach
  4. Acquiring the vision
- 

Second Level Tags

1. Dealing with the whole person
2. Athletes compromised by school
3. Coaching inadequacies
4. Limitations of coaching
5. What not to do while coaching
6. Coach has final say
7. Olympic context
8. Big Breaks
9. Personal organization
10. Coaching success

11. Athlete development
12. Love of sport
13. Athletic diversity
14. Acquiring knowledge
15. Diversity of content
16. Meteoric rise
17. Hardships
18. Necessary ingredients for coaches
19. Necessary ingredients for athletes
20. Making adjustments
21. Team cohesion
22. Goal-setting
23. Communication
24. Athlete selection
25. Coaching opposite sex
26. Practice planning
27. Educating in practices
28. Theoretical education
29. Deliberate practice
30. Simulation strategies
31. Athlete Physical Training
32. Athlete injuries
33. Communicating with officials
34. Athlete - coach problem resolution
35. Coaching philosophy
36. Seasonal planning
37. Athlete input

38. Setting guidelines with athletes
39. Self preparation
40. Mental rehearsal
41. On-site procedures
42. Rituals
43. Coaching strategies
44. Working with support staff
45. Home environments
46. Athlete opportunities
47. Dealing with family
48. Supplemental knowledge sources
49. Specializing in a sport
50. Being mentored as a novice coach
51. Career termination
52. Cutting athletes
53. Dealing with the media
54. Cutting staff
55. Player's log book
56. Sharing knowledge with other coaches
57. Quadrennial planning