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**Female Varsity Athletes' Perception of
How Coaches Influence their Self-confidence**

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FEMALE VARSITY ATHLETES' PERCEPTION OF HOW
COACHES INFLUENCE THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE

by

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Experience tells you what to do; confidence allows you to do it.

Stan Smith

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ABSTRACT

Communities and athletes see coaches generally as leaders, mentors, and role models in sport. Recent research in the field of coaching revealed that coaches must have the ability to encourage, challenge, and understand the athlete (Bloom, 2002b). Further research indicates that females are known to be psychologically and physically different than males (Fasting & Pfister, 2000); therefore, most females need to be coached differently than men during practice and competition. The notion of self-confidence is an essential element in Vealey's (1986) Sport Confidence Model, in which it is defined as: "the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their abilities to be successful in sport" (p. 222).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand female varsity athlete's perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. The study used twelve participants (N= 12) among Canadian Interuniversity Sport teams: basketball (3), soccer (3), hockey (2), rugby (2), and volleyball (2). Semi-structured interviews were conducted regarding athletes perception of (a) athlete's perception of self-confidence, (b) different coaching qualities that may positively or negatively influence athletes self-confidence, and (c) athletes perception of an 'ideal' coach that positively influences their self-confidence.

The results displayed a combined definition of all 12 athlete's perception of self-confidence, which is "one who believes in herself, has inner strength (while not worrying about others beliefs), and stays positive throughout their sport and life." Secondly the results found four main qualities that athletes perceive essential for a coach to positively influence their self-confidence. Finally, the results revealed 12 predominant coaching characteristics that athletes perceive essential for positively influence their self-confidence. An 'ideal coach' would display these characteristics.

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**PART ONE: INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF LITERATURE,
AND METHODOLOGY**

INTRODUCTION

Coaches are extremely important figures in the world of sports. They are defined as leaders and communicators. Coaches indeed have the power to motivate, stimulate, and positively influence athlete through sport (Bloom, 2002a). The coach can stand as a role model in the eyes of an athlete and may use this leadership role at a very significant and sensitive time in an athlete's life. According to Bloom (2002b) coaches must have the ability to encourage, challenge, and understand an athlete.

Women are known to be psychologically and physically different from males (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Therefore, most women need to be coached differently than men during practice and competition. In essence, according to Officer and Rosenfeld (1985), males and females respond differently to coaches.

Athletes go through critical times in their lives and might look to their coaches for the confidence to overcome even the smallest obstacles. Coaches must understand that varsity athletes are in transition stage between adolescence and adulthood. It may be hard for the athletes to cope with obstacles and challenges in their athletic, academic, and everyday lives (Cooker & Caffey, 1984).

The coach-athlete relationship, "is unique and multidimensional, with the potential for high degrees of relationship ambiguity: the coach is part teacher, part friend, part counselor, and part parent while the athlete plays the complementary roles of student, friend, client, and offspring" (Officer & Rosenfeld, 1985, p.3 60). What's more, a coach may be notable in an athlete's performance only if both parties combine their efforts. According to Orlick (2000), "performance is enhanced most readily when coaches and athletes work together to create a positive environment and share

responsibility for pursuing the mission and improving ongoing communication” (p. 191). Therefore, without a high level of self-confidence, athletes may never have the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

Bandura (1986) states that a strong sense of confidence allows people to take up challenges and persist, thus helping them reach their goals. In a broader form, self-confidence is how we evaluate ourselves. Generally, people with a great deal of self-confidence feel good about themselves and think they can accomplish most tasks that confront them. In association with Vealey's (2001) work, it reveals that most athletes agree that coaches behaviors and expectations influence athletes levels of confidence (as cited in Singer, Haunsenblaus, & Janelle, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to understand female varsity athlete's perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. To this end, a qualitative study will be conducted with varsity athletes. Research questions relate to athletes' perception of how their past and present varsity coaches influenced their level of self-confidence.

CHAPTER I

Review of Literature

A coach-athlete relationship at the varsity level may have an immense impact on the athlete's self-confidence, academics, and everyday life. Research has addressed the idea of coaches' roles and qualities influencing varsity athletes and the effect they might have on their performance (e.g., Edwards, 2000; Bloom, 2002a; Culver & Trudel, 2000). However, there is a lack of literature on female varsity athlete's perception on how coaches influence their self-confidence in a sport setting. For the purpose of this chapter,

the review of literature will be broken down into three parts: (a) Concepts of Self-confidence, (b) Women in Sport and Self-confidence, and (c) Coach Attributes.

The first part explores the concept of self-confidence and self-confidence versus self-efficacy. Part two investigates the literature on how women become involved in sports, the characteristics of coaches who have trained women, and how they have contributed to the development of women's self-confidence. The third section, coach attributes, looks into the different roles and qualities a coach must possess in order to build a positive relationship and enhance female athlete's self-confidence. In addition, part three explores coaches' behaviors while coaching women.

Concepts of Self-confidence

There are many approaches to the study of self-confidence (Vealey, 1986). Some examples are Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, Harter's (1978) theory of conceptual models of perceived competence and, finally, Corbin's (1981) view on self-confidence and behavior in sport.

Self-confidence is generally accepted as a significant factor in athlete's performance and everyday life. Vealey, Hayashi, Garner-Holman, and Giacobbi (1998) state, "Self-confidence is widely acclaimed by theorists, researchers, and practitioners as the most critical psychological characteristic influencing sport performance" (p. 55). From a psychology standpoint, Cox (1998) believes that self-confidence is the "feelings or belief in one's own abilities" (p. 271). Generally, research has supported the notion that confidence is one's ability to successfully determine the outcome in a variety of situations (Feltz, 1988, as cited in Cox, 1998).

For this study, the researcher looked at athlete's self-confidence only in their sport setting. Research has shown that self-confidence may be the difference between a very successful varsity athlete compared to a less successful varsity athlete (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan, Dieffenbach, & McCann, 2001). What's more, the right dose of self-confidence may help successful athletes excel even more (Cox, 1998).

Orlick's (1998) definition of self-confidence is "knowing in our mind and body and believing in our heart that we have value as individuals and can actually accomplish what we are capable of doing" (p. 54). Orlick also contends that people with a great deal of confidence feel good about themselves and think they are able to accomplish most tasks that confront them. In general, the rougher the situation becomes on the outside, the greater the need for self-worth on the inside. The ability to overcome obstacles is enhanced if a person has high self-confidence. Furthermore, Orlick (2000) later illustrates that people must have confidence to overcome obstacles within preparing and readiness, focusing, making choices, missions, and goal setting. He also indicates that a coach may have a notable influence on the confidence involved to overcome these obstacles. All told, a coach's influence on athletes is a considerable factor on their self-confidence and, in the end, for helping them reach their potential. Orlick (2000) states that "we can all gain from coaches who help us to feel competent and confident in our abilities to reach our goals" (p. 189).

In the sports setting, one can also find Vealey's (1986) reputable work on self-confidence. Her definition of self-confidence is "the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their abilities to be successful in sport (p. 222). Various researchers such as Vealey (1988) and Lenney (1997), have found that although research

shows that females generally have lower self-confidence than males with regard to motor performance, it seems that the lower level of confidence may be due to the labeling of gender-role by society. Still today, sport is believed to depict male athlete's behaviors as superior. Lenney (1997) states that confidence comes with the nature of the sport being played (gender-appropriate tasks). Females are more likely to have less confidence in a perceived masculine task (i.e. hockey), as men do in a perceived "feminine" task (i.e. figure skating). All told, Canfield, Hansen, and Hewitt (2000) express that "confidence is the all-important factor you need to protect yourself from the slings and arrows of negativity. In the absence of confidence, fear and worry take control" (p. 158).

Self-confidence vs. Self-efficacy

Bandura's (1986, as cited in Cox 1998) theory of self-efficacy states "self-efficacy is synonymous with an individual's beliefs that he/she is competent and can succeed at a particular task" (p. 244). His theory can be compared to Vealey's (1986) previously stated definition of sport confidence "the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their abilities to be successful in sport" (p. 222). Bandura (1986) proposes that self-efficacy is more fundamental to competent performance, whereas Vealey's (1986) self-confidence conveys more general feelings that may transfer from situation to situation. Although both terms are very similar, for the present study, we must realize that they are not identical and that they communicate significant differences. Vealey's Sport-confidence Model (1986) (see Appendix A for model) takes a broader angle in developing opportunity to look beyond the specific sport setting and takes notice of how confidence in one area may carry over or influence another area in an

athletes life. Vealey's Sport Confidence Model (1986) is a significant tool for explaining the general and specific levels of sport confidence. An athlete who gains a general feeling of sport confidence will be able to transfer this confidence to a new and different situation. As confidence develops, a greater level of situation specific confidence will be experienced. A transfer of confidence is made from one task to the next (i.e. soccer to basketball). The athlete carries his/her success from one sport experience to another sport situation, which allows him/her to maintain confidence throughout the process.

Feltz and Weiss (1982) state that a coach's role is to develop and maintain the athlete's high levels of self-efficacy by ensuring positive communication and performance successes, using modeling techniques, encouraging self-talk, and reducing anxiety-producing factors. They believe these factors are dominant in positive psychological development. Furthermore, an individual who derives joy from a high level of self-efficacy may enter the task at hand with more enthusiasm and self-confidence (Cox, 1998). Bandura (1986) believes that self-efficacy is enhanced by the higher level of accomplishments and success rate of the athlete. Through repeated success and the absence of failure athletes build a strong sense of self-efficacy.

After reviewing Cox, Orlick, Vealey, and Bandura's definitions of self-confidence, one can conclude they refer to the "belief an individual possesses about their own abilities, and capacities to be successful." Therefore, Vealey's definition of self-confidence (1986), which encompasses a collaboration of the majority of fellow researchers thoughts and definitions, is used for this study: "The belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their abilities to be successful in sport" (p. 222).

Women in Sport and Self-confidence

Over the last 20 to 30 years, women's practices both inside and outside sports have changed a great deal (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Some authors have shown that women play virtually every sport now from soccer, hockey, and rugby to triathlons, bodybuilding, and even boxing (Blue, 1987).

However, a number of studies show that young women gradually withdraw from sports participation between the ages 10 and 18. As Zimmerman and Reavill (1998) discuss, girls become interested in other things besides physical activity and organized sports. Furthermore, Zimmerman and Reavill found that female athletes have many barriers in becoming involved in physical activity and sport. Some common barriers are: lack of encouragement, lack of opportunity or conflict with other activities, and girls' own belief that they do not have enough skill to participate. However, Hanson and Kraus (1999) have found that young women who compete in sport develop skills and attitudes, such as self-confidence and independence that may benefit them in their academic and everyday life. Women learn many positive attributes such as determination, drive, and perseverance, thus becoming more self-assured, capable, and assertive (e.g., Bailey, 1993; Cohen, 1993; Kleiber & Hemmer, 1981, as cited in Hanson & Kraus, 1999). Therefore, for those female athletes who happen to persevere in a sport at the university and college level, it becomes part of their life and, sometimes, the only factor that matters. In the end, Zimmerman and Reavill believe most university female athletes develop a healthy self-concept and break away from the stereotypical views of what a woman is supposed act like. Despite all these positive attributes, Fasting and Pfister

(2000) showed that women are still portrayed as having less confidence than the average male.

Indeed, it is dubious to assert that research findings for male athletes can be applied systematically to females (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). However, it is common knowledge that female athletes differ from males physically, socially, and psychologically. Martens (1987) and Orlick (1986) state that females break away from men from a psychological standpoint and should be coached differently.

Culver and Trudel (2000) discovered that the women in their study believed that a positive interpersonal climate was conducive to greater athlete satisfaction and self-esteem. Females felt that they communicate more effectively, learn quicker, and perform better in a positive atmosphere. In addition, Shogan (2001) also reveals that trust is an essential personal characteristic that a coach must possess. Female athletes need to trust their coaches to improve athletic skill, observe performance, and provide feedback. Trust is central to all relationships.

When looking at Fasting and Pfister (2000) and Wade and Baker (1998) factors in today's society can be identified, implying that female athletes look upon male coaches as the ideal coach. One factor may be the dominance of male coaches and the fame given to them by society. A second factor may be the amount of attention given to male athletics is much higher than females (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Finally, the media may play a role in the awareness of female athletes. The type of coverage men receive emphasizes on their athletic ability (i.e. mental toughness and physical strength), whereas women are often looked upon as objects of femininity and physical attractiveness (Wade & Baker, 1998). Fasting and Pfister (2000) indicate that female coaches were more likely

to show empathy, communicative competence, and more willingness to cooperate. In comparison, male coaches were more aggressive, authoritative, and keen on demonstrating power with a 'macho' attitude.

Coach Attributes

Roles and qualities of a coach

It is of great importance to revise conclusions of research relating to coach attributes, such as roles and qualities, when trying to understand how coaches can influence an athlete's self-confidence. According to the Community Coach-Senior Manual (Canadian Soccer Association, 2002) a coach must be a teacher, a leader, and a counselor. A good coach must also be able to inspire, realize individuality, be persistent and optimistic, and understand all key factors of coaching. Furthermore, the CCSM lists the essential qualities of a good teacher, which are: understanding, enthusiasm, patience, and praise. Meanwhile, the essential skills of a good teacher are: organization, observation, and communication. In addition, Bloom (2002b) states that an elite coach should be encouraging, challenging, and understanding to the athletes. He also notes that athlete's late developmental years should be coached with a leadership approach that focuses less on pure instruction and more on tactical refinement and development of individual style. A coach must teach, model, and reinforce outcomes and situations so that athletes will be able to complete the task themselves (Dils & Ziatz, 2000). Despite the many different roles and behaviors a coach may have, Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993, as cited in Bloom 2002a) believe that an important factor in

developing athlete's self-confidence is to make sure they enjoy what they are doing while encouraging them to excel beyond their current level.

To help increase self-confidence, athletes must discover the roles and qualities of their coach that they perceive beneficial to increase their self-confidence, which may in return, enhance their performance. According to Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce (1990), a coach's ability to show acceptance, provide empathy, and express warmth, while at the same time ensuring and developing high standards for the team and its individual athletes, may build self-confidence and drive personal development. Furthermore, knowing that the coach is there to assist the athlete may provide an opportunity for the athlete to regain and/or build more self-confidence. As Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce have observed, the willingness and comfort brought forth by a coach can indeed increase the level of confidence in the athlete. Howe (1986) states that during the season, the coach should carefully analyze the performance of his or her players and attempt to provide them with personal goals that are within their reach. Furthermore, he believes behavior and attitude can make or break an athlete's motivation.

Motivation is another influential factor for a team or an individual athlete. Good motivators are believed to make some performers produce miracles (Howe, 1986). Recent findings state that a social support such as a coach's leadership style and effectiveness, and feeling of comfort with the competitive environment can help increase the confidence of young athletes (Vealey, 1988).

Culver and Trudel (2000) stated that communication is a critical technique in the art and science of coaching; perhaps the most important element. Coaches require good communication skills in order to give technical and tactical instruction, manage their

teams, interact with parents and administrators, and provide psychological support to their athletes. Again according to Culver and Trudel, feedback provides the check for effective communication. There are four major factors in a communicator's effectiveness: (a) actual communication skills, (b) knowledge level of the subject matter and the other person, (c) attitude towards oneself, the other individual in the dyad, and the subject matter, and (d) the relative position of the communicators in the sociocultural system.

It is important for a coach to provide a positive environment for learning. Through a positive environment, self-confidence can be generated, which may be a key for enhancing athlete's performance. To reinforce positive behaviors, a coach must understand how to tell the athlete 'what to do' and 'what not to do' and try to keep errors in perspective (Anshel, 1994). Amorose and Weiss (1998) also acknowledge that feedback is a major quality for the enhancement of self-confidence in athletes. In addition, they found that praise or constructive feedback increased the self-confidence in athletes more than receiving corrective feedback. The quality and quantity of feedback may differ from athlete to athlete based on the perceived ability by the coach (Solomon, 2001).

Zimmerman and Reavill (1998) expressed that coaches need to understand what motivates their athletes to participate in their sport and provide an environment that addresses the athlete's needs. Furthermore, Zimmerman and Reavill found that an essential quality for a coach is to remember every athlete is different and that an athlete-centered model is the best way to satisfy the needs of all athletes. They further display many beneficial coaching qualities for the female athlete. Such qualities are: (a) allowing

athletes to make mistakes in their decisions to encourage independent learning, (b) support athletes in their training decisions, (c) help athletes deal with pressures from parents to perform, (d) show professionalism at practice: be on time, challenging, listen to the players, and give feedback, and (d) set goals with each athlete.

Behaviors and attitudes of a coach

Carron and Bennett (1977) suggested that in determining coach-athlete compatibility, it is necessary to assess not only the coach's personality and behavior, but also the athlete's desire for such traits and behaviors in their coach. Zimmerman and Reavill (1998) determined that coaches could have a great effect on female's development of self-esteem, self-confidence, and healthy body image. Similarly, Smoll and Smith (1989) propose that coaching effectiveness be interceded by athletes' perception and recall. Overt coaching behaviors are perceived and pinpointed by each athlete, resulting in an attitude toward both the coach and the sport experience. Harter's Competence Motivation Theory (1978, as cited in Amorose & Weiss, 1998) predicts that individuals who report a higher perception of competence towards themselves tend to choose more challenging tasks, persist longer when faced with difficulty, and exert a high amount of effort. Competence motivation is based on an athlete's feeling of personal competence and successful attempts at mastery which promote self-efficacy and feelings of personal competence (Cox, 1998, p. 245). Overall, it was found that coaching behaviors influenced the player's enjoyment of the sport, team solidarity, evaluation of coaches, and self-esteem (Smoll & Smith, 1990, as cited in Bloom, 2002a). Furthermore, coaches who gave less punishment, less general feedback, more technical instruction, and

who engaged in fewer controlling behaviors were rated more positively by their athletes (Bloom, 2002a).

Furthermore, Solomon (2001) showed that coach's perceptions and expectations of their athlete's abilities may have a direct effect on the athlete's performance. Many coaches are still unfamiliar with the effects of self-confidence on performance and, more importantly, how experience in sport builds self-confidence (Feltz & Weiss, 1982). In a coach-athlete relationship, the coach has the power to decide on many factors for each individual athlete (e.g. dressing, playing, captains, positions, etc.). For the team and athletes to remain focused, both parties must understand the power relationship, yet must respect each other and try not to highlight the distinction. Coaches who provide encouragement, positive reinforcement after successes, objective technical instruction, and encouragement after mistakes have athletes who report a more positive sport experience (Barnett, Smoll, & Smith, 1992). Coaches may use techniques that positively influence athletes' self-confidence. Some techniques include verbal persuasion, evaluative feedback, expectations of others, self-talk, positive imagery, and other cognitive strategies (Felts & Lirgg 1998, as cited in Singer et al., 2001).

Overall, previous research shows athletes possess multiple types of confidence: (a) confidence about one's ability to execute physical skills, (b) psychological skills, (c) perceptual skills, such as decision-making and adaptability, (d) physical fitness and training status, and (e) learning potential or ability to improve one's ability (Vealey, 1998). However, this shows how self-confidence is a broad topic and needs to be observed more precisely. Many coaches consider confidence as a critical mental skill in athletes that needs to be mastered in order to reach their full potential (Vealey, 1998).

Fasting and Pfister (2000) state that women are more difficult to coach because they are more sensitive and emotional, more easily crossed, and more thin-skinned than men. In addition, Fasting and Pfister believe that the coaches who want to work with women need to show more empathy and a high degree of social competence. He or she must be conscious that women tend to express many emotions through body language. Furthermore, women should be given constructive feedback rather than criticism (Weiss, 1993). Weiss also believes it is very important for coaches to have a positive communication style with females.

Smoll and Smith (1989) illustrate "leader effectiveness resides in both the behaviors of the leader and the eyes of the beholder" (p.1544). Many studies reveal that the gender of the coach affects the attitudes of the athlete. The roles and qualities displayed by each gender may play a role in how each coach is looked upon. Kenow and Williams (1999) suggest that coach-athlete compatibility might influence self-confidence on athlete's perception and recall of coaching behaviors. Anshel (1994) states one must keep in mind that females are cultured to have lower expectations and feelings of self worth than men. In order for the female athletes to increase their self-confidence,

coaches need to acquaint themselves with the psychological differences between the male and female athlete and how to accommodate these differing needs (Fasting & Pfister, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, research questions are presented below.

1. What perceptions do female varsity athletes have of self-confidence
2. What coaching qualities influence female varsity athletes' self-confidence
3. What perception of a female varsity athlete constitutes an ideal coach that positively influences their self-confidence

CHAPTER II

Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used to gather information to understand the female athletes' perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. The data was collected to (a) understand the athletes' perception of self-confidence, (b) gain a better understanding of the different coaching qualities that may increase, and perhaps, decrease athletes self-confidence, and (c) gain an understanding of athletes' perception of an 'ideal' coach that positively influences their self-confidence.

This chapter will be broken down into six sections: (a) Research Design, (b) Selection of Participants, (c) Methods, (d) Data Analysis, (e) Trustworthiness of the Study, (f) Significance of the Study.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was used with varsity female athletes to conduct this research project. As explained, the research design consisted of individual interviews with 12 female varsity athletes over a period of 1 to 2 months. Rubin and Rubin (1995) refer to qualitative interviewing as both academic and practical. It allows the researcher to share information on what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their world (p. 5).

Selection of Participants

The participants (N=12) consisted of Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) (varsity) female athletes within the Ontario Women's Intercollegiate Athletics

Association (OWIAA). The sample size was composed of interviewing 12 female varsity athletes, from two different universities in Ontario. The selection of participants consisted of athletes in their third to fifth year eligibility and presently participating in one of the five varsity sport teams: basketball, soccer, hockey, rugby, or volleyball. This insured consistency of experience with the athletes in a team sport environment. Furthermore, the athletes were full time students at their university. The purpose of choosing 12 athletes was to make sure the data grasped different perspectives from a variety of athletes and to expand the data to analyze. The purpose of having the data collection from five different varsity sport teams was because the researcher believed that different sports may have different methods and strategies for coaching their athletes (i.e. volleyball compared to rugby). Therefore, the researcher wanted to gain information from a team perspective and not a specific sport.

The initial step was to secure approval for the research project (data collection) through sport services or the athletic director within the university. Once the researcher gained approval from Sport Services, each eligible coach within both University A and University B were contacted and asked permission to present the research project to their athletes. The researcher then met with each team at the beginning of a practice and presented the research project to the athletes. The athletes that were interested in volunteering were asked to read an information letter and sign a consent form (see Appendix B) with their telephone number. The telephone number was left for the researcher to gain contact with the participant to set up a meeting time for an interview. The athletes were contacted by the researcher and asked to work out an availability time to meet for the interview. All athletes were interviewed at the end of their season. Prior

to the interview, the athletes were explained the procedure of the interview, confidentiality, anonymity and were asked to complete an information sheet. The athletes that were not chosen were contacted and explained the process of random selection and were thanked for their time and interest in the study (see Appendix C for ethics approval).

Methods

Two methods were used for collecting data in the present research. First, the participants were asked to complete an information sheet. This entitled the researcher to obtain background information about the participants (see Appendix D). The second method was a semi-structured interview. All 12 athletes went through an interview, approximately one hour in length (see Appendix E). The researcher gained valuable information through the interviews related to female athletes' perception of how their past and present varsity coaches influenced their level of self-confidence.

Data Analysis

The interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using QSR Nudist Vivo (NVivo) software program. First it was used to manage, and second to organize the transcription text of each interview. The interview text was then analyzed by identifying emerging strategies, behaviors, and situations that athletes may have shared to describe their experiences on how coaches influence their self-confidence. The researcher coded and generated nodes for each emerging theme within the narrative of athletes. In addition, the researcher generated nodes by coding and organizing the data

into three main sections (a) self-confidence, (b) coaching qualities, and (c) athlete's perception of an ideal coach.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The researcher ensured trustworthiness in the study through several means. The selection of the athletes was first taken into consideration and meet the requirements of varsity status. The athletes were well aware of the study and the components that were involved with the data collection. Secondly, only the primary researcher conducted and transcribed the interviews. The athletes were interviewed and told that the information brought forth will be kept confidential, unless otherwise stated by the athlete. Thirdly, the researcher succeeded to build an interview guide to ensure consistency in interviewing each athlete. Finally, the use of Nvivo software enabled the researcher to classify and handle the data more efficiently and effectively throughout the entire data analysis. Any biases are stated in the researcher's personal reflection.

Significance of the Study

The researcher believes this research revealed significant information for the training and education of coaches on the importance of self-confidence in female athletes. This research will be a great contribution to the sport community and a reliable resource for coaches to better their understanding of the female athlete. In addition, this study will contribute to research further knowledge on the concept self-confidence, and the importance that it conveys with the female athlete. Furthermore, self-confidence is a significant characteristic for varsity female athletes to have in order for them to continue

to participate at a competitive level. The researcher believes that coaches need to become aware of certain qualities and characteristics that positively influence athlete's self-confidence. This will allow the optimal development of their athletes.

PART TWO: RESULTS

CHAPTER III

Results

This chapter outlines the results from semi-structured interviews with 12 varsity female athletes. The primary objective of these interviews was to generate data for a better understanding of female varsity athletes' perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. The one on one interviews were an attempt to capture richer information from female varsity athletes. The results focus on three main areas of inquiry: the athlete's perception of self-confidence, the qualities of a coach that may influence self-confidence, and the athlete's perception of what characteristics constitute an 'ideal coach.' For the purpose of this study, an *ideal coach* is 'one who positively influences athletes' self-confidence.' The study revealed that all 12 athletes believed that there were certain coach's qualities that affected their self-confidence, in both a positive and negative way. Results of the analysis of the interviews are presented under three sections: (a) Athletes' Perception of Self-confidence, (b) Coaches Qualities that Influence Self-confidence, and (c) The Ideal Coach that Increases Athletes' Self-confidence.

Athletes' Perception of Self-confidence

Athletes are key components in evaluating the coaching process. First, their perception on the definition of self-confidence constitutes a multiple voiced foundation for the term. This facilitates a better understanding of the perceptions from the athlete and will be a key factor when examining other data pertaining to this research. This section identifies the results of the research that relates to the athletes and their personal perception of self-confidence. Figure 1 identifies the different sub-sections that will be

presented in this chapter. (a) Athlete's personal definition of self-confidence, (b) Athlete's perception of their own self-confidence, (c) Athlete's self-confidence from sport and how it can impact their everyday life, and (d) Athletes' perception of other athlete's self-confidence (i.e. teammates).

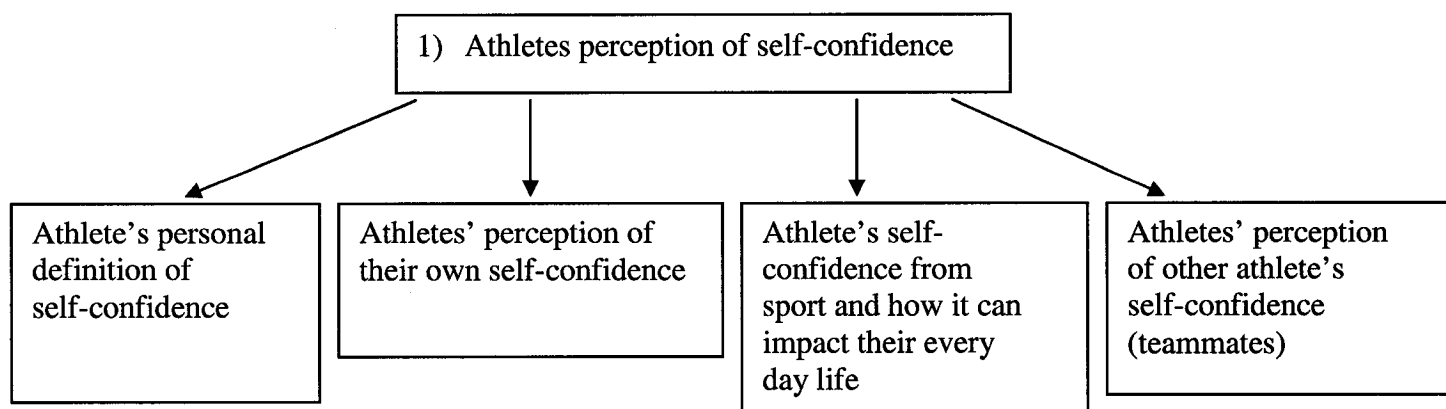


Figure 1. Illustration of sub-sections within the text on athlete's perception of self-confidence.

Athlete's personal definition of self-confidence

All 12 athletes were asked to give their personal interpretation of self-confidence. Table 1 displays the results given by the athletes with regard to their definition of self-confidence. Twelve athletes stated in some form that "belief in oneself" was a main characteristic of self-confidence. In addition, 4 out of 12 athletes emphasized: "not to worry about what others think and to stay positive each day." Finally, 3 out of 12 athletes said that inner strength was substantial in having self-confidence. The ratio represents the number of times the actual term was mentioned by the athletes. Some athletes mentioned all 3 characteristics, while others mentioned only one. After close analysis of the athlete's responses, the researcher established a definition of self-confidence from the 12 interviews. To combine the definitions of all twelve athletes, a generated understanding

of self-confidence is “one who believes in herself, has inner strength (while not worrying about others beliefs), and stays positive throughout their sport and life.” In addition, Athlete 5 stated the importance of self-confidence as an athlete. “I think that self-confidence is the most important aspect you can bring to your game as an athlete. You may be the star player on the team but if you have no confidence it will show in your playing.” This data identifies an understanding of the role that self-confidence can play from the point of view of experienced athletes (3rd to 5th year eligibility).

Table 1

Athlete's Definition of Self-confidence

Characteristics of Self-confidence	Ratio	Quotes
Believing in yourself	12/12	“Self-confidence is believing in yourself, being positive and believing that you can do anything you set your mind to.” (Athlete 5)
Not worrying about what others think	4/12	“Being confident in who you are and not worrying about what others think (...)” (Athlete 8)
Being positive	4/12	“The will to keep playing your sport or keep being a person thinking positive throughout your day or life.” (Athlete 4)
Perception of one's self	4/12	“It is a perception of one's power and strength and how it relates to how you feel about yourself.” (Athlete 10)
Inner strength	3/12	“Inner strength, mental toughness, high self-esteem and a belief in yourself.” (Athlete 9)

Athletes' perception of their own self-confidence.

The athletes were asked to compare their level of self-confidence to that of their teammates. They were presented with 5 options for consideration: (a) a lot more confident than my teammates, (b) more confident than my teammates, (c) as confident than my teammates, (d) less confident than my teammates, or (e) a lot less confident than my teammates. Each athlete's level of self-confidence was established in order to gain a broader understanding of the athlete and to provide valuable information pertaining to a coach's influence on varsity female athlete's self-confidence.

Table 2 illustrates the number of athletes in each category and the level of self-confidence that each athlete believes they have in their varsity sport. The analysis of the interviews indicated that 4 athletes were as confident as the rest of their teammates. They believe that their confidence level, at the time, was equal to the majority of players on their varsity team. Meanwhile, 5 athletes said that they were more confident than their teammates and the remaining 3 athletes explained they were a lot more confident than their teammates. These athletes felt that their confidence surpassed the other players on their team and it reflected in their actions.

Eleven athletes explained that this self-confidence had to do with experience in the sport, staying positive, and being able to communicate with their coach and other team members. "You gain it through experience. I don't believe you are born with confidence like that" (Athlete 4). Since this research study was completed only with varsity athletes in their 3rd to 5th year eligibility, this may be the reason why no athletes stated they were less confident or a lot less confidence than their teammates. All told,

athletes perceived their experience at the varsity level was a notable factor regarding their coach's influence on their self-confidence.

Table 2

Level of Personal Confidence of the Athletes

Level of Confidence	Ratio	Quote
A lot more confident than my teammates	3/12	"A lot more confident than some of the younger teammates for sure...A comfort in your role, in where you are and what you've achieved. Being happy about things brings more confidence." (Athlete 1)
More confident than my teammates	5/12	"I believe I am more confident (...). I am comfortable in my abilities and what I can do, how to play, the information I have in my head, and the experience playing the sport. I feel confident in my own abilities." (Athlete 12)
As confident as my teammates	4/12	"I think I am as confident as my teammates...As a captain, I wouldn't say I was the best player on the team but I have no problems speaking up, just as I don't mind getting criticism. I think someone with less confidence would be too timid to say how they feel because they are not the star of the team. I think I can play with anyone on this team, I wouldn't be here if I couldn't play. This helps me, I have had highs and lows, so when I am in a low I just think back to when I was doing good and that, I have been there before so I can be there again." (Athlete 3)

Athlete's self-confidence from sport and how it can impact their everyday life.

Athletes were asked if their self-confidence from sport influences their everyday life. Ten out of 12 athletes believed that their self-confidence in sport carried over to other areas such as social, professional, and academic. Athlete 9 explained her reasoning: "I think being in athletics really carries over. Being a varsity athlete really increases your self-confidence. To hear 'I can't believe you play rugby and you can go to school at the same time.'" In addition to believing their self-confidence carries over to their everyday life, 5 out of 12 athletes believed that their self-confidence was built through their experience as a varsity athlete. Athlete 12 stated: "In the beginning of my varsity career, of course I'd be more sensitive. You don't understand why your coach is like that or if it's personal." She explained that this understanding helped her develop in her everyday pursuits. Athlete 11 explained how her confidence from sport carried over into her everyday life:

I guess that in a simpler form it is how you feel about yourself and a type of confidence you have in yourself. So if I am a confident person I will do well. I believe your confidence influences you everyday life. Your sport performance, in the professional world, in your personal life, it effects everything.

Four athletes believed their confidence came from persistence after failure and experience within their sport. For example, Athlete 7 explained:

(...) I think because you can learn to build self-confidence in one area and learn how to persevere and how to keep going...as long as your sporting experience has taught you that, you are not just some Phnom walking in there and could just do it

all. As long as you had some adversity...it definitely has potential, if you look at it from a positive perspective, to influence your future adversities.

Results further indicated that 3 out of 12 athletes believe that a change in their self-confidence can influence their everyday attitude.

Table 3 provides additional examples of direct quotes from the athletes that further explain their perceptions pertaining to the belief whether self-confidence in sport affected other areas of their lives. The number of athletes stating their beliefs in each area is displayed in parenthesis within the table.

Table 3

Athletes' Perception of their Self-confidence in Sport and how it Impacts Everyday Life

1) Yes, confidence carries over to other areas in life. (10/12 athletes)

“Definitely! I am more confident in my studies because of the time management and commitment skills. I try my best at everything that I attempt! (...) Socially athletics has definitely increased my confidence because around campus I am recognized as an ‘athlete’ and I think that more people open up to you and see you in a different (better) way than if you were just a regular student.” (Athlete 5)

(a) Confidence is learning through experience in sport.

“Yes I think it can. I think confidence through sport is learned by experience. Once you reach that level somewhere else it is easier to carry on into other aspects of your life. You know how to be confident and when to be confident.” (Athlete 1)

(b) Confidence is learned from perseverance after failure.

“...you gain a lot from being an athlete, failure after failure. You have to keep getting up and trying to get there.” (Athlete 6)

(c) Confidence from sport influences daily attitude.

“It (confidence) carries over on my daily life. If I come back from a practice or a game and I am down on myself it rubs off and give other people negativity. I think confidence goes everywhere. You need it to achieve your goals career wise, professional and as well with family.” (Athlete 4)

2) No, confidence does not carry over to other areas in life. (2/12 athletes)

“No, no I don’t think it does. I think everyone has there own abilities, certain things they are good at and certain they’re not as strong in (...).” (Athlete 11)

Despite the majority, 2 of 12 athletes stated that they did not believe their confidence in sport carried over to the other areas in their life. Contradicting her first statement, Athlete's 11 presented a new point of view:

No, no I don't think it does. I think everyone has their own abilities, certain things they are good at and certain things they are not as strong in. For myself personally, I think I had a lot of success with soccer at different levels so I know that is something that I am strong at, so yeah, I have confidence there. In other respects, professionally, I wouldn't say I am confident but I wouldn't say I am not...I haven't had much success professionally, so I am not...if you are good at it you become confident and if you are not then you don't have confidence.

The results suggested that the concept of self-confidence in sport could influence other areas of athlete's lives. The majority of athletes indicated that their self-confidence increased through sport and positively influenced other areas in their lives. However, 2 out of 12 athletes stated that it does not carry over to other areas of their lives.

Athletes' perception of other athlete's self-confidence (i.e. teammates)

In an attempt to further understand athletes' perception of self-confidence, the researcher asked them to express their views on the recognizable characteristics of self-confidence in other athletes. This data further identified an insight into how athletes perceived self-confidence and helped to construct an overall view of the term self-confidence. The majority of athletes claimed that self-confidence was shown through verbal and non-verbal characteristics. An example of non-verbal characteristics would be how athletes perceive confidence through body language, with specific attributes such as

eye contact, presence (posture, head down or up, wanting the ball), and attitude (with teammates and coaches). To demonstrate one perception, Athlete 1 explained: "They (other players) would be confident if they had eye contact with everybody. Their head was up and they got into the game right away." Athlete 4 indicated that self-confidence is determined by many different aspects: "By their posture, their smile in their face, attitude if they are holding their head up high, confidence in their strides, and if they are holding their stick tight (hockey)."

Secondly, the results indicated that athletes perceive self-confidence by the way verbal communication is delivered. Athlete 9 remarked:

The people that have a lot of confidence are the ones who go and talk to the other people, they are really helpful with others, they are willing to help each other and talk to the girls, and a lot of the other teammates look up to them.

Athlete 10 expressed her view on how verbal feedback can determine other's self-confidence:

I think communication is the big one and putting yourself in certain situations.

Like being on the field, being the go to girl and showing support for people on the field as well. Supporting other people's mistakes, giving positive feedback on the field.

To retain a definition of self-confidence from the athletes, their perception from different interview questions were analyzed. This led the researcher to different qualities the athlete's perceive to be essential in having self-confidence. Figure 2 illustrates the next section, athletes' perception of different coaching qualities that influence their self-confidence and its sub-section to follow.

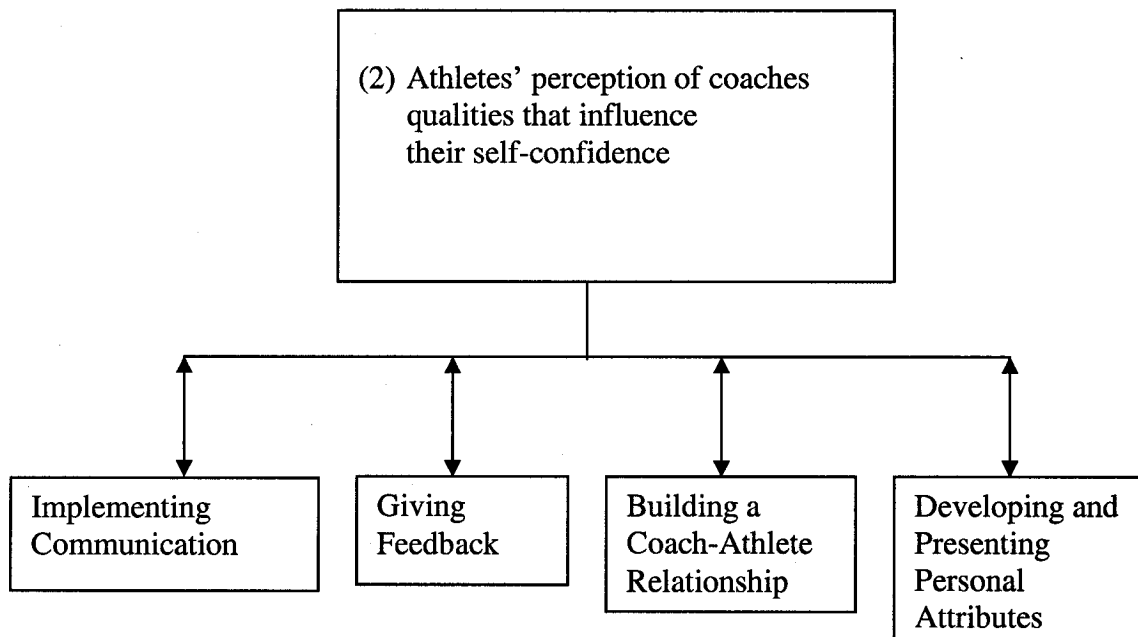


Figure 2: Illustration of sub-section within the text on coaches' qualities that influence athletes' self-confidence

Athletes' Perception of Coaches Qualities that influence their Self-confidence

This section elaborates on four predominant coaching qualities that are considered by the athletes to have the most effect on their self-confidence. The athletes were asked questions about their varsity experience, which were designed to elicit different qualities that influenced their self-confidence in a positive or negative manner. For the purpose of this research, *qualities* are defined by the researcher as “the different characteristics and strategies displayed by a coach during interactions with the athletes.” The researcher developed this definition in an attempt to provide the reader with a more specific awareness of the term ‘qualities’. After the analysis of the interviews, four distinct coaching qualities were acknowledged: (a) implementing communication, (b) giving feedback, (c) building a coach-athlete relationship, and (d) developing and presenting personal attributes.

Implementing communication

All 12 athletes explained the importance of communication. “(...) A coach influences an athlete by the amount of playing time and by his verbal and nonverbal actions. If he is positive most of the time then athletes will gain more confidence. But if he is always negative and is always screaming, that can be very detrimental to an athletes confidence” (Athlete 5). For this research, *communication* represents “the verbal interaction a coach has with his/her athletes that may influence the athlete’ self-confidence.” Examples could be: (a) approaching players one on one and as a team and (b) communicating to the player why they are going into the game or more importantly, why they are coming out of the game.

The athlete's perceptions revealed that as a coach you must be able to communicate with your athletes one on one, identify individual personalities, and understand their personal goals. Athlete 1 illustrated: "(...) every player is individual in that...it would be good to know what's going to motivate a player or increase their confidence. They will be better players if he (coach) can treat them in that manner." Athlete 3 expressed that a coach must be able to read their athletes: "A coach has to realize when a person doesn't have 100% confidence to talk to them; the coach needs to see what they can do to help." Similarly, the following exert from Athlete 11 illustrated her beliefs on communicating the different roles within the team.

I think it is very individual. Different people like different things. But like when they pull you a side and say 'this is your role and I know you can fulfill this role and this is how I want you to fulfill this role.' I think that would boost anybody's self-confidence (...).

Communication, game involvement and time played are concerns for athletes. Presented below are additional examples of athlete's concerns as to why a coach should tell their players why they are not playing or why they are being taken out of the game. Athlete 2 gave her perception on coach's communication with players on the verge of playing or not playing:

(...) their (athlete) self-confidence must have been shot to the ground but a good coach would go and talk to them. They would explain some circumstance surrounding not playing and tell them. Don't BS them, don't feed them lines, but tell them the truth. If they are not good enough to play, say they are not good enough to play. Don't keep them on the bench lingering.

Athletes relate that other forms of communication by the coach can have a negative influence on the athletes. Furthermore, evidence showed that athlete's self-confidence could become greatly affected by the lack of communication from the coach to the athlete, especially when the athlete doesn't play a major role within the team. Athlete 3 expressed her feelings about the coach not communicating to her as to why she was sitting on the bench:

(...) as a player you sit on the bench wondering if you have done something wrong, how come she is not putting me in, maybe she thinks that I can't do it, maybe she thinks I am going to screw up and doesn't want to risk it. As an athlete, these things go through your mind waiting on the bench. This affected me in the sense that I hate not feeling confident and when you get that feeling inside it is awful. I went from playing well and then for no reason to not playing at all.

Athlete 12 presented feelings towards her coach not communicating with her, along with her teammates as to why they are not dressing for a game: "(...) he doesn't give you a reason why you aren't dressing. If you get pulled off, he just doesn't talk to you instead of telling me why I am not dressing, or tell me why I am coming off?" In addition, the majority of athletes stated numerous times throughout the interviews that it is crucial for a coach to be able to treat the star player the same as their weakest. Athlete 6 expressed her concern about making every team member feel as important as the next. "Every coach has to make the players who don't play as much feel as much a part of the team as everyone else." Athlete 3 reiterates this idea:

As a team, I think she (coach) gave your confident players confidence and then the rest really feel useless. Like if she could have just that seven she would be

happy with just them. You need everyone. Their attitudes and contributions are important to the win, just as much as the top players.

The majority of athletes believe that it is crucial for the coach to be able to treat all athletes the same. The athletes always want to feel a part of the team. The perceptions of the athletes suggest that female athletes considered communication from their coach as a significant part of maintaining self-confidence. As a small conclusion, athletes require overall communication that empathizes with the needs of the female athlete.

Giving feedback

Feedback, or lack of, can be very instrumental to an athlete's self-confidence. Feedback for this research is noted as a form of verbal communication. However, the researcher believes that feedback should be categorized separately from communication to emphasize the importance that was distinguished by the athletes. For the purpose of this study *feedback* is defined as "the method in which a coach delivers information on an athlete's behavior and/or performance and how it may influence their self-confidence." Examples of the different types of feedback are: (a) constructive/positive, (b) negative, (c) yelling and screaming, (d) singling players out, and (e) quantity and time of feedback. Eleven out of 12 athletes mentioned feedback as one of the most dominant qualities for a coach. Athlete 3 explained that even one comment from a coach could change her confidence in that particular moment:

My coach talking to me one on one, telling me what I am good at and what she sees in me and why she wants me on the team, whether it is for my good attitude or leadership or being quick.

Eight athletes stated they would like positive and/or constructive feedback on a consistent basis throughout the season. Athlete 4 mentioned how her coach did such an amazing job at giving her, and the team, feedback. She said it was essential to keep the team together and for her to remain confident.

For feedback he was amazing. I think that helps so much in games. He knows how to boost us up. He would send e-mails, laminate different quotes for different games, etc. and put them on the door. The meetings were great, never pointed out anyone (...).

Furthermore, Athlete 1 stated her beliefs on how her coach positively influenced her self-confidence.

Every once in a while he points out something that he is impressed by, sees improvement in, and it increases your confidence. Giving you more responsibility as a leader, or with a role on the team. Being encouraging and helping you to the next level or step.

Athlete 8 had a strong, but simple, belief on what kind of feedback she wanted from a coach: "With compliments, saying what we are doing well, and how to improve on it."

Negative feedback can influence an athlete's self-confidence in many ways.

Athlete 2 stated that some feedback given to her by the coach can either 'make or break' her confidence:

If the coach is constantly telling you that you suck, you're not good enough, there is only so much you can take before you snap and say I don't need to take this.

Coaches can add or take away from your self-confidence. Even at this age, even

when our self-confidence is already instilled, a coach can say one remark and you are screwed.

Athlete 10 gave an example from her experience when the coach was too negative:

I think the worst thing ever said to me was that I was told I played like rubbish or something like that. Another was that I was on the wire during tryouts. Kind of made me feel like they aren't sure if I am going to make it or not. That was kind of shattering.

As a form of negative feedback, Athlete 10 stated that yelling and screaming by her coach decreased her self-confidence: "I don't like it in a training session when a coach yells and screams and is...ahh...negative." Athlete 7 expressed her views on feedback:

I believe in feedback but I believe in approaching it from a positive perspective and not really making that person feel that they necessarily failed (...). Go the other way and instead of saying, 'Oh no you did this wrong,' you can say, 'Okay here is how you can do it better.' Never making it the player's fault...I think is the ultimate biggest factor on a person's confidence (...). I think just by the coach's demeanor and the way they approach you, you can either feel one way or the other.

Athlete 11 explained her beliefs on the different way male and female coaches give feedback. She prefers women to coach women and men to coach men because we, as women, can understand one another better: "men like to scream more, yell more and tend to be more aggressive, whereas women are a little more passive."

A common way for coaches to deliver feedback was to single players out from the team. Many athletes stated that this could definitely be a significant factor in decreasing

their self-confidence. Most athletes expressed that it was bad enough being criticized, but in front of your friends and teammates was even more detrimental. Athlete 10 shared her experience:

Times when I was on the field being pointed out, for example this play was terrible specifically because of me. It was rubbish or whatever. Just pointed out over and over again. This kind of thing would happen, this would be hard (...).

Furthermore, Athlete 10 explained that when she is running on the field and her coach begins to yell at her in front of her teammates and fans it affects her game. "(...) I want to give it my best and then I just get off focus when they say, you did this wrong, yelling and you have to look at them (...)." Athlete 11 told one of her personal experiences about a coach yelling at half time:

We had an incident where a player made a player cost us a goal...whatever it wasn't a big deal...it was a bit shattering...but other than that it was a mistake. The coach, at half time blasted the player, for the entire half time, in front of the whole team. He yelled, he screamed, he cursed and pointed fingers. So rather than taking her aside and talking about it, he blew up in front of the whole team. As a result, when the second half started, nobody was ready to play. Everyone was so focused on what just happened. You know when you make a mistake and everyone starts to get jittery and panicky and don't want to make a mistake. So definitely not good for team performance, or confidence at all.

The majority of athletes believed that when a coach encouraged their skill, attitude, and effort it could be a prevailing factor in increasing self-confidence. The quantity and time of feedback that a coach gives to the athlete seemed to be another

crucial element for both, increasing and decreasing self-confidence. Two athletes believed that some sort of feedback is better than no feedback at all. Athlete 9 explains: "I have had coaches that just yell...and that is crazy. But the worst is when they don't say anything. I would take yelling over nothing any day." In addition, 8 athletes felt it was important to attain feedback immediately after they came out of a game. She would rather know why she came out at that specific time. "I want the feedback right away, right after and she (the coach) never gives it to me." Athlete 9 explained how she just wants feedback from her coach and it does not matter how it is given, as long as the feedback is immediate and individual.

I like immediate feedback and that way I can reflect on it. And if it is yelling at me, 'What did you do?' That is fine, I can take it. If it is the coach being very calm saying 'we need to work on this.' That is fine as well. I just need something, I need something to say, 'okay, why did you do this and what did you do that for?' I like to be able to figure it out. Give me a situation and I will figure it out, or I will try to. And if it is wrong that is fine, correct me.

Data indicated that athletes want feedback. However, results show that in order to keep the athlete's self-confidence high, feedback is required at specific times during a game (e.g., when a player is coming off the field, half time, after the game but not while they are playing). The majority of the athletes preferred constructive/positive feedback to increase their self-confidence. A coach must be able to encourage without yelling and screaming and negatively singling players out from the team.

Building a coach-athlete relationship

Most athletes felt that a coach-athlete relationship was important at the varsity level to increase the athlete's self-confidence. For the purpose of this study, *coach-athlete relationship* is defined as "the bond developed by the athlete and coach through their time together at the varsity level." Coach-athlete relationships, was mentioned by 10 athletes within the interviews and was considered to be another important aspect in their varsity career. These athletes believed that having a 'good' relationship with their coach was one of the most important components that influenced their self-confidence. Athlete 1 stated her feelings: "He (coach) is the one you struggle with through all your learning. He knows you better than anyone else. He has the knowledge of what is going on around you. He's also a friend (...)."

Interpretations of the athletes' responses indicated the complexity of issues surrounding this topic. For instance, to determine the actual meaning of a 'good' relationship between the coach and athlete would be very complex due to the fact that every individual athlete is different. However, 10 athletes revealed that it is important to have a coach-athlete relationship to help maintain self-confidence. It was necessary to have a coach you can approach, have respect for, and understand. By displaying all these characteristics, the majority of athletes believe it will positively influence their self-confidence. In the present research, only half of the athletes considered themselves to have a 'good' relationship with the coach that increases their self-confidence. Moreover, 3 athletes revealed that it is important for the athlete and coach to be on a friendship basis, while 2 athletes felt that the coach-athlete relationship should be completely professional and no friendship should develop over the years. Athlete 8 stated: "(...) I

have a really good relationship with my coach and I feel comfortable talking to her, not only as a coach, but also as a friend (...)" In comparison, Athlete 1's thoughts were different: "I don't think you have to have a friendship with the coach. You have to have an open relationship. You should feel that you can talk back and forth. Friendship is more on a personal level. Keep it coach-athlete related."

Despite the differences indicated between the athletes, to compare these two statements would be complex and trivial for a generalization of female athletes. The following statements should allow the reader to become familiar with the needs of the athletes and what they are seeking to increase their self-confidence in a coach-athletes relationship. Athlete 3 illustrated her vision of a coach-athlete relationship: "Having a good relationship with your coaching staff is really important for your confidence knowing that you can talk to your coach when you have a problem." Another example represented the importance to be close to your coach. Athlete 6 explained:

We weren't close to the coach this year and I think that is important (...). I want to be able to go to the coach. Sometimes I've avoided going to the coach because it's awkward and she doesn't talk to you about anything else besides basketball.

Athlete 7 told her story about the coach-athlete relationship she had and how it just never seemed to work out: "(...) It kills me to know that I will never be able to fix my coach-athlete relationship with my coach and we never found it for us, ever (...)."

Athlete 2 presented another example of a poor coach-athlete relationship: "I don't really talk to my coach. We have a surface level friendship. I don't open up to her because I don't feel like she cares. I don't think she understands me (...)."

The majority of athlete's believed that a good coach-athlete relationship was very important to increase their self-confidence. The findings show that certain athletes were very disappointed they had no relationship with their coach and this affected their enjoyment with the team, self-confidence, and sometimes performance.

Developing and presenting personal attributes

Personal attributes of a coach, for this study, are defined as “values, and behaviors of a coach that may influence an athlete's self-confidence.” Some attributes include showing empathy, support, trust, respect, honesty, being positive, being able to challenge the athletes and encouraging them in their goals and actions. Seven athletes firmly expressed that it is important for their coach to believe in them and their abilities. Athlete 9 revealed: “(...) I know that she (coach) trusts me and that is a big thing for self-confidence.” Moreover, Athlete 5 explained that she would like for the coach to be honest and up front with her individually and make her roles known within the team:

He (coach) is very honest with all of his players and tells them straight up what they need to improve on. He puts work ethic and respect first before talent...He is a disciplinarian, but in a way that makes us respect him. He doesn't get mad too often and shows respect for his players. He puts the team first and then himself. He is also very easy to talk to when you have a concern or problem.

Athlete 1 illustrated: “That's the great thing about our coach-athlete relationship is that we have mutual respect for each other and he knows me so well.” Athlete 2 insisted on the coach telling the players the truth and not ‘beating around the bush’ about things: “Don't BS them (players), don't feed them lines, but tell them the truth, if they are not

good enough to play, say they aren't good enough to play. Don't keep them on the bench lingering."

Staying positive and encouraging were also other important personal attributes that contributed to becoming an ideal coach. Athlete 10 explained: "(...) It helps, a lot of positive encouragement about our skills. (...) Just pointing out the positive things that we have been doing recently and reinforcing that. Encouraging us to keep going with that. It is what I like to hear."

Athlete 2 stated: "I would say the greatest feeling in the world is when a coach makes you feel needed on a team." Furthermore, Athlete 3 explained:

(...) It really depends on your coach to get you out of a rut or she can approach me when I am down. I think you need guidance. Knowing that if you need improving on something you can ask the coach for help. Knowing that your coach believes in and sees something in you and knows I can improve. That is what makes me want to go to practice every day and gives me the confidence to keep going.

Athletes revealed that the personal characteristics of a coach are very important to positively influence their self-confidence. A coach must possess specific personal attributes to positively influence each individual athlete on their team. Reflecting on coaches' qualities, athletes identified their ideal coach by these specific personal characteristics. In the following section, the researcher displays the athletes' perceptions on the qualities and characteristics that determine an ideal coach for their self-confidence.

The Ideal Coach that Increases Athletes' Self-confidence

The athlete's viewpoints were sought on their opinions of what constitutes an ideal coach that increases athlete's self-confidence. These perceptions were analyzed through various questions asked within the interviews. The fact that an athlete did not mention one of the presented characteristics does not mean that the athlete did not believe it was important. Due to the open-ended questions, the athletes were able to state whatever was on their mind at that particular moment and sometimes the important characteristics could be left out.

The researcher determined the importance of the data by the number of times a specific characteristic was mentioned by the athletes. In addition, the importance of each characteristic was determined by the athlete's passion towards each characteristic or if one contradicted another. A more specific definition of an *Ideal Coach* is "certain characteristics, roles, behaviors, attributes, and qualities of a coach that athlete's perceive to positively influence their self-confidence."

All 12 athletes were asked specifically to describe their ideal coach. Table 4 illustrates the 12 most predominant characteristics of an ideal coach mentioned by the athletes. The table illustrates the most to least frequently mentioned characteristics by the athletes. By summarizing the athlete's beliefs, the researcher provides a general definition to gain more of an understanding of each coaching characteristic. All 12 athletes were asked to describe specific experiences and situations, involving their varsity coach, which had increased their self-confidence. Therefore, the following information will allow the reader to gain a greater understanding of a female varsity athlete's perception of their ideal coach and how he/she can positively influence their self-confidence.

Table 4

Athlete's Perception of Important Characteristics of a Coach

<i>Coaching Characteristics</i>	<i>Definition from Athlete's Perceptions</i>
Feedback	Coach provides positive and constructive feedback to the players and team to help increase their self-confidence.
Team Builder	Coach develops team cohesion to build self-confidence as a social and performing agent.
Motivator	Coach addresses the specific needs of the team and players to become aroused to increase their self-confidence.
Challenger	Coach is able to challenge each player on the team to increase their success, which in turn will increase their self-confidence.
Respectful	Coach is able to gain respect from the players and show respect to the players.
Managerial Skills	Coach provides each player her role within the team. Coach is organized with a structured plan and is prepared for team meetings, practices, and/or games.

Approachable	Coach is easy to talk to and is approachable for questions, comments, or feedback.
Leader	Coach has the ability to lead the team in accomplishing their goals.
Communicator	Coach is able to give verbal and non-verbal communication with the team in the most effective ways.
Disciplinarian	Coach is able to maintain order and show authority with his/her team in a respectful manner.
Knowledgeable	Coach is knowledgeable about all aspects of the game (i.e. psychological, tactical, physical and technical).
Encourager	Coach positively encourages athletes and team to reach their goals and enjoy each moment.

Feedback was the most predominant characteristic mentioned by the athletes. Athlete 9 was quick to express: "I want feedback!" As well, Athlete 6 stated: "By giving you feedback, it is not all about the bad things. Let someone know when she does well. Make them feel appreciated. Even if you didn't play much, you contributed by cheers and helped others get motivated." Athlete 10 expressed a similar point of view that providing feedback is an important characteristic for a coach to have, but she also described many other important characteristics:

An example would be they are the leader (...) I have had experiences whereas after game talks were so powerful. I know it was just an after game talk but even that kept boiling my confidence for me the next time I played soccer. Sometimes coaches don't have these talks but when they do they can have a huge effect on you. Especially pre game talks if they are positive. That would pump me up too.

Another essential characteristic for a coach to display is being a team builder.

Athlete 6 listed several substantial attributes that she believed a coach must have in order to be a successful team builder. Mainly, she explained that it is essential for a coach to get to know their players outside of the sport.

They (coaches) care about the athlete outside of basketball. They have good communication with the team. Every coach has to make the player who doesn't play as much feel as much part of the team as everyone else. Has to be organized, open with the team, and know everything about the players.

Four athletes soundly indicate that a coach needs to be able to motivate and encourage their players, both individually and as a team. Athlete 10 expressed that a simple positive gesture from the coach can make the world of difference:

I know the coaches don't have a lot of time but it helps to get a lot of positive encouragement about our skills (...). Just pointing out the positive things that we have been doing recently and reinforcing that. Encouraging us to keep going with that. That is what I like to hear.

In addition, the majority of athletes believe that it is essential for their coach to be able to challenge their players. This is another primary characteristic to positively influence their self-confidence. Athlete 9 illustrated her beliefs on challenging the players and her perception of an ideal coach:

An ideal coach...I guess it would be someone who recognizes your strengths and weaknesses. Who allows you to use your strengths, to challenge your weaknesses. A coach that challenges you, but also makes you challenge yourself.

An ideal coach would also give me feedback on not only what I think (...).

Respect represented another key characteristics for a coach to obtain. Three athletes strongly felt that it was the coach's responsibility to gain the respect of their athletes. Athlete 5 told her perception of an ideal coach:

Actually my ideal coach is the one I have now. He is very honest with all of his players and tells them straight up what they need to improve on. He puts work ethic and respect first before talent. That is very important because many 'star' players have rotten attitudes. He is a disciplinarian, but in a way that makes us respect him. He doesn't get mad too often and shows respect for his players. He puts the team first, and then himself. He is also very easy to talk to when you have a concern or problem. So all in all, my ideal coach is someone I can respect and respects me.

Another important characteristic is for a coach to display honestly. Athlete 11 stated her concerns as to how a coach should always tell the players their roles within the team:

I think it is very individual, different people like different things. But like when they pull you aside and say 'this is your role and I know you can fulfill this role and this is how I want you to fulfill this role.' I think that would boost anybody's self-confidence (...).

In addition, Athlete 7 stated that simply the approach of a coach could effect her self-confidence. "Just by the coach's demeanor and the way they approach you, you can either feel one way or another." Athlete 1 explained the importance of leadership from a coach: "A coach is somebody who leads a team. Sets out a path of how he's going to get his team to where they want to be, as far as performance or outcomes."

Athlete 2 expressed her feelings, that it is not the big picture that is important, it is the small things with in the picture that really makes the difference:

I would say the greatest feeling in the world is when a coach makes you feel important on a team. I think is the worst feeling in the world when you don't feel needed. It is a really hard role to fill. Obviously there has to be people like that on the teams because not all twelve players can be a star or the 'go to person.' (...). It is the little things, it doesn't have to be your name in the paper the next day. It really just the things that no one else sees. Just the time outs when it is just your team or in practice. Even when you are just one on one with your coach, talking and he tells you the potential that he sees. To here that from someone else, instead of always telling yourself, it really makes a difference.

Athlete 7 expressed her thoughts on what a coach should be like at the varsity level:

Coaches are different for each group. Once you get to a varsity level you don't need someone to guide you in as many different areas. They don't have to be as much of a role model. It should be more on an equal level where you discuss things. The bigger the team, the harder it is to have a democracy within a team.

The coach will always have to be someone who makes the final decisions.

Present them in a way that the team trusts the coach. Coach has to be a leader, not make the team feel low, and has to have technical knowledge of what they are coaching.

This athlete believes that when you reach a certain level in your sport, athletes should be able to guide themselves. However, the quote symbolized many characteristics the athlete believed a coach should have to be able to positively influence their athlete's self-confidence.

A coach's technical knowledge has always been known to be an essential part of the coaches repertoire at the varsity level. Athlete 7 mentioned that the technical knowledge of an ideal coach is important, but it is not the most important characteristic:

It's not about how good you are on paper, how technical you are on paper, doesn't mean you are going to win a championship. It's the other side of it, to be able to create team dynamics and a sense of confidence within the team as a whole that they can accomplish anything. A lot of focus is put on the technical aspect of sport sometimes. I think it's important in terms of mechanical perspective. (...)

The coach sets the mood within the group. They have the last say.

Athletes perceive many coaching characteristics as essential attributes for an ideal coach to increase their self-confidence. With all that said, the majority of the coaching characteristics complement each other and to have one without the other would defeat the purpose of an 'ideal coach' (see Appendix F for an overall analysis of the most essential coaching qualities to increase athletes self-confidence).

PART THREE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand female varsity athletes' perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. The interviews produced direct and relevant information that aided in producing concrete results for this study. The collection and analysis of data indicated an awareness of coach's qualities and characteristics that influence varsity female athletes' self-confidence. This discussion reflects on past literature and its relation with the present research to provide a more definitive understanding of the concept self-confidence and the qualities and characteristics a coach displays that influence female varsity athletes' self-confidence. The results were broken down into three sections: (a) Self-confidence, (b) Coaches Qualities and (c) The Ideal Coach. The intention of this structure was to first develop a uniform definition of self-confidence and therefore setting a concise meaning of the term. Secondly, coach's qualities were discussed giving weight to the experience of the athletes, and their specific discussions regarding the most predominant qualities that affect athletes self-confidence. Finally, through information contributed by interviews a composite was formed as to what constitutes an ideal coach that can positively influence athletes' self-confidence.

The overall results and perceptions of athletes provided many similar conceptions that corresponded with previous literature. This previous literature has shown that there is a link between coach's behaviors, attributes, and qualities to athletes' self-confidence. The majority of the athletes simulated Bloom's (2002a) findings that coaches have the power to motivate, stimulate, and positively influence athletes through sport. In the

present study, findings show similar personal characteristics of a coach to be essential for positively influencing athletes' self-confidence.

Self-confidence

Definition of self-confidence

When combining the definitions of all twelve athletes, a confident athlete is noted as “one who believes in herself, has inner strength (while not worrying about others beliefs), and stays positive throughout their sport and life.” This definition can be compared to Orlick's (1998) definition of self-confidence, “knowing in our mind and body and believing in our heart that we have value as individuals and can actually accomplish what we are capable of doing” (p. 54). In addition, Orlick (1998) states that people with a great deal of confidence, feel good about themselves. Athletes have identified that coaches must empower them and elevate their self-confidence by supporting their own beliefs. The sporting experience should be a positive learning experience, which should be enhanced by the coach. Cox's (1998) definition of self-confidence “feelings or belief in one's own abilities” (p. 271) also resembles the definition of the athlete's perception in this study, and it reiterates the idea that all athletes need to believe in themselves in order to be confident. Finally, Vealey's (1986) definition of sport confidence, which is “the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their abilities to be successful in sport,” further corresponds with the present findings.

Athletes' self-confidence is an essential characteristic in their varsity career. It may be argued that even though 8 of the 12 athletes see themselves as having more

confidence than their teammates, athletes believe that this self-confidence can increase or decrease from different coaching qualities and characteristics. All 12 athletes reported that the coach does in fact influence their self-confidence with the different qualities they portray as a leader. Csikszentmihalti, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993, as cited in Bloom 2002a) indicate that an important factor in developing athletes' self-confidence is to make sure they enjoy what they are doing, and at the same time encouraging them to excel beyond their current level.

Athlete's self-confidence away from sport

The majority of athlete's believe that their confidence from sport carries over to other areas of their life. Therefore, when a coach increases athletes' self-confidence within sport, the positive effect carries over to their everyday life. Athlete's increased their self-confidence from experience in sport, rising after failure, positive influence from their coach, and success in their sport.

Athletes highlighted the different qualities of a coach that positively influenced their self-confidence, which enabled them to transfer that confidence to the other areas of their academic, social, and professional life. Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce (1990) findings can be compared to the personal attributes of a coach found in the present study that are desired by the athletes to positively influence their self-confidence. These researchers identified that a coach's ability to show acceptance, provide empathy, and express warmth, while at the same time ensuring a high standard for the team and its individual athletes, may build self-confidence and drive personal development.

Athlete's perception of self-confidence in other athletes

Athletes perceive fellow athletes' self-confidence from their verbal and non-verbal communication. Therefore, the majority of athletes are able to tell when teammates' self-confidence is high, low, or if it is influenced by an outside factor (i.e. coach). Athletes state that you can determine a confident athlete from a non-confident athlete, by their posture, eye contact, attitude, tone of voice, and the way they approach others. There is a lack of literature in this area and could be continued with future research to determine how athletes perceive this confidence and if they mirror other athlete's confidence as a form of role modeling.

Coaches Qualities

Essential coaching qualities determined from the study are congruent with the results from previous studies: Bloom, (2002), Edwards, (2000), and Fasting and Pfister, (2000). The key qualities include (a) Implementing communication, (b) Giving feedback, (c) Building a coach-athlete relationship, and (d) Developing and presenting personal attributes. These four qualities seem to be the most predominant of all the qualities mentioned by the athletes. They perceived these four qualities of a coach as essential assets for an athlete to maintain or increase their self-confidence throughout their varsity career.

The present study reflects the broad patterns of literature on coaching qualities that increased varsity female athletes' self-confidence. The main qualities (presented above) were critical, when put into a positive approach, to positively influence athletes' self-confidence. In association with Molstad and Whitaket (1987), they state that the

sport environment is a complex one, especially for female athletes. Their values and expectations include those traditionally associated with the male sport environment, but also ones, which have become characteristics of the female experience. Specifically, these findings indicate that female athletes place particularly high values on a coach's ability to interact on a personal level.

Implementing communication

Athletes reveal that communication is needed first to increase athletes' self-confidence and second to establish a successful coach-athlete relationship. However, communication can be presented as both negative and positive from a coach. These findings are congruent with Marten (1997) that coach's communication must be skillful at sending clear and understandable messages. In addition, they need to be sharp listeners to understand what athletes are communicating in return. All 12 athletes want one on one communication throughout the season, whether it is before, during, or after a game and practice. Furthermore, athletes need to know their roles within the team. Findings show that athletes believe it is the coach's job to deliver these role assignments to each of his or her players before the competitive season.

Once the athlete gains success at a certain task, she becomes more confident in her abilities and furthermore in herself. Other existing literature was found on the importance of communication. Culver and Trudel (2000) stated that communication is a critical technique in the art and science of coaching; perhaps the most important element. Coaches require good communication skills in order to give technical and tactical instruction, manage their teams, interact with parents and administrators, and provide

psychological support to their athletes. Again according to Culver and Trudel (2000), feedback provides the check for effective communication.

Giving feedback

Athletes see effective feedback as another important quality that can positively influence and increase their self-confidence. Furthermore, athletes suggest that feedback can either 'make or break' their self-confidence. Athletes want positive/constructive feedback and they want it on a consistent basis. What is clear to Amorose and Weiss (1998) is that athletes acknowledge feedback as a major quality for the enhancement of their self-confidence. In addition, these researchers found that praise or constructive feedback increased the self-confidence in athletes more than receiving corrective feedback. Further research by Solomon (2001) indicates that the quality and quantity of feedback may differ from athlete to athlete based on the perceived ability by the coach.

The female athletes address that they want to be shown empathy while the coach is delivering the feedback. They want it immediate but in a way that they feel empowered, all the while remaining confident in their abilities. In addition, athlete's testimony on the way that a coach delivers feedback can increase or decrease their self-confidence.

The majority of female athletes prefer positive/constructive feedback as opposed to negative feedback or yelling and screaming. Some athletes believe that a coach must realize that any feedback is better than no feedback. When an athlete is taken out of a game, without an immediate explanation, this action decreases their self-confidence for the rest of the game. The athletes further highlight that by being singled out in a negative

way by their coach, in front of their teammates, fans, and parents, decreases their self-confidence instantly. Athletes become embarrassed and less confident in their abilities within their sport and themselves. However, if the coach singles out athletes in a positive manner, in front of their team, fans, and parents, this can increase their self-confidence and give them more insight to perform at a higher level. The majority of athletes express that recognition in front of others increases their self-confidence.

Building a coach-athlete relationship

A coach-athlete relationship is identified as being another essential quality in positively influence an athlete's self-confidence. Officer & Rosenfeld (1985) define a coach-athlete relationship as, " unique and multidimensional, with the potential for high degrees of relationship ambiguity: the coach is part teacher, part friend, part counselor, and part parent while the athlete plays the complementary roles of student, friend, client, and offspring" (p. 360). After reviewing the data, what is evident is that a coach-athlete relationship molds all the other qualities mentioned in this study.

The athlete's interviews offer several examples of how important a coach-athlete relationship is for their self-confidence, not only in sporting terms, but personally as well. Similar to these findings, Edwards (2000) stated that coach-player interchanges serve to illustrate and underline the importance of communication as an essential quality in the elite setting of women's hockey. Further evidence reveals that for a successful coach-athlete relationship, the coach must know the individual personalities of their players.

Zimmerman and Reavill (1998) found that an essential quality for a coach is to remember every athlete is different and that an athlete-centered model is the best way to

satisfy the needs of all athletes. The coach must know whom they can confront more aggressively, compared to an athlete that needs to be approached more delicately.

Athlete 10 explains: "Again, I think it is very individual, different people like different things." What's more, a coach may be notable in an athlete's performance only if both parties combine their efforts. According to Orlick (2000), "performance is enhanced most readily when coaches and athletes work together to create a positive environment and share responsibility for pursuing the mission and improving ongoing communication" (p. 191).

Developing and presenting personal attributes

Athletes perceive personal attributes of a coach to be essential for positively influencing their self-confidence. Moreover, to achieve a good coach-athlete relationship, which again increases athletes' self-confidence, athletes express that by having respect from the coach gives them more self-confidence in their sport. The majority of athletes illustrate that if their coach trusts them, as an athlete and person, their confidence would increase, they would play better under pressure situations, and gain more confidence within the team setting. Zimmerman and Reavill (1998) expressed that coaches need to understand what motivates their athletes to participate in their sport and provide an environment that addresses the athletes' needs. Orlick (2000) declares "the best coaches understand that when you feel valued and respected, you give more of yourself and perform at a higher level" (p. 189).

In summary, the more trust and respect the coach displays toward his or her athletes, the more confident the athlete has in pressure situations, in their coach, in their

playing ability, and overall within their team. Furthermore, in order for coaches to positively influence and increase athletes' self-confidence they must give support, show empathy, and create a positive environment.

The Ideal Coach

After reviewing Table 4 in the results, twelve most predominant characteristics model an 'ideal coach' which is one who positively influences athlete's self-confidence. Female athletes' self-confidence blooms from a coach delivering positive reinforcement, defining individual roles, and player motivation/encouragement. Anshel (1994) expresses that it is important for a coach to provide a positive environment for learning. Through a positive environment, self-confidence can be generated, which may be a key for enhancing athlete's performance. To reinforce positive behaviors, a coach must understand how to tell the athlete 'what to do' and 'what not to do' and try to keep errors in perspective.

Athletes want the high five's, the 'good jobs' and the recognition for their efforts and successes. This type of encouragement increases the athletes' self-confidence. Moreover, it allows their self-confidence to stay high for the remainder of the game or practice, and the next one to follow. Athlete 1 illustrates her belief on coaches' influence on self-confidence: "It's the impact they (the coach) have on you. They will be the difference between you leaving a sport and staying." Athlete 5 expresses the best thing her coach has ever said to her that increased her self-confidence: "You are a true leader on this team and I hope the girls follow in your footsteps." This is a strong statement that can be kept with the athlete through out the rest of her sport career. Coaches must be able

to acquire and improve on their coaching skills. They must adhere to certain principles of good communication, such as, personal attributes, organization, manners, vocabulary, and positions. Moreover, a good coach must inspire, realize individuality, be persistent and open-minded, and understand the endless responsibilities of coaching (Canadian Soccer Association, 2002).

The essence of this research suggests that coaches do have an influence on female athletes' self-confidence. The interpretation of data provided thorough literature, and the athlete interviews addressed many of the qualities of an ideal coach. The distinct elements that emerged from the interviews genuinely illustrate a definite relation between coach's qualities and their influence on female athletes' self-confidence. As well, interpretation of the interviews revealed a close association with the athlete's perceptions, and this evidence along with past research, again suggests a valid indication that coaches do have an impact on female varsity athletes' self-confidence. Feltz and Lirgg (1998) illustrate that female's lack of confidence only occurs under certain conditions, and have various strategies for enhancing their self-confidence in the sporting domain. What is clear, is that this domain of research is a growing body of work, which suggests that certain strategies from a coach are needed to be successful.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Recommendations

As an athlete with a strong sense of a coach-athlete relationship and as a researcher with an awareness of sport and its traditions, I began this present study with a desire to further develop recognition of female athletes, coach's qualities, and how these qualities affect female athlete's self-confidence. Without exception, all athletes participating in this study were emotional in their responses and were committed to a vision of an ideal coach. The present study has generated conclusions that could provide a focus for further action.

Coaches should be aware of the qualities that are most highly valued by female athletes. By cultivating these four qualities: implementing communication, giving feedback, building a coach-athlete relationship, and developing and presenting personal attributes, an administrator should seek and secure persons who exemplify, possess, and make use of these qualities. Based on the results, it is necessary for coaches to understand the importance of such qualities and appreciate both the psychological and physical differences of the female athlete.

Communication by a coach is considered both verbal and non-verbal, while being approached in a clear, precise, consistent, and positive manner to the athletes. It is recommended a coach explain to each athlete their role on the team and why their playing minutes are at a certain level, at the present time. In addition, feedback is a form of communication, which should be practised skillfully by a coach. It is suggested coaches give positive and constructive feedback to their athletes, before the game, at half-time, after the games, and during practice to positively influence athletes' self-confidence. In

the present study, a coach-athlete relationship is extremely important in developing the majority of athletes' self-confidence. A coach should always be aware of the different personalities of each of his or her athletes. Furthermore, coaches should try and give recognition to athletes and show interest in their everyday life, as well as their game. Personal characteristics are evaluated as the positive support, trust, empathy, respect, and honesty shown by the coach. Based on the results, coaches should be responsible for knowing the 'female' athlete and using their knowledge in these areas to positively influence their athletes' self-confidence. Sport is a game; it is part of you but not all of you. It is recommended that all coaches should understand and recognize that their vision of winning cannot be at the cost of corrupting athletes' self-confidence.

Today, we see more and more females participating in sport. At a very young age females are exposed to team and individual environments through sport. In many instances, particularly through the teenage and young adult years, athletes spend a great deal of time with their teammates and coaches. It is imperative that coaches realize the effects their coaching characteristics have on female athletes, and understand that both the positive and negative effects of their approach carry over to other areas of that individual's life. Based on the characteristics that we have identified that positively influence athletes' self-confidence, (feedback, team builder, motivator, challenger, respectful, managerial skills, approachable, leader, communicator, disciplinarian, knowledgeable, and positive support) a coach must practice each essential quality to enhance their coaching ability (see Appendix G for list of qualities and corresponding literature). Furthermore, administrators should evaluate coaches on these specific qualities before allowing them to coach at the varsity level. Coaches must learn to

identify and conquer techniques such as self-evaluation, learning strategies, and self-confidence techniques. Coaches should familiarize themselves with the many dimensions of gender differences and be prepared to recognize these differences in a coaching situation.

One limitation of this study would be that a larger sample size of this project might have covered a more decisive analysis on the topic studied: female varsity athletes' perception of how coaches influence their self-confidence. Furthermore, the demographics of the participants withhold any generalization to the larger population of athletes. Another limitation of this study was the difficulty in putting the athletes' emotions into words. Various approaches were used to reveal the true value of each quality but the emotions of each athlete could not be fully expressed.

More research is required in several areas directly pertaining to this study. For example, a longitudinal case study with high school female athletes and the impact their coach has on their self-confidence throughout their high school years. Such a study would be beneficial in identifying younger athletes' development of self-confidence. What differences would be apparent in female athletes' self-confidence who are led by coaches trained in communication, feedback, coach-athlete relationship building, and personal attributes as compared to coaches that have limited training in these areas? Finally, more research is needed on the differences between male and female coaches and the effect they have on female athletes' self-confidence.

In conclusion, the qualitative approach to this research was designed to obtain the views of participants and to illustrate through descriptive interviews and analysis, a clearer understanding of the importance of self-confidence and its relationship to a

coach's influence on female athletes' self-confidence. It is hoped that this research has produced some insightful information in the subject matter and may open a door for better understanding of athlete's needs and further inquiry into understanding the specific needs of female athletes.

Personal Reflection

The research conducted for this thesis has been both an educational and personal venture in the hope of gaining information beyond what currently exists. As an athlete, I have played soccer and other sports at both university and international levels. I have experienced coach-athlete relationships with many coaches along the way and have been exposed to many different coaching qualities, characteristics, and styles. Therefore, I feel my research would not be complete without the process of contributing my personal thoughts based on my exposure to coach's qualities, characteristics, and styles and their effect on my own self-confidence.

After my second year of university, I was asked to speak at the athletic banquet at my local high school. Until then, I did not really spend a great deal of time reflecting on my athletic or soccer career or how I achieved success to that point. This reflection was a turning point for me as I spent days resonating on my athletic career trying to understand my path and reflecting on the positive elements that contributed to my successes. I knew that I was a hard worker but did not spend a great deal of time trying to understand the qualities of my various coaches and their contribution to my success, except one. The period of time spent with this coach, the strong coach-athlete relationship and his ability to build strong self-confidence stayed with me even as I changed coaches. Four years later, I would like to contribute to this research some of the same thoughts that I

presented to high school students in the hope that my personal experiences and convictions will add to and reinforce the results of this study.

At five feet two inches, I am an unlikely candidate for a soccer goalie. I could go on and on about the many coaches that told me I was too short and that I would never make it, but that would be pointless. Instead I would like to tell you about the one coach that has made a difference and is a key component to my achievements. I played under this coach in a senior woman's league for three seasons. This coach, through his ability to implant self-confidence has embedded a lasting effect on me, both as an athlete and in my personal life. His qualities as a coach represent a model that embraces positive influences on player self-confidence and I believe as a result brings forth the best efforts from players. His practices were gruelling and his expectations were high, but players delivered to the best of their ability because coach-athlete relationships were constructive and without taunting personal criticism.

Communication was constant between this coach and members of the team both as a whole and on an individual basis. Players knew where they stood at all times. Feedback was constructive and accepted because players knew how well the coach knew their specific playing style. His personal characteristics portrayed a style where his knowledge about the game of soccer was very apparent yet he encouraged input from the players. He identified the weaknesses of players but constantly worked and built on the strengths of individual players. In my instance, we both recognized my height as a shortcoming but his insistence to concentrate and develop other qualities such as conditioning, speed, timing, and focus eventually provided me with an edge over many other keepers.

As my self-confidence grew, these qualities became my strengths and outweighed my lack of height. His resolve to raise the self-confidence of other players and myself provided lasting effects. It enabled me to distinguish the differences of other coaches, between constructive criticism and feedback verses personal ridicule and poor communication, which produced negative effects on players. Also it provided me with the courage to overcome obstacles and continue to persevere. Most importantly, this coach set a standard for me of how an ideal coach should be.

One of the great joys of sport is that the condition under which you play and the situations you face are never the same from one moment to the next. A game can seem like an unfathomable maze when you are playing badly. Yet when things are going well, you almost forget such obstacles can exist. In both instances, it is the solid coach-athlete relationship, communication, feedback, and personal attributes of a coach that can produce positive effects on athletes' confidence. To my experience and understanding of coach's qualities, the strong personal characteristics of a good coach will provide the concrete foundation and continued success of player development.

As a researcher, I learned many lessons throughout the past two years. I have learned that without persistence you will have trouble seeing the light at the end of your journey. If I could help fellow upcoming researchers, I would tell them first to choose a topic that you truly enjoy. To work in your domain of passion makes each process that much easier. Next, would be to develop your strengths in research, but also recognize your weaknesses, whether it is in writing, collecting data, analyzing data, or presenting data. Try and find help in these areas and you will learn a vast amount for future endeavours. You will be surprised at the amount of people who are out there willing to

help you, and feel honoured doing so at the same time. Finally, I suggest that you try to enjoy each stage and individual personality you meet along the way. You may learn that the obstacles and challenges that you face will become your stairway to success in the future.

The road to confidence is paved with weekly victories. Learn to applaud them.

Unknown

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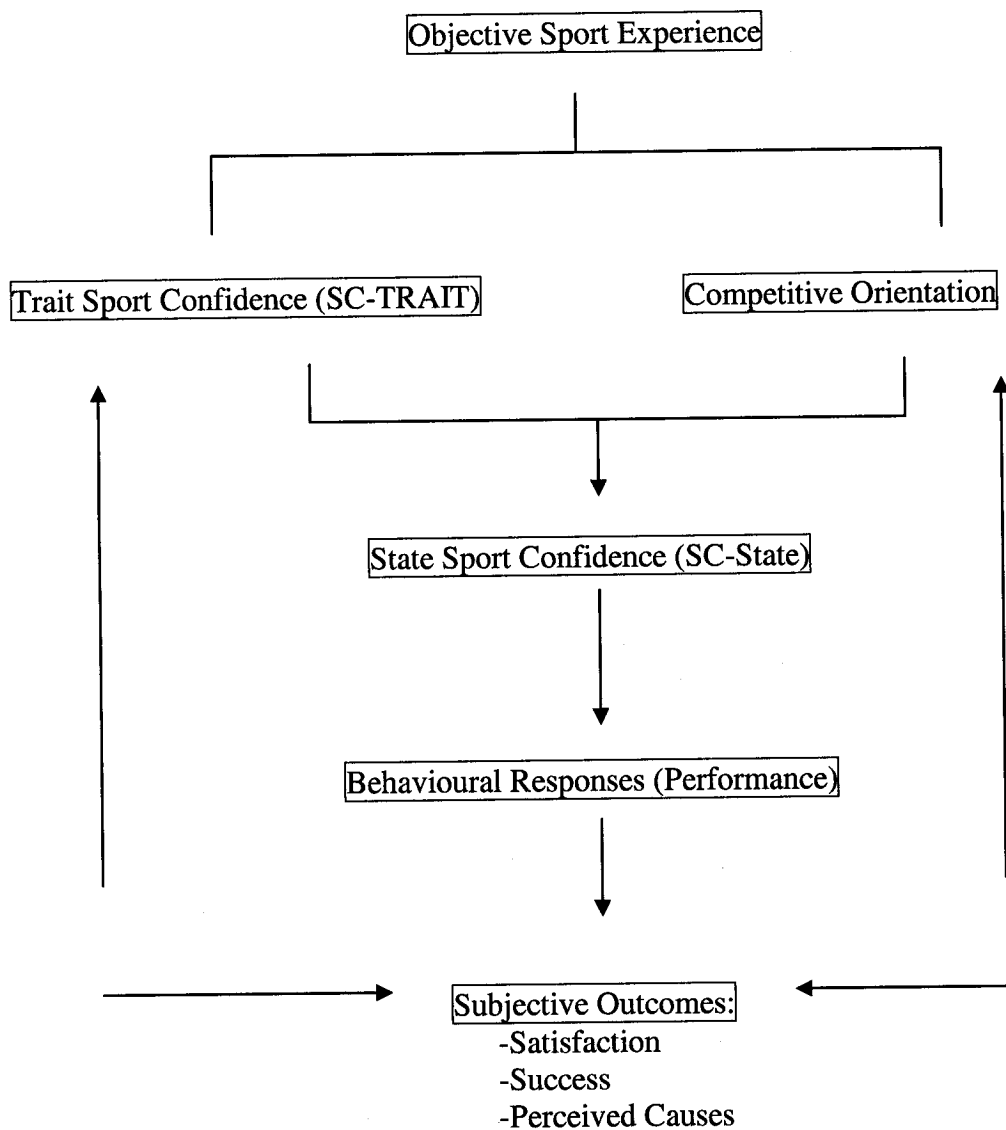
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Appendix A

Vealey's Model of Sport Confidence (Cox, 1998)



Appendix C

Information Sheet for Athletes

Name (Fiction) _____

Age _____

Sport _____

Position on team _____

Years of experience as athlete _____

Year in university _____

Year eligibility _____

Other sports played

Top level played

Thank you for your time.

Beth McCharles
M.A. Candidate.

Appendix D

Athletes Interview Guide

Our definition of Self-confidence is: "the belief or degree of certainty that individuals possess about their ability to be successful in sport."
(Vealey, 1986, p. 222).

1. What is your vision of self-confidence?

Referring to our definition:

2. Can you tell me, some of your past experiences that increased your level of self-confidence before becoming a varsity athlete?
3. Can you tell me some present experiences that increase your self-confidence as a varsity athlete? (specific situations and events)
4. Do you believe a coach can influence an athlete's self-confidence?
5. In your experience as a varsity athlete, what strategies or qualities did your coaches implement that may have made you feel less confident about your abilities in yourself and for your team?
6. In your experience as a varsity athlete, what strategies or qualities did your coaches implement that may have made you feel more confident about your abilities in yourself and for your team?
7. In your experience as a varsity athlete have you tried to communicate with your coach what strategies work best for you to build self-confidence or a higher level of confidence?
8. Do you believe you are a confident athlete? If yes or no, why?
9. How confident do you feel lately? High Medium Low
 - 10.1 What make you say high or low?
 - 10.2 Are you satisfied with this level of confidence?
 - 10.3 Which level would you like to achieve?
10. In comparison with your teammates, do you believe you are:
 - a) lot more confident than your teammate,
 - b) More confident than your teammates,
 - c) As confident as your teammates,
 - d) Less confident as your teammates,
 - e) A lot less confident than your teammates.
11. Would you like to add any other information about athlete's self-confidence that I did not ask you?

Appendix E

Overall Analysis of the Most Essential Coaching Characteristics to Increase Athlete's Self-confidence

Communication (12)	Making all the players feel equal (3)
Feedback (11)	Confidence in the athletes (3)
Player/coach relationship (10)	Giving more personality (3)
Motivator (10)	Support (3)
Recognition (10)	Listener (2)
Respect/Trust (7)	Honest (2)
Being positive (7)	Individual meetings (2)
Goal-setting (6)	Challenger (2)
Individual attention for improvement (6)	Care about the athlete (1)
Approachable (5)	Empowerment (1)
Knowing each personality (4)	Sensitive (1)
Leader (3)	Organizer (1)
Knowledgeable (3)	Disciplinarian(1)
Providing individual role (3)	Guidance (1)

Appendix F

*Past Literature in Correspondence with Coaches Characterizes
of an ideal Coach that Positively influence Athletes' Self-confidence.*

Characteristics of an Ideal Coach the positively influence Athletes' Self-confidence	Some Past Literature on Specific Characteristics
Feedback	Culver and Trudel (2000); Amorose and Weiss (1998); Rink (2002)
Team Builder	Barnett, Smoll, and Smith (1992)
Motivation	Rainer and Martens (1997); Bloom (2002b); Howe (1986)
Challenger	Bloom (2002)
Respectful	Orlick (2000); Salmela (1996)
Managerial Skills	Community Coach Senior Manual (CCSM) (2002); Zimmerman and Reavill (1998)
Approachable	Officer and Rosenfeld (1985); Fasting and Pfister (2000)
Leader	CCSM (2002); Salmela (1996)
Communication	Culver and Trudel (2000)
Disciplinarian	Rainer and Martens (1997)
Knowledgeable	Salmela (1996)
Positive Support	Rainer and Martens (1997); Orlick (2000)
