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Examining how elite S&C coaches develop coaching practice using reflection stimulated by
video vignettes

15 Abstract

16 The purpose of this study was to identify narrative types that illuminate how strength and
17 conditioning (S&C) coaches used video vignettes in a guided reflection process to support the
18 development of effective coaching practices. At the beginning of each week over a four-week
19 period, eleven elite S&C coaches were sent a short video vignette clip of an S&C coach's
20 practice. They subsequently engaged in daily reflections in which they were guided to
21 explore how the topic of the vignette aligned (or not) with their coaching practice. After the
22 intervention, each S&C coach was interviewed regarding their process of learning from the
23 vignette and from their reflections. Using a holistic narrative analysis of form and structure,
24 results exemplified three narrative types: performance, achievement, and helper. S&C
25 coaches whose reflections fitted the performance narrative type focused on their own practice
26 with limited consideration of the athletes' perspective or the vignette. The S&C coaches
27 whose reflections fitted the achievement narrative type strove to accomplish goals with their
28 athletes and were selective in considering the vignette. S&C coaches whose reflections fit the
29 helper narrative type found that the vignette helped them to consider an athlete-centered
30 coaching approach focusing on the athletes' well-being as well as athletic abilities. Thus,
31 S&C coach developers should utilise a guided reflection process that focuses on encouraging
32 a coaching approach based on the helper narrative type.

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34 Keywords: reflection, narrative learning, coach development, psychosocial coaching
35 behaviours, vignettes

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Introduction

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Strength and conditioning (S&C) coaching organisations, including the UK Strength and Conditioning Association (UKSCA), the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), and the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA) have a focus on teaching standardised competency-based curriculums. Such instructional strategies are based on the instructional paradigm, where learning is linear and instruction centred (Paquette & Trudel, 2016). In this approach, extensive technical and coaching knowledge is fundamental to develop effective S&C coaching practice; however, learning is reduced to *what* the S&C coach should know (also known as “professional knowledge”). The International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, 2013) suggests that coaches should develop holistically, learning professional knowledge as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge in order to develop effective coaching practice. In adopting a lifelong learning approach, coaches learn from experience through reflection, adding to their knowledge of how they interact with others (interpersonal knowledge) and who they are (intrapersonal knowledge).

Findings from recent research have provided evidence that S&C coach educators should consider more novel and innovative approaches, based on the constructivist paradigm (e.g., Ciampolini, Milistetd, Rynne, Brasil, & Vieira do Nascimento, 2019). Constructivist pedagogical strategies, for example narrative learning, emphasise active human development throughout life via personal perceptions of experiences (Baumgartner, Caffarella, & Merriam, 2006) and are in line with developing the coach holistically (e.g., Cushion et al., 2010). Narrative learning theory suggest that humans lead storied lives, meaning we live in, through, and out of narratives (Frank, 2010) and has been encouraged as an instructional strategy in coach education (McMahon, 2013). Through narratives, we make sense of the complexity of life and learn from our experiences. Research suggests that reflective practice encourages narrative learning (Szedlak, Smith, Day, & Callary, 2019). Reflective practice in sports

62 coaching has been encouraged (e.g., Gilbourne, Marshall, & Knowles, 2013) including in an
63 S&C context (e.g., Kuklick & Gearity, 2015). Reflection brings together thoughts of past and
64 present experiences and promotes internal dialogue of the meaningfulness and relevance of
65 coaching experiences (Knowles, Katz, & Gilbourne, 2012). As a result, the practitioner
66 generates thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that may initiate a change in applied practice
67 (Saylor, 1990). Thus, by examining S&C coaches' reflective accounts, researchers and S&C
68 coach educators (e.g., UKSCA, NSCA, ASCA) are able to not only highlight what coaching
69 areas S&C coaches reflect upon, but more importantly, how their personal beliefs and values
70 contribute to why they develop specific behaviours and characteristics. This means that the
71 reflection process can be a useful tool to examine how S&C coaches' narratives might
72 influence the development of technical as well as psychosocial coaching practice.

73 Reflection is an internal housekeeping process, meaning that it can be limited to what
74 an individual currently knows and how they perceive themselves to be effective (Moon,
75 2004). One suggestion of disseminating information that could further encourage narrative
76 learning, as well as enabling S&C coaches to consider new or alternative effective coaching
77 behaviours and characteristics, is the use of vignettes. Vignettes are non-fiction, evidence-
78 based, crafted stories. Through story, vignettes can be used to translate knowledge about
79 effective S&C practice to the coach. Frank (2010) suggested that stories have the ability to
80 arouse imagination and make the unseen compelling. Since memory, storage, and retrieval is
81 predominantly story based, Scott, Hartling, O'Leary, Archibald, and Klassen (2012) described
82 stories as generating an emotional impact. Indeed, vignettes stimulate an internal dialogue,
83 which is synonymous with initiating reflective practice (Saylor, 1990). As an example,
84 Szedlak et al. (2019) examined how elite S&C coaches responded to stories (vignettes) of
85 effective coaching. The authors reported how S&C coaches initially evaluated not only
86 technical coaching skills but also psychosocial behaviours that contributed to effective

87 coaching practice. In turn, the S&C coaches reflected on their coaching philosophy, including
88 coaching values such as developing the relationship with the athlete through trust, rapport and
89 respect, and using motivational strategies to engage the athlete. This process of reflection on
90 the vignette allowed the S&C coaches to contemplate change to their coaching practice,
91 which included practical steps to allow athletes more autonomy and ideas to gain insight
92 through feedback surveys on how athletes perceived their sessions. Whilst this research
93 provides evidence that vignettes are a useful instructional strategy to disseminate information
94 and encourage reflection, exploring the S&C coaches' narratives that guide how and why
95 they decided to act and reflect on certain information and disregard other, would provide
96 S&C coach developers with valuable information to enhance current coach development
97 programmes. Using the same narratives developed by Szedlak et al. (2019), we conducted an
98 intervention with S&C coaches with the aim to provide a novel and holistic strategy for S&C
99 coaches to continue to develop their practice.

100 **Method**

101 **Participants**

102 This study used criteria based purposive sampling (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) to recruit
103 experienced, elite S&C coaches. Trudel and Gilbert (2013) suggested that experienced
104 coaches have potentially the most to gain from the process of reflection since they have the
105 knowledge to understand that there is not "one best way" to coach, thus utilising reflection as
106 a means to think through different coaching decisions and options. Further, they are more
107 likely to seek out alternative learning opportunities, often having exhausted traditional formal
108 coach education programming. Given these suggestions, we identified two criteria for the
109 selection of participants: i) a minimum of three years' experience coaching athletes at an elite
110 level, that is working with full-time funded athletes who represent their country at the highest
111 achievable level (i.e., Formula one, World/European championship, Olympic/Paralympic

112 games, National Hockey League and County Championship Division One); ii.) accredited by
113 the UKSCA or a certified strength and conditioning specialist through the NSCA. This
114 stipulation helped to deselect participants who are self-declared coaches, a trend common in
115 the fitness context. We used these criteria to ensure that the S&C coaches had a thorough
116 understanding of the elite performance environment and had built up a high level of context
117 specific coaching skills. To recruit the S&C coaches, the first author approached leading
118 S&C companies who had previously shown an interest in using reflective practice to develop
119 coaching practice. Following these approaches, the companies internally advertised the
120 reflective process as part of their S&C coach development programme. Whilst participation
121 was voluntary, the S&C coaches who were recruited perceived this as a great opportunity to
122 further develop their coaching skills and were highly motivated to fully engage with the
123 reflective process. As a result, they completed their diary entries after every coaching session,
124 with only the occasional entry being late. The final sample consisted of eleven S&C coaches
125 (ten male and one female) covering the following sports: formula one motor racing (n=5),
126 athletics (n=3), cricket (n=1), ice hockey (n=1), squash and boccia (n=1). Three S&C coaches
127 resided in the United States of America, two S&C coaches in Finland, one in France and the
128 rest in the United Kingdom. All S&C coaches spoke and wrote fluently in English. The S&C
129 coaches had an average age of 31 years (SD=4.2) and an average coaching experience of 9.3
130 years (SD=3.1) with 7.1 years at an elite level (SD= 2.6).

131 Research has proposed that initial reflection should be guided or shared by an
132 experienced mentor to draw the person into deeper levels of reflection such as evaluating and
133 reworking their own views and ideas (e.g., Knowles et al., 2012). This aligns with Frank's
134 (2010) conception of dialogical research, which proposes that participants and researcher co-
135 construct data through a process of active dialogue. Thus, the first author, an experienced
136 S&C coach and coach mentor, acted as the coach developer. He has over eleven years'

137 experience of coaching elite athletes (i.e., Olympic, World, European champions) and over
138 six years' experience in mentoring S&C coaches, which included facilitating critical
139 reflection on coaches' own practice. Further, he has theoretical knowledge of the process of
140 reflection through his PhD studies, and thus could provide feedback to the S&C coaches that
141 was in line with both their practice as an S&C coach, and with theoretical underpinnings.

142 **Procedure**

143 After obtaining institutional ethical approval for the study and written informed
144 consent from the participants, S&C coaches were invited to participate in the study. The
145 study had three stages: 1) a pre-intervention education on reflection; 2) the intervention
146 which included the video vignette, reflective e-diaries, and feedback from the first
147 author/coach developer; 3) a post-intervention semi-structured interview.

148 **Stage one.** The first stage of this intervention aimed to educate participants on how to
149 engage in the reflective process. We provided participants with an information pack in which
150 we outlined simple evidence-based guidelines and examples of how to engage in reflective
151 practice (i.e., Evans & Maloney, 1998; Moon, 2004). To familiarise themselves with the
152 process of reflective writing, all of the participants reflected on a coaching scenario at the end
153 of a coaching day. The aim of this first reflection was to allow the S&C coaches to practically
154 apply the guidelines we provided and thus become more familiar and comfortable with the
155 process ahead.

156 **Stage two.** Considering previous research regarding reflective practice (i.e., Knowles
157 et al., 2012) and heutagogical learning approaches, which emphasise that autonomous, self-
158 determined learning is a skill that takes time to develop (Stoszowski & McCarthy, 2018),
159 the intervention stage lasted four weeks for each participant. It included three steps every
160 week: a) watching a video vignette once per week, b) completing daily guided reflections in
161 an e-diary, and c) sharing the e-diary and receiving feedback from the coach developer.

162 First, on the Sunday of each week, the participants watched a clip of the video vignette
163 developed by Szedlak et al. (2019), which was made available via YouTube (i.e., first clip,
164 first week, second clip second week etc.). The video vignette created by Szedlak and
165 colleagues consisted of several individual clips (available at
166 <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheDavster101>) and its design and development was
167 grounded in research examining effective coaching practice that had been conducted and
168 synthesised (Szedlak, Smith, Day, & Callary, 2018; Szedlak, Smith, Day, & Greenlees 2015).
169 Through the vignette clips, we disseminated research-based information on effective S&C
170 practice including psychosocial coaching behaviours. Participants were then prompted to
171 reflect by considering a series of questions regarding their perceptions of the video vignette.
172 These questions were included on an information sheet at the start of each week. With these
173 questions, we aimed to understand which effective coaching behaviours and characteristics
174 from the vignette clip they perceived as relevant to their personal coaching context. Questions
175 included, “Can you identify any effective behaviours and characteristics of the S&C coach?”,
176 “Does this relate to your own coaching practice, if yes would you like to share some of your
177 experiences?” and “If you would like to change anything in your coaching practice as a result
178 of watching the video clip, what would that be and how would you do that?”

179 Second, participants completed a daily e-diary between Monday and Friday. As Day
180 and Thatcher (2009) suggested, diaries can often prompt internal dialogue and allow for a
181 greater understanding of why and how we do what we do. Thus, the e-diary acted as a means
182 to initiate and record the process of reflection. The e-diary was semi-structured, meaning that
183 through questions, we guided participants to re-evaluate and consider how the information
184 they identified from the video might contribute to understanding and enhancing their current
185 coaching practice. Questions included, “What went well or OK? Why?”, “What emotions did
186 you feel throughout the session?”, “Why are these emotions important?”, “How might the

187 athletes perceive your action and emotions?” and “How would you like them to perceive
188 you?” We encouraged the participants to use these questions as an initial stimulus rather than
189 a simple question and answer, which gave the participants the latitude to use their personal
190 style to express themselves.

191 The e-diary (a document shared between the coach developer and the individual coach
192 in Dropbox) was chosen as a method to collect data. With the advance of technology, typed
193 diaries may now be a more familiar method of writing and was easily shared with the first
194 author (coach developer) at the end of every week (i.e., the Friday or Saturday). The coach
195 developer immersed himself in the data through the process of reading and re-reading the
196 diary entries before providing feedback to the participants. By becoming familiar with the
197 data, the coach developer was better able to guide participants to actively consider practical
198 or psychological change to become more effective in their coaching practice. Feedback was
199 provided using the comment function in Microsoft Word, and highlighting text in which the
200 coach developer noted which step of reflective practice the participant had engaged with and
201 what the next step might be. For example, “You start to analyse your feelings here and
202 brought it back to your relationship with the athlete. Can I encourage you to go a step further?
203 Consider how you think the athlete perceived your actions and how did you want him to
204 perceive them? Maybe you can reflect on your own values and philosophy, and talk a little
205 more about how this feeling influences your coaching practice?” Recapping the main points
206 of the feedback, the coach developer then provided a weekly summary of suggestions that the
207 participant could consider for the following week.

208 The participants repeated this three-step process with a different clip of the video
209 vignette each week for four weeks, reflecting in the e-diary only on days they coached their
210 athletes. Since this process was intensive for the first author/coach developer, data collection
211 spanned a period of six months because he worked with no more than two to three

212 participants at the same time. This time span allowed the first author to spend sufficient time
213 with the reflective entries.

214 **Stage three.** After each participant had completed the intervention, they took part in
215 an individual semi-structured interview that focussed on how they developed their coaching
216 practice including which psychosocial behaviours, if any, they developed, and how the video
217 vignette clips might have contributed. Sample questions for these interviews included “What
218 coaching behaviours or characteristics have you developed through this process?” and “What
219 practical changes, if any did you make to your coaching practice?” and “Did the video help
220 influence your decisions on what to change, if so how?” and “What have you learned from
221 the video that you maybe would not have considered otherwise?” The follow up interviews
222 were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. These closing interviews each lasted between
223 20-31 minutes.

224 **Data analysis**

225 We analysed the reflection and interview data using a holistic narrative analysis of
226 form and structure (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) following the steps outlined by Smith (2017).
227 We depicted, through the structure and form of narratives, how the process of reflection,
228 initiated by video vignettes, influenced the development of effective psychosocial behaviours
229 and characteristics within the context of S&C coaching. The strength of this method of
230 analysis lies in its ability to depict how humans make sense of their life experiences over time
231 (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). It generates understanding of psychological
232 processes within their sociocultural context such as sports coaching (Smith, 2010). Our
233 analysis identified common narrative types S&C coaches use to make sense of their coaching
234 practice. To do so, the first author engaged in “narrative indwelling”, reading and re-reading
235 the accounts to identify the thematic focus for the development of the plot across participants’
236 accounts. Next, the first author investigated shared developments and common transitions

237 across the S&C coaches' data in terms of the narrative form. More specifically, the first
238 author identified objectives of the participants involved, the conflicts or obstacles of
239 achieving them, and attitudes or emotions toward those circumstances. He then presented his
240 initial findings of common narrative types and themes to the research team, who acted as
241 critical friends questioning the initial interpretations and providing alternative suggestions.
242 We repeated this process several times until we identified three dominant narrative types, the
243 "performance", "achievement", and "helper" narrative (Table 1). These narrative types have
244 been recognised in literature (i.e., Douglas & Carless, 2006, 2008). Five S&C coaches'
245 transcripts best fitted the performance type, three the achievement, and three the helper
246 narrative type. It should be noted that the three narrative types are not an all or nothing
247 approach, but rather a continuum (Blumberg, 2009), from "performance" through to "helper",
248 with achievement in between. This means that the S&C coach engages in an interplay
249 between the dominant narratives depending on the specific coaching context and situation.

250 To analyse the structure of the narrative, we then constructed the axis of how the plot
251 of each narrative was developed, keeping in consideration the experiences, present coaching
252 situation, and possible changes in coaching practice of the participants (Smith, 2017).
253 Furthermore, we analysed the sentence structure including use of language (i.e., use of first
254 person pronouns). Second, we explored the content of each narrative type. Guided by
255 previous research on reflective practice (e.g., Gilbourne et al., 2013; Knowles et al., 2012),
256 effective coaching (e.g., Côté & Gilbert, 2009) and the knowledge translation process (e.g.,
257 Graham et al., 2006), we refined the identified themes within each narrative, particularly
258 focusing how reflective practice and the video vignettes impacted coaching practice. For each
259 emerging theme, the contributing authors acted as critical friends by encouraging alternative
260 interpretations, comparison across participants and consideration in accordance with the
261 identified narrative type.

262 Research findings have highlighted that stories are an effective strategy to disseminate
263 knowledge to applied practitioners (e.g., Smith, Tomasone, Latimer, Cheung, & Martin
264 Ginis, 2015). Thus, using creative non-fiction writing (CNF) techniques, we crafted three
265 stories: “the helper”, “the performer”, and “the achiever” to present the findings. We used
266 direct quotes and diary excerpts from all the participants that represented the identified
267 themes for the specific narrative (Table1) and only added our own words (in italics) when
268 clarification was needed. For example, “The Helper” story was made up of quotations that
269 best represent the sub-themes of this narrative from the five coaches that fitted the helper
270 narrative type. To ensure confidentiality, we used pseudonyms for the athletes that the
271 participants spoke about. Whilst each of these stories describe one S&C coach’s engagement
272 with the reflection process and response to the vignette, reference to athletes and S&C
273 coaches are meant to be composites of all S&C coaches working with all athletes within the
274 identified narrative type.

275 Using CFN to display our results fits well with the overall aim and philosophical
276 approach (i.e., epistemological constructionism and ontological relativism) of this study,
277 which views reality as multiple, subjective and created through relationship and dialogue
278 with others (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This means that the researcher is part of what is studied
279 and “there can be no separation of the researcher and the researched, and values always
280 mediate and shape what is understood” (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p 13). First, CNF
281 encourages the researcher to engage in this co-construction process. The stories were co-
282 created with the participants’ words and the author’s words, which represent the
283 interpretative element of the analysis process. Thus, CNF enables the researcher to recreate
284 lived experiences in ways that represent personal and social meanings, as such CNF provides
285 more adequate representation of how S&C coaches develop psychosocial behaviours through
286 the identified narrative types (McMahon, 2017).Second, Ropers-Huilman (1999) suggest that

287 CNF enhances the engagement of the reader as such stories can communicate the emotional
288 complexity of the S&C coaches' responses to the reflection process and the vignette.

289 **Enhancing rigor**

290 We invite the reader to consider the following quality indicators that we used to
291 enhance the research process: rich rigor within the data collection and analysis processes,
292 credibility, aesthetic merit, and generalisability (Smith, 2018; Smith, McGannon, &
293 Williams, 2015; Smith & McGannon, 2018). First, we used multiple methods including
294 written diaries, video vignettes, facilitation, and interviews to help generate a more nuanced
295 understanding of the subject matter (Tracy, 2010; Williams, 2017). Second, in order to ensure
296 credibility, which includes sincerity of the findings, we followed Tracy's (2010) suggestions
297 of author self-reflexivity (i.e., written diaries) throughout the data collection and analysis.
298 The co-authors acted as "critical friends" to the lead author during this process, which
299 encouraged reflection upon alternative interpretations in relation to the data (Smith &
300 McGannon, 2018; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). To enhance the credibility of the facilitation
301 process, the first author engaged in a twelve-week pilot study with an elite S&C coach to
302 further develop his own skills of guiding the participants into more critical levels of
303 reflection. Finally, we aimed to create three well-crafted, coherent, and engaging stories that
304 invite interpretative responses from the reader, which further enhanced the study's credibility
305 (Tracy, 2010). Furthermore, and as Smith (2018) suggests, this creative writing process can
306 encourage naturalistic generalisation (how findings resonate with readers' experiences) and
307 transferability (to what extent findings are transferable to another context).

308 **Results**

309 We identified three dominant S&C coaches' narratives of learning that illuminate how
310 video vignettes contributed to the S&C coaches' reflective process, and whether and how that
311 reflection influenced their development. In the results section, we present three stories that

312 typify the “performer”, “achiever”, and the “helper” coaches. The themes that are developed
313 in these stories are represented in Table 1.

314 *Table 1 near here*

315 **The Performer**

316 At the end of the day, I have to focus on myself, how can I improve my coaching? That
317 is what’s important. I am responsible for my performance and I know what I bring to the
318 table. If I get better and become the best I can be, I know that [my athlete] Darren’s
319 performance will improve as well. It’s logical for me. I have seen this over and over again in
320 my coaching, so why should I change this approach? I want to be a successful S&C coach, so
321 that is what why I am focusing on this process of reflection. It’s the most important thing in
322 my life at the moment. Yes, you have to make sacrifices, I travel a lot and work ridiculous
323 hours, but that is where I get my rush from. You cannot be less than 100% focused, or you
324 just won’t succeed in this business.

325 **Emotional detachment.** *I mean, watching the video, all I could think was attachment*
326 *means emotion, which means clouded decision-making. That does not help in elite sport. I*
327 *have a drive to self-improve and perform. I like to be in control and I want my athletes to*
328 *trust in my coaching expertise. I’m thinking of Darren. He annoys me as he is often late to*
329 *sessions, but as he is contracted by England and not us, I can’t really control what he does. I*
330 *got some good work out of him and I have him playing again, something England failed to*
331 *do. He is not without issues though. I constantly have to build him up. A lot of the time, I just*
332 *want him to ‘man up’. International sport has many weak individuals, but I need him just to*
333 *trust the programme that I have set. I find it hard not to give them the brutal truth. I believe*
334 *that there are rules in place to develop athletes, and they should follow the programme and*
335 *need to trust in my expertise.*

336 **Understanding oneself and developing athletes' sporting success.** There is no point
337 on reflecting all the time on how the athletes feel and what they want. I'll tell you why. Once
338 I know what works with them, I stick with it and purely concentrate on making my coaching
339 more effective. That has always produced great results. If I then started to reflect on
340 individual athletes, I am sure I would find some negatives, because there will always be
341 someone who does not agree with what I do, and in elite sport everyone has an opinion. But, I
342 have to believe in myself, in my abilities and in what I can achieve. *I know that about myself.*
343 *I have achieved a lot and I know what works. I know how I can get the best out of the*
344 *athletes.* Sometimes, I have to temper being blunt and stating fact. I'm not sure I can dress up
345 the situation any differently. I have, over the years, tried several approaches, sometimes a
346 'cuddle', sometimes a 'stick', sometimes a 'carrot' and sometimes all three, but now I am just
347 brutally honest and direct with my athletes, the 'stick' seems to work best. The other day, one
348 of my athletes wanted to do some extra work in the gym. I had to reign him in and remind
349 him of the programme I set, I mean just get on with it. And I was right, *his results speak for*
350 *themselves. When we re-tested,* he improved a lot in all tests, and I was pretty happy about it.
351 Now he's going to the National Hockey League and I know he will be one of the fittest and
352 strongest guys there.

353 **Critical of the vignette.** *I don't think I changed anything in my coaching practice*
354 *throughout this reflection process and to be honest,* these videos are not revolutionary. I think
355 this relational approach from the video works with some athletes, but not others. I mean I am
356 not employed to be their friend or buddy, I am here to produce results and that is what I am
357 best at. I always put effort into my programming and sessions, and I think the athletes see this
358 and appreciate it. I believe this creates respect and trust, not the flexible, laissez fair approach
359 focusing on rapport and relationship. The majority of athletes I work with do not want an
360 involvement in the process, they want the outcome. So, if I am well prepared, that shows I

361 care and they will commit and do their part as well as they can. If I am not prepared, my
362 athletes will not be as motivated. To be honest I would not change my own style as it has
363 evolved and is adaptable and fit for purpose. The coach in the video is just not me, not my
364 style at all. If I changed to become like him, I would not be true to myself.

365 **The Achiever**

366 When I look at my calendar and see that I have a session with Jordan I get positive
367 energy. *Reflecting on this*, I have started to think why is it like this? Why do I get such a buzz
368 out of it? Maybe it's because my favourite athletes tend to be people that get excited and
369 show their emotions about the programme just like I do. They know what we want to achieve
370 together. That is what you coach for, it drives you to become a better coach.

371 **Emotional awareness and control.** The other day I felt a little under the weather, but
372 I purposefully made an attempt to hide my negative emotions. *I was reminded of the videos:*
373 *The S&C coach showed a lot of emotions, but it was purposeful and motivational.* I feel that
374 consistency from the coaching staff, particularly this time of year, is a vital component to the
375 training process. I have been guilty in years past of "wearing my emotion on my sleeve" so to
376 speak, and letting it affect the daily training environment, sometimes positively and
377 sometimes negatively. This time, I did not allow my cold to get in the way of the job. I know
378 that when I am not 100%, I can be withdrawn, distant, and disengaging with my athletes.
379 Mike does not respond to that very well. So, I made a conscious effort to involve Mike and
380 Jordan in the session. Then, the highlight of the session came when we had a discussion
381 around the use of heavy sleds for acceleration work. Jordan appeared to experience a moment
382 of enlightenment and stated, "I learn something new every day". I could see that he
383 appreciated the conversation, I think it allowed him to take ownership of the programme a
384 little more. *I believe that we should allow our athletes to question and challenge us.*

385 *However, those questions should be respectfully stated around how we achieve the goal we*
386 *agreed upon.*

387 **Understanding oneself enables understanding others.** *This reflection process*
388 *encouraged me to look inside and explore myself. It focused me on understanding what I did,*
389 *how I did it, and whether it was effective? This is so important: how can I understand my*
390 *athlete's perspective if I have no clue about myself. That reminds me of a session I had with*
391 *Anna, working on lateral agility, accelerations, and decelerations. I knew that Anna's mind*
392 *tends to wonder, and that it is difficult to keep her focused. My default coaching style would*
393 *be to keep encouraging her and provide quite a few coaching cues, which usually works well*
394 *in general. So, I decided to keep my cueing simple and to the point by providing two to three*
395 *relevant cues per exercise in order to keep her mind on effective changes. It went well. With*
396 *each rep she got better and better. I could see from her body language that she was starting to*
397 *really trust me as a coach. That trust is important, because without it, how can we achieve our*
398 *goal? Another example: The other day, I did this session with Jess, she gave me all the signs*
399 *that she was super motivated for the new exercises. I tried to dig more into why she was so*
400 *motivated. Something had clearly changed. But then I realised there was a problem, she*
401 *wanted to do a totally different programme. I told her that it is fantastic to see her motivated*
402 *in the gym, but that on this occasion, I will have to be tough because we need to stick with*
403 *our original plan. She took it quite well and trusted me. I could actually see how she applied*
404 *some of that motivation to our original plan. I knew, I could be direct with her because I*
405 *worked hard on building that relationship. Actually, that reminds me that I have the tendency*
406 *to sometimes hide my emotions when my athletes achieved a certain benchmark or win a*
407 *medal. I mean, I am super happy, but I don't show it out maybe as much as I could. I should*
408 *have told Jess that I was really pleased with her attitude and effort in the session. I valued her*
409 *commitment and understood that from a personal perspective, she made a sacrifice.*

410 **Adapting priorities to achieve goal together.** *The reflection process really helped*
411 me in understanding what my priorities are when I coach my athletes. I do believe that we
412 need to develop the athletes holistically, that is what the video is all about, but in the first
413 instance and if you ask the athlete, they want to achieve their goal, they want to win that
414 medal. Yes, I want to work as a team, I want my athletes to be accountable and I want them
415 to contribute, but it has to be for the right reasons, *to achieve the goals we have set together. I*
416 *have a great recent example.* Jeff hadn't managed to follow our action plan. He made it
417 sound like it wasn't a big thing and everything was under control. Previously, I would let him
418 get away with it. But not this time. I knew if he would carry on like this, he would not
419 achieve his benchmark targets and that could lead to deselection. So, I challenged him, which
420 turned into a good discussion. He did not realise how serious the situation was. Sometimes
421 being people-focused does not do the athlete any favours. *But then on the other hand, people-*
422 *focused does not just mean giving in. I think it also means that you have to make that*
423 *conscious effort to understand how your athletes feel, like when I worked with Eva.* She
424 needed my support more than my technical expertise. She was quite timid, but so talented.
425 She lacked confidence. The sessions I had with her were totally different. I was more
426 reassuring, provided more feedback and we always had a debrief afterwards. Above all, I
427 knew that if I could help her to become more confident and independent, she would be more
428 motivated to engage in the programme. Teamwork can look quite different at times, *but a*
429 *team can only work effectively if they have a shared goal, something that satisfies each*
430 *individual.* *The other day,* I was so proud of helping one of my race drivers, Pierce, to
431 achieve his goal. He won the race and will be promoted to F1 now. That was our biggest goal
432 for two years. We worked hard for this, day in day out. We had our ups and downs but most
433 importantly, we had a plan that we made together. We made sure we were both focused and
434 gave our best. We supported each other motivating and encouraging each other when things

435 got tough. I have not seen such a happy guy for a long time, it was crazy, he kind of jumped
436 in my lap. These experiences remind me of why I'm in the sport: I'm looking to impact
437 people's lives in a way they did not think possible, to allow them to accomplish and feel
438 things they did not know existed. I get pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfilment out of coaching
439 these athletes. Working together to achieve this, was one of the highlights of my career.

440 **Selective reflection encouraged by the vignette.** I found the videos very
441 informative. I think the reflection process was a useful exercise and a great new skill for me
442 to learn, but the videos were not vital, they probably did not contribute that much. They
443 probably helped jumpstart the week, which was the main benefit for me. For example, the
444 videos highlighted the importance of building relationships. If you do not build that trust with
445 that athlete, you won't work well together. When I was working with Liz, I developed such a
446 great working relationship, we always achieved our targets. As a result, she did not really
447 want anybody else leading her workout. That gave me a lot of confidence in my coaching
448 abilities. *On the other hand*, some stuff from the videos, I disagreed with. I mean, you should
449 encourage independence in your athletes but not to the detriment of the session objective, like
450 Pete did when he changed the programme to accommodate for some tired athletes. I just think
451 this is bad planning, he should have known that. *I really learned through that reflection*
452 *process*, it forced me to replay the day in my head, it allowed me to examine the athletes'
453 perspective. I also enjoyed the facilitation on the reflection. I felt accountability to do the
454 reflections, which encouraged me to learn and really master that skill. I took a lot of
455 satisfaction from that learning experience. *More importantly and from an applied point of*
456 *view*, I always came up with some action points to move forward. These were small goals for
457 the next week, like being more deliberate in my coaching cues or providing positive feedback
458 at the end of the session. I know that these small changes contribute to accomplishing our

459 vison. That is why I will give 100% to see these through, even if they are tough to implement.
460 I tell you, once you have achieved it, wow, you do really feel satisfied.

461 **The Helper**

462 I value the relationship built with the athletes and take every effort to understand their
463 life both within and outside their sport. I have a genuine interest in their life and also their
464 sport and welfare. I want to understand what their goals are and how I can contribute and help
465 them achieve. My athletes are heavily involved in my own life. It is probably my intrinsic
466 need to help others and solve their problems which led me become a coach. And it is for this
467 reason that I feel the great weight of responsibility to improve and develop myself and
468 basically “be ready for any obstacle” they might come across. That is not to say I am the
469 smartest or know all the answers, definitely not. Rather, it means, that I am trying to
470 constantly improve, learn and develop so as to be of best help to the athlete in front of me.

471 **Emotional attachment.** *The video vignette helped me to understand how I am*
472 *building mutual accountability and collaboration with my athletes based on trust and respect.*
473 *For example, last week the video vignette helped me reflect on how I want the athlete to feel,*
474 *like an equal within the relationship, combining our individual skills to become more efficient*
475 *and effective.* That lead to further debate and discussion with one of my athletes that
476 positively influenced how we programmed for future sessions. I would be so happy if these
477 conversations allow my athletes to have a voice and a say in the process. I want them to be
478 continually asking questions, challenging the status quo, and forcing me to improve my own
479 craft for their benefit. If they understand more, they can question more, and if they question
480 more, we can progress together a lot quicker. It’s what the video at the beginning of the week
481 was all about, where the athlete questioned the S&C coach and they had a great discussion
482 about the rationale of programme. *I feel so pleased when they ask me questions it shows they*
483 *care not only about the programme but about our relationship. This is what I aim to create, a*

484 *close emotional bond with my athletes through transparency and openness. Last week for*
485 *example, I felt a combination of nerves, tension, on-edge, worry, optimism, and apprehension*
486 *for Michael's competition. I want him to be able to have this opportunity to compete on this*
487 *stage for the first time. I share his dreams and I feel largely responsible for his success and*
488 *failures.*

489 **Understanding others and developing the athlete holistically.** I am very passionate
490 about his success, which is more than just success on the track, but success in enjoying the
491 process and learning and growing as a person throughout this journey. This reflection process
492 highlights to me that perhaps my hierarchy is a little skewed and I should remember that my
493 athletes' needs are of higher importance than a lot of other things on my agenda, so if my
494 athletes are looking for help, then their needs come first. The biggest change for me was
495 making a conscious effort to understand how my athletes might think or feel concerning a
496 specific situation. I remember when I felt that Michael was disrespectful in terms of needing
497 all the attention during a competition, and I thought how fastidious he was. But then, when I
498 reflected on how he might be feeling I realised that this was just his way of dealing with pre-
499 competition anxiety. It really helped me understand his perspective and I cut him a little
500 slack.

501 I've come a long way from thinking that a good S&C coach is one who just develops
502 technical knowledge. I mean this is what the video was all about and to see that I have
503 created a similar relationship based on trust, respect and openness with my athletes makes me
504 feel that I do make a difference. That is my priority. Like Michelle, when I first worked with
505 her, she was 17 years old, shy and lacking confidence. I always had time for her. Eventually
506 she just opened up and we had some great discussions around her sporting and personal life.
507 Throughout our time together I saw her develop as a person, now she is happily married, has
508 two kids and runs her own business. She still pops in for a workout and we have a chat and a

509 coffee afterwards. Isn't that what coaching is all about? *That reminds me of a conversation I*
510 *had with Melanie, another athlete I worked with a while ago, when she was upset about me*
511 *leaving for a new job.* I wish that I was able to bottle that conversation, to store it and share it
512 with every athlete I coach. She told me that she found her own "why" for the sport. It is so
513 incredibly important, you need to know why you are doing it and Melanie always listened to
514 outside influences, her parents, her friends, the pressure to get a medal to be accepted,
515 funding etc. Now, she tells me I helped her to find her real motivation, which is her love for
516 the sport. She told me that even if suddenly all of the elite support and opportunities would be
517 stripped away, her love for the sport would still stand, which made her more positive about
518 the future and her life outside the sport. Being part of her journey that is what fulfils me as a
519 coach.

520 **Vignette initiates and triggers reflection** *I enjoyed this reflection process and I think*
521 *the videos really helped me.* When you watch the video, something will jump out from it and
522 stick in your head for the rest of the week and as you reflect you take that into consideration.
523 When you reflect, you ask yourself what is the context here? The video springs to mind and
524 off you go. My reflections of the video always began with the main theme of the video. What
525 is the S&C coach going through in the video and how does that apply to me? When he talked
526 about trust, I was like OK, 'trust', if that was me and my athlete, how would I empathise?
527 How would that have played out? If that was the athlete during the video talking about me,
528 what would they have said? And again, that taught me something that I never actually
529 considered if I am perfectly honest. *For me* this process of reflection was definitely quite
530 cathartic. It helped me to actually express my emotions in a way that I could learn from it.
531 For example, a few days ago when I coached a particular group of athletes, I thought it did
532 not go that well and that I had really messed it up. I reflected about it, recalling the video and
533 how the S&C coach always reflected positively at the end of the day. So, I tried the same and

534 came to the conclusion that it was not as bad as I thought. Then, the following day, I spoke to
535 my fellow S&C coach and he did say that this group is difficult to coach, which made me
536 even more positive about it. You know, sometimes you just say “that is rubbish” and you just
537 leave it and get depressed, but this reflection process allowed me to re-evaluate and actually
538 gave me time to think about how I can improve my coaching.

539 **Discussion**

540 This study presents an innovative approach highlighting how the S&C coach develops
541 effective coaching characteristics and behaviours through the process of reflection stimulated
542 by a video vignette. In particular, the findings illuminate how different narrative types help us
543 understand the idiosyncratic ways that guide the decisions of S&C coaches to develop or not
544 develop coaching practice through a reflective process with video vignettes. In agreement
545 with previous literature (e.g., Callary, Werthner, & Trudel., 2012; Knowles et al., 2012;
546 Kuklick & Gearity, 2015), the findings of this study strengthen the use and value of reflection
547 to develop coaching practice within the elite sporting context. The reflection process allowed
548 the S&C coaches to consider inter/intrapersonal skills as well as their level of professional
549 knowledge, which are essential to develop effective coaching practice (Côté & Gilbert,
550 2009). Werthner and Trudel (2009) suggest that research has neglected to identify why one
551 practitioner may emphasise certain learning situations as key, while another may value and
552 make use of quite different situations. Our results suggest that, depending on the situation, the
553 S&C coaches may have leaned towards one narrative with influences from other narratives,
554 which explained why they responded to the learning situation in the ways in which they did.
555 Indeed, some participants (i.e., participants who fit the helper and achievement narrative)
556 were stimulated to reflect by the vignette, whereas others (i.e., participants who fit the
557 performance narrative) gave limited consideration to the vignette. We note that the narrative
558 presented in the video vignette was built on empirical data (e.g., Szedlak et al., 2015, 2018)

559 that specifically examined psychosocial characteristics and behaviours, and thus, we found it
560 was in line with a helper narrative. This particular learning situation appeared to be more
561 valuable from a learning perspective to those S&C coaches who fit the helper and
562 achievement narrative type, as the information disseminated by the video vignette (helper
563 narrative) fits closely to the S&C coaches pre-existing dominant narrative (Cushion, 2018).
564 From an applied standpoint, we therefore suggest that S&C coaches and coach developers
565 should be aware of their dominant narrative type in order to consider alternative types when
566 appropriate.

567 The reflection process, independent of the S&C coaches' dominant narrative,
568 enhanced the S&C coaches' level of self-awareness. Previous researchers have highlighted
569 the importance of self-awareness in developing effective coaching practice (e.g., Anderson,
570 Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004) as personal characteristics, including values and character
571 traits, will influence how a coach determines what constitutes effective coaching practice for
572 a given situation (e.g., Nelson-Jones, 2014). These characteristics should not be taken as a
573 limitation of one's coaching approach, but according to Petitpas, Giges, and Danish (1999) offer
574 a rich resource on which the coach can draw. Our findings illustrate how the S&C coaches
575 started to pay more attention to self, analysed interactions, and became aware of their
576 limitations, self-interests, prejudices, and frustrations. Miller, Anthony, & Oldham (2011)
577 suggest that increased self-awareness can result in coaches being in a better position to
578 manage themselves and their practice effectively. Our results illustrate how some S&C
579 coaches became more aware of the social, psychological, and emotional dimensions of
580 coaching with a specific focus on building relationships and understanding the athlete's
581 perspective. Such a coaching approach is often described as holistic (Jones & Turner, 2006),
582 or athlete/person-centered (Miller & Kerr, 2002), meaning that the S&C coach considers an

583 athlete's personal and sporting context and sees the long-term health and well-being of the
584 athlete as central to the coaching process.

585 The findings of this study extend previous research noting the dominance of the
586 performance narrative in elite sport (Carless & Douglas, 2009; Douglas & Carless, 2006,
587 2009) and showing its relevance in the coaching context with five S&C coaches fitting the
588 performance narrative type. Coaching is strongly associated with maximising performance
589 success and winning (Light & Robert, 2010). S&C coaches, in part, are accountable for and
590 dependent on accomplishing such outcomes (EIS, 2019). Therefore, it is understandable, and
591 to some degree necessary, for the S&C coach to take a performance-oriented coaching
592 approach, as their job security might be dependent on performing to achieve these targets
593 (e.g., Abraham, Collins, Morgan, & Muir, 2009, Light & Robert, 2010). Whilst previous
594 researchers have discussed the negative influences on mental wellbeing and life after sport of
595 athletes that fit the performance narrative (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2008), our findings
596 highlight that the reflection process allowed S&C coaches to explore how their performance
597 narrative positively contributed to their coaching practice. Nonetheless, these findings should
598 be understood with caution as coaches who single-mindedly focus their learning on achieving
599 performance success may be doing so at the expense of their athletes' holistic development
600 (Douglas & Carless, 2006; McMahon & Penney, 2013).

601 Although the S&C coaches who fitted the performance narrative type developed self-
602 awareness, they were reluctant to take risks or depart too far from the status quo of accepted
603 technocratic practice in order to try a more holistic coaching approach. These S&C coaches
604 advocated a high priority to follow procedure with set and expected coaching responses,
605 which often takes place in a coaching context subject to power relationships and deeply held
606 anti-intellectual beliefs (Abrahams et al., 2009; Thompson, Potrac, & Jones, 2013).
607 Researchers have suggested that such a coaching environment is not conducive to develop

608 reflective practice (i.e., Abraham et al., 2009; Light & Robert, 2010; Schön, 1987), as it does
609 not encourage individuality, appreciation of differences, facilitation of generating new ideas,
610 and active experimentation. Corroborating this literature, our findings indicated that coaches
611 who fit the performance narrative often simply rejected the helper coaching approach
612 presented in the vignette, as they perceived it not to be effective practice that contributed to
613 athlete success. Stodter and Cushion (2017) have proposed that coaches learn by filtering a
614 learning experience through an individual filter (biography acting as a frame of reference)
615 and a contextual filter (understanding of situation, whether concepts would work or not).
616 Thus, in order to develop holistic approaches for coaches who fit the performance narrative, it
617 may be wise for coach developers to filter these ideas into a situation (vignette) that these
618 coaches may more easily relate to. Since our findings indicate that these coaches can
619 associate with some of the characteristics of the achievement S&C coach (i.e., self-
620 improvement to achieve a common goal), this may be the place to start.

621 Douglas and Carless (2006, 2009) have emphasised the need for more narrative types
622 to be identified in sport to provide alternatives to the dominant performance narrative. Carless
623 and Douglas (2012) further suggest that considering alternative narrative types, with diverse
624 conceptions of success, promotes mental well-being at the elite level. An original finding is
625 the identification of the helper narrative and the achievement narrative in this study,
626 providing alternative narratives in S&C sport coaching. Our results suggest that S&C coaches
627 who fit the helper narrative type encourage an athlete-centered coaching approach, primarily
628 focused on providing social support. Research has highlight that an enhanced level of social
629 support has a positive effect on the well-being of the athlete (Miller & Kerr, 2002; Reblin &
630 Uchino, 2008). Thus, our results suggest that coaches who fit the helper narrative have a great
631 potential to develop psychosocial characteristics that form part of a holistic coaching
632 approach. S&C coaches who fit the achievement narrative are able to prioritise whether to

633 focus on sporting success or holistic development to achieve the common goal. Achiever
634 S&C coaches predominantly focus on the efficacy of teamwork, which can enhance
635 productivity and effectiveness (e.g., McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014; Mendelsohn, 1998). As a
636 result, after engaging with the vignettes, the S&C coaches who fitted the achievement and the
637 helper narratives developed psychosocial behaviours and characteristics including empathy,
638 trust and care, inspiration, and motivation, which are important in becoming an effective
639 S&C coach (e.g., Szedlak et al., 2015, 2018). S&C coaches who fit the helper narrative type
640 were open to be challenged and willing to learn from the vignette, whereas the achievement
641 narrative prompted S&C coaches to prioritise what to reflect upon.

642 The study is not without its limitations. While we acknowledge the under-
643 representation of female coaches in this sample, every effort was made to recruit elite S&C
644 female coaches but they are generally under-represented across the world (O'Malley &
645 Greenwood, 2018). In summary, this study provides an original account and strategy to
646 develop psychosocial behaviours and characteristics in S&C coaches through the use of
647 reflection and video vignettes. Our findings highlight that the video vignettes prompted
648 discussion by all S&C coaches but appeared to be more impactful with the S&C coaches who
649 fit a non-performance narrative. Furthermore, our findings corroborate that the elite coaching
650 context tends to elicit the performance and in some case the achievement narrative, despite
651 research (e.g., Szedlak et al., 2015, 2018) suggesting that a helper narrative type is effective
652 in this context. Thus, S&C coach developers should provide opportunities for S&C coaches
653 to develop an alternative approach to include in their instructional strategies “toolbox”, the
654 helper coach, who encourages a holistic, athlete-centred coaching practice as advocated by
655 the International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, 2013).

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