

## The Importance of Mentoring in the Development of Coaches and Athletes

GORDON A. BLOOM\*, NATALIE DURAND-BUSH\*\*, ROBERT J. SCHINKE\*\*\*,  
and JOHN H. SALMELA\*\*

\* California State University, Fresno, USA.

\*\* University of Ottawa, Canada.

\*\*\* University of Alberta, Canada

*Mentoring has been considered an increasingly important element of coaching development programs. It occurs when a teacher willingly invests time in the personal development of a student or athlete, when a trusting relationship evolves, needs and interests are fulfilled, and imitation of behavior takes place. The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring experiences of expert team sport coaches. More specifically, the intent was to determine if any of the coaches were mentored through their development as athletes and subsequently as coaches, and if in turn they mentored other athletes and coaches during their careers. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 coaches. The data were analyzed inductively using qualitative procedures outlined by Côté and colleagues (1993, 1995). Results revealed that most coaches were mentored by more experienced coaches during both their athletic and early coaching careers. As a result, they gained valuable knowledge and insights that helped shape their coaching philosophies and enhanced all facets of their performance. Once they reached a level of expertise in their field, they themselves began to mentor athletes and younger coaches. The benefits of establishing structured mentoring programs for developing coaches and athletes are highlighted throughout the article.*

KEY WORDS: Coaching, Mentoring.

Mentoring is a process that requires further research and is believed to lead to high levels of success in both personal and professional endeavors (Merriam, 1983). In sport, it is evident that the role of the expert coach entails more than teaching individuals how to shoot correctly or how to dribble

Coaching and mentoring are often thought of as the same thing. While they are similar, they are not exactly the same. A coach in the office is helping someone to learn a skill. This is the same as a golf coach teaching a player how to improve his swing. Great companies mix both coaching and mentoring to develop strong and efficient teams, while identifying the next group of company leaders to mentor. Giving employees a chance to succeed at what they do and grow into higher career levels helps companies recruit top talent and keep them for the long run. When coaching and mentoring is not a significant part of the human resources development model, employees tend to leave the company in search of other opportunities for growth and success.

- Benefits of coaching and mentoring in organisations.
- Links to good management.
- Corporate strategy.

Although there probably are certain personality traits that predispose individuals to professions such as coaching or mentoring, the importance of training should not be underestimated. No-one is born a mentor – a nurturing personality does not mean that you will be any good at running a mentoring scheme or coaching individuals.