HOW FEMALE COACHES CREATE A WINNING TEAM CULTURE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE FIELD HOCKEY

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Team culture becoming increasingly recognized as foundation for success (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016; Mallett, 2005; Vallée & Bloom; 2016)

Yet, few studies of successful high performance female coaches

Purpose

Examine how female high performance coaches create and experience a winning team culture

Participants

7 female head coaches in field hockey
26-35 years of coaching experience
Multiple conference & national championships

Procedures

Semi-structured interviews (45-120 mins)
184 single-spaced pages
Qualitative data analysis (coding)

Results Overview

Competence
Team Culture
Autonomy
Relatedness
Competence

- Coaches’ feelings of competence and behaviors to increase competence directly influence their ability to build and experience a winning team culture

Competence Themes

- Mastery experiences
- Involvement with international game
- Appropriate feedback
- High expectations
- Encourage risk-taking

High expectations

- Hire others who are better

“I have great assistant coaches. They are better than me at many things and I let them do what they are really good at. ... That does not undermine my self-worth, my authority. It actually should make me look smart, because I was smart enough to hire them." (Yasmine)

Encourage risk-taking

- Failures/mistakes are necessary

“We had a kid who just never knew how to overhead the ball and she is a very good backfield player. We said, ‘every game, you need to throw at least 2. And we are going to evaluate your decisions on when to do it.’ And honestly, she threw it and flunked it in the first game. And this is a perfectionist. The whole team cheered for her in support and it made her laugh. ... By the end, she was tossing them at the Final Four. That’s the kind of stuff that I love.” (Meredith)

Relatedness

- Coaches’ connections and engagement with athletes, staff, administration, and on- and off-campus community directly influence coaches’ ability to build and experience a winning team culture

Results Overview
Relatedness Themes

- Program fits in larger sport context
- Close-knit staff
- Face time / proximity builds connections
- Holistic player relationships

Face time/proximity builds connections

- Locker room presence

“Sometimes I’ll walk in and just sit in the locker room and just join and get there early so a couple of girls will get there early and that’s a good time because I’ll just be talking to a couple of them.” (Nicole)

Holistic player relationships

- Relationships on athletes’ terms

“My individual relationship with the women comes from what they give to me. I am equal to all of them when it comes to coaching field hockey and being there for them academically, socially. My door is always open. My phone is too.” (Yolanda)

Autonomy

- Coaches’ independence in decision-making and coaches’ ability to foster this in staff and athletes directly influence coaches’ ability to build and experience a winning team culture

Results Overview

Team Culture
- Competence
- Autonomy
- Relatedness

Autonomy Themes

- Freedom within structure
- “We” mentality
- Leadership driven by team
- Administration trusts coach
- Equal voices
Administration trusts Coach

- Job freedom

“The good thing is, you have freedom to do your job and people don’t really bother you and they’re there to support you.” (Emma)

Equal voices

- No hierarchy

“We have no hierarchy here. So the freshmen don’t carry all the balls or anything like that, because on the field we need them to have as big of voice as a senior sometimes. … We said, ‘everyone is equal. And if you don’t do that on and off the field, then you’ll never be successful on the field.’ Now, I don’t have to do much because they lead the culture.” (Iris)

Discussion

- Winning team culture = ongoing process
- Passionate about field hockey and helping athletes develop holistically
- See themselves as important, but not the only piece, of the bigger picture
- Reflective practitioners – seek feedback from athletes, staff, ADs

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