An investigation of the coaching behaviours in top level female football in the UK

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Introduction

• Significant body of research has focused on coach behaviours in male and youth football (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Ford et al., 2010; Partington et al., 2014)

• Increase in female football players and coaches in the UK (UEFA, 2015)

• A gap remains within coach behaviour studies in female football in the UK

Introduction

• Coaching is highly directive and autocratic (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006)

• Use of “instruction” tends to be the most prominent coach behaviour (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac et al., 2007; Ford et al., 2010)

• Coach behaviours during competition setting (Smith & Cushion, 2006)
  ➢ Instruction (2nd most prominent)
  ➢ Silence (most prominent)

Method

• Mixed methods
  ➢ Systematic Observation
  ➢ Interpretive Interviews

• Modified hand notated Coach Analysis and Intervention System (CAIS) (Cushion, Harvey, Muir & Nelson, 2012)

• Intra-observer (91%) & inter-observer (80%)
  ➢ Recommended criteria of inter-observer agreement score of 80% (Van der Mars, 1989)

Results

• Most dominant coach behaviour remained instruction

• WPL coaches used silence more prominently
  ➢ Allow players time to problem solve

• RTC coaches used significantly more questioning and feedback
  ➢ Improve players’ understanding and confidence
Instructions tend to be higher in youth or RTC
- Younger players require that additional information
- Adult players may find them unnecessary

"You will lose impact if you speak too much... so when I do talk, I want them to be keen to hear what I've got to say" - Jane (WPL coach)

Initially they were a little unsure of what they were going to get... but once you start talking and giving the technical detail and stuff I think they buy in

Goalkeeping coach's total = 18.35%

Discussing
- Difference in coaching behaviours (WPL vs RTC)
- Phase of season influencing coaching
  - Partington & Cushion (2013) conducted their study in mid-season, level of instruction still high
  - I'll be more demanding in the ladies' first team... whereas here (RTC) it's more like coaching... check your shoulders

"I feel you can learn more from players expressing themselves by watching what they do, watching their habits"

Goalkeeping coach's total = 18.35%

Impact of FA Youth modules
- Questioning and giving players time to discover and take ownership of their learning

Convergent Divergent

WPL RTC WPL RTC

2.06% 8.84% 3.70% 5.09%
**Female vs Male**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>15.74%</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>9.65%</td>
<td>9.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
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**Discussion**

- Punitive behaviours in male football seems to be a norm.
- Whereas in female football, coaches tend to be more sensitive and conscious of how they treat female players.

**Partington & Cushion (2013)**

**Partington et al. (2014)**

**Tan & Cushion (2016)**

**Preconceived stereotype of gender differences?**

Referencing elite male football players such as Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard instead of Steph Houghton or Toni Duggan.

**Limitations**

- Timeline
- Pre-season
- No. of observations
- Observer effect (Sparkes & Smith, 2013)
- Sample size

**Practical Implications**

- Foundational understanding of coaching behaviours in female football
- Complement the development and growth of female football
- Coaches still need to be flexible and adaptable in their coaching practice and behaviours in ways that are appropriate and effective within their specific coaching contexts

**Q & A**

- *Lads... as in the voice and* Humour “would have made better because I feel they can take it.”
- *I interact with boys differently as compared to girls. I think you have to. Girls are a lot more sensitive. They take every simple word you say.*

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