

The Graduate College
 University of Wisconsin-Stout
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ABSTRACT

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“How does the relationship between player and coach effect individual performance, As perceived by the players”?
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 (Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that coaches may have on their player’s individual performance. A second goal of this project is to explore new ways in which coaches can be more effective, through various methods that will be ventured throughout this study. Results from this study will also be able to apply to business and industry in creating more means of performance improvement, and assisting managers, trainers, etc; on how to bring their employees the their fullest potentials through interaction, empowerment,

respect, and the opportunity for individuals to express their concerns regarding issues that might be factors in hindering their performance.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Back Ground

Year to year all around the United States virtually thousands of males participate in a one of America's favorite past times, American Football. The fierce competition in this sport is said to build character and determination for many young men; however, some players excel more than others do. It is as if they were born to play the game.

This study will attempt to explore why it is that some players tend to perform better with certain coaching styles.

Contingency Theories of Leader Effectiveness (Yukl, 1981). State that situational theories are based on the assumption that different behavior pattern (or trait pattern) will be effective in different situations, and that the same behavior pattern, is not optimal in all situations. This study will examine how the relationship between player and coach corresponds to this theory, and how that relationship effects the player's performance.

Some might say level of performance is determined by genetics, some say it's the support system that each player may have had during his childhood.

Some simply players take time to develop, and they become good players as time progresses.

A coach's job, is to bring players to their fullest potential of play through using different motivation techniques, demonstrating expertise, and putting the players in the best possible situation to utilize their specific talents. It is still not clear why some players do better than others in certain coaching environments. Is it the coaching style? Is it the environment or cooperate culture? These are issues that will be explored in this research.

Research Question

The question that will be researched is: What impact does the relationship between player and coach have on a player's individual performance, as perceived by the players. (See page- for definition of relationship). The results of this study will help trainers, coaches and, managers to redefine their methods of improving performance.

In addition, this research will also attempt to explore ways in which coaches can develop more of a cohesive environment among the team members, as well as the coaches.

In a team based organization, cohesiveness is an important factor, and can lead to greater productivity.

This research will also look at the advantages as well as the limitations to coaches having a relationship with their players.

Finally, this study will attempt to present an opportunity for coaches, or anyone in the position of management, to evaluate their current style of leadership, and offer a means for building trust, respect, and an atmosphere of involvement for the trainer and trainee, through various techniques that will be included in this study.

Justification for Research

For many years managers, coaches, trainers, theorists and even psychologists have argued and debated back and forth about what the proper way to manage is, or what it takes to get employees to perform to their fullest potential. There have been literally billions of dollars spent on training seminars, videos, computer programs, and consultants. This study explores an aspect of training that focuses on the interpersonal side of performance improvement, the people side of management, a different approach from norm. The norm is the “buy something to fix it approach”, which is not necessarily wrong, yet is often the first solution to resolve chaos of any sort in most organization.

Significance of the Study

This study will be most helpful to sports teams in that millions of dollars are spent and/or lost every year in firing and hiring coaches mainly because coaches can't seem to get their players to perform at the level of play that results in victory.

When this failure occurs, many questions arise. Is it the Coach? Is it the players? or upper level management, whatever the answer, coaches are often fired as result of this dilemma. This research could act as an excellent tool of intervention for teams in a (slump) or even as a screening device when hiring coaches.

Methodology

This will be a qualitative study, in which subjects will be interviewed to collect data. An interpretive method will used to analyze the data gathered from the interviews.

Definition of Terms

- NFL—National Football League.
- Slump—Period in which team is not winning.
- Neutralizer---Aspects of a situation that prevent the leader from acting in a particular way or negate the effects of a particular type of leader behavior.
- LPC—Or Least Preferred Co-Worker, is the sum of the leaders ratings on a set of bipolar adjective scales) of the person with whom the leader could do least well with.
- Prima Donna---A very talented, yet uncoachable athlete.
- Uncoachable--- An athlete who is not receptive to a coach's request, or advice to improve his or her performance on or off the field.
- Wide Receiver--- One who's primary job is to, catch the football during field of play
- Defensive coordinator—A coach who's job is to put together the defensive strategy, to counteract the opposing teams offensive play.
- Defensive Back---A football players who's job is to, stop the opposing teams wide receiver from catching the football.
- Line Backer---- A player who's job to stop the opposing teams offensive progress.
- District Champions—The team that has the most wins in their district, or area is often referred to as the district champs.

Assumptions

1. This study assumes that players value their coach's opinions on their performance.
2. This study assumes that coaches are willing to adapt to new coaching strategies, to improve performance.
3. This study assumes that upper level management would support these suggested strategies for performance improvement.
4. This study assumes that players are aware of how to improve their performance.
5. This study assumes that players are willing to work with their coaches to make necessary changes, to improve their individual performance.

Limitations

1. The interviews conducted during this study are limited to football players at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.
2. The athletes in this study are playing at the college level, and methods may or may not apply at the professional level.
3. The interviews conducted in this study are limited to the opinions and insights of four college football players.
4. There will not be a follow up study done with these particular subjects to test for validity.

Chapter 2

Review of literature

As we have moved into the information age, clarifying the roles of coaches, trainers, and managers has become more and more of an issue. For many years theorists, managers, consultants, and even psychologists, have debated back and forth about the impact that of coaches, managers, and or trainers may have on the performance of their subordinates.

This review of literature, will present a better understanding of the different ways to view the role of management, and the impact that particular styles of management may have on the individuals.

Existing Studies

Positive Reward Behavior . A number of studies examined positive reward behavior by the leaders. Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, and Huber (1984) reviewed this literature and found that praise and contingent rewards usually increase subordinate satisfaction. The importance of recognition and appropriate rewards has been noted also in descriptive studies of leadership in effective organizations (Peters & Austin, 1995; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

There are a variety of situational theories that describe how aspects of the situation moderate the relationship between leader behavior (or traits) and outcomes. (Yukl and Van Fleet 1981).

These findings have encouraged me to pursue this study, as well as establish credibility for my topic, and likelihood for obtaining meaningful, relevant and significant results.

One situational style of leadership is the **Path- Goal Theory**. According to Path Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1970), leaders motivate higher performance in subordinates by acting in ways that influence them to believe outcome can be attained by making serious effort. In this theory, aspects of the situation such as the nature of the task, the work environment, and subordinate attributes determine the optimal amount of each type of leader behavior for improving subordinate satisfaction and performance.

Situational Leadership Theory. Hersey and Balnchard's situational leadership theory (1969, 1988) suggests that the optimal amount of task oriented and relations oriented behavior depends on subordinate maturity. Though this theory was popular at management development workshops, it was not well received by the leadership scholars.

After being tested by a few scholars, (Blank, Weitzel, & Green, 1990; Hamblton & Gumpert, 1992; Vecchio, 1987), and this theory was said to be only partially valid. A number of writers have pointed out conceptual weaknesses in the theory,

including ambiguous constructs. Oversimplification, and lack of intervening explanatory processes (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1982; Graeff, 19983; Yukl 1989a).

Leadership Substitutes Theory. Howell, Bowen, Dorman, Kerr, & Podsakoff, (1990) Kerr & Jermer, (1978) describe aspects of the situation (substitutes and neutralizers) that reduce the importance of formal leaders in organizations.

According to this theory, supportive and instrumental behavior by a formal leader is redundant and irrelevant in some situations. Various characteristics of the subordinates, such as task and organization serve as substitutes for these leadership behaviors.

extensive prior experience by subordinates in doing a task, also serves as a substitute for instrumental leadership behavior.

Normative Decision Theory. Vroom & Yetton (1973) specifies that the decision procedures most likely to result in effective decisions in a particular situation. The model identifies five decision procedures (e.g., autocratic decision making by the leader; autocratic decision making by after seeking additional information; decisions after consulting with individuals; consultation with the group; and a group decision.

LPC Contingency Theory. Fiedeler's (1967, 1978) Contingency theory deals with the moderating influence of three situational variables (position power, task structure, and leader-member relations) on the relationship between a leader trait and leader effectiveness.

Cognitive Resources Theory. The Cognitive Resources Theory examines the conditions under which a leader's cognitive resources, such as intelligence, experience, and technical expertise, are related to group performance (Fiedler, 1986; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987) Situational variables such as stress, group support, and task complexity determine whether a leader's intelligence and experience enhance group performance.

Multiple Linkage Model. The Multiple Linkage Model was developed to guide research on effective managerial behavior in different situations. This model states that performance is based on six primary explanatory variables: subordinate effort; subordinate ability; organization of the work; team work and cooperation; availability of essential resources; and external coordination of work unit operations with other parts of the organization. (Yukl, 1981, 1989a)

Leader-Environment-Follower-Interaction Theory.

This particular theory states that these listed behaviors may be used to achieve optimal levels of subordinate performance: use appropriate selection procedures to identify qualified subordinates; provide necessary training; and

redesign the job to meet subordinate skills better. (Wofford, 1982). These are just a few of many theories on Management and Leadership effectiveness.

The next section will review different theories, from coaches as it pertains to the topic of this research.

Coaches Perspectives

Behavior is the “window” to the true philosophy of any coach. According to Coach “X”. While most coaches can talk a good game in front of parents, boosters, and school boards, the real answers to what type of person or coach we are is the specific type of behavior we exhibit “ in game situations or behind closed practices. (Coach, X University of Freeport 1998). This particular coach believes as I do, that coaching exists on the field as well as off the field. When an individual is placed in any type of leadership position, he or she, whether expected or not will be watched and ridiculed constantly. Is it right? Some might not think so, yet it is reality.

There are many factors to being in a leadership position. This is why it is essential to earn the respect subordinates, as well as peers.

“Our behaviors reflect our coaching philosophy and are observed and remembered by those closest to us” (Sabbock 1991).

If we become head coaches, then the whole athletic program will affect our cognitive, affective and behavioral ethics. Any overt coaching behavior, whether viewed by parent’s video camera or a national television audience, can serve as an evaluation or an invariable determinate of our future in the profession (Sabock, 1991).

More from the coaches

Athletes are a powerful, yet untapped source of information for a coach. Because of its extreme validity, player input can be very beneficial to the coach and the overall welfare of the athletic program. Athletes, regardless of age and experience, are exposed to coaching behaviors regularly and usually over a long period. They not only observe peaks and valleys of coaching behavior, they are also the recipients of the consequences but are rarely asked for their insight (Anshel, 1990). The players are an “untapped source.” Too many coaches, CEO’s, supervisors, etc, fail to ask, what they can I do to make things better? They evidently do not realize that matter how many years of expertise they have, they will not always have the answer.

There is a negative side to asking players what they would like to see done to improve the overall success of the team, and that is that it could taken as a sign

of confusion, or a lack of direction. My experience has been, that the best way to eliminate that problem is to designate team captains, and meet with them on a regular basis to get feedback on how the players feel things are going, the captains would act as the liaison for the team.

The Values of a Successful Coach

Success coaches possess 10 key values, plus the character and personality traits that make them effective, according to *Coaching, Mentoring and Managing* (Career Press, 1997). Try incorporating these values into your leadership style:

Supportiveness. Show your comment to stand with and behind team members.

Confidence- building. Bring a personal comment to building and sustaining the self-image of each team member.

Respect- A commitment to value and see the treasure within your people.

Perspective- Have an unflappable focus the entire business enterprise.

Risk- Encourage efforts that reduce punishment for and encourage learning for in all things.

Patience- A view of time and performance that equitability balances learning and demands.

Involvement- A genuine commitment a allow team members to control their work.

Tony Welch who is the founder of [www.quantum](http://www.quantumcoach.com) coach defines coaching as a **synergistic relationship** between the coach and a willing individual which connects at the deep, personal level of beliefs, values, and vision.

The Challenge.

The old cliché that there is always a bad apple in the bunch has no exception in the sport of American Football. As a form of leadership, coaching is concerned with assisting athletes to become more proficient in the performance of their sport. This occurs when coaches provide instruction to improve the athletes' level of skill and understanding of their sport as well as develop a disposition towards consistently high effort in practice and competition. These effects can only occur if the athlete is receptive to coach's input, regardless of the quality of the input. If the athlete ignores a coach's input, regardless of the quality of the input, it will be difficult for the coach to constructively affect the athlete. The prototypical situation is the talented athlete who is unreceptive to coaching in other words, the uncoachable prima donna. The question that arises is, "What makes athletes more or less receptive to a coach's input?" This is an important question because an understanding of the determinants of coachability will provide us with a better understanding of how coach-athlete interactions should be structured to maximize the benefits. (Howell, Dorfman, & Kerr 1986).

Players Perception

A study was done in an Introduction to Coaching class, 87 students were asked to write about the experiences that they have had with their past coaches. The students were asked to write about what they liked most about their favorite coaches, and what made them effective, and then to write about their least favorite coaches, and what they disliked about them. Over 90% of the students in this study had been athletes at least through high school, and about 50% had been or were currently college athletes. The categories of this study evaluated the following factors: “cognitive behaviors,” those dealing with behaviors which reflected knowledge based attributes such as teaching, communicating or developmental skills; “affective behaviors”; those dealing with feelings, or areas which are often referred to, but very difficult to quantify like, motivation, caring, praise, love, humiliation and favoritism, and, finally, “physical behaviors”; those behaviors which could be quantified or documented with “hard” examples such as stressing winning above everything, showing up late or unprepared for practice, stressing doing your best, using player input and being available for the players on and off the field. (Stewart, Craig 1993).

Application

Several different leadership styles as they pertain to the research topic have been reviewed from a coaches point of view, as well as a study done with athletes on what makes a coach effective has also been examined. Though many theories, and methods of how to get players to perform to their fullest potential, have been discussed, no one method will work in every situation. This study offers insight, and various means, and methods by which to improve performance by using interactive methods as described throughout the research.

Summary

There will always be talk about the right or wrong way to maximize performance. Research suggests that it is the responsibility of the leader to find what is going to work best for his or her situation in the time and or environment that they are in. We as a society have went from the stone age, to the agrarian age, to the hard working labor age, now to the information and high technology age. We as leaders, Managers, Coaches, Supervisors etc; need to be conscious about the methods we use in performance improvement.

The rule that emerges from this theory is that, it needs to be made clear that “We” meaning the people in the organization and or team, must be working together towards a common goal. With this as a basis, much can be achieved.

Chapter 3

Methodology

A qualitative method was used to conduct this research, entitled “How does the relationship between player and coach affect individual performance, as perceived by players?.

Data collected for this research was gathered from interviews conducted using football players and coaches from the University of Wisconsin Stout. Data used in this study was also collected from existing studies found in the library resources center, The Internet, and several books. Qualitative methods were the best means to do this research according to (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This method best suits the research because it helped to determine the subjects perceptions, and opinions to interpret the data received.

Personal interviews were conducted because the nature of the topic made it more appropriate in that the subjects were sharing information that might have been very personal to them.

My interview questions were purposely designed as open-ended question so that the subjects could have the opportunity to express them selves openly and authentically. This also gave the subjects the opportunity to take the questions as far as they wanted to, which in some cases led to some very interesting stories and personal experiences as will be examined later in this chapter.

There were eleven questions in all, six directed to the coaches, and the other five were directed to the players. Only the questions directed to the players were used in tabulating the results. The questions to the coaches were used for insight, noted in chapter two.

The Subjects

Initially my subjects were to be players from an NFL team. I approached the team's vice president with the idea weeks in advance, yet I felt that he was very hesitant about giving the clearance to interview the players. I sense, that it might have been that he was afraid that it might have given any unhappy or angry player an opportunity to vent his frustration, or bad mouth the organization.

One of the things that I learned in my experience in working for the NFL, is that, image is extremely important.

Reporters are like vultures, waiting for a story to tell, and unfortunately in the era that we live in, controversy is what sells. I can remember when the reporters were around, and management reminded us {interns} to stay away from them.

After weeks of deliberation, I decided to use football players from a local University. My reasons were that, I would have easy access to subjects, both players, and coaches, and because I played here, I knew what it was like when I played three years ago.

I realized then that this would be the perfect place to do my research. When I played here three years ago we never won many games, as matter of fact the year that I played here we only won three games out twelve, and it was not because we did not have good players. As a matter of fact, I felt that if we had been managed correctly, we could have at least been district champs. We had players that were very talented, but I just felt that the coach did not know how to get the guys to play to their fullest potential. There wasn't a winning environment, or attitude set at the time, which I feel that the coaches are mainly responsible for.

Now, however, it's different here; the team is winning games convincingly. There is a new attitude; the players communicate with the coach, and, in most cases they have a relationship with him that extends off the field. I think it will be very exciting to find out how much of a factor in their winning has to do with this new attitude that the coach has had in the last few seasons, as perceived by the players.

The first questions ask the subjects how important is it for them to have a relationship that extends off the field. I felt that this question was important to ask first, mainly to get them into the mind frame of the subject matter; this also allowed me to understand how they felt about the whole topic.

The last few questions asked what they thought would be a good way to motivate them, to ignite their potential. I felt that this would be very helpful for future research; comments are in my recommendations and conclusions section.

All participants were given the same eight questions and were allowed to answer the questions as best they could, based on their personal insight, interpretations, experiences. (Dillman's 1978) guidelines for questioning were used

The Interviews

The first person that I interviewed was senior wide receiver Jesse Diaz. Jesse Has been a member of the Blue Devil football team for the last three season, and have seen many days of defeat, leaving the stadium wondering if he had made the right decision in playing for the Blue Devils instead of any of the other schools that had recruited him coming out of high school. Jesse, who is from Milwaukee, WI, had also played little league football, so he has been exposed to various different types of coaching methods throughout his days in athletics.

The second person I interviewed was, Tony Aizpurua. I felt that interviewing Tony would be a great idea. Coach Ed Mierkort the coach used in this research, coached at Southwest State University as the defensive coordinator prior to being granted the position as head coach here at the University of

Wisconsin-Stout. As he made the move here, he brought along some of the players from South West State and, one of those players was Tony Aizpurua, I felt it would be interesting to see how Coach Mierkort has transitioned from then to now. Tony has also played football practically all his life, and being a Floridian, where football is taken very seriously, he offers a different perspective as to what athletes perceive to be important factors to make an effective coach.

The next person I interviewed was Larue Pierce. Larue also played at South West State with coach Mierkort, and is also from Florida. Larue is a very outspoken individual and was an excellent addition to this research.. The last person I interviewed with is Coach Carl Lance, another individual who played at South West State however, this individual, as I perceive, will be able to offer a great amount of perspective because of the fact that he not only played under Coach Mierkort, but is now his personal right hand man on putting the defensive scheme together, as well as coaching the defensive backs here at the University. I also interviewed coach Ed Mierkort whose responses were not reported in the results section, since the study is about the perception of the athletes, but I felt that it would be good to get his opinions to add to the recommendations section.

The Questions

Questions for coaches.

1. What would you say your theory is for motivating players is?
2. Of what importance would you say it is to you to have a relationship with the players that extends off the field?
3. Do you feel that it is needed to give any of the players extra attention, being that players are motivated in different ways?. If so, can you give an example of a particular incident.
4. How would you describe the player's perception of you as a coach and or individual.
- 4b. Is that of any importance to you?
5. Do you feel that your coaching style is one that allows players to express their concerns and ideas regarding on the field play?
6. What are some ways in which you would increase player's performance on the field?

Questions For Players.

1. Of what importance would you say that it is for you to have a relationship with your coach that extends off the field. 1b. Might this relationship by any means be a motivating factor in your individual performance on the field?

Explain

2. Some players are motivated by money, some by the fame and recognition of playing football, some by the women and glamour. What would you say is your biggest motivating factor to play football?

3. How would you describe the coaches perception of you as a player? How then would you describe the coaches perception of you as an individual? Would you say that this is important to you?

4. Since there are many different coaching styles, and players are motivated in different ways, What are some ways in which the coaches might motivate you as a player?

5. Do you feel that there is an open door policy for players to express their concerns about things that might happen on or off the field here?

A professional transcriber was hired to type the responses from the interviews verbatim. The responses were then analyzed, then coded for common themes, patterns, and tendencies between the four participants responses.

The techniques used to interpret the data received from the interviews, were Miles et al. (1994) qualitative data analysis techniques, and Dobbert's (1982) interpretive methodology of analyzing future data.

In this procedure I had hope to identify patterns, and themes from the responses. I also made sure to not to cast out any anomalies that might have come up in this research. The first process was to analyze each participants responses separately, then to a contrast, and compare for commonalties.

Once this process was complete, the data was then color coded and categorized, then the findings were documented as perceived.

My goal was to find out how important players felt it was to have a good relationship with their coaches, in regards to their performance on the field.

At times it was difficult to not be bias in this matter because I felt so strongly about my theory, however I have learned that, that is the challenge of a researcher.

After all of the presumed data had been collected, results were then turned in to the participants for validation of interpretation.

Chapter 4

Results

The first person I interviewed was, Antonio Aizepiero. Mr Aizepiero who an ex football player here at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, has had many different coaches throughout his career and talks about his experience with his former coach Ed Mierkort. The second person interviewed was Jesse Diaz who is currently going on here final year of eligibility to play football here at the University. The third person I interviewed was coach, and former player under coach Mierkort, Carlton Lance. Lastly I interviewed Head Football Coach, Ed Mierkort, who's responses were not tabulated in the results section due to the fact that the this study was from the players perspective, however Coach Mierkort's insight will be used in chapter 5 summary, conclusion and recommendations.

This chapter will summarize the information gathered from the interviews conducted between the researcher, and the four participants.

Antonio Aiezpiero, “ my relationship with coach Mierkort has meant more to me in regards to my off the field life, than on the field”. I am a firm believer that players have to respect their coach as people and or men in particular before they can really accept their coaching strategies. It's a matter of building

credibility, and trust. Many coaches, head coaches in particular, feel that their title or position is enough to awe their players into to maxim performance, but even at the professional levels of play, in the sport of football what matters is what you are doing now!. players may be a little more attentive with a big name coach who may have won a super bowl or two, but the present success is what everyone focuses on.

Aizepiero was asked about what it would take to motivate him “ For me I must admit I’m definitely a showoff, I feed off of the fans and the attention. Don’t get me wrong, I love this sport, but when I get out on the field on game day and I see all of the fans out to watch us perform, I get a serious rush.”

Motivation

How does coach Mierkort facilitate your particular style of motivation? Well he knows that I love to be in the lime light, so he will do something like make me captain for a particular game if he feels that I need an extra “pep” or he might mention how he needs a big play from some of his key players then he would look directly at me, these are just a few of the things he would do to motivate me.

More from Aizepiero” I think my coach sees me as an individual who has a lot of potential not just in athletics, but in life as well. I guess somewhere in the back of my mind I had felt that I was smarter than I would perform, or that I could get more out of life by challenging my self more and meeting those challenges,

but people need affirmation about themselves some times and coach Mierkort helped me out in that area a lot. I have noticed that when doing a comparison from some of the coaches that I have had before, and the relationship that I had and still do have with coach Mierkort, my performance is so much better because now not only did I love the sport, but the environment, and the tone that was set made me want to be a better player and I did just that.

Reflection

It wasn't always like this, thank goodness that every one grows sometime. I first met with coach Mierkort back at Southwest State University in Marshall Minnesota , and he has a totally different approach than that of what is now. When coach was awarded the head coaching job here at UW-Stout he felt that it would be a good move for me to transfer with him and start off fresh. But even then the approach that was initially used here at Stout was different then the approach that he uses now. Coach Mierkort is now more of a players coach and what that means is that he is more involved with our needs and concerns, their for everything else just sort of falls in place, because we are more of a cohesive unit now than we where before.

Overall my opinion is that it is having a relationship that extends off the field with your coach is almost vital. The simple fact of the of the matter is, especially at the college level of play where athletes are not compensated buy any financial means, or in this particular case there aren't any athletic scholarships.

There has to be more than just the love of the game not necessarily to play, but to achieve maximum performance. College in it self can be extremely stressful at times in just the academic setting. Here's a scenario, your at a division three school, with no athletic scholarship and you have to report to campus three weeks early from summer break to practice three times a day, you have meetings twice a day with a play book about sixty pages long that you have to memorize inside out. Not to mention it is ninety degrees out side, and you have to wear all of those heavy sweaty pads. No matter how much you love this sport, in these conditions, it takes good coaching amongst other things to make you forget how miserable you might feel. This is done though encouragement, exciting drills, dynamics in coaching delivery methods, and most of all "Positive Reinforcement". There is just something about when a coach looks you in the eye, and says great job son! and pats you on the rear. I have had situations where a coach will see that we are really weary out there, yet know that we can go that extra mile if we just dig a little deeper, so they would put on some pads and run those laps with us. I cannot tell you what that does to us as players. It totally erases the title of coach and player [As Aizepiero demonstrates with hands, having one hand higher than the other] and makes you feel like he is truly in all sincerity part of the TEAM. [Aizepiero brings his hands at the same level signifying equality].

Jesse Diaz

Mr. Diaz started off by explaining that having a relationship with a coach automatically makes you play harder. He went on to say that because of the fact that you feel like that person [Coach] actually cares about you, players receive their coaching better than they would if they felt that the coaches had no interest in the individual players lives off the field.

More from Mr. Diaz

You have to love this game to play it. This sport is very intense, and even violent sometimes. It can be very dangerous if individuals do not follow certain cautionary measures.

On every team there is one or two key player's, or players that are referred to as the "go to players". These are the players that you can almost always count on to perform well in clutch situations. They are the naturally talented. But you who also have those player's on the team that are maybe equally as talented, or in some cases more talented than the star players, but just have not yet recognized their true potential. This is what I think separates the good coaches, from the great ones. Times like this, a coach takes that player and first helps him understand that he is not there to control his or her life but to help him develop as an individual, as well as an athlete. This is when you develop a relationship your coach, when you feel like he is not only out for his self, but he sincerely cares about what

happens to you. For me personally I naturally play better in this environment. I feel sometimes, it's almost like I feel like I owe it not only to myself, but to my coach also.

Motivation

I must admit that I am motivated by the glamour and recognition of playing football, however when it's 95 degrees out there and your sweating from head to toe. There are no fans out there to show off for, so it takes more. This is when the love for the game, and dedication has to be there. The coaches role in this process, is to bring the best out of you. It is really hard to be motivated by someone that you know doesn't really care about you unless your playing football for him or her. One of the reasons why I chose to come here to play football was that I felt like coach Miercort was interested in me getting a degree, as well as playing football. When I came here, one of the first things he did was get me in the mandatory study hall to make sure that I kept my academics on track.

Perceptions

I think coach Miercort perceives me to be an individual that is responsible, competitive, and a leader.

One point that I also now think about is that, I feel that by having a relationship with my coach it also benefits him in learning how to coach me more effectively.

For example, when I first got to school here I really didn't know what to expect from him as a coach, or my teammates. I was happy with my visit here but, I wondered now that I was here and they had me was it all going to change. Nevertheless I was really quiet and didn't say much to anyone, I just went out there and performed. I could tell that coach Mierkort wasn't exactly sure how to come at me, but as time progressed and I began to trust him, and we started to develop a relationship, he was able to communicate his points to me more effectively. So this is why I feel that having a relationship with your coach not only beneficial from a player's point of view, but for the coaches as well.

Communication

Pending on the situation, I may feel a bit more comfortable to approach my position coach first, before I would the head coach. This is only because naturally you spend more time with your position coach and have had more time to develop more of a comfort zone with that individual.

Coaches have gotten a bad rap in the last few years in many different programs for making promises to players that are not kept. For this reason many football players today enter programs at caution when it comes to trusting their coaches.

There must be trust in all relationships. Whether friendship, intimate relationships, or whatever type of relationship one is involved in, there must be trust.

Coach – Player Carlton Lance

“My theory is to have the player’s believe in me just as much as I believe in them.”

It’s important to develop that mutual foundation of trust. When my player’s step on that field I want to be able to feel like hey, I know my coach prepared me for any thing that could possibly happen. Realistically you could almost never be ready for everything, but I want to be as close as possible. Coaching is very full filling to me, when you see guys come as freshmen, and they hardly know what dedication and hard work is all about, and might not understand that there is no substitution for hard work. But that’s what it’s all about, getting them to reach there fullest potential in all that they do, whether on or off the field.

Some might say that hey, that’s quite a big responsibility, and truthfully most of the guy’s leave to have only played to about 89 or even 90% of their full potential, but they understand the concept of giving it their best.

Playing football, develops character, and discipline, which I personally feel are traits that are vital to have, to succeed in any profession.

“ I feel like my players are an extension of me out on the field, if there soft and unprepared, then I have failed to do my job” Carlton Lance

It doesn't matter what area of expertise that a person might be in, it is vital to have some type of a relationship with between worker and supervisor.

I want my players to know with all of there heart that I am with them through the whole thing whether they perform well or bad Yes there will be constructive criticism, but they will know that I am with them through whatever happens. Having this relationship with them builds trust and if they trust me they will take in my advice, and use it to the best of there ability therefore performing better.

There is no perfect formula to get players to play hard, but having a relationship that involves trust between you and that player, gives you a foundation for direction in this goal of achieving excellence.

It not much different than the business world, in that if you care about your boss, and you guys get along well and are on the same page, you will more likely give that extra effort to get that extra sale, if you feel that you're a part of the organization, or that you are valued you might have more of a nonchalant attitude.

I like it when my guy's give me input, cause hey let's face it , I can only see so much on the sidelines. I also remind them that there is a right and a wrong

way to do things, I mean if a player comes up to me screaming and yelling at me about what he thinks we should do, well he might be in for an interesting response.

I appreciate the emotion because football is an emotional sport sometimes, especially if it's a close game. But I have to remain in control, so if I have guys yelling at me and disrespecting me in front of other players, well I have just lost all of my credibility. I say this not in the sense of being on a power trip, but it is vital that my players respect me, as well I will respect them.

This is a team sport, and most people view this thing as there is the team, and then there is the coaches, I like to think that were all the team and were working towards a common goal, which is to win football games and develop quality young men.

Equality

Fact of the matter is that a lot of coach's talk about how every one is going to be treated equally. The truth is that that almost never happens in some aspects. No one theory is going to work the same on every player, forgive the expression but like cars you might have a lot of all Mercedes Benzes, all the same color, same year every thing but, there not going to be in the same shape. For example, some might need brakes; some might need new engines. Now it's common knowledge that brakes are not that serious of a problem, a bad engine on the other hand, will require several days if not weeks to complete therefore, needing more attention. The key thing to remember is to give everyone an equal opportunity to prove them selves worthy or capable of holding that starting position. I have almost never had a season where the second string guy felt that he should sit the bench, while the guy ahead of him plays. The sad thing is that only one guy can be the starter.

The way to deal with this type of situation without building resentment from that second string player, would be to communicate to him why it is that he is not

starting, development an open an honest relationship with the players things will go so much better.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

This purpose of this study was to research the importance of football players having a relationship with their coach, and whether or not players perceived this relationship a contributing factor in regards to their performance.

The review of literature and surveys conducted, produced evidence that players did indeed, feel that it was important for them to have some sort of a relationship with their coaches to achieve maximum performance levels.

Some of the more favorable characteristics of a productive coach as resulted by study done by Anshel (1990), were as follows.

Cognitive Behaviors

Good teacher

Taught every player

Took time to teach players

Taught and practiced good sportsmanship
Demanded personal greatness
Good Motivation skills
And personal, not militant
And the number one answer was Communication

Affective Behaviors

Trustworthy, and also easy to talk to
Cared about the players
Very positive
Patient and supportive in players “as people”
Honest
Built confidence in players
Enthusiastic
Showed and “earned” respect
Motivated players

These findings were consistent with my findings in this study, which was very relieving, and provided encouragement and a sense validity throughout the rest of the research. (see lit review more this details on study)

The results of this study is intended to be applicable in areas of coaching management, training, or teaching to improve performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through done in this study, and personal experience, it has been determined that coaches need to admit, and or accept the fact that their roles are never completely defined but, there are certain traits that are very important when in the role of leadership.

The position of leadership requires one to be able to accept and manage many dynamics. Dynamics in personality, attitude, and more importantly dynamics in “Learning Style”. Too often teachers, coaches, managers, trainers use the same delivery methods to implement different strategies, methods, plays, etc. It is vital as leaders that we understand that not every one learns in the same manner, therefore it is of great importance that we at least attempt to provide dynamics in our delivery.

Through research and interviews it was also concluded that though athletes preferred that there coach be personable, it was also stated that some players were motivated be a coach who was more aggressive, and strict in their coaching style.

A study done in Montana, Stewart and Sweet (1992) of nearly 300 coaches, found that 89% of the coaches had gotten into coaching for the fact that they initially at least, loved the sport, enjoyed teaching and /or benefited from having a positive impact on young athletes. So the problem is not necessarily that this

profession tends to attract some insensitive slave drivers, but that we live in a society that demands that we win, and win consistently or your not considered successful. So then the focus is lost, and coaches are now so worried about keeping their jobs, that they loose focus on their initial intentions which causes them to be ineffective. It's like a double edge sword, that's why now coaches at least, in the Nfl demand more control over there destiny and are given multiple roles such as head coach, and general manager, which allows them to make more decisions.

The fact of this matter is that the success of any organization demands that the goals and or mission of that organization, be consistent throughout the entire organization. This includes everyone from the Head Coach, to the Players, Owners, General Manager, even the janitors.

This study offers one of the many ways by which to improve performance. However, according to the literature and this research, the human element of performance improvement is with out a doubt essential to effective leadership .

This study hopes to bring awareness to the fact that even though we live in the information, technology age, the human brain still is the most powerful tool available. Therefore, we must not underestimate it's capacity, or are ability to reason with one another.

“ Happiness is measured by the relationship we develop throughout our lives. “

Newton Bobby Sanon

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BY

NEWTON BOBBY SANON

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By

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