

COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIPS – A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

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POWER



GENDER
DIFFERENTIATION

EQUALITY

merely enhancing athletes' physical, technical and strategical skills (Miller & Kerr, 2002)

much more than sequentially imparting content knowledge through a particular pedagogy (Jones, 2009)

coach's and athlete's cognitions, feelings, and behaviours are mutually and causally interrelated (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007)

matching of several different aspects, including aims, respect, commitment and communication (Hemery, 1986)

How to raise female differences in athletics without adopting a patronising or condescending attitude?

How to dig into female differences without bringing the old phantom of inequality?



“guest culture” (Carme Garcia, 2003)

One senses that female athletes are intruding in a male dominated world and as the guests they have to adapt to their host's bidding.

FROM A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

POWER

“I can have an idea of how the training is going by using my stop-watch but I need as much information as possible from the athlete to adapt and to improve the training session”

“How can I say anything to someone who has worked hard to lower a mark and he or she doesn't achieve it? On the contrary, I feel sorry and I try to see my part of responsibility in this defeat”

“My job and my commitment depend absolutely on the commitment of the athlete”.

GENDER DIFFERENTIATION

“When a boy does a good training session he is very proud and tells you immediately how he feels. However, when a girl does a good training session she still demands attention and reassurance”

“I prefer to train boys than girls any day. Girls are not aggressive, they are not ambitious, they don't have the character. I like athletes that have character, you know being successful at hurdles demands being aggressive”

EQUALITY

“Female and male are the same in terms of sacrifice and dealing with pain. Well, women could say that they are stronger because once a month they have to run like the rest and they are suffering from inferior conditions”

FROM AN ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE POWER

“I know I shouldn't eat a Nutella sandwich and drink red bull before competitions, but I think I need it for my psyche, so I do it without telling my coach”

“It was an awful year, the coach didn't come much to training because she had personal problems, we were not training in the best conditions and my marks went down, I stopped enjoying it and my parents suggest that maybe I should leave her. That was very hard. I felt very anxious, one of the worst experiences in my athletic career”

“I was offered an important bursary to go to Madrid, but just thinking of telling my coach, I didn't dare”

“no confrontation, conformity but doing what I think is best for my performance”

GENDER DIFFERENTIATION

This issue raises contradictory discourses because on the one hand they want to be treated as equals to men, but on the other, they would like the gender differentiation to be a part of the coaching relationship.

They admit that women have a tendency to be more jealous than men and they demand more attention from the coach.

The physical presence of the coach is paramount to their performances, the personal motivation, the constant help they received from the coach

“Even though we are more perverse and the relationship with other female athletes are tense, usually everyone wants to be the most important for the coach. Men frequently ignore these issues”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



- How can we bring equality by not taking on board differences between the two sexes? This includes biological (periods and hormonal cycles) and social-cultural (by norm, not by chance, women are busier at home).
- Treating equally does not mean bringing equality in the team. Dealing with difference does not mean patronising and condescending... how can female athletes be treated sensitively and still feel they are not inferior to their male counterparts?
- Why should we take for granted that the female essence is one of a jealous nature and as such it is normal that female athletes compete for their coach's attention?

- Why do women have more difficulties in saying NO to their coaches as opposed to their male counterparts? They continuously need to feel the approval of their coach. Women are more used to suffer: the embarrassment, the shame, the fear of not being loved, accepted...
- Why does being different immediately mean that this is solely a woman's issue? Why does the male have to be the norm?
- The difficult task of being a coach: being demanding, strict and at the same time, showing empathy, understanding and tender. Having an iron will but being flexible. Showing authority and at same time being a friend.