Coaches and Cohesion: The Impact of Coaching Techniques on Team Cohesion in the Small Group Sport Setting

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The examination of cohesion in the realm of team sports has been studied from a number of perspectives (i.e., adherence, leadership, performance, and interpersonal relationships). Although this body of research has advanced our understanding of the importance of cohesion in small group sports, the specific techniques and strategies utilized by coaches to foster and promote cohesion among their players has gone unexamined. This study was conducted in two phases to first identify techniques and behaviors that motivate and demotivate athletes in their sport, and then second, to determine the impact these various strategies and behaviors have on team cohesion. In the second phase a case study method was used to obtain thick description of athlete-coach interaction through the use of in-depth interviews. Findings identify numerous techniques that deter (i.e., inequity, embarrassment, and ridicule) and promote (i.e., bragging, sarcasm and teasing, motivational speeches, quality of opponent, athlete directed techniques, team prayer, and dedication) team cohesion levels.

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Matheson, Mathes, and Murray (1997) suggest athletes come and go, continually changing the makeup and quality of their teams. This causes many to wonder how a team could be successful one year and then become less successful the following year. Moreover, there are teams with a significant number of talented athletes that are unable to perform at high levels, while other teams with limited talent are able to beat the odds and win championships. Cohesion is one factor that has often been connected to group performance and has been defined as "an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in groups" (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990, p. 482).

The connection between coaching (the coaches use of various leadership styles during interaction with the team) and cohesion has been described by a number of researchers (Carron, 1978; Carron, & Chelladurai, 1981a, Chelladurai, 1984a; 1984b; Gardner, Shields, Bredemeier, & *Bostrom, 1996; Schriesheim, 1980; Spink & Carron, 1994; Westre & Weiss, 1991; Widmeyer,* Carron, & Brawley, 1993). Both elements are central to the development of many groups, and the way leaders promote and create high levels of group cohesion have a dramatic effect on the way a group performs. These factors are evident in the way coaches use motivational techniques to ensure their athletes will compete at the highest possible level. The way a coach uses his/her power to lead can increase or decrease the likelihood of a team's success during contest situations (Chelladuari, 1990, Gardner et. al., 1996). Little research in the coaching field has examined the specific strategies coaches use to develop cohesion in small group sports (e.g., those sports where a significant amount of interaction is required among athletes to achieve team success). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the specific types of motivational techniques employed by coaches that are used to motivate and demotivate athletes, and to determine how those techniques promote or deter team cohesion levels.

A question often asked in small group research is what elements create healthy groups so they work harder, appear happier, make numerous individual sacrifices, and have higher levels of interaction than those of other groups. Cartwright (1968) described such strong feelings as "we-ness" because group members were more likely to use the term "we" rather than "I" when referring to the group (p. 70). Often the terms "cohesion" or "cohesiveness" are used to describe a group "in which the members all work together for a common goal, or one where everyone is ready to take responsibility for group chores" (Cartwright, 1968, p. 70). Being willing to endure sacrifices at the expense of the group, and defending against those outside the group who may criticize or attack are both elements that demonstrate group cohesion. Bird (1977) described cohesion as the overall force that causes individuals to continue membership in the group. Because the team's cohesion level affects individual group member behavior, it is important to establish a level of cohesion that builds a climate for team success. One primary area of research concerning cohesion in athletic settings has been the effect on team performance. The following section examines this body of research.

Team Performance

It is reasonable to conclude that a team's success or performance can have a dramatic effect on the amount of cohesion the team has. For most small group sports, the primary reason for sticking together is to increase the potential for obtaining success. Because team success is seen as the ultimate goal of sports competition, many researchers believe there is a strong relationship between cohesion and performance.

Martens and Peterson (1971) conducted one of the first empirical examinations of the relationship between cohesion and team performance. These researchers examined 1,200 male university athletes participating in intramural league play to determine the influences of differing levels of group cohesiveness as a determinant of player satisfaction and team effectiveness. Results indicated that highly cohesive teams were more successful than teams with low levels of cohesion. The researchers concluded there is a "circular relationship between satisfaction, cohesiveness, and success. Those teams who are more cohesive are more successful, and teams which are successful have greater satisfaction from participation than unsuccessful teams" (p. 58).

Various researchers have addressed the connection between these two concepts by utilizing a variety of sport types including golf (Widmeyer & Williams, 1991; Williams & Widmeyer, 1991), football (Westre & Weiss, 1991), rugby (Kozub & Button, 2000; Kozub & McDonnell, 2000), lacrosse (Matheson, Mathes, & Murray, 1996), baseball (Boone, Beitel, & Kuhlman, 1995; Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, & Bostrom, 1995), and volleyball (Bird, 1977; Eisler & Spink, 1998). From this body of research, Widmeyer, Carron, and Brawley (1993) suggest that 83 percent of the studies indicate a positive relationship between cohesion and performance. Most conclude that athletes on successful teams perceived the team to be more cohesive, while athletes on unsuccessful teams perceived the team to be less cohesive. One question that has gone relatively unanswered by this large body of research is whether cohesion impacts performance, or if performance influences cohesion. It may be reasonable to assume that as a team has more success, the high level of performance is what causes the athletes to perceive higher levels of cohesion. Success has the potential of allowing strong interpersonal relationships and positive group morale to develop.

Coach/Athlete Interaction

An important element that has gone unexamined, as a contributor to a team's level of cohesion, is the coach's style of leadership. Scholars have made numerous attempts to describe, predict and identify leadership styles that are effective at obtaining group goals, and motivating and satisfying group members. This is also true of leadership research completed in the field of coaching. Chelladurai (1984b) has operationalized leadership as "the behavioral

process of influencing individuals and groups toward set goals, is interpersonal in nature, entails a high degree of direct interaction with the athletes, and bears directly on the motivation of the team members" (p. 329). This definition is much like that of cohesion, in that a coach's goal is to direct athletes toward the attainment of the group goal (winning and satisfaction) which then has a dramatic effect on the team's cohesion levels

Ball and Carron (1976) insist that coaches view cohesion as an integral part of a team's success. A multitude of hard, strenuous practices and contest situations provide great potential for meaningful interpersonal interaction between the athletes and their coaches. This high level of interpersonal interaction creates a unique social environment, which is uncommon for a variety of other small group settings, suggesting that the quality and type of interaction are either indicators or catalysts to a teams effectiveness and success. Carron and Bennett (1977) tested intercollegiate coaches and athletes representing compatible and incompatible dyads in order to determine those factors that were the source of stress, strain, and incompatibility. While it was hypothesized that the critical areas would be affection and control, interestingly, the results indicated that the predominant factor contributing to incompatibility was inclusion behavior. The authors also observed that the interpersonal relationships within incompatible coach-athlete dyads were characterized by relatively detached, withdrawn, isolated behavior on the part of both the coaches and athletes.

More recent research has attempted to connect cohesion with one of five leadership styles used by the coach (autocratic, social support, democratic, training and instruction, and positive feedback). Gardner et. al., (1996) and Westre and Weiss (1991) found coaches could promote higher levels of task cohesion for their players by using training and instruction, democratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback styles and avoiding the use of autocratic coaching strategies.

Although extensive research has attempted to determine the various factors that affect cohesion in the athletic context, no research has examined the specific coaching strategies a coach uses to develop and promote cohesion among athletes in coacting small group sports. If the research is correct and team success is a predictor of high cohesion, one could also conclude that cohesion could be a predictor of team success. If a coach is aware of the importance cohesion can play for small group sports one would assume that a significant amount of a coach's communication and interaction with the team would involve strategies to promote and develop unity and cohesion among athletes.

In addition, a significant amount of cohesion research utilizes the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) to examine the impact of a number of variables on team cohesion levels (Boone, Beitel, & Khulman, 1995; Carless & De Paola, 2000; Gardner et al., 1996; Kozub & Button, 2000; Kozub & McDonnell, 2000; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Although valuable, this

body of research does not provide an in-depth examination of techniques and strategies used by coaches to promote or deter team cohesion. Thus, to correct this limitation the following research questions are set forth: "What types of motivational strategies does a coach use that creates or deters athletes' participation in small group sports?" and " What impact does a coach's motivating and demotivating strategies have on the amount of cohesion athletes feel within a small group sports setting?"

Method

Phase One: Sample & Procedures

This study uses two phases of data collection to identify the impact of motivating and demotivating coaching techniques on team cohesion. In the first phase of this analysis, 15 male athletes (representing track & field, football, wrestling, basketball, baseball, and swimming) and 15 female athletes (representing soccer, basketball, track & field, swimming, gymnastics, and volleyball) completed an open-ended survey instrument. The instrument asked athletes to identify coaching behaviors that either motivated or demotivated them to continue participation in their respective sport.

Surveys were distributed at a university athletic center where student-athletes seek academic assistance. Once the surveys were completed, two copies of the surveys were made for coding purposes. Athlete responses were then coded into both motivating and demotivating responses. Using a constant comparative approach the coders identified common themes that emerged from the data. Where areas of disagreement emerged, a consensus was reached through discussion by the primary researchers. This initial phase of analysis served two valuable roles. First, it provided empirical evidence of coaching behaviors and its impact on student athletes. Second, the typology was used as a source to guide the development of the interview protocol utilized for the second phase of the study. The rationale for this study suggests limited understanding of the role of the coaching in either promoting or deterring levels of cohesion in small group sports. Thus, information obtained during the initial phase of data collection was utilized to examine the impact of coaching behaviors on team cohesion levels.

Phase Two: Sample & Procedures

Sample. The participants for the second phase of this study consisted of 12 male athletes from a Division I College Football Team. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22 years of age, with a mean age of 20.8. A random cluster sampling technique was utilized to select athletes who were both starters and non-starters from both offensive and defensive squads. The

selected participants were then asked to participate in in-depth interviews at the beginning and end of summer practice sessions. The only requirement of the participants was that they have had interaction with the coach they described within the last year.

Procedures. The participants were interviewed using an in-depth interview schedule. The schedule consisted of a variety of questions that asked athletes to describe their coach's behavior and then describe the impact it had in developing cohesion and unity for the team. Probing questions were asked to provide specific examples from the respondents about the impact of coaching behaviors and strategies on team cohesion and unity. The answers to these questions were the primary focus of the following analysis. Once the interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed.

Design and Data Analysis

Design. Phase two of this study utilizes a case study approach. The case study approach is a specific technique for collecting, organizing, and analyzing data and the advantage it has when examining a single organization or group has been identified by numerous scholars (Bromely, 1986; Hersen & Barlow, 1976; George, 1979; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Gottman, 1973; Kratochwill & Levin, 1992; Yin, 1981;Yin, 1983). Arneson (1994) suggests "case studies enable researchers to understand special people, a particular problem, or a unique situation in great depth" (p. 165). Bromely (1986) suggests case studies are valuable methodological tools because they allow the researcher to analyze individuals by having them reconstruct and interpret events in their own life. This then assists in the development of grounded theory.

Data Analysis. The interview audiotapes were transcribed verbatim, resulting in approximately 150 single-spaced pages of text-based data for the present analysis. The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) was used to analyze the data. In general, the constant comparative method entails identifying emergent themes while continually comparing them for similarities and differences to existing themes. Each time a new theme emerges, a new category is created (Creswell, 1998). To complete these processes, the data analysis comprised six steps. First, each transcript was read in its entirety two times to garner a holistic understanding of the experiences on the team. Second, each researcher recorded emergent themes, including descriptions and labels for each. Third, the primary researchers came together and synthesized the findings and discussed the themes in detail to obtain consensus between members, choosing exemplar quotations for the research report. Fourth, the findings were written to ensure that the voices and themes of all informants were included in the study. Finally, the transcripts were read again to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the categories, looking for any rival explanations of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The athletes' descriptions of the motivating behavior of their coaches and its impact on

cohesion and team unity are examined in the following section using invivo coding which uses the words of the athletes in the development of categories. The participants' perceptions of the behavior of their coaches are examined in the following.

Results

During the first phase of this study, analysis of the open ended surveys indicated that athletes believed their coaches displayed a number of motivating and demotivating behaviors which either fostered or deterred their desire to participate in their respective sports. From this data analysis a typology of motivating and demotivating behaviors were identified (See table 1.1 for typology of motivating and demotivating themes).

During the interviews in the second phase of data collection, athletes identified a number of coaching behaviors, techniques, and strategies they felt promoted and deterred cohesion. Coaching techniques that deterred team cohesion levels were categorized into either issues of inequity or the use of ridicule and embarrassment. The techniques described by athletes to promote team cohesion were the use of sarcasm and teasing, bragging up the abilities of other athletes, the use of motivational speeches, discussion about the quality of opponents, the use of athlete directed techniques, team prayer, and showing dedication. Each is examined in the following section.

Table 1
Demotivating and Motivating Coaching Behaviors

Demotivating Typology	*N*	%
Abusive Language	19	37.3
Superior/Subordinate Relationship	8	15.7
Inequity	7	13.7
Inability to Communicate	6	11.7
Player Ridicule	6	11.7
Non-Systematic	5	9.8
Motivating Typology	*N*	%
Inspirational Direction	20	25.3
Personal Relationship	20	25.3
Types of Inspirational Devises	16	20.3
Support	15	19
Dedication	5	6.3
Systematic	3	3.8

Deterring Team Cohesion

Inequity. Inequity was a consistent theme addressed by the athletes on this team. The behaviors connected with this theme represented interaction or coaching behaviors in which the coach showed favoritism to a particular athlete or group within the team, utilization of poor communication skills, and bragging about the ability of other athletes. Athletes elicited numerous responses to illustrate this theme which had a negative impact on the team's cohesion levels.

Specifically, when the coach showed favoritism to individual athletes or certain positions, eight athletes felt team cohesion and unity was negatively affected. While most understood that it was not the athlete's fault for the coach showing favoritism, it still caused some athletes to distances themselves. One athlete stated "I lost a lot of respect for that person and you know if you don't have respect for a person you are not going to be out there trying to work as hard for him if he is not going to work hard for you." Most athletes suggested coach favoritism came during instances where individual athletes were allowed to do less work, or miss team meetings, events, or practices during times that other non-starters or scout team members would have been reprimanded.

Strong negative feelings were also felt toward the coach by most athletes suggesting that not only did team unity decline, but they were less likely to respect him during other situations. One athlete suggested:

> *It creates a jealousy. It creates a hatred because you feel that you are not getting the* same treatment as that other athletes, and it kind of creates a hatred toward the coach because if he is not going to treat everyone equally, it will create a separatism among the team.

Many of the athletes indicated similar feelings by representing how negative feelings or perceptions of the coach would then result in a decrease in team cohesion or the development of separation.

Embarrassment and Ridicule. Seven athletes described embarrassment and the use of ridicule as demotivating factors that caused the levels of cohesion on the team to decrease. All but one referenced the coach or assistant coach's use of embarrassment to them or other athletes. Most examples reflected instances of being yelled at after making a bad play or mistake in practice. Times when embarrassment caused the athletes to feel a loss of unity often involved instances where a coach continually yelled at an athlete over a period of time, or made remarks about another athlete to the press. One athlete described:

> There was a time when the defensive-back coach got in the paper and he was putting down one of the players saying that he couldn't run any plays.... He embarrassed him and the player was pretty upset. Made the player seem like he was dumb and couldn't think, and it made a lot of people mad.... so that part tore down unity. In a situation like that one just really loses all respect for the coach.

After being yelled at by a coach, athletes often described having negative feelings toward their coach and a limited amount of interaction they would have with athletes who were reprimanded. In one situation an athlete described his feelings toward the coach after he had continually yelled at one of the athlete's teammates, "I kind of feel sorry for him and like I said before you kind of loose a little respect for the coach....like why do you have to bring that guy down."

Promoting Team Cohesion

Bragging - Ten athletes indicated that when the coach talked up or bragged about the abilities of other athletes it made them feel more connected to their teammates. For instance, one athlete responded:

> I would say it brings me closer because especially within my position, if they do something that the coach praises, I ain't afraid to ask how they do it and have them tell me how to do it and that goes back to that everybody looks out for everybody.

Similarly, two other athletes commented on how that behavior exhibited by the coach makes them more united with their teammates. For example, another athlete stated:

> With those players, it's like they work hard in the weight room and they are winning the little awards for working hard in the weight room you might want to go work with them when they are working out because they are getting seen for what they're doing. You work with them and you will be able to get your level up too.

The other athletes made reference to the fact that the coach's bragging about other athletes made them feel closer to their teammates because it gave them the opportunity to learn from what that teammate has to offer. One particular athlete stated, "It brings me closer to them because those guys have already been here basically, and I can learn a lot from them you know. It brings me closer to him professionally and I learn from him because he is somebody I look up to." Based on those responses, it can be said that the majority of the athletes saw this particular coaching behavior as something that enhanced the cohesion among team members. Only two athletes suggested a decrease in team cohesion or unity when the coach talked up or bragged about the abilities of other athletes. One of these athletes mentioned this behavior made him feel he was not equal to the athletes the coach was bragging about.

Sarcasm and Teasing. Sarcasm and teasing is the second theme impacting team cohesion identified by athletes. The strategy of teasing athletes was another frequent response that promoted cohesion and brought the teammates together. The behaviors displayed by the coach represented in this thematic area consisted of the use of sarcasm, ridicule, joking, and the teasing of athletes. Athletes elicited numerous responses to illustrate this particular theme.

Eleven athletes described times that their coach used teasing and ridicule which then caused them to be drawn closer to their teammates and coach. Although results from the first phase of this study indicated use of sarcasm and ridicule caused athletes to be demotivated, most athletes on this particular team saw various forms of sarcasm as drawing them closer because it demonstrated the coach had a side to him that did not focus only on the sport. One athlete indicated that:

> As for my coach it brings us closer I think because I think it breaks that coach-player seriousness. If you can sit around and joke one time but when it comes down to business you can get serious. I think it brings us closer as players and with the coaches. By him doing that I think that helps us as a team because it brings us closer together and, you know, if anything else comes up that you need help with you won't feel afraid to go and talk with him because you've talked with him before.

Many other athletes indicated that having the coach make fun of them or joke around helped draw the other athletes together because they were able to laugh together during team meetings, huddles, and while watching game footage. These are times that were normally referred to as extremely strenuous and duff. Five athletes also described times when their coach embarrassed either them or other athletes as something that also drew them close to their teammates. Most saw forms of embarrassment and being yelled at by the coach as something that was part of the game and a responsibility the coach had to ensure the team could win. While many felt distanced at first, these feelings were soon overcome. This may appear contradictory; however, conversely this is an example of athletes turning what is potentially a negative situation (deterrent of motivation) into something positive (promoting cohesion). One athlete stated:

> It makes you feel like you are part of the team.... Because if they don't say anything to you I take it as if they're going to say something to you that means they care and that means they want you there. So I think that's how they pull you in.

Across all athletes the use of sarcasm and teasing were both techniques and strategies used by their coaches that drew them closer to one another and increased the levels of cohesion and unity felt by the entire team.

Motivational Speeches. Ten athletes described instances where the coach's speech made the team more cohesive and united. The athletes based this feeling in part on the way they felt after the speech and how they interacted with each other afterward. Based on the responses elicited, the coaches said things in their speeches that get the athletes motivated and bonded with each other. One athlete was quoted as saying, "His speeches have been about being a team, being united. Being like helping your team out as much as possible with whatever you do on and off the field. Mainly team goal oriented toward benefiting the team

and not just yourself." The coach obviously stresses team effort and attitude more than individual attitude. The coach encourages the athletes to relinquish personal agendas for the good of the group. Another athlete was quoted as saying, "He talks a lot about team unity. He lets us know our team is only as strong as its weakest link. That we all need to come together." Two other athletes revealed similar comments about how the coaches' speeches promote cohesion and unity. One said, "After one of his speeches we feel more cohesive. That we need to stick together in order to win the games after his speeches."

Quality of Opponent. The coaches description of the upcoming opponent was a fourth theme identified by athletes as having an impact on the teams cohesion. Twelve athletes revealed that the coach always described the other team, regardless of the importance of the game, in the same way. The coach describes the opponent with respect and he gives them credit where necessary. According to the athletes, the coach says that every team has the opportunity to win if they are taken lightly. The majority of the athletes described team unity and cohesion as higher when the game was more important and the opponent more challenging. Six athletes described team cohesion and unity as being higher in a more important game or those that would be televised nationally. Those athletes were quoted as saying:

> Well, everybody tries to claim that every game is just as important but you know it's not. You know that when we play Iowa State everyone is going out they're trying to kill the other team and move up in the rankings by blowing them away. And then when we play Texas or Texas A&M or something there is more. You see guys during the week who are hitting harder. Guys are more hype. Guys are more united.

A number of the athletes alluded to the connection and focus of their teammates during weeks they played higher caliber opponents. It also appeared to affect the way in which athletes felt cohesive and united before the game. Athletes seemed to take it upon themselves to pump up each other for the bigger opponents. Another athlete was quoted as saying:

> Unity before an important game is all week long. Everybody is on each other's case, pumping each other up. Getting everybody cranked up. You know Monday, like before some scrubby team we are, you know, messing around, not really busting our balls or nothing but for an important game it (unity) is pretty intense.

Two other athletes elicited similar responses concerning the team unity and cohesion being much higher when the game is important. One of the two said:

> When there is a big game the team usually pulls together. It's just like they don't want to make any mistakes at all. Unity is really strong especially during a big game because everyone feels that we have to win this game for many reasons so we kind of pull together as one and try to make everything count.

Athletes alluded to the fact that their coach often approached difficult games differently during pre-game speeches. Often, focusing on the potential rivalry that existed between the two teams was identified as one clear technique to help promote the cohesion and unity the team members had with one another. A clear "us" versus "them" was a quality that was threaded throughout the athlete's descriptions of the speeches the coach gave. According to the athletes, this technique was an extremely effective tool for bonding the athletes together and progressing toward one common goal.

Athlete Directed Techniques. Athlete directed techniques consisted of particular techniques used by the coach to allow athletes to develop their own levels of cohesion for the team. The behaviors under this technique were such things as the coach using team goals and establishing a unity council. Athletes elicited numerous responses to illustrate these categories. The athletes all felt that their coaches used a variety of strategies to foster and encourage cohesion and unity on the team. According to the athletes, the more they were together as a whole team the more cohesion they felt the team had. Athletes indicated their coaches used strategies such as having them spend time together off the field, lift and study together, going to movies before games, having team meetings during the regular and off season, team picnics, pep rallies, and having athletes go to group homes.

A number of the athletes suggested that the coach's attitude toward the entire team was another factor that encouraged and promoted cohesion among members. One athlete suggested:

> He lets me know that on this team it doesn't matter if you are washing the uniforms or you are a star player, you get treated the same and it really helps keep things flowing just to know that no matter what you're doing you play a big role in this team.

The fact that the coach placed everyone on the same level, and tried to keep everyone involved in team activities was one of the major strategies athletes identified. Another athlete stated, "whenever somebody messes up, coach would say 'if one guy messes up and has to run the whole team has to run.' Everybody does the punishment together. It is never anyone's fault...it is the team's fault as the whole."

The athletes indicated that their coach had established a unity council that consisted of two senior athletes from each position. These athletes were responsible for representing the team when bringing athlete concerns to the attention of the coach. Athletes suggested the unity council had a significant impact on the way athletes interacted with each other. By knowing that one had a say in the decisions about team activities and the structure of practices had a significant impact on athletes' satisfaction with the team, coach, and their teammates.

In addition, the coach's use and development of team goals was another technique athletes identified as having an impact on their ability to control cohesion levels for the team.

Athletes indicated that they were asked to developed team goals at the beginning of the season. Goals focused on things such as the overall team performance for the end of the year, individual game goals, and offensive, defensive and special team goals to be achieved for each game. These goals were then placed on plaques in the locker room, team meeting rooms, and in locations as they walked onto the field. When describing the impact of team goals one athlete stated:

> I think its got a big impact because on this team we got a lot of different walks of life and when you got one certain goal and you got everybody going for just that goal every body is the same then. It ain't like there's ten different shades of people. Everybody's going for the same thing. Everybody's living off the same heart beat and you would be amazed how much love is brought out between players.

Eight athletes addressed the importance of team goals on the amount of cohesion felt by team members. Because they sat down as a team after each game and tallied up the number of goals achieved and those unattained, it made the team aware of what they needed to continue to strive for. In addition, it caused the athletes to push and help one another to achieve those goals. One athlete indicated:

> I mean if you don't meet certain completions and stuff, the quarterback will stay back with some of our receivers after practice and go over that or if someone fumbles then the coaches will stay back with some of the running backs and run fumbles or do interception drills at the end. I mean we will do something together, you know, so we make sure that we meet those goals so we get a closeness and then we get that trust from everybody.

Trust was one key element that athletes felt developed throughout the team. An effort of helping each other to ensure the team goals were achieved. A type of "you help me, I'll help you" mentality was developed by a majority of the athletes, with an elimination of individual goals unless they were vital in achieving team goals.

Team Prayer. Ten athletes indicated the use of prayer during pre-game and post-game interaction as a technique used by their coach to help develop and maintain cohesion. Athletes suggested the team prayer focused on ensuring the health of athletes from both sides, and allowing every team member to perform up to his best ability. One athlete touched on this:

> It's a sense of life, it's a sense of almost looking out for each other and caring for each other...because no body wants to see anybody get hurt, so we pray that nobody gets hurt...I don't want to see Chris get hurt; I don't want to see Kyle get hurt; I'm pretty sure they don't want to see me get hurt or whatever or have a down game. They want to see me have a good game and come out of there with a win, so I think the prayer pretty much brings out, you would say the love part and the friendship part.

Most athletes offered similar statements when describing the role of team prayer prior to competition. They were not praying for God to provide them with a win, but to draw each other together and eliminate lack of trust that may have existed prior to the game. One athlete who indicated a separation between positions and racial groups stated:

> It shows me that they have a different side to them. Even people who we may think are prejudice toward us black players, but when they pray for god we kind of block that out...we let everything out. Let out all those hatreds and whatever we might have toward someone else and we get together as a team and go out and play.

The team prayer allowed athletes to forgo any conflicts and brought them together as one unit. While other strategies used by the coach allowed athletes to develop trust in each other, and the use of team goals allowed members to focus on their specific tasks to ensure team success, the team prayer became the primary force that allowed a connection of all the other various strategies. One athlete indicated, "it kind of like after the prayer it's just like you're going into war. You're going in as a team. It keeps you very united and it lets you know that no one person is going to win this game, the whole team is going to win."

Dedication. The findings demonstrate that ten athletes indicated the coach's use of enthusiasm prior to a game was an additional strategy used by their coach to help develop and maintain cohesion. These athletes believed the coach's enthusiasm created a special bond between them as teammates. One athlete was quoted as saying, "I think it brings us closer. You get in the huddle and everyone is like 'ya, you see coach jumping over there on the sidelines. Come on we got to do this for coach. And it just brings a whole better atmosphere to the team." Another athlete revealed similar thoughts when he said:

> When we see one of our coaches get pumped up it usually pumps the team up and we will usually pump each other up so we kind of together everybody pulls together and kind of pump each other up in a way that it will help you. You are kind of saying that you are getting pumped up so that I can get out there and play for you not only myself. So it brings unity a majority of the time.

Another athlete was quoted simply saying, "When he shows enthusiasm everybody then comes together somewhat."

Discussion

The rationale for this study speculated that if a coach is aware of the impact cohesion has on team success then one would assume that a significant portion of a coach's interaction with the team would involve strategies to promote and develop unity and cohesion among athletes. The results from this study demonstrate the valuable role a coach plays in the

development of cohesion for his/her team. The findings suggest that athletes identified a number of techniques and strategies that they felt deterred (inequity, and embarrassment and ridicule) and promoted (bragging, sarcasm and teasing, motivational speeches, quality of the opponent, team prayer, and dedication) team cohesion.

Using the findings of this study as a basis, there are a number of valuable implications for coaches. One implication is that coaches need to take the time to reflect on those strategies that make the team more cohesive. In addition, there are a number of similarities to existing literature when making the connection between coaching styles and cohesion which coaches should be aware of. The use of athlete directed techniques, use of motivational speeches, and showing dedication are similar coaching strategies represented by democratic style, social support behavior, and rewarding behaviors displayed in the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS). As a result these findings are similar to various researchers (Carron & Chelladurai, 1981b; Gardner et. al., 1996; Shields, et. al., 1995; Westre & Weiss, 1991) in their examination of coaching styles using the LSS and GEQ.

A unique finding from this study is that a number of the coaching techniques identified by athletes *during the first phase of the study increased cohesion during the second phase.* Sarcasm, teasing, embarrassment, ridicule, inequity, and bragging up other players were all described as demotivating behaviors. What would then cause an athlete to suggest bragging, sarcasm and teasing would foster team cohesion? The one thing that separates these variables is the impact on interpersonal relationships, which are developed between athletes. Inequity, embarrassment and ridicule were all described as isolating experiences with the coach. It caused separation between the athlete(s) being referenced and the rest of the team. Bragging, sarcasm and teasing, however, were described as inclusive strategies. Sarcasm and teasing made the team laugh together at the expense of one athlete. Bragging up the ability of one athlete presented the model by which the coach wanted other team members to aspire. For coaches, these may appear to be very miniscule differences, however, from the perspective of the athlete, the impact on the team can be dramatic. These techniques allowed athletes to begin to develop interpersonal relationships with the coach and between teammates. These findings are similar to Nixon (1977) who examined intramural athletes and found that athlete's interpersonal attraction to his teammates and the level of cohesiveness were found to be positively related. Other researchers (Klein & Christiansen, 1969; Landers & Luschens, 1974; Schriesheim, 1980) have also found similar results when examining interpersonal relationships and cohesion.

A third implication from this study is the impact team prayer had in promoting team cohesion. Many of the athletes described a separation between different groups on the team. Offensive athletes had limited interaction with the defense, starters found themselves sepa-

rated from the non-starters, those who did not dress for games described animosity with those athletes who traveled, and finally because of the racial differences on the team, a number of black athletes alluded to the fact that they felt separated from the white athletes in and away from the sport. Just on this one team these various subgroups developed and were affecting the potential team cohesion. These are issues that many coaches must face when attempting to ensure team cohesion. However, the athletes describe that team prayer was one of the most effective strategies for allowing separation, animosity, and individual prejudices to be wiped away moments before game time.

Future research in the area of cohesion should continue to examine specific techniques and strategies used by coaches that either deter or promote team cohesion levels. The examination of techniques used by coaches from a variety of levels would be a beneficial area to conduct future research. Do youth, high school and professional coaches utilize the same techniques and strategies, and if so do they have the same impact on cohesion? It would be interesting to determine if female athletes respond in the same way as male athletes. In what way does athlete gender impact the effectiveness of coaching strategies? Do females respond the same way when confronted with teasing, sarcasm and bragging? Finally, I believe future research should attempt to examine various sport types to determine if coaches employ additional strategies when working with independent or coacting team structures.

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