Coaching Leadership Preferences: What Are Collegiate Athletes Looking For?

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Abstract

This one hour lecture session is intended for coaches, coach educators, and sport researchers. It will focus on the results of a study involving nearly 2,000 NCAA student athletes representing twelve different intercollegiate sports teams from ten colleges in the Midwest. The purpose of the study was to identify and compare coaching leadership preferences of present day collegiate athletes.

The coaching leadership preferences were collected using the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS). It is a 5-point Likert–scaled questionnaire consisting of 60 items. The dimensions measured were training and instruction behavior, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support behavior, positive feedback behavior, and situational consideration behavior. The teams surveyed were selected according to task dependence and the existence of both male and female squads. The following sports were chosen: men’s and women’s basketball, men’s and women’s soccer, men’s baseball and women’s softball, men’s and women’s swimming, men’s and women’s tennis, and men’s and women’s track & field.

The data were analyzed to identify and compare differences and similarities between male and female athletes as well as team and individual sport athletes using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). For all procedures the minimally acceptable confidence level was established at .05 and the results were reported as such. Significant differences were discovered in four of the six coaching behavior dimensions between male and female varsity student-athletes and in all six coaching behavior dimensions between team and individual sports.

This research study provides significant information for the advancement of coaching leadership. The RLSS will be presented as a tool that coaches can use with their own teams; to become effective listeners, to assist with communication, and potentially help their athletes perform at a higher level. It addresses benchmarks established in NASPE Standards 1, 18, 19, and 25-28.