Coaching Athletes with Hidden Disabilities: Research and Recommendations for Coaching Education

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Abstract

Athletes with high incidence disabilities (specific learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional behavioral disorders, mild intellectual disabilities and speech/language disabilities) make up 10% of the population of children in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Since these disabilities are not physically apparent, there difficulties may be overlooked or athletes may be mistakenly labeled as unmotivated, lazy, oppositional or defiant. These deficits can be remediated and compensated through the use of research-validated strategies and instructional methods. However, while these methods and strategies are often included in teacher preparation, they rarely, if ever, are included in coaching-preparation. Therefore, the purpose of this hour long interactive lecture is twofold and 1) seeks to review the coaching education research on hidden disabilities, including coaches’ attitudes and efficacy towards working with athletes with hidden disabilities, coaching educators attitudes towards the inclusion of such content within coaching education, and coaches’ preferences for how to receive this information, and 2) to illustrate teaching strategies and techniques that can successfully be incorporated into coaching education. Presenters will use discussion, activities, and research to introduce this new area to coaching education to coach educators and sport scientists/high performance directors.