

THE MAGAZINE FOR CANADA'S COACHES

VOL 22 NO 2
SPRING/SUMMER 2015

COACHES

plan

JOHN HERDMAN: READY FOR FIFA

The celebrated soccer coach
on the art of coaching

WINNING COACHES
SHARE THEIR BEST ADVICE

RECOVERY TIME
WHY COACHES
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John Herdman, ChPC

TIPS ON PA TOOLS | A GAME PLAN FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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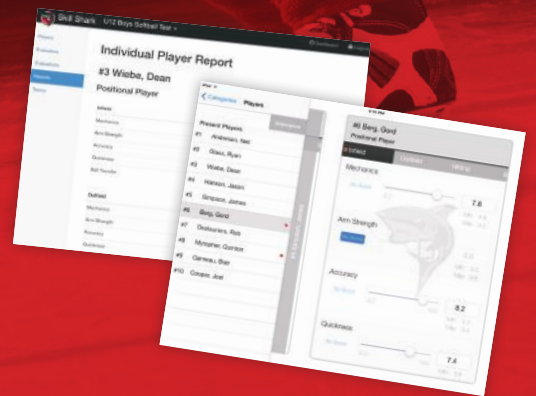
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Coaches on the art of coaching

The writer John Steinbeck had this to say about advice: “You know how advice is. You only want it if it agrees with what you wanted to do anyway.”

There may be some truth to that, but most coaches know that a few well timed words of advice can be very valuable indeed. Especially if they come from a respected source. In this issue, you’re in luck. We have advice from some very high profile coaches who were generous in sharing some of the lessons they’ve learned about coaching both on and off the field. Eight of Canada’s top coaches—Chantal Vallée, Brian Towriss, Dave Preston, Mary-Anne Reid, Larry Haylor, Howie Draper, Dave Scott-Thomas and Tom Johnson—drew on their decades of experience in coaching to contribute to this issue. We think you’ll be intrigued as to what they have to say.

Another high profile coach—John Herdman—graces our cover this month. *Canadian Press* reporter Lori Ewing, a regular contributor to *Coaches plan*, had an interview with the celebrated soccer coach in advance of the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup. Herdman shares some advice of his own with our coach readers, including suggesting they try to create opportunities for “parent-free” times when athletes can play without being under the watchful eye of their parents. “It often tends to be parents, more than the coaches, who turn players off playing,” he says.

There’s no doubt that overly involved parents—among other factors—can make a coach’s life stressful. That’s why we’ve included a feature in this issue which offers practical advice on how coaches can lead balanced lives. Writer Rosalind Stefanac interviewed coaches who found strategies to keep things in balance. Stefanac also spoke to Shaunna Taylor, a sports psychologist, who notes coaches can at times find their lives out of whack. With personalities typically drawn to coaching which are “driven, demanding and self-sacrificing,” a coach’s personal pursuits and relationships can be at risk if they are too focused on coaching. We hope the article will get you thinking about how to combine your love of and dedication to sport with living a healthy and well-rounded life.

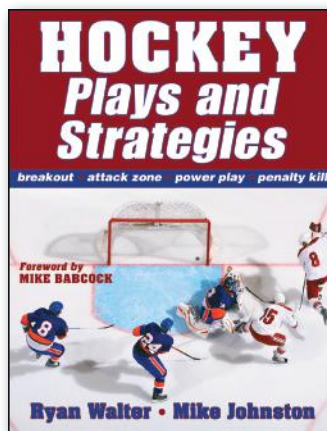
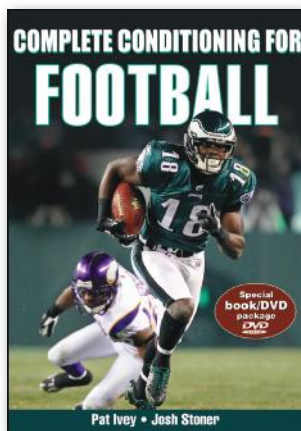
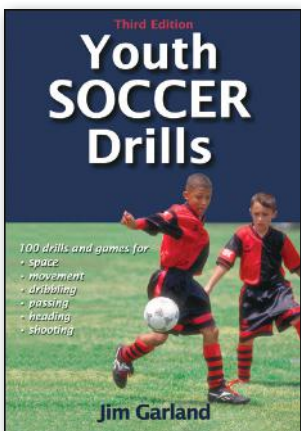
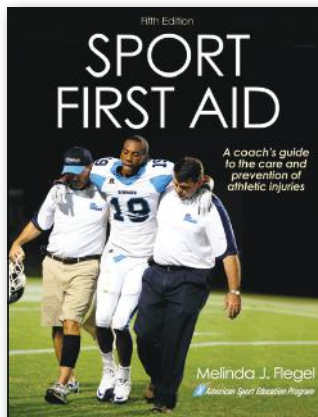
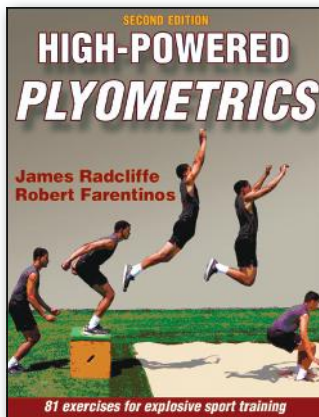
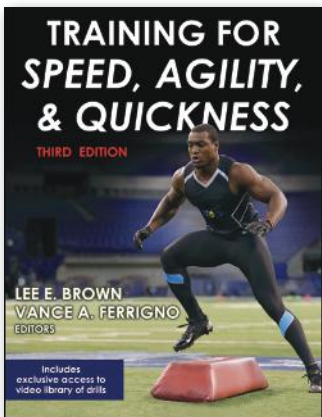
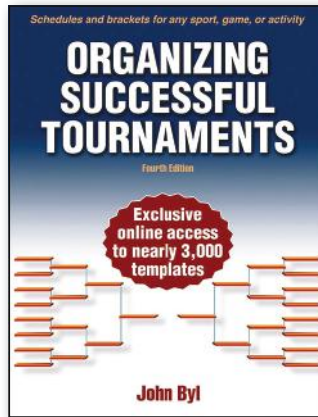
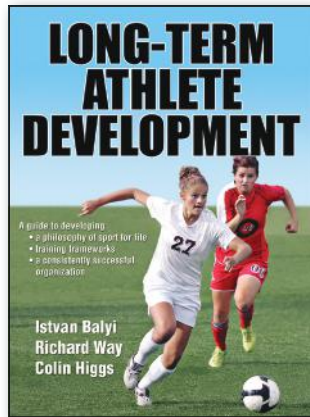
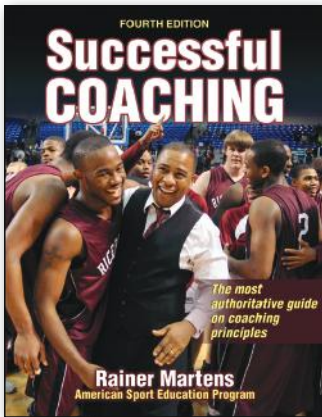
Elsewhere in this issue, other experts offer up their best advice on how best to use performance analysis tools and how to help athletes meet adequate energy requirements for optimal health and performance.

So while Steinbeck suggests that we only want advice that already fits with our perceived notions of how things ought to be, we think our coach readers are open to many different viewpoints. In fact we suspect they may agree with the words of another famous author, Harper Lee, author of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, who said: “Many receive advice, only the wise profit from it.”

We hope our readers will indeed profit from the wealth of information in this issue.

— Julie Parkins-Forget, Executive Editor

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A game plan for mental health

HERE'S A SAMPLING OF KEY RESOURCES
COACHES CAN UTILIZE TO HELP THEIR ATHLETES

By Shaunna Taylor, PhD

ONLY AN ESTIMATED ONE-THIRD OF CANADIANS WHO REQUIRE MENTAL HEALTH assistance will actually seek and receive it. But more people than ever before are beginning to speak out and get the help they need — thanks in part to ground-breaking public awareness initiatives such as Bell Canada's "Let's Talk" campaign. A key driver for this campaign is the decorated Olympian cyclist and speedskater Clara Hughes, who openly speaks of her personal experience with depression in order to help dispel the myth that athletes are immune from mental health challenges. As a result of campaigns like these, many in the world of sport at all levels are trying to find ways to better address the mental health needs of athletes.

Research shows that athletes are at a higher risk for mental health issues such as disordered eating and anxiety, and are less likely to seek help because of the stereotype that athletes are physically strong and mentally tough.

Last year the *Mental Health Strategy for High Performance Sport in Canada* was developed by a working group that included the Canadian Sport Institutes and the Canadian Sport Psychology Association. This strategy has four key objectives for the high performance sport community, including: increasing awareness of mental health problems and the importance of early identification; awareness of the impact of mental illness and implementing return-to-sport/work plans to avoid relapse; prevention measures; and increased knowledge of the resources available for support and intervention.

This strategy is an important step in the long road to create better awareness of mental health in the sport context at all levels. Coaches are a key part of this strategy because of their role as influencers in the sport environment. One only has to look to the role coaches have played in the prevention, detection, and return-to-play of athletes with brain injuries and concussions to understand the similar value they can have in the world of mental health.

Most coaches take first aid and CPR training, but few are aware of, or are engaged in, mental health training programs. Below is a sampling of some of the resources that can help coaches become more proactive in helping staff and athletes with mental health issues.



Shaunna Taylor, PhD, is the Co-Chair of the Managing Council of the Canadian Sport Psychology Association. She has been consulting with coaches and athletes from the grassroots level to the Olympic/ Paralympic level for 15+ years.

Mental Health Commission of Canada

This organization offers a Mental Health First Aid resource that helps coaches learn about signs and symptoms of common mental health problems and crisis situations in addition to providing information about effective interventions/treatments and how to access professional help for staff and athletes. The Commission also produces free monthly hour-long seminars on mental health in the workplace that can assist coaches in creating a team environment that promotes resiliency. www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca

OHL & CMHA: “Talk Today”

In recent years, there have been many high profile examples of athletes who have suffered from severe depression, self-harming, and who have committed suicide. Some sport organizations have taken a proactive approach to educating their team members on these issues. Last year, the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) joined forces with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to help players and coaches understand mental health issues. As part of the “Talk Today” program, each of the OHL’s 20 teams have been assigned a mental health coach who is available to players, coaches, parents, billets, and other members of the organization. Other aspects of the program include training on recognizing signs of potential suicide and appointing “mental health champions” to talk to the public about the league’s efforts.

Cycling Canada’s mental health strategy

Cycling Canada introduced a new webinar last year outlining its mental health strategy to cycling coaches. The webinar offers guidance on identification, intervention, treatment, and prevention of mental health issues. This webinar was offered as part of Cycling Canada’s professional development opportunities for its coaching community: www.cyclingcanada.ca/maintenance

Student-Athlete Mental Health Initiative (SAMHI)

SAMHI is a not-for-profit organization that advocates and supports the mental wellbeing of student-athletes across campuses in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport system. It also features a tool for coaches called the Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP), which provides coaching staff with guidance on interacting with athletes with mental health issues. www.samhi.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association

“safeTALK” is a half-day workshop offered to the general public that is designed to help participants identify those at risk of suicide and offer strategies for connecting them with the help they need. ottawa.cmha.ca/programs_services/safetalk

The CMHA also offers a two-day workshop on suicide prevention called ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. ottawa.cmha.ca/programs_services/asist

BodySense: A positive body image initiative for athletes

This outreach initiative, offered jointly by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the True Sport Foundation, is dedicated to fostering positive body image in male and female athletes to help prevent disordered eating and muscle dysmorphia and offers workshops and other resources to sport organizations. www.bodysense.ca



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Clara Hughes

A key driver for Bell Canada’s “Let’s Talk” campaign is the decorated Olympic cyclist and speedskater Clara Hughes, who openly speaks of her personal experience with depression in order to help dispel the myth that athletes are immune from mental health challenges.

The case for calories

LOW ENERGY AVAILABILITY CAN HAVE A DISASTROUS EFFECT ON AN ATHLETE'S HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE

Angela Dufour, MEd, RD, IOC Dip Sports Nutr, Sport Dietitian, CFE

ATHLETES NEED TO MEET ADEQUATE ENERGY REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER to maintain appropriate and desired body weight and body composition goals at specific phases in their training. Low energy intake can lead to muscle loss, menstrual dysfunction, low bone density, high risk of fatigue, injury, longer recovery, and illness.

The body can adapt to small changes in energy availability, but significant deficits over time will reduce its ability to function properly for optimum health and performance. The general minimum energy requirement for athletes is 30 calories per kg of fat free body mass. There are three factors typically associated with chronic low energy availability (EA):

- Eating disorders (ED) and disordered eating (DE)
- Excessive restricted eating and/or excessive exercise for weight control or loss of body fat
- Not adapting to higher energy needs during different training periods

Studies show that athletes who consume 700 calories a day less than required will demonstrate a 10 percent decline in performance times while those who fuel adequately show an eight percent improvement over eight weeks.

The body has an adaptive response to energy deficits and goes into “starvation mode,” causing metabolism to decrease and fat storage to increase. Energy deficits greater than 300 calories in elite athletes have been associated with higher body fat percentage. Other potential effects of relative energy deficits on sports performance include increased risk of injury and decreased muscle strength.

WHAT COACHES CAN DO:

Low EA/DE/ED

There are a number of markers coaches should be aware of for at-risk athletes. The screening and diagnosis of energy deficiency is challenging as symptoms may be subtle. Early detection is key in order to improve performance and prevent long-term health consequences. An annual health exam may be recommended in situations where low energy availability (EA) is suspected, since this is a key risk factor in energy deficiency. There are various screening tools to detect disordered eating behaviours and eating disorders, such as the Brief Eating Disorder in Athletes Questionnaire and the Eating Disorder Examination, but there are few validated screening tools to detect persistently low EA. The LEAF Questionnaire can be used as a screening tool in combination with other validated disordered eating screening instruments for the identification of at-risk female athletes.



Angela Dufour owns and operates Nutrition in Action, a private counseling and nutrition services practice for athletes, coaches, and the general public in Bedford, Nova Scotia, and also works with the Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic. She is the author of *PowerFuel Food: Planning Meals for Maximum Performance* (Glen Margaret Publishing, 2013).

Low EA is frequently diagnosed in female athletes with a Body Mass Index (BMI) <17.5 or adolescents within <85% of their expected body weight. If BMI is >18.5, a more in depth assessment addressing food intake and energy expenditure by a registered sport dietitian is warranted.

The goal of treatment is to reverse any recent weight loss, reach a body weight that supports regular menses, reach a BMI of between 18.5-24.9 and consume a minimum of 2,000 kcals per day. Increases in energy intake should be gradual and occur over several months to ensure the athlete achieves healthy and sustainable eating habits.

To minimize energy deficits, it is important to determine the current energy intake and energy expenditure of the athlete via food and activity logs. Diet plans should focus on incorporating energy and nutrient-dense foods over regular intervals throughout the day.

Cognitive behavioural therapy and nutrition counselling may be beneficial in changing negative perceptions athletes may associate with food and body image. These measures may help the athlete reach a greater acceptance in increasing their energy intake and weight.

Screening for menstrual dysfunction

Subjective screening for menstrual dysfunction may include determining the prevalence of irregular menstrual cycles coupled with a biochemical/laboratory assessment to rule out other potential contributing factors, such as pregnancy or endocrine irregularities. More extensive testing might include a pelvic ultrasound and endometrial sampling to rule out other gynaecological pathologies.

Athletes with menstrual dysfunction should aim to gradually increase their energy intake. Positive energy intake leading to weight gain has been identified as the strongest predictor of resumption of menses among female athletes. Return of menses is individual and dependent on the severity of energy restriction.

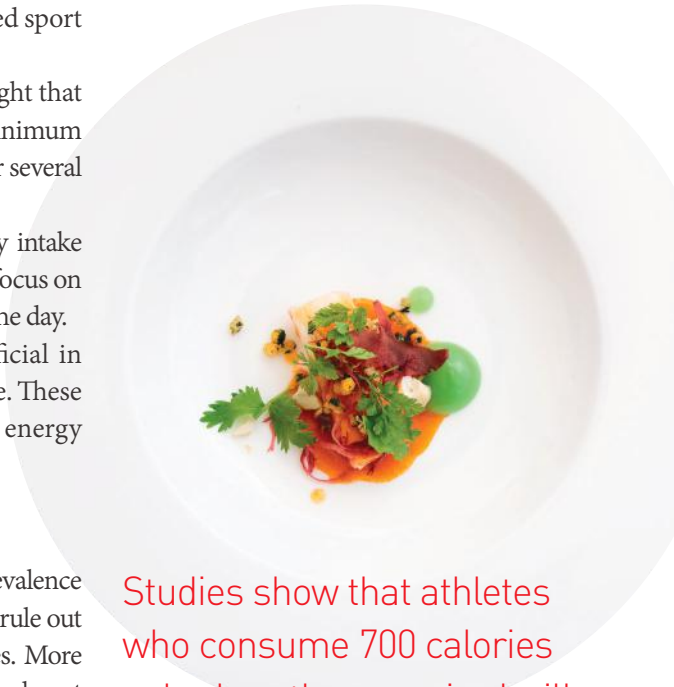
Screening for bone mineral density (BMD)

Athletes with low EA, DE/ED or amenorrhea for more than six months should be screened for BMD. In the athlete population, low BMD is defined as a Z-score between -1.0 and -2.0 SD, together with a history of nutritional deficiencies, hypoestrogenism, stress fracture or other secondary clinical risk factors for fracture.

Athletes with low BMD should aim to increase energy intake to promote weight gain and resumption of menses. Resumption of menses has been closely linked to normalizing hormonal levels and preventing further BMD loss. Vitamin D and calcium status should be determined through food records and blood tests; dietary intake of these minerals should be increased if necessary. Athletes are advised to participate in weight bearing activities, such as resistance training, in order to increase and maintain BMD.

Getting back in the game

The decision to allow athletes to return to play should be based on a validated risk assessment model, such as *The Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport Clinical Assessment Tool* or the *Risk Assessment Model for the Triad and Return to Play*, which identify if athletes are at low, moderate or high risk. An athlete at low risk can be fully cleared to return to play. An athlete at moderate risk can receive limited clearance to play but must be subject to continual monitoring of their health status until full clearance is granted. They are also required to adhere to recommendations outlined by their multidisciplinary health team. An athlete at high risk is restricted from play and must reach specific health goals as agreed upon via a written contract as outlined by the multidisciplinary team in order to return to play.



Studies show that athletes who consume 700 calories a day less than required will demonstrate a 10 percent decline in performance times while those who fuel adequately show an eight percent improvement over eight weeks.



References available upon request

Practical tips on performance analysis tools

HOW COACHES CAN MAKE THE MOST OF PA TECHNOLOGY

By Larry Katz, PhD



Larry Katz is a professor and director of the Sport Technology Research Laboratory in the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary. An award-winning multimedia developer, Dr. Katz is a consultant, innovator, instructor, and international speaker who has developed numerous multimedia tools and performance analysis resources for coaches, teachers, students, and athletes to enhance their performance and decision-making.

GREAT COACHES HAVE AN EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR SPORT

and strong powers of observation, but they cannot identify and remember all of the key events occurring in a practice or game. They need resources to help them accurately recall events and analyze performance to provide appropriate feedback and plan and implement new strategies.

According to the International Society of Performance Analysis in Sport, performance analysis (PA) is an objective way of recording and interpreting sport performance using the latest technology. This technology allows key features of athletic performance to be quantified in an acceptable and consistent manner and helps coaches collect relevant information about their athletes, including their biomechanical performance, physiological condition, tactical functioning, and emotional preparation before, during and after practices and competitions. It also analyzes game play. Appropriately employed, these innovative resources can help coaches advise their athletes and improve decision-making. The information offered by PA technology is accessible and easily interpretable by coaches and athletes. Since victory can be a matter of a few centimetres or hundredths of a second, such tools have plenty of practical potential.

Many people have seen PA technology in use without realizing it — just think of broadcasts of SimulCam skiing, or StroMotion ice skating (when rapid movement by an athlete is perceived as a series of static images) or using StroMotion and SimulCam in tandem. Virtual simulations can be used to help football quarterbacks practice decision-making or to engage injured athletes in interactive virtual environments to motivate and monitor rehabilitation.

There are several issues coaches need to be aware of when adopting technology for performance analysis, including cost, training time, ease of use, and maintenance.



StroMotion image courtesy of Dartfish

Cost

State-of-the-art PA technology is often very expensive. For example, the Motek interactive system for rehabilitation is about \$1 million per unit. However, the Nintendo Wii, Sony Move, and Microsoft Kinect systems can also be used for rehabilitation and cost just a few hundred dollars. Similarly, the cost of wearable devices or wearable clothing to measure biometrics is also in the range of a few hundred dollars.

Dartfish is one of a number of video performance tools that provides StroMotion and SimulCam for a few thousand dollars. Alternatively, dozens of video analysis tools—among them VideoTagger and Coach's Eye—are available for smart phones and tablets and range from no cost to \$29.95.

Training time and ease of use

The time it takes to learn how to use these systems—and their ease of use—also have to be considered, as well as determining who will do the training, who among the coaching staff will be trained and whose responsibility it will be to collect and analyze the data.

Maintenance

Who in your organization will be assigned to maintain your PA equipment? How will you protect the equipment from damage during practices and games? Is learning how to use these technologies a valuable use of a coach's time and is the coach really interested in learning how to use these new tools? Some coaches like working with technology and can be their own performance analysts, however, others do not have the time, interest or comfort level to work with this kind of high-tech gear.

Having to tackle issues such as these is the reason that most coaches do not make use of PA tools. However, without the use of PA technology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to reach the podium. Coaches and athletes need to understand how computers are used in studying and analyzing sport performance for their own success. Having a complete understanding of the technology's capabilities will allow them to realize the benefits of PA. The insights gained enable coaches and athletes to maximize training.

HOW A PERFORMANCE ANALYST CAN HELP

Performance analysts are experts on PA technology and work with coaches and athletes to maximize the potential of this technology on athletic performance.

These professionals can meaningfully and creatively access, organize, and manage data and provide information to coaches in a timely, relevant and easy-to-understand manner. Coaches can then use this information to help athletes review and appropriately modify training and performance parameters.

For example, the Centre for Video and Performance Analysis at the University of Calgary (www.ucalgary.ca/cvpa), works with a number of sport groups to analyze the performance of their athletes in real time. Two of these groups are Paralympic swimmers and Olympic luge teams who are provided with immediate feedback on various force and acceleration components of their starts.

The use of performance analysts is a major component of the sport support model in China and in some parts of Western Europe, but the uptake is not nearly as strong in Canada. To improve our stature in international competition, we need to train coaches who are interested in using PA tools and develop and train performance analysts to work with coaches who realize the importance of using these tools, but do not have the time or inclination to learn how.

To save money on the cost of hiring performance analysts, coaches can arrange for the training of interested players, parents, and fans who could act as performance analysts for their teams.

THE CELEBRATED SOCCER COACH SITS DOWN
FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH *COACHES PLAN*
IN ADVANCE OF THE 2015 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Lori Ewing

JOHN HERDMAN, ChPC, ON THE ART OF COACHING

In what was one of the most memorable performances in sport history, Canadians held their collective breath for 120 minutes during the 2012 London Olympics Canada-U.S. semifinal women's soccer game, and felt the national heartbreak of a loss that was so hard to understand.

On the heels of Canada's shocking last place finish at the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup, the Canadian Soccer Association looked to Englishman John Herdman, ChPC, to turn the program around. Herdman led Canada to a gold medal at the 2011 Pan American Games just weeks after his hiring, then a year later at the London Olympics, the team won bronze, Canada's first medal in a traditional team sport since 1936. The team's heartbreaking 4-3 loss to the U.S. in the semi-finals was one of the most compelling sports events in recent history. Herdman and his team will be back in the spotlight this summer as Canada hosts the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup.

If you could do one thing over, what would it be?

"It would be the 2007 World Cup against Japan. New Zealand was 1-all with 15 minutes to play, and I should have made a structural change at that point. We hadn't solidified a good solid Plan B, and because of that, I didn't have the courage to change it. And we got beat 2-1 by the team that went on to win the World Cup."

What do you think is the single most important role of a coach?

"It's about being able to communicate a vision on a daily basis, and understanding the need to ask great questions that will help others realize their vision."

Do you coach individual players differently?

"People are different. They've had different experiences and different upbringings. The reality is that there are different tools coaches use for different responses and when you want a certain response, there's a certain tool you use. Top coaches know how to pick the right tool at the right time. And then it's got to be an informed process as well. You can't just be using a sledgehammer because you feel like it. There has to be a really good reason why you're going to use that. And you have to know what the impact is going to be on a player if you use a sledgehammer."

Do you ever use a sledgehammer?

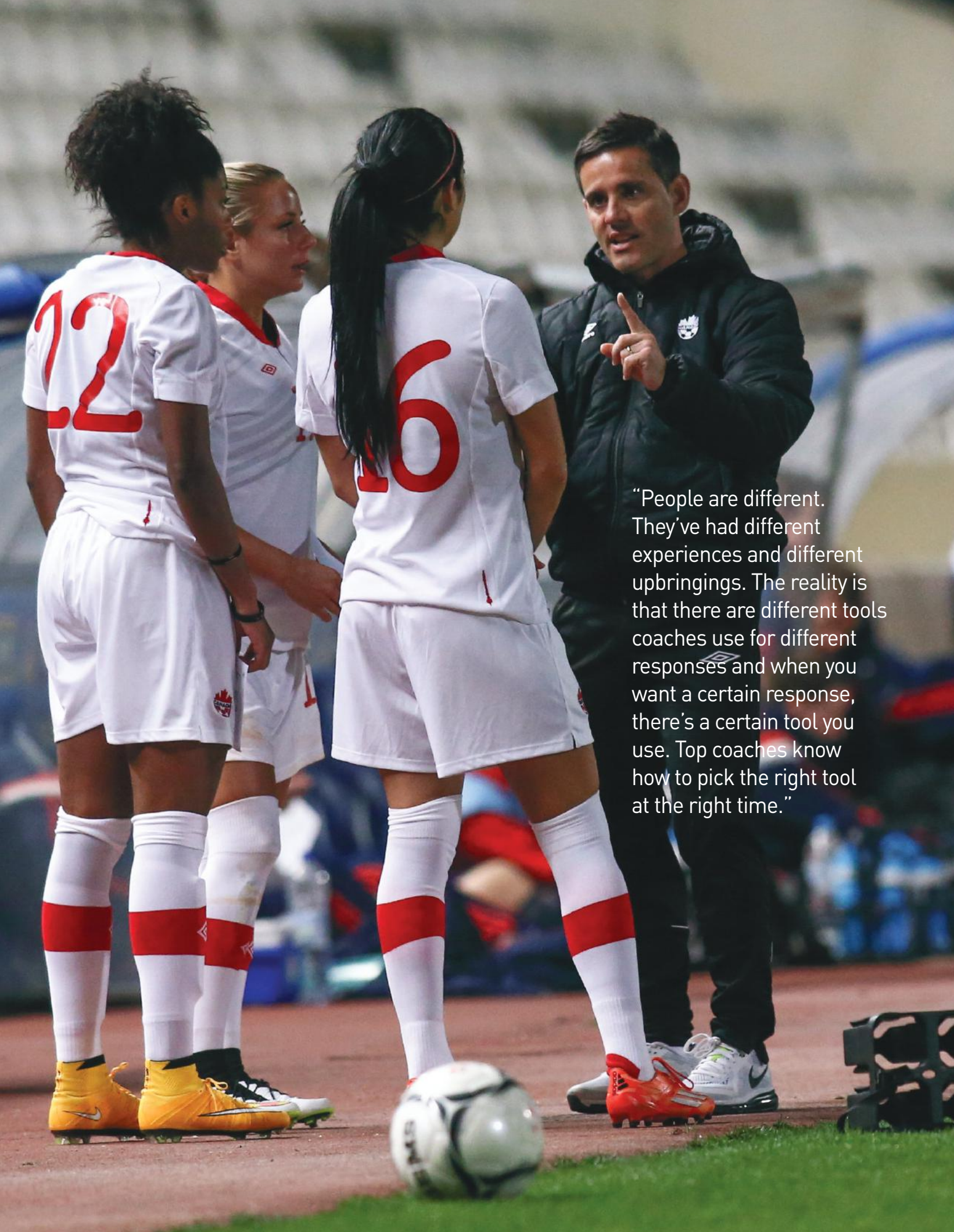
"Yes, I do, but not in a way that's abusive. If you bring a sledgehammer out and you're going to get really assertive and authoritative, then you know what impact it's going to have on people. Every time you do something, there's always a consequence and you've got to know what that consequence is—whether it's going to be positive or negative—before you do it. That's the art of coaching."

Is there something you could be better at?

"The big thing for me would be on the neuroscience piece—becoming more aware of how the brain works and how you impact physiology and people's emotions. This is a new area for coaches to explore and I'd like to learn more. I'm also interested in starting a PhD. I'm keen to understand more about developing high performance coaches. It's something that I do, and it's something I want to be an informed decision-maker on, so I'd like to get into the research in this area."

Is there something the Coaching Association of Canada could do to attract and keep coaches at the grassroots level?

"People get into coaching for a number of reasons. I think they want to make a difference in the lives of others, and they can do that by getting involved in what they're



“People are different. They’ve had different experiences and different upbringings. The reality is that there are different tools coaches use for different responses and when you want a certain response, there’s a certain tool you use. Top coaches know how to pick the right tool at the right time.”

“I don’t think that Olympics would have ever been as memorable if it wasn’t for that moment. Even if we had gone on to win the gold medal, I think this team won more through their response and the adversity. They won more than a gold medal in that moment from that game. So for all of us, it’s a positive memory because we gained our identity through that moment.”

passionate about—and that’s their sport. The one thing that spoils the experience for coaches is the pressure of results, and the pressure parents put on coaches around the training environment and around matches. One thing that I think we could try is to have some kind of approach where coaches and players can perform without being under the watchful eye of parents—almost having no spectatorship in training sessions, and having parent-free weeks or days. Now and again just letting the kids play, and letting coaches coach without them constantly thinking ‘have I upset this parent because this player wasn’t put on the pitch for X amount of time.’

My son is going through the development system now in Canada, and we’re at a fantastic club. He’s 10 years old. But in the last few weeks, I’ve seen some of the politics around children progressing at different levels, and the sort of pressure that’s on the coach, and then parents talking. It’s actually quite cancerous. It often tends to be parents more than the coaches who turn players off of playing.

Grassroots soccer used to be grassroots—kids used to just play. Now, you pay a hefty fee to be part of a club. I think most coaches at the grassroots level do a good job of equal playing time, but for whatever reason, maybe because of personalities, a kid gets put in the wrong position at the wrong time, or a kid scores more goals than another, and the next thing you know, there’s just this cancerous attitude around the environment. Coaches can create a culture where parents buy into a philosophy and a vision, and with that, there are certain things that happen on a seasonal basis that enable players to just be able to play free, and not under the watchful eye of parents. You can have parent-free training nights, whatever it is, just let these kids be kids, like they would if they were in a playground somewhere, because they don’t play in the playgrounds enough.”

The team has designated Fortius Sport & Health in Burnaby, B.C., as its training headquarters for the 2015 World Cup and 2016 Rio Olympics. What does having the team centralized for training in Burnaby mean to the program, and how beneficial has it been?

“We have a good balance with what we do in Burnaby. We use the Fortius Centre training facility, which has a pitch, a gym, world-class practitioners, and a hotel. So the whole purpose was to create efficiency around our high-performance culture. But what we quickly learned was that when you live in that environment, players don’t feel like they can get away from work. So while we’re saving time in that they can literally roll out of bed into the gym, the reality is that players are still people and they need to have differentiation between work and the rest of their life. Now we go into the Fortius Centre for a two-week block to use the facilities, and for a prolonged period the players live in Vancouver in condos the way they did prior to the Olympics. They travel to Fortius just to train, and then we use the pitch facilities in the middle of the city. So, now we have a good balance.”

Do you use the Olympic semi-final game against the U.S. as motivation with your players?

“The whole Olympic experience comes up from time to time, because that is one of our X factors going into this World Cup — the fact that there’s about 60 per cent of that squad still there who have experienced what it takes to connect around one vision. So the U.S. game, and the feelings going into that game, and how people experienced it, are still very good foundation pegs for this team about what optimal preparation looked like, and what optimal performance looked like when people were able to push to their absolute best. And the players will refer to that. We also had to work hard on diminishing the negative memories that existed. People see that game as a positive example of a

performance that connected our country, and that’s what we’ve built this whole vision on for 2015—of performances that connect our country. And if we have enough of those performances, the by-product will be winning the World Cup.”

How do you deal with the memories of that game?

“As years go on, I still get stopped in the airport and people will say, “That bloody referee.” You can’t get away from it. I don’t think that Olympics would have ever been as memorable if it wasn’t for that moment. Even if we had gone on to win the gold medal, I think this team won more through their response and the adversity. They won more than a gold medal in that moment from that game. So for all of us, it’s a positive memory because we gained our identity through that moment. I don’t think it was the bronze-medal match, I think it was the passion, the grit, the determination that the players displayed and the sheer adversity that they had to go through to pick themselves up for the next game. It’s definitely a positive.”

All the Canadian reporters who were at that game call it the most exciting sporting event they had ever covered.

“Oh man, can you imagine standing on the touchline watching it happen in front of you. Oh god, it was crazy.”



Lori Ewing is a sports reporter with The Canadian Press. She covered Canada’s women’s soccer team at the 2003 World Cup in the U.S., the 2011 World Cup in Germany, Canada’s gold-medal victory over Brazil at the 2011 Pan Am Games, and Canada’s thrilling bronze-medal run at the 2012 London Olympics.

(This interview has been slightly edited for brevity and clarity.)

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WINNING WORDS



Coaches **plan** asked some of Canada's best coaches to share what they've learned on the playing field. Eight of Canada's top coaches share their best advice.

CHANTAL VALLÉE: **Treat athletes as 'whole people'**

Chantal Vallée is in her tenth season as the head coach of the Windsor Lancers Women's Basketball program at the University of Windsor, one of the top women's basketball programs in the country. She's captured five straight CIS national titles from 2011-2015.

"The most important thing is to be extremely clear about role descriptions, expectations, and why someone does or doesn't play. Coaches have to be visionaries and that means having a very clear direction and vision—they have to know where the team is headed and have a clear plan on how they are going to bring their team together. I often hear colleagues say 'it's not my job to motivate my athletes,' but it is our job and we should take that seriously. That means ensuring they are doing the training and monitoring that and being a support in their development. We have to make sure we invest in their personal growth as much as their athletic growth and treat them as whole people."



BRIAN TOWRISS: **De-selection is the toughest part**

Brian Towriss is in his 32nd year as head coach for the University of Saskatchewan's Huskie football team, which he has led to three Vanier Cup titles, 11 Hardy Cup titles and nine Vanier Cup appearances. He is a seven-time Canada West Coach of the Year and one-time CIS Coach of the Year.

"My greatest satisfaction comes from seeing athletes learn to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours and the resulting outcomes as they mature. Obviously everyone loves the thrill of game day, but the best part of being a football coach during the competitive season is the analysis and preparation of your game plan each and every week. The longer I do this the more I enjoy practice.

Without question the toughest part of coaching is the process of de-selection. It is very difficult and often emotional to sit down with an athlete who has done all of the right things, put in all of the time in preparation, and who has given great effort—and then inform them that they can no longer be part of the team. In high profile coaching situations, both internal and external expectations and pressures can be difficult for coaches to manage."



DAVE PRESTON:

More than one way to reach a goal

Dave Preston has coached Canadian university volleyball for 23 seasons with a career record of 320-93. A three-time Conference Coach of the Year and three-time National Coach of the Year, he also has 10 years of international experience with Team Canada as both an assistant and head coach participating in Pan Am Games, FIVB World League, World Cups, and World Championships.

“In 26 years of coaching, one of the most important lessons I’ve learned is there is never only one way to do anything. I think early in my career I was so determined to get the players to believe in what I was doing that I tunneled my vision and tolerance to the point where it was ‘my way or the highway.’ Looking back, it was much more a statement about me than them. Once I shifted my coaching style to be more principle-based, it allowed me to have a better understanding of the differences in athletes and approaches while still maintaining the overall messages and directions of the various programs I was overseeing.

There is more than one way to reach any goal. A principle-based approach has provided me with a map and each season the route may alter slightly. Thankfully the map is still current.”

“Coaches who can be trusted and who have empathy with their players build the strongest player-coach relationship and thus the foundation of the team culture. You must always be truthful with your players in order for them to trust and believe in you.” — LARRY HAYLOR



MARY-ANNE REID:

Allow athletes to discover the answer

Mary-Anne Reid was previously head coach of women’s field hockey at Queen’s University, in addition to helping Ontario provincial teams. While at Queen’s, Mary-Anne was named 2013 OUA and CIS Field Hockey Coach of the Year. She is currently working with Field Hockey Canada and the CAC on coach education curriculum.

“I have found having an athlete-centered approach to coaching allows athletes to better understand and engage with a program, help their decision-making on the field, and promote holistic and balanced development. I’ve been most effective when I have helped athletes take ownership and responsibility for their own learning and development, and that of the team. The temptation as a coach is often to provide the answer, rather than helping an athlete come to the conclusion themselves. I am constantly trying to remind myself to ask questions and facilitate understanding when teaching about technical and tactical skills—if the athlete understands why they’re doing what they’re doing, it makes it easier for them to apply the principles on the field. Basically, I’ve found that the more I can help them learn to solve problems on their own and rely less on me to figure things out for them, the better job I’m doing.”



LARRY HAYLOR: Trust is key

Larry Haylor joined the Western Mustangs at the University of Western Ontario as head coach in 1984, and guided the program until his retirement in 2006. During his career he was selected as the OUA Coach of the Year seven times and the CIS Coach of the Year twice. He compiled a 178-43-4 record in collegiate football, which at the time of his retirement ranked him first among all CIS coaches for wins. He was inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 2014.

“Good coaches are trustworthy and reliable—they don’t change according to circumstances. Trust is the cornerstone of any relationship and once lost, it’s almost impossible to regain. Coaches who can be trusted and who have empathy with their players build the strongest player-coach relationship and thus the foundation of the team culture. You must always be truthful with your players in order for them to trust and believe in you. Players can accept bad news provided it’s the truth and there’s a plan to help them improve.

Coaches must also understand they are always accountable. When things go bad some coaches disappear, but the buck stops with the coach. We have the ultimate responsibility for the team and must be prepared to confront adversity and criticism in a direct and forthright manner. Players should never be singled out for public criticism. When you’re loaded down with criticism, try to remember to never ‘pull the trigger.’ Coaches who are accountable to their players gain the respect and trust of all team members. I have always been impressed with coaches who, under the most difficult circumstances, can put things in perspective and communicate the proper message while assuming the burden of accountability for their players and their team.”



HOWIE DRAPER, ChPC:
Lead with humility

Howie Draper has coached the University of Alberta's women's hockey team for 18 years. He has led the team to seven CIS and 12 conference championships. He has also coached the CIS women's team to gold at the Universiade Winter Games, and Alberta U18 teams to gold and bronze at the last two Canada Winter Games.

"Great coaches surround themselves with great people. Finding and recruiting skilled athletes who are also strong leaders is critical. Any coach fortunate enough to win a championship can't do so without outstanding athletes to work with. Strong coaches also surround themselves with a coaching staff who possess strengths they may not have. They are aware of their own limitations and seek out a supporting cast that can complement their strengths and weaknesses.

Coaches like this tend to be humble leaders. They demonstrate humility by sharing leadership and encouraging the team's other coaches to take centre stage. They reinforce the significance of an assistant coach's involvement by asking them for input in and encouraging them to think creatively. They publicly credit the people they lead for successful ideas, methods and/or actions. The end result is that they tend to get the best out of these coaches, and this has a positive impact on what's most important—the development and performance of the athletes whom they serve."

"Great coaches surround themselves with great people. Finding and recruiting skilled athletes who are also strong leaders is critical. Any coach fortunate enough to win a championship can't do so without outstanding athletes to work with." — HOWIE DRAPER



DAVE SCOTT-THOMAS, ChPC:
'The race must mean everything, and yet nothing at all'

Dave Scott-Thomas has developed one of the premiere collegiate programs and one of the top overall endurance groups in the country at the University of Guelph. His teams have set numerous OUA/CIS records, he is the most highly decorated coach in CIS history, as well as being a two-time Fox 40 OUA Coach of the Year—all sports recipient and Ontario High Performance Coach of the Year. He has worked with numerous all-Canadians, national medalists and champions, national team members as well as seven athletes who have represented Canada at World Track and Field Championships and Olympic Games.


"My old track coach, Pete, used to say with a wink in his eye: 'The race must mean everything to you, and yet nothing at all.' We joked about the Zen-lite nature of that comment, but it's true, and it's equally true in coaching. You need to engage in a range of activities and have involvement in life as well as having some distance from your sport in order to be healthy and have a long career. So here's some advice: keep it in context, develop a support team who "get it," will listen and care, and kick you in the butt. Remember it's more about your athlete, team, community, and less about you. And take some time to grab a paddle and head out to the Canadian Shield. Because the sport must mean everything to you and nothing at all."



TOM JOHNSON, ChPC:
Live your values

Tom Johnson has been named to Canada's coaching staff at multiple Olympic Games, FINA World Championships, Commonwealth Games and other major meets. As a club coach with the UBC Dolphins and UBC Thunderbirds, the club and university have combined for dozens of national titles under his leadership. His past swimmers include multiple international medalist Brent Hayden, who won gold in the 100-m freestyle at the 2007 FINA World Championships and a bronze at the 2012 Olympics in London.

"My experience in coaching has shown me that it is really important that you enjoy the process of the day-to-day coaching as much, if not more so, than the results.

I have a unique and special opportunity to influence my athletes' lives in and beyond sport. Teaching, subscribing to, and actually living the values and beliefs that I hold dear allows me to be consistent in how I deliver messages to my athletes. The more that I stay true to my core values and beliefs, the better the results." 



HOW COACHES
CAN CREATE
BALANCED LIVES

By Rosalind Stefanac

Recovery time is just as important for you as it is for your athletes

YOU COULD SAY MICHEL PELLETIER IS pretty passionate about volleyball. As head coach of the women's volleyball team at Quebec's Cégep de La Pocatière college for the past 12 years, he spends 17 hours a week in training and an extra 150 hours in competition time every season. Last summer, he also led the men's volleyball team in Quebec to a gold medal at the Canadian Francophone Games.

But with a full-time job as coordinator of the college's computer science department, and a father of five, Pelletier says it's a fine balancing act to ensure the "spheres" of his life aren't overlapping too often. "Sometimes things go wrong in one sphere and you use the other to stay in balance," he says. "And when you're not in balance, it's going to reflect in the quality of your tasks, no matter what you're doing."

Pelletier says it's all about planning and being able to compromise both at home and at work. "Sometimes I would like to do more coaching, but I have my family and I want to spend time with them," he says. "You have to make choices and they're not always easy." Last year, for instance, he missed seeing his daughter win a significant gymnastics award because he was at volleyball tryouts. "But with technology I was still able to see the pictures and interact with her," he adds.

This struggle to find work/life balance is a common challenge in the coaching profession, says Shaunna Taylor, a counsellor and Co-Chair of the Canadian Sport Psychology Association's managing council. She says the personalities typically drawn to coaching are "driven, demanding, and self-sacrificing," which can mean a coach's personal pursuits and relationships are sacrificed in the process.

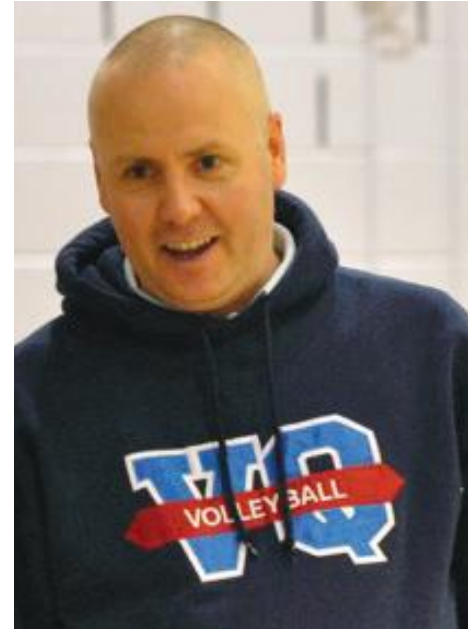
For coaches who need to subsidize their income with other jobs, free-time comes at a premium. But even coaches

who aren't juggling multiple professions are at risk for getting off balance, says Taylor. "At the competitive level, many coaches live and breathe the sport and it's all about athlete development and performance—it's easy to lose yourself in that."

Simply being aware that things are starting to go off-kilter is half the battle. "Irritability, mood changes, lack of focus, and severe fatigue are all signs that it's time to step back," says Taylor. In fact, when she works with teams, she'll get coaches to make appointments with themselves to do the things that help them decompress. "This is where you go for your run, do a hobby, or just nap while the team is working with the assistant coach," she says. "And after a trying game, a coach's recovery is just as important as the players'."

Taylor says building a training timetable that includes your own hobbies and family events can be helpful in maintaining balance, as can finding support so you can 'divide and conquer' various tasks. She advises coaches to ask themselves questions such as: "Can I get a protégé to take over one practice a week so I don't have to be here all the time?" and "Can I bring in a guest speaker to cover topics with the team that I'm not as familiar with?" The key is not to feel as though you have to do everything yourself, she says. "As coaches get more experience, they realize they can't do it all and it's important to surround yourself with a good support network."

This network can extend off the field as well. A supportive spouse and extended family members can help with childcare, for example, which can ease the daily juggle for coaches with young children. So can bringing the two worlds together on occasion. "When it's appropriate and safe, I bring my kids to practice to show them what I'm passionate about," says Pelletier. "It's good for the team to see I'm a father too."



"Sometimes I would like to do more coaching, but I have my family and I want to spend time with them. You have to make choices and they're not always easy."

Michel Pelletier
Head Coach, Women's Volleyball
Cégep de La Pocatière college

4 tips for balancing the scales in your favour

SET BOUNDARIES

While you may be passionate about your sport, recognize that your family and friends may not be. Resist the urge to make every conversation about work and try to nurture personal relationships by being truly present in activities outside of work.

ASK FOR PROVISIONS

Don't be afraid to ask your employer for things that will make your life easier, such as being allowed to take your kids to practice or having access to teleconferencing so you can communicate with family while travelling. During the three weeks Michel Pelletier was on the road with the Quebec team during the Canadian Francophone Games last summer, he negotiated going home to sleep every three days so he could be with his family.

FIND A MENTOR

Seek out others in the profession who are in similar circumstances to find out how they're keeping the balance in their lives. They may have suggestions you haven't considered yet.

EMBRACE THE IMBALANCE

Accept the fact that in the profession of coaching there will be times when you're skipping dinner or missing family events because the job is your necessary focus. Be sure to schedule time to recoup daily so you're not too burned out to enjoy your time off.

Rosalind Stefanac is a freelance writer based in Toronto, Ont.



Cindy Tye and children

For Cindy Tye, a former soccer player for Canada's national team, being able to bring her kids to work has enabled her to continue her passion for the sport through coaching. In fact, she's been taking her kids, now 11 and 6, to her coaching sessions since they were infants. "I would coach with the baby in a carrier on me," she says, noting that her association was supportive once she proposed the idea. "Now my daughter is helping coach my son's team and learning all kinds of skills she isn't going to get anywhere else."

As a coach at the Regional Training Center for under-12 players and the Regional Center of Excellence at Soccer Nova Scotia—in addition to coaching her daughter's team—Tye is on the field at least 20 hours a week, often during dinner-time. "For my kids, it's the norm to come here straight from school," she says. "I used to struggle with the fact we weren't getting home for supper, but now I see it's a good place for them to grow up, surrounded by young people who are passionate about their sport."

Constructing her life so that she could pursue coaching and balance life's other obligations took careful planning, however. A teacher at Hants West Middle School in Newport, Nova Scotia, Tye went back to university to earn a master's degree, which put her at a higher pay scale. Then, when her son was born, she went back on a job-share so she could work part-time. "This means Thursdays and Fridays I can get my kids to school, pick them up and do some coaching without feeling completely pulled in every direction," she says.

As for finding her 'me' time, Tye works out at 6 a.m. because it's the only part of the day she can fit it in. "I usually swim, bike, or run and I do it every day," she says. "It's part of who I am and as a role model to the kids I'm in front of every day, I need to be able to move."

For Pelletier, simply going to a movie or heading outside to play with his kids can be a respite from the stresses of coaching. "It's the little things that can give you pleasure and perspective," he says.

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