The role of personality characteristics within the coach-athlete relationship

Dr Louise Davis
Northumbria University
Significance of the Coach-Athlete Relationship

- Acknowledged by sports organisations, academic researchers, applied practitioners, coaches and athletes

- Foundation for promoting athletes’ physical and psychosocial skills (Antonini, Philippe & Seiler, 2006; Jowett & Cockerill, 2002)

- Contributing factor towards performance success and satisfaction (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007; Wylleman, 2000)
Olympic Bronze medallist Joannie Rochette and Coach Manon Perron
2010 winter Olympics, Vancouver
Antecedents of the Coach-Athlete Relationship
Personality Characteristics

Quality of the Coach-Athlete Relationship
3+1cs: Closeness, Commitment and Complementarity (CART-Q; Jowett, 2009)
Social Support, Depth and Conflict (QRI- Jowett, 2009)

Correlates of the Coach-Athlete Relationship
Motivation (Adie & Jowett, 2010)
Self Esteem (Shanmugam et al., 2011)
Physical Self (Jowett & Cramer, 2010)
Team Cohesion ( Jowett & Chaundry, 2004)
Personality: Attachment Styles

- Explains individual differences in the bonds that are formed and maintained over the life cycle (Bowlby, 1969/1982)
- Attachment figures
- Provide proximity, secure base and safe haven
- Caregivers’ availability, sensitivity and responsiveness

- Secure
- Anxious-Ambivalent
- Avoidant
Aims and Key Findings

Aim

- Explore the role of the coach as a context specific attachment figure
- Explore the role of athletes’ and coaches’ attachment styles on their perceptions of relationship quality and well-being.

Key findings

- Coach fulfilled functions of a secure base, safe haven and proximity maintenance (Davis & Jowett, 2010)
- Secure attachment styles were associated with positive perceptions of relationship quality and well-being (Davis & Jowett, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Davis & Johnston, 2012)
Key Findings cont......

Key findings

- Insecure avoidant attachment were associated with negative perceptions of relationship quality and well-being

- Coaches’ attachment styles were not associated with athletes’ perceptions of relationship quality and well-being (Davis & Jowett, 2011a)

- Athletes’ attachment styles were associated with their coaches’ perceptions of relationship quality and well-being (Davis & Jowett, 2011a)
Discussion Points

Question 1
- Why does the athlete’s personality impact upon coaches to a greater extent than coaches’ personality on the athlete?

Question 2
- How can we prepare coaches to work with athletes who display characteristics of avoidant or insecure attachment styles (e.g., disconnected; disinterested) in order to create more harmonious interdependent relationship-leading to enhanced skill performance and success?