



Managing Stakeholders in the Coach-Athlete Process

Vicky's article on working with parents to maximise their impact on the coaching process is a really good one, but what about the other stakeholders involved in an athlete's life?

No matter the age or level of athlete, they will experience a huge range of competing demands – school, work or university, friends & family, training partners, clubs and so on. At the elite level you can add in sponsors, media, agents and sports administrators to the mix. This has the potential to be very stressful and demanding, and impact negatively on an athlete's performance if not managed well. Athletes, especially triathletes (after all why else would we do three sports!?), can often try to be 'all things to all people' and end up pleasing no-one when they can't match up to what they have committed to.

It might sound obvious, but a lot of the time, 'noise' and stress can come from not being clear enough with expectations & responsibilities, and not communicating them well enough or early enough with the right people. As a coach, it is well worthwhile spending some time with the athletes you work with to make this process as clear and efficient as possible, and minimise the risk of this occurring. We use a simple coaching framework with the athletes in the Performance Centre, and I think it is applicable to working with athletes of any age and level (although clearly the trick, as with anything in coaching, is how you adapt it to the individual you have in front of you).

1. Trust – Building the Relationship

The core of athletic performance is the coach-athlete unit. How will the two of you work together to get the most out of each other? What are each of your non-negotiables and key values? Make sure these are compatible before going any further!

2. Purpose – Profiling & Goal-Setting

What are you trying to achieve together and when by? What are the gaps between where the athlete currently is and where they need to be to meet their goals?



3. Collaboration – Co-creation of a Plan

Co-creation of a plan – what do we need to deliver to reach the goals and close those gaps, and how will we implement this? What other commitments do you/they have that might impact on the ability to do this? Who else needs to be brought into the process to input, feedback or support?

4. Accountability

Who is responsible for each part of the plan? Has this been clearly communicated, received and understood?

5. Feedback & Recognition

When and how will we review progress towards the goal? What are the feedback mechanisms we will use to ensure everyone is still on board?

We will explore some of the other topics in more detail in future webinars/newsletters (I am due to do Performance Profiling in July), but this month is all about Collaboration & Accountability. Once you have spent time getting clear on how the pair of you will work best together, and defining the objective you are working towards, the key here is to ensure that you sufficiently cover all the different facets that impact on the athletes' performance and wellbeing, and bring everyone involved in supporting this along the journey with the pair of you. It can often help in the beginning to literally map this out on a bit of paper – it's amazing how many people and connections there are that need to be nurtured and communicated with, to enable an athlete to minimise stress and maximise their performance. We find that getting this section right really helps to develop the athletes' ownership over the process, and also gives everyone involved the permission and opportunity to challenge/feedback if the agreed expectations are not being met, as they have been clearly set out right from the start of the journey.

I hope you find the framework useful – best wishes for your coaching this month.

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