

Four Keys to Building a Championship Culture

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Winning a national championship is a rare feat; winning five consecutive championships is extraordinary. One such example has recently occurred with the University of Windsor women's basketball team which competes in the Canadian interuniversity sports league. The team's head coach, Chantal Vallée, has a combined regular season and playoff winning percentage greater than 80%, including winning five consecutive Canadian national championships. Even more astounding is that before her appointment the school had only four winning seasons in their 50-year history, and had never hosted a playoff game. The purpose of this paper is to explain the remarkable turnaround of this program. This article will provide both the "what" (Enacting The Vision; Athlete Empowerment; Teaching Life Skills; Lifelong Learning and Personal Reflection) and the "how" (blueprint) of the transformation of the University of Windsor women's basketball into a perennial national contender.

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Coaching effectiveness is evaluated at all levels of competition and includes the coaches' actions and behaviours both on and off the field of play (Bloom, Falcão, & Caron, 2014). Between 1970 and 2008, 872 articles on coaching science were published, including 113 devoted to coaching effectiveness (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013). Among the conclusions, effective coach leadership has been linked to individual and team performance (Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan, & Chung, 2002; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Riemer & Harenberg, 2014; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2010), where a coach's job involves mastering a variety of tasks, ranging from developing athletes' mental, physical, technical, and tactical skills and abilities (Bloom et al., 2014), to instilling life skills and personal values (Duchesne, Bloom, & Sabiston, 2011), to preparing athletes for life outside of sport (Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, & Reid, 2012). While the interest to study coaching effectiveness has increased,

there is very little empirical research on coaches at elite levels of competition who have consistently won multiple national championships (Yukelson & Rose, 2014).

Undoubtedly, successful coaches possess a wide body of knowledge that leads to behaviours that can influence team success. Effective coaches achieve their results through the application of their professional, intrapersonal, and interpersonal knowledge (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Professional knowledge refers to sport-specific knowledge. Interpersonal knowledge involves understanding human interactions and building relationships. Intrapersonal knowledge includes personal reflection and an understanding of oneself. The integration of these categories of knowledge influences how a coach does his or her job, which ultimately impacts the record of their teams (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). In addition, effective coaches must adjust their feedback and teaching styles based on the specific needs and preferences of their athletes to maximize their learning and performance (Côté, Young,