

Chapter 25

Leadership Development in Sports Teams

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Chapter Overview

In team environments the need for, and provision of leadership is a crucial factor impacting upon multiple outcomes for both teams and individuals. However, historically leadership in team sports has often developed in an ad-hoc and unstructured way. This chapter will explore the concept of leadership, particularly within the context of sports teams. Specifically exploring coach leadership, athlete leadership, and leadership development of both coaches and athletes.

Introduction

Leadership is a core part of sport, particularly as it relates to the effectiveness of teams within sport environments (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016). The notion of leadership has been explored in detail across a wide range of environments, both within and outside of sport, which in turn has led to the development of numerous conceptualizations of leadership. Leadership has been defined and described in a variety of ways depending on the context in which it was conceptualized. For example, in considering the context of management, Barrow (1977) defined leadership as “the behavioral process of influencing individuals and groups toward set goals” (p. 232). An alternative view was adopted by Gray (2004) who described leadership as “knowing what should be done, and influencing others to cooperate in doing it” (p. 76). In addition to these two definitions, leadership has also been described by Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) to be:

A process that includes influencing the task objectives and strategies of a group or organization, influencing the people in the organization to implement the strategies, and achieve the objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of the organization (p. 149)

In recent years the leadership that exists as part of sport teams has emerged as an important area of focus (Day, 2012). Increasingly, team leadership has been highlighted to be a distinct form of organizational leadership (Kozlowski et al., 2016).



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Coach Leadership

Coaches in sport have traditionally been seen as either *occupying* a leadership role or *fulfilling* a leadership role. In considering coaches as leaders, Chelladurai and Riemer (1998) defined coach leadership to be “a behavioral process that is used to increase athlete performance and satisfaction” (p. 228). Building upon this initial conceptualization, Vella et al. (2010) further suggested that coach leadership is “a process of influence that is dependent upon and constituted by the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete” (p. 431). Vella et al. (2010) also suggested the following key aspects to coach leadership: (a) The coach–athlete relationship does not directly affect athlete outcomes, but rather acts as a mediating variable between coach behavior and athlete outcomes, (b) coach leadership behaviors are used to bring about the athlete outcomes of competence, confidence, connection, and character, (c) coach leadership behaviors are determined by the coaching context, the coach’s personal characteristics, and athlete characteristics.

Models of Coach Leadership

In an attempt to understand the mechanisms underpinning coach leadership, a number of models and theories have either been applied from other domains or developed specifically within a sporting context. These include: (a) trait and behavioral approaches, (b) the mediational model of leadership, (c) the multidimensional model of leadership, (d) coach–athlete relationships, (e) authentic leadership, and (f) transformational leadership approaches.

Trait and Behavioral Approaches

Simply put, trait and behavioral approaches suggest that the traits and characteristics individuals have predispose them to be effective or ineffective leaders in specific contexts. Four main trait and behavioral approaches to the study of leadership were highlighted by Carron et al. (2005) in a sporting context:

1. Universal-traits approach
2. Situational-traits approach
3. Universal-behavior approach
4. Situational-behavior approach

In the universal-traits approach the most successful leaders are scrutinized to understand the personality traits they possess that make them effective and successful leaders (for more discussion on personality and physical activity, see Chapter 6; Wilson & Rhodes, 2021). Under this line of thinking, if you identify the desired personality traits you could then be able to select the individuals with the right traits for future leadership positions. This approach, though, has been largely dismissed as being too simplistic since a single set of key personality traits could not be found and because it fails to account for the broad range of people who are successful in leadership roles (Cotterill, 2012). Building upon some of these initial limitations, the situational-traits approach seeks to understand the traits possessed and also the characteristics of the specific situation or context. This approach works on the assumption that some personality types will be more effective in some situations than others, as proposed in Fiedler’s (1967) contingency theory of leadership. Examples of the sorts of traits that have been historically linked to successful leadership include confidence, decision making, delegation, creativity, and authority (Cotterill, 2012). This view that leaders are born to be effective in certain situations also suggests that the same leaders might be less effective in other contexts.

In contrast to the trait approaches, the behavioral approach suggests that individuals are not born as leaders or followers, but that leadership can be developed like other skills. The universal-

behavior approach seeks to understand how leaders behave and how this makes them successful or effective as leaders. Four main styles have emerged from this approach (Cotterill, 2012):

1. Concern for task: focusing on achieving specific objectives
2. Concern for people: seeking to understand the people they lead
3. Directive leadership: making decisions for others
4. Participative leadership: sharing decisions with others

In the situational-behavior approach, the focus is on understanding what leadership behaviors and approaches are successful in specific situations. Examples of positive leadership behaviors include leading by example, communicating effectively, asking for feedback, treating everyone fairly, listening, and acting consistently (Cotterill, 2012). Although these behavioral approaches have merit, they do fail to consider the need for authentic leadership (i.e., the idea that leaders should embody their true selves in their leadership role) instead of adopting a set of general leadership behaviors that have been suggested to be effective.

The Mediation Model of Leadership

A number of leadership theories have sought to build upon these earlier trait and behavioral approaches, embedding a range of important factors, including both leadership behaviors and athlete/player perceptions. One example of this is the mediational model of leadership suggested by Smith et al. (1977). The core components of this model are coach behaviors, both athletes' perceptions of and recall of these behaviors, and athletes' evaluative reactions to the coach. One of the core principles of this model is that both perceptions and memories (the mediators) are just as important as the actual demonstrated coach behaviors in determining athletes' evaluative reactions to the coach. In this model, coach behaviors are believed to be influenced by the uniqueness of the coach (individual differences), including factors such as coaching goals, intentions, perception of coaching norms, role conception, perception of athlete motives, and gender (Smoll & Smith, 1989). Athlete perceptions and recall, on the other hand, are influenced by athletes' individual differences, such as age, gender, perception of coaching norms, sport-specific achievement motives, competitive trait anxiety, general self-esteem, and athletic self-esteem (Smoll & Smith, 1989). Finally, all core components of the model—coach behaviors, athletes' perceptions and recall, and athletes' reactions—are influenced by situational factors, such as the nature of the sport, level of competition, setting (practice or game), previous successes and failures, current outcomes, and intrateam attraction (Smith et al., 1977). The mediational model offers insight into how mental performance consultants might improve leadership outcomes by either modifying coach behaviors or shaping athletes' perceptions or recall abilities (Cotterill, 2012). If one is looking to modify coach behaviors, an effective approach would be to work on optimizing the coaches' goals and motives and associated behavioral intentions. If the focus is on changing athlete perceptions, then one would focus on understanding athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors, and more specifically, expected coaching goals, intentions, norms, and roles within the team and broader sport.

The Multidimensional Model of Leadership

The multidimensional model developed by Chelladurai (1978) seeks to build upon all of the previously mentioned theories, integrates the core aspects of the trait, behavioral, and mediational approaches into a comprehensive model that seeks to outline a comprehensive range of factors that influence coach leadership behavior. A central tenet of the model is the congruence between three categories of leadership behaviors: required, actual, and preferred behaviors. According to Chelladurai, whether the leadership approach is adopted (and how well it is received) in a given situation is determined by a range of specific situational factors, the preferred behaviors of the group, and the

preferences of the leader. The actual leadership behavior is a function of the characteristics of the leader, the behaviors required by the situation or composition of the team, and the behavior preferences of the athletes. To illustrate the impact of preferred behaviors, previous studies on leadership suggested that when coaches' leadership style is not aligned with athletes' preferred style, the *performance* of athletes may develop, but their level of *satisfaction* may decrease (Cotterill, 2012).

In 2007, Chelladurai further adapted the model to include the concept of transformational leadership. This concept was included as Chelladurai felt that coaches served to transform relatively unaccomplished novices into expert performers. As such, it could be argued that successful coaches exhibited transformational leadership (covered later in this chapter).

Authentic Leadership

In recent years the concept of authentic leadership has gained increased traction within leadership-focused literature. This approach to leadership was originally developed building upon reflections about the unethical ways that transformational leaders can manipulate their followers (Gardner et al., 2011). Authentic leadership has been defined in the literature to be:

A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 90).

It has been argued that while transformational approaches outline what to do in order to facilitate change, they do not really focus on personal growth for either the leader or the follower. Furthermore, while transformational leadership requires authenticity as part of the characteristics of being visionary and of high moral character, the distinction between the two lies in the authentic leaders' faith in their own deep sense of self-values and beliefs (Sağnak & Kuruöz, 2016). In contrast, an authentic leader leads with purpose, gives more consideration to contextual and organizational factors that influence the effectiveness of leadership, and ensures the psychological well-being of followers (Penger & Cerne, 2014).

In addition, authentic leadership is not only limited to the authenticity of the leader, but also includes the quality of the leader-follower relationships. Central to the development of these relationships are the concepts of integrity, respectability and trustworthiness (Emuwa, 2013). Recent published research has highlighted that coaches who are viewed to be authentic create transparent two-way relationships with their athletes (Bandura & Kavussanu, 2018). These positive relationships serve to then raise levels of follower commitment, motivation, and positive emotion, and they can also facilitate positive follower behaviors such as active engagement and independent critical thinking (Sağnak & Kuruöz, 2016). In a recent study, Bandura and Kavussanu (2018) also highlighted that coaches who are viewed to be authentic are perceived as being trustworthy and fostering autonomy in athletes who, as a result, reported greater enjoyment and higher commitment.

Transformational Leadership

A revised version of the multidimensional model (Chelladurai, 2007) incorporated the concept of transformational leadership, in which the leader transforms the aspirations and attitudes of group members and subordinate leaders (e.g., assistant coaches, team captains) by creating and articulating a new mission for the group. This extension to the model suggests that leadership can help to change the expectations of the group regarding the leadership requirements of a specific situation.

The transformational model of leadership has been applied to the sports coaching context with positive results (Vella et al., 2010) and has seen increased application to sporting environments in recent years (Arthur et al., 2017). Transformational leadership has been described as “the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members (organization culture) and building commitment for major changes in the organization’s objectives and strategies” (Yukl, 1989, p. 174). More simply, it is a course of action in which both leaders and participants engage in a mutual ongoing process of raising one another to higher levels of motivation, moral reasoning, and self-consciousness (Charbonneau et al., 2001). Research exploring the leadership approaches of 132 business managers suggested that individuals scoring in the highest group of moral-reasoning on the Multi Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) exhibited more transformational leadership behaviors than leaders scoring in the lowest group (Turner et al., 2002).

Four specific leader behaviors have been associated with transformational leadership (Hopton et al., 2007): (a) Idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. A number of studies have reported links between these four behaviors and key group factors including team members’ values, team needs, team awareness, and ultimately team performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Idealized influence is a behavior through which leaders seek to instill pride in the group members, set a good example, and earn the respect of the group. Inspirational motivation refers to a behavior that leaders adopt to motivate and inspire those around them by developing a collective purpose and shared vision. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed as athletes are engaged in helping leaders create an exciting and attractive future. Intellectual stimulation occurs when leaders are creative and innovative with group members through questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and encouraging creativity in one another. One outcome of this process is the enhancement of each person’s knowledge and abilities. Finally, individualized consideration guides the behavior of leaders in growing future leaders by paying attention to each individual’s needs for achievement and growth. Leaders serve as supporters, mentors, and coaches for participants, thereby increasing these individuals’ potential for development and increased competence. In sport, one example of the application of transformational leadership is captured in Newland et al.’s (2015) phenomenological study of 11 female team sport athletes. The athletes highlighted transformational approaches adopted by coaches, including caring, motivating, teaching life lessons, and trusting. This example suggests that coaches who wish to adopt a transformational approach should seek to focus on interpersonal skills, including how to both motivate and care for their athletes, with a focus on them as people and not just sporting outcomes.

Coach–Athlete Relationships

Coach leadership requires engagement with athletes and as a result, the quality of the relationships that exist between the coach and their athletes is crucial in underpinning how effective the coach can be as a leader. Crucial to this is the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge. Intrapersonal knowledge includes self-awareness and reflection, both of which have been shown to influence the development of coaching and leadership (Vella et al., 2010). In contrast, interpersonal knowledge is the awareness of others in relation to oneself. The importance of these forms of knowledge and associated interpersonal skills cannot be overstated, and, as such, should form a core component of understanding and assessing effective leadership.

Coach–athlete relationship frameworks are built upon the view that both leadership and coaching are social processes that are constituted and maintained by reciprocal, interpersonal relationships. The coach–athlete relationship has been conceptualized by Jowett (2006) in relation to four interpersonal constructs: closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation. Closeness is reflected in mutual feelings of trust and respect that result from appraisals of coaches’ and athletes’

relationship experiences. Commitment is represented in coaches' and athletes' long-term orientation toward the relationship. This orientation includes thoughts of attachment and the intention to maintain the athletic relationship. Complementarity is reflected in coaches' and athletes' actions of cooperation. Co-orientation includes reciprocal behavior whereby, for example, the coach instructs while the athlete follows instructions. The corresponding behavior would then be when the coach and the athlete manifest a friendly attitude toward one another and communicate effectively during training sessions (Jowett, 2007).

Mageau and Vallerand (2003) presented a motivational framework that outlined core aspects of the coach that can affect both the quality of and perception of the relationship. These factors include the coach's personal orientation, the coaching context, and the coach's perceptions of the athlete's behavior and motivation, all of which influence the coach's autonomy-supportive behavior (the degree to which the coach empowers the athlete to be autonomous). The core importance of supporting athlete autonomy in this model relates to the premise that autonomy-supportive behaviors have a beneficial impact on athletes' intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation, which are important determinants of performance and persistence (for more on autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation, see Chapter 3; Quested et al., 2021).

Assessing and Quantifying Coach Leadership in Sport

In seeking to assess, compare, and contrast coach leadership, a number of specific measures have been developed including the Leadership Scale for Sports (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

Leadership Scale for Sports

The Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS), developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1980), is based upon the multidimensional model of leadership (Chelladurai, 1978). The scale is composed of 40 items, representing five dimensions of leader behavior (Chelladurai, 2012): (a) training and instruction, (b) democratic behavior, (c) autocratic behavior, (d) social support, and (e) positive feedback and rewarding behavior. Training and instruction refer to the development of athletic performance through the use of technical skill, tactical, and team culture development. Democratic behavior reflects the degree to which the individual involves athletes in the team decision-making process. Autocratic behavior scores reflect the degree to which the coach acts as an independent decision-maker and acts in an autocratic manner. The social support dimension reflects the degree to which the coach demonstrates care, concern, and the provision of support to athletes. Positive feedback and rewarding behavior refer to the extent to which the coach rewards positive or desirable athlete behavior.

The scale is assessed using a five-point Likert scale (always, often, occasionally, seldom, never). One interesting feature of the measure is that it can be used to better understand the leadership preferences of both athletes and coaches and can identify the existence of differences between the two.

One study to utilize the LSS was conducted by Loughhead and Hardy (2005), who used the LSS to compare the leadership behaviors both of coaches and athlete leaders. Their results suggested some differences between coaches and athlete leaders. First, that the coaches were more likely to score higher on the training and instruction, and autocratic behavior dimensions. In addition, the athlete leaders recorded higher scores on the social support, positive feedback, and democratic behavior dimensions when compared to the coaches. These findings highlight that not all of the leadership needs of a team are met by coaches. As a result, mental performance consultants should look to develop a holistic view of the leadership needs of a team and how these needs can be met (see Chapter 20 for more discussion on mental skills training or psychological skills training; Rymal et al., 2021).

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

The second tool developed to assess leadership behavior is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 1995). Similar to the LSS, the MLQ assesses leadership styles including passive leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership.

A number of studies have been conducted using the MLQ in a sporting setting. For example, Paradis and Loughhead (2010), in their study of leadership in youth sport athletes, reported that the individualized consideration (e.g., “the leader differentiates among us”) and inspirational motivation (e.g., “the leader expresses confidence”) dimensions of the transformational leadership scale were most decisive in determining the effectiveness of youth sports leaders. In a study of female adolescent soccer players, Price and Weiss (2013) asked participants to fill out the MLQ for both the coach and the athlete leader in the team. The results suggested that the transformational leadership behaviors of both coaches and athlete leaders were positively related to perceived competence, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, team cohesion, and confidence. Interestingly, it was also reported that athlete leadership behaviors were overshadowed by the coach for individual outcomes (such as enjoyment) but were equal for team outcomes (such as collective efficacy).

Athlete Leadership

Although there has been significant focus on coach leadership in the last 40 years, it has only been recently that the concept of leadership within teams and groups of athletes, termed *athlete leadership*, has started to receive significant attention. An athlete leader has been defined as “an athlete, occupying a formal or informal role within a team, who influences a group of team members to achieve a common goal” (Loughhead et al., 2006, p. 144).

Building upon previous research, Fransen, Vanbeselaere, et al., (2014) developed a four-factor athlete leadership categorization system. This system includes two leadership roles on the field: the task leader, who provides tactical instructions to their teammates, and the motivational leader, who motivates their teammates on the field. The categorization system also includes two leadership roles off the field: the social leader, who fosters a good team atmosphere off the field, and the external leader, who handles the communication with club management, media, and sponsors. Fransen and colleagues (2014) emphasized the relevance of this leadership classification by demonstrating that effective fulfillment of the four leadership roles within a team resulted in higher team confidence, stronger team identification, and better team performance outcomes (e.g., ranking).

There has also been an increased focus on different types of athlete leaders as characterized by how formal their leadership position is. Some leadership is provided by formally appointed leaders such as captains, while at the same time, unappointed teammates can also provide peer leadership for their teams (Loughhead & Hardy, 2005). As a result, a second approach to categorizing athlete leadership has been to explore the formal versus informal nature of leadership (Carron & Eys, 2012). Formal leadership roles are those that are prescribed or awarded (e.g., captains and vice captains). Informal leadership roles are those that emerge within the team as a result of interactions between teammates and the demands of the task (Cotterill, 2012). These informal leaders often act as the cultural architects for the team. Cultural architects are leaders who possess the ability to change the mindset of others (Railo, 1986). In sports teams, cultural architects are often more senior and vocal individuals who are respected by the rest of the team and thus play a prominent role in the development and maintenance of dominant team culture.

Informal leaders can both help and hinder the work of formal leaders (Cotterill & Cheetham, 2017). When informal leaders’ views complement the views of the formal leaders, they reinforce core messages, further enhancing the focused nature of the team environment. However, when informal leaders’ views conflict with those of the formal leaders, this can result in a lack of clarity within the

team, resistance to the proposed approach, and broader conflict within the team. The same can be true for formal leaders. For example, when behaving in a negative way (e.g., competence-thwarting behavior), formal leaders can also have a negative impact on the team motivation and performance (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2015; Fransen, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2018). Competence-thwarting behaviors include providing negative feedback and displaying a lack of confidence in the ability of individuals and the team.

Fransen and colleagues (2014) emphasized the importance of informal leaders, reporting that in a study of 4,451 participants across nine team sports, the team captain in almost half (i.e., 44%) of the teams was not perceived as best leader in relation to any of the four leadership roles. In addition, a study using a network approach to leadership tempered these findings by demonstrating that leadership is shared within sport teams. In half of the teams observed, the team captain was perceived as the best leader in general. In the other half of these teams, the informal leaders, rather than the team captain, were perceived as the real leaders (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015). With regard to the specific leadership roles, findings demonstrated that in the majority of the teams, the captains were perceived as best task and external leaders. However, in the motivational and the social leadership role domains, informal leaders were largely perceived as the best leaders. Ultimately, leadership is shared within teams. The coach, team captain, and informal athlete leaders all pursue different leadership roles. Finally, it is important to note that the specific formal role of, and the importance assigned to, the captain can vary significantly from sport to sport, and across levels of performance (Cotterill, 2015).

Characteristics of Athlete Leaders

Initial research focused on athlete leaders characteristics explored a number of descriptive and observable aspects of leader behavior that athlete leaders are more highly skilled than their teammates (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Moran & Weiss, 2006; Price & Weiss, 2011; Yukelson et al., 1983); are more likely to be starters (Gill & Perry, 1979; Loughhead et al., 2006); have more experience (Gill & Perry, 1979; Yukelson et al., 1983); and have more playing time (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015)

A number of research studies have sought to understand the behaviors, traits and skills of effective athlete leaders. For example, Klonsky (1991) reported that athlete leaders demonstrated higher levels of dominance, ambition, competitiveness, and responsibility compared to players who were not perceived as leaders. In a more recent study, Moran and Weiss (2006) suggested that athlete leaders could be viewed in terms of both instrumental traits (including being independent, energetic, self-confident) and expressiveness traits (including being emotional, gentle, kind, warm in interactions with others). It has also been reported that effective athlete leaders need good interpersonal skills (Holmes et al., 2010), have the ability to develop effective relationships with other team members (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015), and crucially need to be trusted and respected their teammates (Bucci et al., 2012; Dupuis et al., 2006).

Furthermore, Callow et al. (2009) identified transformational leadership behaviors that are important for athlete leaders, such as: individual consideration (showing respect for followers and concern for their personal feelings and needs), inspirational motivation (developing, articulating, and inspiring others with their vision for the future), and intellectual stimulation (challenging followers to reexamine their assumptions about their work and reconsider how it can be performed). These leaders also foster acceptance of group goals, have high performance expectations, use appropriate role modelling of behaviors that are consistent with values that the leaders espouse, and provide positive reinforcement in return for appropriate follower behavior and performance.

A more modern approach to peer leadership in sport is the social identity approach (Haslam et al., 2011). This perspective asserts that in order to mobilize athletes' efforts and to be successful as a peer leader, leaders need to be "seen as one of us" (be identity prototypes), "craft a sense of us" (be identity entrepreneurs), "do it for us" (be identity champions), and "embed a sense of us" (be identity

impresarios; Steffens et al., 2014). Research has highlighted that when coaches and athlete leaders succeed in building a united feeling of “we” and “us,” this joint team identity will, in turn, foster athletes’ motivation and performance-related outcomes (Fransen, Haslam et al., 2015; Fransen et al., 2016; Rees et al., 2015; Slater et al., 2015; Slater et al., 2018).

Assessing Athlete Leadership

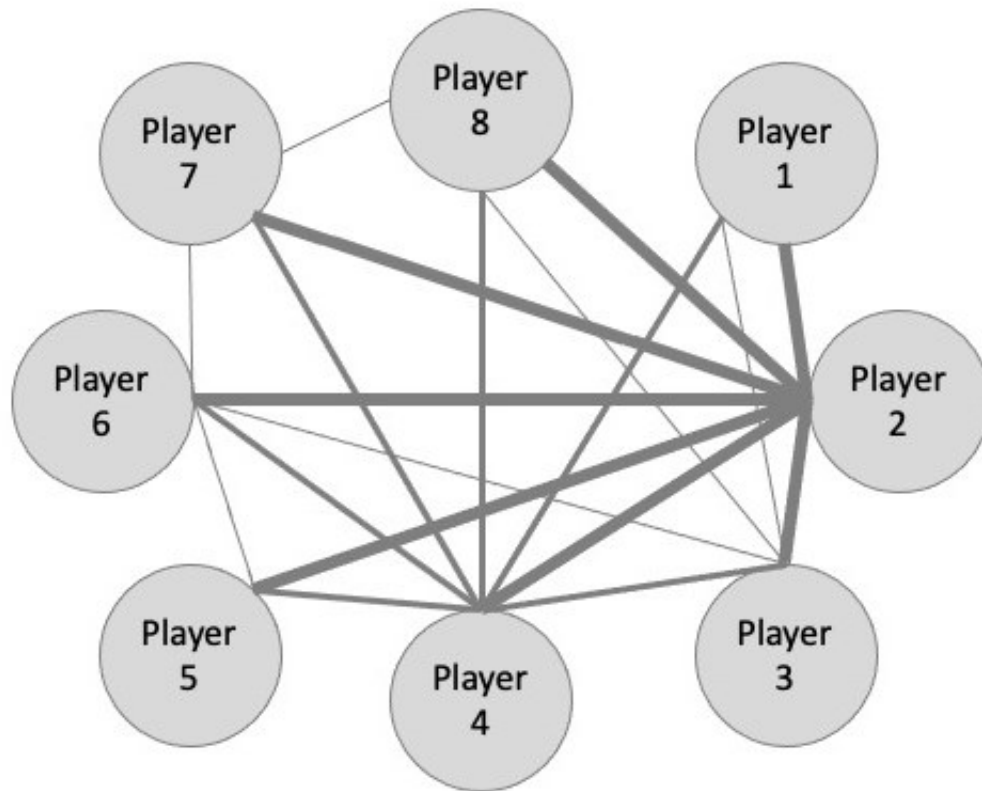
A number of assessment tools have been developed that have been used to assess athlete leadership quality including the Player Leadership Scale (Kozub, 1993), the Identity Leadership Inventory (Steffens et al., 2014), and Social Network Analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

The Player Leadership Scale distinguished between instrumental and task leadership behaviors (e.g., “helps to set goals for the team”), as well as expressive and social leadership behaviors (e.g., “helps to settle conflicts among team members”). Research with interscholastic student-athletes demonstrated that male student-athletes generally perceived task leadership behaviors as significantly more important for athlete leaders than did female student-athletes, who showed no favoritism between task and social leadership behaviors (Todd & Kent, 2004).

The Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI; Steffens et al., 2014; van Dick et al., 2018) explores the extent to which leadership behaviors foster a shared team identity. The scale is composed of four dimensions of effective identity-based leadership. First, effective leaders must be in-group prototypes (i.e., represent the unique qualities that define the group and what it means to be a member of the group). Second, they must be in-group champions (i.e., advance and promote the core interests of the group). Third, they must be entrepreneurs of identity (i.e., bring people together by creating a shared sense of “we” and “us” within the group). Fourth and finally, effective leaders must be embedders of identity (i.e., develop structures that facilitate and embed shared understanding, coordination, and success). The initial study by Steffens and colleagues’ (2014) explored the identity-based leadership behaviors of team captains in a number of teams across four different team sports. The results suggested that the dimensions most related to the perceived leadership quality of the team captain were identity prototypicality and identity entrepreneurship. In addition, team confidence and task cohesion were also reported to be positively correlated with the captains’ leadership behavior.

An alternative approach that has been used to assess leadership structures and provision within teams is Social Network Analysis (SNA). SNA conceptualizes groups in terms of networks, consisting of nodes (representing the individual actors) and ties (representing the relationships between the actors; [Wasserman & Faust, 1994]; See Figure 25.1). This approach allows the researcher to move beyond team member self-perceptions and instead explore perceptions within the team at a global level. Over the past decade, SNA has yielded explanations for social phenomena in a wide variety of domains, including athlete leadership (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2015). The SNA approach has the potential to provide insights into the leadership structure within a team and more clarity on the importance of formal versus informal leaders. Furthermore, this approach is ideally suited to enhance our knowledge of specific leadership attributes (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015). The approach also allows for further examination of the antecedents and consequences of high-quality athlete leadership (e.g., Loughhead et al., 2016).

Figure 25.1
Social Network Analysis: An Example of SNA Nodes and Ties



Leadership Development

While understanding and describing leadership behavior is important, applying this knowledge and understanding to enhance leadership for both individuals and teams is crucial to enhance both individual and team performance. As such leadership development has emerged as a scholarly discipline in its own right. Key factors in leadership development include leader identity (Lord & Hall, 2005), cognitive and metacognitive skills (Marshall-Mies et al., 2000), affect, and behavioral skills (DeRue & Myers, 2014). A distinction can also be drawn between developing individuals as leaders (leader development), and meeting the leadership needs of a specific context (leadership development). Historically, more emphasis has been placed on leader rather than leadership development. In trying to resolve this distinction, Day (2001) suggested that the “preferred approach is to link leader development with leadership development such that the development of leadership transcends but does not replace the development of individual leaders” (p. 605). In a sporting context, this distinction is important because there has been a tendency to focus on trying to develop the individual rather than to meet the context-specific leadership needs. Following this line of thought, coaches should seek to develop the leadership abilities of all members of a team to maximize the leadership provision within the team rather than focus on just developing certain individuals as leaders (e.g., captains).

Coach Leadership

A useful starting point when considering how to further develop coaches as leaders is to reconsider the factors influencing the coach's leadership approach, a summary which is presented in Table 25.1.

Over the last 20 years a number of specific approaches to coach leadership development have also been suggested in the coaching literature that encompass both formal and informal development approaches that focus on the coach's ability as a leader (Mallett et al., 2009). There has also been increasing recognition of the experiential learning that takes place within the coaching context as coaches reflect upon their own coaching practice and those of others (Cushion et al., 2003). One example of a coach development program was developed by Smith and Smoll (2007). They developed a coach effectiveness training (CET) intervention designed to enhance coach practice. The training program emphasizes five core coaching principles that can enhance coaches' leadership:

1. Having a coaching philosophy that prioritizes learning and development (with a focus on athlete effort and enjoyment)
2. The coach possesses a positive approach to coaching (demonstrating positive reinforcement and encouragement)
3. Embedding norms that emphasize athletes' obligations to help and support one another
4. Engage in decision making that involves athletes (to achieve greater compliance with team roles and responsibilities)
5. Demonstrate increased self-awareness of one's own behavior and its consequences (through observing and recording one's coaching behaviors)

A coach self-monitoring form was also developed by Smoll and Smith (2005) designed to be completed straight after training and competition as a tool for individual coaches to reflect upon their leadership behaviors and associated individual and team outcomes. Research exploring the CET approach suggests that it can be effective in reducing dropout (Barnett et al., 1992) and increasing self-esteem in coaches (Smith et al., 1995).

An alternative approach to coach leadership development was suggested by Ferrar et al. (2019), who explored the effectiveness of the coach-athlete relationship aspect of the United States Olympic Committee's National Team Coach Leadership Education Program (NTCLEP). This component of the NTCLEP focused on developing coaches' self-awareness, people acuity (i.e., the ability to discern and maximize others' strengths), interpersonal agility (i.e., adaptability in interpersonal interactions), and self-management. Based upon feedback from the program attendees, researchers concluded that: (a) interpersonal and intrapersonal skills were crucial for coaches to be effective leaders of teams, and (b) coaches had an important role to play in determining and influencing team culture. The authors emphasized that the coach wears many hats (including instructor, manager, and leader), and a key role of the leader is to create a climate and personal interactions that allow individual athletes and the team as a whole to thrive and succeed.

Athlete Leadership

There has been a growing interest in athlete leadership, and athlete leadership development in the sport psychology literature over the last decade. Initially there was a focus on the development of personal leadership skills in youth athletes through sport (e.g., Gould & Voelker, 2012; Gould et al., 2010; Martinek & Hellison, 2009), with limited research exploring approaches to developing leadership approaches, knowledge, and behaviors in adult and/or elite sport (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016; Voight, 2012). However, in recent years there has been a significant expansion of studies exploring adult and elite sport athlete leadership development.

Table 25.1*The Main Factors Influencing Coaches' Leadership Approaches*

Factor	Description
Coaching context	The coaching context is defined by key environmental factors such as the sport, the level of competition, the age and gender of the athletes, cultural and ethnic identity, and socioeconomic background. The most effective coaches will develop a good understanding of these contextual factors and implications for the way that they conduct themselves. For example, youth and collegiate athletes differ in the coaching style they prefer, so coaches should adjust their approach accordingly.
Coaches' personal characteristics	This factor includes coaches' interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge, values, beliefs, personality, and goals. Self-awareness is important for developing leadership ability. By understanding what they do, how they do it, and why, coaches can operate in ways that are better aligned with their own beliefs and values while also considering the needs of the group they lead.
Athlete outcomes	The competence, confidence, connection, and character of athletes are outcomes that are also the focus of successful leadership. Effective coaches are able to develop each of these key characteristics and, in particular, help to enhance confidence at both an individual level (self-efficacy) and a team or group level (collective efficacy). Which in turn may be reflected in athlete performance outcomes.
Athlete characteristics	The perceived effectiveness of coaches in the eyes of athletes is also influenced by the athletes' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. Even if coaches are doing a good job (objectively), individuals might view this differently. As a result, there is sometimes a need for coaches to manage perceptions and to challenge existing beliefs and attitudes.
Coaching behaviors	How coaches actually act or behave is a major factor influencing how they lead and how they are perceived by others. Having a coaching mentor can be a very effective way to help coaches to reflect on how they behave and why. This increased self-awareness can further help coaches to maximize their effectiveness in a given situation.

Youth Athlete Leadership

A number of published studies have reported the effectiveness of leadership programs with youth athletes. One example of this is the work of Gould and Voelker (2010). They developed a workshop-based development program for high school captains that included a clinic (development group) and a self-study team captain's guide. Examples of workshop topics included "What you need to know as a leader" and "Handling common team problems." The guidebook, titled, *Becoming an Effective Team Captain: Student-Athlete Guide*, focused on topics such as the role of a team captain, effective

communication, team motivation, team building and cohesion, handling tough team situations, and recommendations from captains and coaches. One particular concern regarding the development of youth sport athlete leaders is the support and guidance provided to them by their coaches (Collins et al., 2009; Voelker et al., 2011). Part of the problem is that often the coaches are not sufficiently equipped or educated (in relation to leadership development) to develop the leadership skills and abilities of their athletes (Gould et al., 2013).

A relatively recent development in the leadership development literature relating to sport is the application of mentorship (Mead & Gilson, 2017). In this approach, the more experienced leader (the coach) trains a protégé by consistently interacting and sharing ideas (Day, 2001). The effectiveness of this approach relies heavily on how positive the relationship is between the mentor and the protégé (Riggio, 2013). In a study of American high school basketball, Mead and Gilson (2017) explored the impact of coach mentoring on athlete leadership development. The study itself provided a rich and detailed description of the coach's approach to mentoring, and their successes and failures. Specifically, the coach sought to allow captains to use their personal voice, distribute and delegate leadership tasks to the captains, offer reminders of important leadership concepts, and set an effective example as the coach. The captains in this study were also encouraged to reflect on their own leadership development—an approach that has been suggested to be an important part of the leader development process (Grandzol et al., 2010).

Adult Athlete Leadership

There is an increasing focus on adult athlete leadership development within sport. According to Grandzol and colleagues (2010), occupying the position of captain within NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletics teams appears to lead to the development of the leadership skills of the individuals involved, suggesting that effective programs of leadership development should include the opportunity for future leaders to practice leading and applying leadership skills. However, historically, the focus on the development of athlete leaders in sport has not been great. In reviewing current practices at the collegiate level, Voight (2012) reported that much of the leadership training that team captains received consisted of either receiving a list of books or articles about leadership or being given a list of responsibilities without guidance or instruction.

Building upon these initial gaps in the approach to leadership development for athletes, a number of studies have sought to systematically apply and report the implementation of structured leadership development programs. For example, Voight (2012) implemented a 15-stage leadership development program with two regional U.S. volleyball teams. Although the program proved to be effective at this level, it was recommended that future research explore the delivery of similar intervention programs at different levels (e.g., youth, recreational, and professional levels). In addition, Cotterill (2016) developed a leadership development program for elite (international) U.K. professional cricketers. The program sought to develop athlete leadership at three specific levels: (a) captaincy development, (b) leadership skill development (e.g., teamwork, honesty, respect, excellence, enjoyment, resilience), and (c) personal growth and leadership development. These three levels have been identified as crucial in helping to cultivate leaders at an international level of performance. Captaincy development was delivered through a leadership development group, which focused on awareness of the self and others using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) tool. This structured program used a range of relevant guest speakers and offered the opportunity to get practical experience as a captain and to receive leadership performance debriefs from a sport psychologist and coaches. Reflections on the program by the participants suggest that a formal development program can be beneficial in enhancing the leadership capabilities of elite players.

Recently, an alternative approach has focused on seeking to develop individuals' social identity (i.e., leadership identity). This approach has been implemented with both athlete leaders (Fransen,

Vanbeselaere, et al., 2018) and athletes and coaches (Slater & Barker, 2017). In the Slater and Barker study, the intervention was informed by the five Rs program created by Haslam et al., (2017): reflecting, representing, realizing, readying, and reporting. Slater and Barker focused on the three Rs that related to identify leadership—reflecting, representing, and realizing—and included a number of new activities delivered with the senior leadership team (SLT). An outline of the specific components of the program is presented in Table 25.2.

In a similar vein, Fransen and colleagues (2018) reported the implementation of a leadership development program that focused on teaching the athlete leaders how to create a sense of “we” and “us”, as a way to create a shared identity for the team. This program adopted a team-centered approach where workshops were delivered with the entire team and the appointed athlete leaders were given additional responsibilities to further enhance the process.

Table 25.2

Overview of the Stages of the 3R Model as Implemented in the Slater & Barker (2017) Study

Stage	Overview
1. Reflecting	Purpose: increase participant understanding and application of reflection. In the first workshop the concept of #whatstrending was used to allow athletes to raise awareness of current issues in a non-judgmental way. Identity mapping was also undertaken in the second workshop.
2. Representing	The focus in this stage was to explore values and barriers that would interfere with the team living those values. Then, in developing an action plan relating to behaviors that align to the agreed values.
3. Realizing	In this stage the senior leadership team reviewed the operationalization of the values and behaviors agreed in the representing stage, then focused on creating a team vision.

Conclusion

Understanding of leadership within sport has developed significantly over the last 20 years, moving from the application of global leadership models and theories to the development and implementation of sport-specific models and approaches. However, while the description of leadership as a concept in sport has progressed, the evidence base underpinning leadership development has lagged behind. Future research needs to explore the implementation of leadership development programs in different contexts, with different sports, and at different levels. The studies that have been conducted have been quite disparate and focused on different leadership development environments (e.g., professional teams, collegiate athletes, high school athletes) and have adopted varying approaches to leadership development (education programs, personal development self-awareness). As a result, far more research exploring applied intervention programs is required. A good starting point might be the development of a conceptual framework to underpin leadership development projects. There is also a need to better share and disseminate the leadership development approaches for both coaches and athletes being applied out in the applied sporting world.

Learning Exercises

1. How would you describe the concept of leadership?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of using theories and models of leadership from other domains to explain and describe leadership in sporting contexts?
3. Why is the position of the coach seen as a leadership role?
4. Why are trait and behavioral approaches to explaining leadership seen as too simplistic?
5. How do the mediational and multi-dimensional models of leadership build upon the trait and behavioral approaches?
6. What is authentic leadership, and how can it be applied in sports teams by coaches?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the transformational leadership approach?
8. What factors influence the quality of coach-athlete relationships?
9. What is athlete leadership?
10. What are the key characteristics of successful athlete leaders?
11. What lessons can be learnt from the Coach Effectiveness Training (CET) program to enhance coach leadership development?
12. What approaches have been adopted to develop leadership skills in youth athletes? How can youth leadership development be enhanced?
13. What further work is required to better understand how to effectively develop adult athlete leaders?
14. Reflecting on the chapter, where do you feel the current gaps in knowledge and understanding are?

Further Reading

Carron, A. V., & Eys, M. A. (2012). *Group dynamics in sport* (4th ed.). Fitness Information Technology.

- A great starting point for seeking to understand group functioning and group-related processes. Will serve as a good foundation upon which to explore key concepts in greater detail.

Cotterill, S. T., & Fransen, K. (2016). Leadership in team sports: Current understanding and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 9, 116–133.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2015.1124443>

- This article presents a comprehensive overview of the concept of athlete leadership, its measurement and approaches to further enhancing athlete leadership within teams.

Hopton, C., Phelan, J., & Barling, J. (2007). Transformational leadership in sport. In M. R. Beauchamp & M. A. Eys (Eds.), *Group dynamics in sport and exercise psychology: Contemporary themes* (pp. 45–60). Routledge

- A good overview of transformational leadership within a sporting context, and crucially how to look to apply the theory in practice.

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