

Exploring Leadership Strategies of Athletic Coaching through the Theory of Play

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to explore the contents within leadership strategies of athletic coaching by the means of Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of play. Current research regarding the leadership of coaching have topics which focus mostly on leadership behavior and theories based mainly on theories and models of leadership management. In this study, researchers try and approach from a different angle: by using the theory of play as the basis to propose leadership strategies which athletic coaches can refer to, and also providing eleven specific approaches towards those strategies that coaches may reference. The strategies include establishing team situation as the main body of leadership, leadership with the seriousness of play, showing the self- presentation of a leader, participatory leadership, and transformation leadership. Although each strategy has its different key point, they are similar in aspects such as the focus of the leader on the situation, the process of implement is more important than the outcome, as well as the fair and just treatment of every member in the team.

Keywords: Coaching, Leadership Strategies, Play, Gadamer

INTRODUCTION

As athletic competitions become increasingly fierce and more emphasis placed upon the outcomes, efforts made by the athletes in training and overcoming obstacles is one of the key factors to winning competition. The other key factor is the coaches. Their leadership is particularly important because they often need to take responsibility for the outcomes. Most people think that a successful coach need only the skill of training athletes but, in truth, everything from implementing technical training, physical enhancement, and on-site guidance, to mental adjustments, life counseling, and interpersonal relationships, to gathering information on competitions, is the responsibility of the coach.

What role should the coach play when faced with such diverse and complex content, especially in team sports such as football, baseball, and basketball? The coach is the trainer, counselor, teacher, parent, and friend. Coaches are leaders as well as listeners for the athletes, and at the same time, they are also their partners.

No matter which role is assumed, the coach remains an important function. As Whitmore (2009) believes, the coach stimulates the potential in people to produce their ultimate performance; the coach cultivates the perception and responsibility of the athlete in hopes of producing high performance. In other words, the main purpose of athletic coaches is to lead athletes to achieve the mutually set goal.

With this being the case, how coaches lead athletes to achieve their best potential performance is a topic worth discussing. However, current research regarding the leadership strategies of coaches is still limited. The topics mostly discussed include: exploring the leadership behavior of coaches in different sports (Chou & Chen & Yeh, 2008; Hung, 2007; Hung & Kuo & Liao, 2007); the experience and views of coaches

on leading athletes (Gilbert & Kaplan, 2005; Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000); as well as the characteristics and conditions of a successful coach (Martens, 1997; Wooden & Carty, 2005). Although some of the researches do investigate theories on leadership behavior of athletic coaches (Cheng, 1995), most derive from the theories and models of leadership management, and less from other theories researching on the leadership strategies of athletic coaches, hence the topic of this study is worth exploring.

Researchers believe that, in the process of leading the athletes, coaches are as if playing a game and the theory of play by German philosopher H.G. Gadamer (1900-2002) offers unique insight on modern society related issues as well as provide an alternative choice for leadership strategies. Therefore, this study will be using the theory of play by Gadamer as research basis, along with document analysis and reflection as the research method, to investigate the leadership strategy of athletic coaches, and explore possible approaches to implement leadership so that a win-win situation for coaches and athletes can be achieved. Based on the above, the second section of this study will show the importance of leadership strategy from a different viewpoint by presenting documents regarding the leadership strategy of athletic coaches, and also describe leadership strategies as well as athletic coaches and their leadership strategy; the third section will reveal the theory of play by Gadamer as well as use concepts such as “subjectivity”, “seriousness”, “self- presentation”, “participation”, and “transformation” to comprehend; the fourth section will suggest actual leadership strategies for athletic coaches by using the theory of play, and also propose five items: establishing that team situation is the main body of leadership, leadership with the seriousness of play, showing the self- presentation of a leader, participatory leadership, and transformation leadership; the fifth section will conclude this study.

INVESTIGATION OF RELATED DOCUMENTS

Leadership Strategies

The term “leadership” can mean the behavior process effecting an individual or a group to arrive at a common goal (Hsu, 2006; Barrow, 1977). It can also refer to the process of convincing others and implementing together (Hsu, 2006; Drath & palus, 1994), or as Hong (1997) believes, leadership is the tool that enables normal operation of the organization, harmony within the personnel, and successful accomplishment of goals. Furthermore, Wu (1998) defines the meaning of leadership using the difference between managers and leaders: managers are assigned and their authority over the members comes with certain terms; leaders, on the other hand, are either assigned or produced from within the group, and their authority is based on personality or professional knowledge. After summarizing the documents from within the country and abroad, he defined leadership as: the active process of effectively achieving team goals through relevant command and influencing members to implement the mission. To summarize the above, leadership is a behavior as well as a process. For leaders, it is a presentation of influence.

Therefore, leadership strategy is the effective strategy of leaders when executing the mentioned behaviors and processes. More specifically, it refers to the formulated feasible method or solution of the leader leading and influencing the individual or the group in hopes of achieving the set goal. This method or solution cannot be executed on the decision of the leader alone, because whether or not the strategy will work depends on the state of interaction between the leader and the members being led. Researches relating to leadership strategies appear mainly in the field of management, while researches on leadership behavior in sports are in the field of sports management. However, the field of education administration holds many documents directly investigating leadership strategies. For example, the research of Sue (2003) mentioned the leadership strategies of principals: (1) allow teachers to exert their abilities by

providing a wealth of teaching and administrative resources; (2) hold no prejudice on the promotion of the curriculum and respect the professionalism of the teachers; (3) lead by example and truly communicate with the teachers; (4) encourage the professional development of teachers and provide the stage to apply their expertise; (5) encourage professional dialogue between teachers and create an open as well as trusting culture inside the school. Research by Lin, Wang and Cheng (2004) states that the managing strategy for promotion of transformation leadership in the school should include: (1) expand the vision of the school and express high expectations; (2) show charismatic leadership and self-confidence; (3) seek active communication as well as gain trust and commitment; (4) inspire the intellect of members to constantly think creatively; (5) encourage self-realization and share professional knowledge; (6) activate the atmosphere of the organization and show genuine concern for the members; (7) create a learning organization and acknowledge the professionalism of the teachers.

To conclude, the development of an organization or a team depends on the strategies implemented by the leader or directing team. There should be a different leadership strategy in response to the different characteristics, team members, and situation of each team. In other words, every different domain has its own unique leadership strategy. For instance, the teaching team and the sports team would have unique leadership strategies different from each other.

Athletic Coaches

Athletic coaches play a main role in leading athletes and sports teams. Their objective is to lead and assist athletes to enhance professional athletic abilities, gain the best athletic achievement, as well as maintain peak athletic performance for as long as possible. They deal primarily with matters relating to people (the athletes). Whether it be training, living, interpersonal, or competition related, everything must be taken care of, because these are possible factors that could effect performance. Although the main duty of athletic coaches is the role of trainer who instructs and trains athletes on athletic skills, they also sometimes become counselor that advise on emotional, interpersonal, and relationship matters, teacher to assist with cultural and personal growth, parent to take care of the athletes, and friend that is mutually supportive. Hence, the role and leadership of the athletic coach is not unchanging but complex and variable (Wu, 1998). As Liu (1990) mentions, compared with other occupations, the athletic coach is high risk, highly challenging, highly creative, and highly complex job that is also very uncertain and conflicting. Therefore, a successful coach is extremely valuable.

Related research regarding athletic coaches focus mainly on understanding how athletic coaches train and lead to achieve the three general indicators of a successful athletic coach mentioned by Martens (1997): operate winning team; help athletes to have fun; assist the mental, psychological, and social development of the athletes. Which type of coach is more likely to succeed? There are some researches that have analyzed the characteristics, style, and behavior of athletic coaches: Wooden and Carty (2005) believed that a successful coach would have twenty-five qualities which include active, diligent, emulous, trusting, team player, adaptation, and others; Martens (1997) seperated coaching styles into the three categories of command, submissive, and cooperative; Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) stated that there are five coaching behaviors - democratic, autocratic, training and instructive, socially supported, and positive feedback. These studies can provide reference to those who would be looking to become athletic coaches when learning to become a successful coach.

Leadership of Athletic Coaches

Current documents regarding the leadership of athletic coaches focus mainly on leadership behavior

and leadership performance. Chelladurai (1993) stated that leadership behavior models include the Multidimensional Model, the Mediational Model, and the Normative Model of Decision Style in Coaching, while Feng and Peng (2006) attributed the leadership of coaching into three types - authoritative, democratic and hands-off type. These studies provide the whole picture on the leadership behavior of athletic coaches and can be used by coaches in the process of training athletes and also for reference in related research (Cheng, 1995). In addition to the general classification, leadership strategies and behaviors differ specifically with the characteristics of each coach, and sometimes appear in the form of written biography. Such is the case with Duke University basketball coach Krzyzewski. His several leadership strategies and methods include attention to time management, emphasis on communication and cooperation, development of trusting relationship, strengthen individual responsibility, develop winning attitude, respect for authority, and many others (Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000). Attention is gradually being called upon case studies relating to leadership experiences of individual coaches (Lee, 2006; Wu, 2008; Liang, 2006).

Due to the diversity and different categories of sports, the actual leadership behaviors differ with coaches in different categories, and hence, the many related researches on the leadership of coaching in the sports field. For example, Kang (2005) investigated the leadership behavior of baseball coaches and proposed that the factor structure consisted of five dimensions – authoritative leadership, concern and support, fair responsibility, teamwork, inspiration and motivation. In addition, studies on the leadership behavior of coaches in wrestling, tennis, taekwondo, table tennis, badminton, football, and others (Chou & Chen & Yeh, 2008; Hung, 2007; Hung & Kuo & Liao, 2007; Teng & Chen & Li & Chuang, 2009; Jang & Chen & Chia, 2009; Dooug & Wu & Tai & Han, 2006) compared with the leadership behavior of different coaches in the same field appeared more often. The different items and different leadership behaviors of coaches exhibited are all worth exploring.

In short, how athletic coaches effectively handles matters relating to athletes depends on good leadership strategies, and how to choose among the many leadership strategies the most effective to use for the situation depends on the judgement and quick thinking of the coach. In addition to referencing leadership theories, one can think and decide through the theory of play in the next section. It is not for the exploration of a specific sport, but the reference for coaches in every field of sports.

HANS-GEORG GADAMER'S THEORY OF PLAY

The theory of play by Gadamer is understood through main concepts such as “subjectivity”, “seriousness”, “self-presentation”, “transformation”, and “participation”.

Subjectivity

When inside a game, the player does not face or handle the game. In other words, the game is not a played object, and the player not the subject. As Gadamer once stated: I have tried starting from the concept of play, to overcome the illusions of self-conscience and the prejudice of idealism. The game is not simply a object, but an actual existence for the the people participating in the game, regardless of whether they participated as bystanders (or audience). In fact, the game can only be expressed through the players, but the subject of the game is the game itself and not the players (Gadamer, 1994). For example, when players are truly into a basketball game, they not only follow the rules, but also become tense as the scores close in, and alter tactics in sync with changes on the other team. They do not seem to be playing the game, but instead played by the game. Everything goes with the game. A true game is one that has

players opening up and allowing the game to dominate themselves. If players see themselves as subjects, then they cannot merge with the game (and cannot play a true game). It is not strictly game playing the players or players playing the game, but interlacing between the two. The player sometimes active while sometimes passive in this constantly renewing but never repeating activity (Gadamer, 1994). The true game has no terminating purpose and is constantly updating. With this process, the player will continue to want to play the game and continue to gain further understanding of the game. Therefore, when playing a true game, the game itself is the subject, otherwise it would be a false game.

Seriousness

Gadamer believed that the behavior of the player is difference from the game itself. For instance, a person plays a game. A true game has seriousness. However, this does not mean that the game is associated with something serious, but instead has its own uniqueness as well as divine seriousness (Gadamer, 1994). For example, in football, the players are required to follow the rules of the football game and shoot the ball through the goal; the players themselves abide by the rules while not allowing others to violate, and progress determinately towards the goal while at the same time preventing the other team from scoring. In this process, the behavior and thinking of the player is limited, thus the seriousness of the game allows for the player to involve in the game and focus on playing a true game. However, this does not mean that the player needs to constantly self-consciously reminded to play seriously and focused. The more self-reminded the player is, the less involved in the game the player will be. Only by not reminding oneself and following the game can the player play serious and in a true game.

Self- Presentation

Self-presentation is the form in which the game exists and also a natural and common form of existence. This also means that the game as well as players are the existence of self-presentation. The self-presentation of the game is the player achieving unique self-presentation via playing some thing (also the presentation of something) (Gadamer, 1994). For example, if game activities were presented in “children playing shootout” and the children were pretending to be “swordsmen, police, ninjas”, under the dominance of the game, everyone does their best to play their roles and accomplish their missions. Generally speaking, although the game is essentially a performing activity and the players express themselves in the game, the game does not perform for any certain person. Not even games presented in front of an audience, such as athletic competitions, are for the audience (Gadamer, 1994). Therefore, the self-presentation of the game is presented in the situation of the game, and not presented for the audience or other people.

Participation

Gadamer uses holiday celebration activities (which is also a game) as example: regularly held celebration activities are recurring and we can refer to them as return. these return are not additions to the original celebration activities, nor are they the same. Although the same celebration activities are held in different objective time, the time experience is the occasion of the celebration activities, and also an uniquely time of “present” (Gadamer, 1986). This “present” is not a short moment, but “contemporaneity”, a temporal that links the past, present, and future into “simultaneous”. When the player is focused and involved in the game, it is contemporaneity and real “participation” in the game.

Contemporaneity is part of the game existence. It is the essence of “being present”, meaning something presented to us is completely in the present, even if its origin was very long ago (Gadamer, 1994). Contemporaneity has characteristics to forget oneself and form the essence of the play. In other

words, forgetting oneself when focused on something (Gadamer, 1994). In a game where the player is completely focused on the game and the meaning of the game lights upon the player, everything is united as one and everything is contemporaneous. By contrast, if a person simply shows up at some event to take up a spot and does not participate (is distracted or doing other things), then that person and the game are indifferent to each other, and the person cannot understand the meaning of the occasion (Chan, 1998). Therefore, the former is the player truly “participating” and playing in a true game, while the latter is merely a “spectator” and not playing a true game.

Transformation

Gadamer believes that every game has its own purpose and the game itself is that purpose (Gadamer, 1994, p. 110). Due to transformation, the game of sports has functions other than those originally of a game. It is through this transformation that game is seen as game, understood as the game of sports, and has the characteristics of facture and fuction. works. He also mentions that transformation is something “suddenly” and completely turns into something else. This something else becomes the true existence and the original something no longer exists (Gadamer, 1994, p. 111). For example, when flour becomes pasta. Hence, the existing item after transformation (as with self-presenting things in the game of art) is permanent and real (Gadamer, 1994, p. 111), and as Gadamer writes: “transformation is a transformation into the true” (Gadamer, 1994, p. 112). In athletic terms, the competition is the process of transformation. The coaches, athletes as well as the competition itself all transform in this process.

SPECIFIC LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES OF ATHLETIC COACHING INSPIRED THROUGH THE THEORY OF PLAY

In the process when coaches lead athletes, if the game played is true and not false, then good leadership results can be achieved. Referencing Gadamer’s theory of play, leadership strategies for athletic coaches are as below:

Establishing Team Situation as The Main Body of Leadership

While the main members of a sports team are the athletic coaches and the athletes, they are not the main body. The team situation is the main body of the sports team. Coaches and athletes have initiative, but at the same time, need to adapt to the situations faced by the team (passiveness) and work together to reach the common goals of growth together and winning championships. In fact, even with common goals, there is sometime conflict between the coach and athletes or between the athletes. One of the reasons for the former is that the coach self-regards as the main body of the team and leading as one pleases, while the athletes can only follow orders and instructions. The coach communicates very little with the athletes, sometimes only with the captain. As a result, detachment and conflict is prone to happen.

Coaches can establish that neither coach nor athlete is the main body of the team. By helping the athletes learn and grow by not instructing, the coach and the athletes grow together as well as unite to face the situation faced by the team. On the basis that the athletic coach puts away the concept of “I am the main body”, the inspired leadership strategies are: communicating with athletes through various methods; setting mutually recognized game rules; interaction that requires friendship.

Communicating with athletes through various methods

Communication between the coaches and athletes is mainly about the problems and thoughts which

they see with each other, as well as the awareness and views of the situation. Although many people believe that communication is necessary, few know how to communicate with each other. On the basis of mutual respect, the possible methods of communication: (1) effective questions: the coach can ask questions such as why everybody is on the team, how to be on the team, or how to achieve the team's goal to enhance observation and responsibility. (2) text communication (exchange, clarify): although coaches and athletes see each other almost every day and seem familiar with each other, sometimes direct face-to-face communication is what makes it difficult to precipitate the thought of both sides or listen to the intent of others. Text communication can allow for more time to think over each others thoughts. Former NBA Lakers coach Pat Riley used this method often when communicating with players. (3) show empathy: empathize that the observed hard work of the training athletes, as well as the pressure and struggle when facing competitions, is not understood by people who have not been in this kind of situation. Therefore, one needs to show empathy towards the emotional reactions of the athletes in this situation and allow the exchange of feelings.

Setting mutually recognized game rules

A game must have game rules. It is part of the situation. Coaches and athletes alike must follow the rules (the mutually recognized game rules), and intitiatively implementing under the conditions of the rule on one hand, while passively limited by the rules on the other. Any coach or player breaching the rules will be subjected to handling by the rules. If the coaches self-regards as the main body and sets rules of their own, then it would be hard for the athletes to play a true game or for the true side to be presented. Therefore, coaches and athletes should set mutually recognized game rules. In the game where the coach leads the athletes, it is an interactive situation. The coach plays over, while the athletes and team situation truly plays back. It is through this back-and-forth process that provides the athletic coach with several true messages, and allows the coach to take further action using these messages and correctly handle issues in the process.

Interaction that requires friendship

There are no class distinctions between the coach and athlete, nor are there any subjective and objective distinctions. There are only differences in roles and responsibility dimensions. A coach does not use the attitude of an authoritative ruler to train and excoriate athletes, but instead should lead the athletes in a friendly and equal manner, especially during the time besides training and competitions. Although in a leadership situation, there is a relationship of leader and the led, both sides are independent entities that have mutual respect, and after confirming each other's duties, can accomplish the duties together in a friendly interactive manner, as well as gain recognition from the athletes.

Leading with the Seriousness of Play

Athletic coaches holding responsibility for the results must face the strong pressure of the competitions, and athletes pursuing the best often face fast changing situations with a serious attitude. Sometimes caring too much about the purpose and outcomes as well as how other see oneself can result in the frequent occurence of faulty seriousness, including excessive seriousness and false seriousness. Excessive seriousness is the behavior of verbal abuse or physical punishment towards athletes during training when the athletes have a bad attitude, do not follow instruction, or do not meet requirements. At this point, some athletes will have fear while others accumulate unsatisfactory emotions. False seriousness is the coach leading with seriousness only in form and on the surface, but not truly focused or serious in every process. The purpose is led others to believe that they are serious and responsible coaches.

Therefore, the coach should always reflect on faulty seriousness that may happen at any time, and use the leadership strategies with the seriousness of play to handle issues with training the athletes, the competitions, and other problems.

Reflect on faulty seriousness that may happen at any time

In the process of leading, the coach should try as much as possible to avoid faulty seriousness. Whether in training, competition, or any other time, this reminder should be always in mind. More attention should be paid during competitions, because the emotions and performance of the athletes in a highly pressured competition situation directly effects the athletic coaches. If the coach scolds the negative emotions and bad performance of the athlete too harshly, faulty seriousness can easily occur, injuring the athlete as well as the coach, and the athlete may be reluctant to express their thoughts or situation towards the coach. Therefore, when athletes do not perform as expected, the coach must be self-controlled to avoid possible faulty seriousness.

Use the leadership strategies with the seriousness of play

Coaches should naturally merge into the leadership situation when leading, and when instructing training or competitions, naturally seriously focus on facing and paying attention to the situations that happen. When a problem occurs, focus on solving the problem and how to do better. Every problem should be handled with sincerely, regardless of the size. No problem should be ignored because it is a small problem. For example, when family, life, or relationship issues effect the emotions of the athlete, it should be dealt with the seriousness of play and as an important issue. In addition, attention should be paid to the seriousness of the competition process. Seriously and actively complete it, then accept the results.

Showing the Self-Presentation of A Leader

The coaching job is different from the average physical education. It does not have the authority of most physical education teachers. The self-presentation of the athletic coach is not with authority nor when leading. It is conveyed through the team situation, and mainly through the self-presentation of the athletes. Specifically speaking, the coach creates the learning and growth situations for the athletes, in addition to the self-presentation of promoter for the athletes during training and competitions, and not the self-presentation of heroism. This leadership attitude will bring forth the following strategies:

Bring out the power of support and assistance

During training and competitions, the self-presentation of the coach supports and assists the athletes to achieve their best self-presentation. In other words, the best self-presentation of the athlete is also the best self-presentation of the coach. The coach needs to often think about how to bring out the best status of the athletes. Facing the different characteristics of each individual on the team, individual teaching and assistance is needed. The coach should not integrate all the actions and thoughts of everyone for the sake of convenience. Hence, the self-presentation of the coach is not expressed by the characteristics of the leadership skills, but by allowing the athletes with different characteristics to show their potential. Bringing out the potential of the individual as well as the team is the self-presentation of leadership expressed by the coach during training, scheduling and interaction.

Respect the self-presentation of the athletes

Each athlete has an unique self-presentation, especially in the performance of unique skills. For example, the forehand stroke of star tennis players Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal is the presentation of one's uniqueness. Sometimes when the coach insists on changing or eliminating the unique physical operation of the athlete, bad results happen (performance fall). On the other hand, when the coach instructs without coaching too much and allowing the athlete's body to be experimented more, it is respecting the self-presentation of the athlete's body. For instance, when children first learn how to walk. Is it the result of parental guidance? No, it is physical ability that we were born with, and sometimes too much talk interferes with this ability. In other words, the coach trusting the athletes is respecting the self-presentation of the athletes, and they will also trust the coach. To do so, the coach must have a more optimistic attitude than usual and see the dormant abilities within the athletes. However, this does not mean that the athletes should be left on their own to try and practice when the coach train skills.

Participatory Leadership

When some coaches lead athletes, they are there in body but not in mind. This is merely a kind of spectator. Some part-time coaches think that training athletes is merely a phase and transition, and that with the end of this phase, the responsibility ends as well. In contrast, participatory leadership is the coach seeing him or her self as part of the team, and not a passerby. The basis of the participatory leadership strategy is participation in the moment of training and competition, while at the same time, understanding the changes in the situation. Specific methods include:

No distractions

If the coach leads and thinks about or handles other issues, then the leadership situation cannot be truly participated in, and will have a negative impact on the quality of leadership. True participation has no distractions and is single-minded. Phenomena worth noticing can be found throughout the leadership process, especially during competitions, where from start to end, it is ever-changing and full of uncertainties such as the current situation of the athletes, the strengths, weaknesses as well as characteristics of the opponent. One will keep trying to comprehend how to respond to this situation, and what methods can be used to receive good results.

Keep enthusiasm

When a coach embraces the leadership job with enthusiasm, the leadership situation can be more participated in, because there is joyous pleasure and passion besides the pressure and hard work. Enthusiastically participating in the leadership situation can present leadership that is full of energy and liveliness. Sports is a game that dynamically exhibits energy, and if the coach has energetic leadership, then the athletes will easily express energy in competitions and training, and more likely to achieve good athletic results. In addition, enthusiasm is passion for the sport. This passion will infect the athletes and allow athletes already passionate about the sport to be able to continue passionately participate in the process of training and competitions.

Transformation Leadership

In the leadership process of athletic coaches, the coach and athletes will be transformed. When transforming, the coach needs not only transformation leadership strategies, but also to understand the subtle transformations in the leadership situation, in order to allow the athletes to transform into the ideal state.

Methods of transformation leadership

Athletes and team situations are constantly transforming, and the coach is transforming in the process as well. Therefore, the leadership strategy cannot stay the same, but instead should transform leadership methods depending on the situation. When in a game where the messages back from the athletes are few and far between, the leadership method needs to be transformed before continuing to play. For example, when some athletes are frustrated and do not know what to do, sometimes even miserable and not willing to talk to anyone, the coach needs to communicate differently from the other players. In addition, we usually think that when records are broken, the athletes would have more self-confidence and seem invincible. In this case, the coach can encourage them to keep up the good work but not let it get to their heads or to get too relaxed. However, for some athletes, the opposite situation occurs. The moment when the record was broken, everything happens too fast, too sudden that one even doubts the record was broken. The current performance is an enormous difference from previous performance. Therefore, when the athletes are transforming and it is not the general situation, the coach also needs to change leadership methods.

Understanding the subtle transformations in the team situation

The situations faced by teams are ever-changing. When the difference is subtle, it is not easy for those other than the persons involved to notice. The coach needed to be observant of the situation status, including that of practice and competition situations, as well as whether or not the atmosphere between the athletes and the team has changed. These faint differences sometime have significant influences on the actual operation of leadership. For example, whether the game goes from winning to losing or from losing to winning, it often happens undetected; at this or that point in time, the mental and physical state and accumulated experience of the athlete has transformed, but remains unnoticed by others; when the team atmosphere that effects cooperation gradually becomes different, it is hard to discover unless one observes closely. When these changes become more obvious, they are easier to detect, but at this point, it has become more difficult to solve. Of course, there are positive transformations as well as negative ones. If the coach can detect them in time, the effects would be greater. Therefore, the coach needs not only methods to transform leadership, but also to understand the subtle transformations in the team, the athletes, and the situations.

CONCLUSION

The leadership strategies of athletic coaching inspired through Gadamer's theory of play include: establishing that team situation is the main body of leadership, leading with the seriousness of play, showing the self-presentation of a leader, participatory leadership, and transformation leadership. The eleven specific methods for these strategies include: Communicating with athletes through various methods, setting mutually recognized game rules, interaction that requires friendship, reflect on faulty seriousness that may happen at any time, use the leadership strategies with the seriousness of play, bring out the power of support and assistance, respect the self-presentation of the athletes, no distractions, keep enthusiasm, methods of transformation leadership, and understanding the subtle transformations in the team situation. Although each strategy and method has its different key point, they are similar in aspects such as the focus of the leader on the situation, the process of implement is more important than the outcome, and the fair and just treatment of every member in the team.

If the theory of play is used as basis for leadership strategy, the athletic coach would see every

competition of the athletes as the process of the leadership game. Thus, every process will be valued. The end of a competition is not the end. In particular, the focus point for the coach would be how to go through this process and be able to develop the potentials of the athletes further, and allow for their athletic career to improve. Because the performance of the athletes depends mainly on the process, the coach would be able to view the competition results with an ordinary state of mind, and not be defeated by losing results or get carried away by winning results. Under the leadership of this strategy, the athletes are more self-confident and can also understand their own strengths as well as weaknesses from the process, not just from the result. Hence, the athlete agrees with the fact that the focus and hard work of the training process is the best way towards achieving good results; even with one victory after another, there are still areas to improve and practice on in order to achieve another self breakthrough.

In addition, if the leadership process is like playing a true game for the coach, then the fun and enthusiasm in coaching can be found in game of the team situation. The same goes with athletes: they will find the fun and enthusiasm in being an athlete. It is similar to the profound experience obtained and loved by gamers immersed in the game world.

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