

Relationships in My Sport: Coach, Family and Team Mates

The interiors of a collective gives you access to the relational aspects that are happening in your sport. They have been part of your story in your sport. Your parents most likely first started you off in your sport, then you started to take it more seriously, eventually you had your own coach and started entering competitions. A lot of the people you came in contact with (some more than others obviously) during your sports career have helped shape the way you now experience and relate to your sport. I suspect that for the majority of athletes reading this article the most important people in your sport are composed of your family, friends, sports coach(es), and your team mates, whether it's an individual or team sports you play. They are also part of your success and therefore, integrative part of your preparation.

They are extremely important for your performance but their actions and behaviour are unfortunately most of the times neglected. This has been a huge gap in elite sport. Just like "forgetting" about the athlete's interior has been another – my previous topic. If you have an authoritarian coach or a high-pressuring parent, you are more likely to grow through sport in less healthy manners: and I mean physically, psychologically and emotionally.

And (sadly) the incredible thing is that albeit all the abuse athletes still suffer these days, they can still get to gold medallists or world champions. Somehow humans can adapt to all kinds of negative situations and become heroic in doing so. I admire them deeply as much as I feel for the wounds their sport has left. But just because athletes can still reach their goals under unhealthy sports environments, does it mean we should just turn a blind eye about it? What if they can still reach their goals but without all the abuse and dictatorial training? What if they can get even higher? How will this shape them as athletes and as ultimately, as humans and role models who can inspire millions?

Athletes who struggle with their relationships in sport carry a serious handicap. If you lack support doesn't mean that you're not going to



make it. It simply means that the way to your goals will be much harder. This is why it is so important to have supportive parents and supportive coaches. The problem is that the two groups (i.e., parents and coaches) most of the times confuse their own expectations and unfulfilled dreams with their kids or their athletes goals and dreams. And this leads to all types of pressure sources.

Caring about and spending time to work on the most important relationships in your sport is very important. Even if you have no one that can help you work in this area it is important that you at least put some attention to them. Who are they? The most important people who can support you? Do you feel supported? If not, can you speak about it with them? Have you ever done that? These and other questions need being asked and self-assessed by you.

I have coached many sports parents during the past 4 years and am sadly amazed at how much damage they have caused to their kids. And the biggest paradox? It's that they do it unconsciously out of their love for their kids or sons. They simply know no better ways of doing it. They have not been taught or developed capacities to become better at supporting them without lashing out their own frustrations and disappointments. Remember me saying this perspective has been pretty much neglected in elite sport? All these experiences can be quite traumatic and damaging to you growing up as an athlete, or as an adult reading this and looking back at your childhood and adolescent years.

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