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Abstract

Late eighteenth century boxing manuals argued that the appropriate methods of training 'wind', 'bottom', and 'science', were at last fully understood, and it was this body of experiential knowledge which informed early nineteenth century coaching. As in other specialised crafts, expert coaches relied on personal experience, oral traditions, often situated within close-knit communities, and their skills as innovators and entrepreneurs. Although this craft approach could lead to traditionalism it also enabled coaches to impose their own ideas in training regimes, to experiment, using trial and error, and to use intuition in the implementation and evaluation of training. This paper argues that many of these valuable practices have gradually disappeared as a result of external pressures. In the late nineteenth century, coaching communities came under threat, especially from the medical establishment, as their traditional skills and knowledge were publicly attacked by men who preferred a more positivistic approach to training. Craft coaches were further marginalised when academics established themselves as gatekeepers of their specialist knowledge and created structural boundaries around sport science. More recently, initiatives to professionalise coaching leave little scope for a craft interpretation of coaching by awarding credibility only to those who progress through science orientated coach education programmes.

Paper

Before the 1948 Olympic Games in London there was pessimism about the country's readiness to compete and anxiety about the diminishing international standing of British sport to the extent that it was being argued that a college for coaches, providing three year courses covering, amongst other topics, first aid, psychology, massage, and modern coaching methods, should be established to address the standards of coaching.[1] The logical extension of these proposals can be seen today in coach education programmes which prioritise scientific knowledge and which are compulsory prerequisites for a coaching career. Although the efficacy of this approach has not gone unchallenged, the debate surrounding this industrialised, scientific model of sports coaching has taken place in an historical vacuum with little consideration given to long-established patterns of coaching which replicated the traditional craft practices of other skilled artisans. This paper explores the nineteenth century origins of contemporary coaching and uses examples of some prominent men, and Victorian coaching was overwhelmingly a male endeavour, to illustrate the collective traits and methods that formed the traditional precepts of sports coaching. The paper then notes the constraints on traditional practice that evolved with the advent of amateurism, growing medical and scientific influences and an increasing reliance on credentialism before concluding that, despite these changes, remnants of nineteenth century coaching practice can still be identified today, even if they are not fully acknowledged.

The term 'coach' is broadly interpreted in modernity as the individual responsible for training others for an athletic contest but in the early nineteenth century it was a colloquial expression for a private tutor. The transfer of the term from education to sports was initiated by public school and university sportsmen and it is significant that when 'coaching' became associated with preparation for competition from the 1840s it should be in those sports most closely associated with this social class, rowing and cricket, rather than in working class sports like pedestrianism and boxing, where the

[1] Trembath, H. (1947). *British Sport*, London: Skelton Robinson British Yearbooks pp. 17-18.

nomenclature 'trainer' persisted. However, the terms have never been mutually exclusive so this paper uses 'coach' interchangeably with 'trainer'.[2]

From the twelfth century onwards, all social groups engaged in competitive activities, the preparation for which required the expertise of men such as fencing and riding professors, falconers, wrestling trainers, and masters at arms. Increased entrepreneurial opportunities stimulated the development of coaching in the eighteenth century although professionals like cricketer William Beldham and fencing master Domenico Angelo perpetuated existing practices while incorporating emerging knowledge. The gambling that underpinned professional livelihoods encouraged further rationalisation with the Duke of Queensberry engaging a professional trainer to prepare servants for pedestrian wagers,[3] and after 'fisty-cuffs' began to replace armed prizefighting in public displays from the beginning of the century there was a gradual refinement of skills and training methods. James Figg took responsibility for one fighter's physical and dietary preparation before a contest in 1725,[4] while Broughton's rules of 1743 encouraged more sophisticated techniques which were recorded in a number of instructional manuals that also, following the example of Parkyns's wrestling manual in 1713, included advice about athletic diets and training regimes. Prominent fighters like Bill Warr and John Jackson, trainer of Bill Richmond who subsequently trained Tom Molineaux, gained widespread reputations as trainers for any sport.[5]

Training and the role of the coach became more central to sporting activities during the early nineteenth century and before Barclay completed 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours for a 1,000 guineas in 1809 he prepared with Bill Warr and John Smith, the Yorkshire pedestrian, another training expert.[6] By this stage, training usually involved participants preparing for around two months under the guidance of men like Jackson and Barclay, trainer of Tom Cribb for his second fight with Molineaux, who drew on their own competitive experiences, together with a sport's oral traditions, to devise appropriate training regimes. Each coach was guided by his own judgment and no universal training rules were applied although the coach normally familiarised himself with the individual characteristics of the athlete first in order to determine how best to organise the training elements. Jackson, for example, assessed potential through trials involving short runs or sparring.[7] Progress was monitored by analysing training components, separately and in combination, to ensure the athlete was improving and to enable training errors to be rectified.[8] Condition was often assessed by whether the sweats stopped reducing weight and by the athlete's time for a mile at top speed, a good result confirming that he had 'derived all the advantages which can possibly result from the training process'.[9]

As in all eras coaches did not work without some constraints on their behaviour. Trainers were advised to be open to instruction and obedient to the rules laid down by employers who checked his probity before engaging him and then monitored him closely

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[2] Day, D. (2008). 'From Barclay to Brickett: Coaching practices and coaching lives in nineteenth and early twentieth century England' (PhD. Thesis, De Montfort)

[3] Wilson, G. (1815). *Memoirs of the Life and the Exploits of G. Wilson, the Celebrated Pedestrian, who Walked 750 Miles in 15 Days*, London: Dean and Munday p. 178; Sinclair, J. (1806). *A Collection of Papers, on the Subject of Athletic Exercises*, London: Blackader p. 10.

[4] *London Journal (1720)*, Saturday 16 January 1725 Issue CCLXXXVI.

[5] Egan, P. (1812). *Boxiana; or Sketches of Ancient and Modern Pugilism*, London: G. Smeeton pp. 403-404.

[6] Radford, P. (2001). *The Celebrated Captain Barclay: Sport, Money and Fame in Regency Britain*, London: Headline p. 2.

[7] Sinclair, J. (1806). *Collection of Papers, on the Subject of Athletic Exercises*, London: Blackader pp. 15, 27.

[8] Egan, P. (1823). *Sporting Anecdotes, Original and Selected*, New York: Johnstone and Van Norden Preface dated 1 January 1820 London pp. 97-98; Walker, D. (1836). *British Manly Exercises*, Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle pp. 283-284; *Penny Illustrated* 27 May 1876 p. 10.

[9] Walker, D. (1836). *British Manly Exercises*, Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle pp. 284-285.

throughout the training period. For his part, the trainer had to be intelligent and firm in his manner, lead by example, and report progress truthfully.[10] The expertise of these men was publically acknowledged. Sinclair (1807) noted the 'incredible perfection' which coaches had brought to the art of training,[11] and Dr. Thomas Graham (1827) thought the art of training had provided new information about the physical changes that could be made to the human body.[12] Barclay's programme was widely regarded as the most effective training regime[13] and Egan described him as an intuitive trainer whose detailed planning and scientific approach in researching and experimenting with respect to training factors would have 'reflected credit on any anatomist'.[14]

Sports coaching did not develop spontaneously in the nineteenth century, since practitioners invariably drew from, and elaborated on, existing practices and a body of accumulated knowledge that owed at least some of its substance to the practices of the Ancient world. Succeeding cadres of coaches never found it necessary to reinvent coaching practices which, throughout all periods, displayed common characteristics in how they were transmitted and subsequently sustained. Firstly, coaches generally emerged from within the activity as retired performers used the knowledge and practical skills developed during their own competitive lifetime to work with aspirants. As ex-performers, their own training methods, understanding of skills, and approaches to contests, formed the basis of their instructional techniques.

Secondly, from their experiences as performer and coach, and the mores of oral tradition, individuals amassed an assortment of coaching techniques and sport-specific practices related to skill development and physical preparation. Since no generation can be entirely exempt from contemporary influences coaches also experimented in applying emerging knowledge, intuitively accepting or rejecting appropriate material. Tradition notwithstanding, each coach, and his successors, thereby added something to the training process, particularly in periods when sport provided commercial opportunities when the incentive to innovate was particularly strong.

Thirdly, the operation of coaching practice replicated that of a craft or skilled trade which, from the earliest times, had been the basic unit of the labour process. In each craft, the worker was presumed to be the master of a body of traditional expertise which encompassed both knowledge and skill and the master-apprentice relationship at the heart of craft training engaged individuals from both inside and outside the family. The tacit nature of craft transmission involved the master modelling and the apprentice continually observing, a process described as 'stealing with the eyes'.[15] Oral traditions and experience, together with personal or observed innovations, provided coaches with a body of craft knowledge which, in contrast to professional knowledge or formal coach education, displayed all the features of a tacit pedagogy, the purpose of which was practical mastery. It has been argued that this inhibited innovation, since an apprentice was taught only to copy, but coaching craft requires flexible adaptation to constraints

[10] Dowling, F. L. (1841). *Fistiana or, The Oracle of the Ring,* London: Wm. Clemen, Jun. Bell's Life in London Editor pp. 91-92. Went to over twenty editions.
[11] Sinclair, J. (1807). *The Code of Health and Longevity; or, a Concise View of the Principles Calculated for the Preservation of Health and the Attainment of Long Life.* Edinburgh: Arch. Constable and Co. Volume II pp. 87-88.
[12] A Physician. (1827). *Sure Methods of Improving Health, and Prolonging Life; Or a Treatise on the Art of Living Long and Comfortably, by Regulating Diet and Regimen 2nd Edition*, London: The Author pp. 325-326, 379. Author was Dr. Thomas John Graham.
[13] Walker, D. (1836). *British Manly Exercises*, Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle pp. 280-281.
[14] Egan, P. (1823). *Sporting Anecdotes, Original and Selected*, New York: Johnstone and Van Norden Preface dated 1 January 1820 London pp. 9-22, 103-105.
[15] Gamble, J. (2001). Modelling the Invisible: The Pedagogy of Craft Apprenticeship, *Studies in Continuing Education* 23 (2) pp. 190-196.

and craftsmen have always been stimulated to experiment by external forces such as potential competitors, commercialisation, and superior technologies.[16]

Use of the word 'craft' does not imply incorporation into formalised guilds since craft knowledge was embedded within informal structures, communities of practice, created by coaches engaging in a process of collective learning which occurred between individuals in a mainly non-cognitive fashion. Skills and knowledge were reproduced across generations not through instruction, but through the granting of access to shared understandings.[17] James Parker, a provisions dealer and beerseller whose training was 'not to be surpassed by any professional of the present day'[18] had a well established training headquarters in Preston by 1851 where at one point he had nine pedestrians in his stable,[19] a number of them living with their trainer.[20] Analysis of *Bells Life* reports from the 1840s to the 1860s suggests that he trained at least eighty pedestrians during this period, including two of his sons, many of whom went on to become trainers themselves, an enduring feature of coaching communities. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sam Mussabini drew up training and racing schedules for the double Olympic champion Albert Hill and when Mussabini retired, Hill took over his coaching role and used his methods with Sydney Wooderson.[21] In 1918 Alfred Shrubb was appointed as the first professional athletics coach at Oxford University where he employed training ideas and practices developed by his own coach, Harry Andrews.[22]

For sports where finesse and skill were paramount many coaching communities reproduced the long-term family involvement observed in traditional crafts. Fencing professor William McTurk saw sons William and David both became fencing masters and golf professional James Paxton's son Peter also became a golf professional while other family members made golf clubs. The sons, grandsons and in-laws of tennis professor Edmund Tompkins were involved as tennis players, proprietors of tennis courts, and tennis instructors, at home and abroad, for over sixty years.[23] Frederick Beckwith used swimming baths and tank facilities in aquaria, circuses, and music halls, to organise entertainments featuring his children Jessie, Frederick, Willie, Agnes and Charles and later Lizzie and Bobby from his subsequent marriage to Elizabeth, a swimming teacher, as well as incorporating in-laws such as Emma, an ornamental swimmer.[24]

While the passing on of expertise through coaching communities was important it was by no means the only information source for coaches. As international competition increased many of them travelled abroad, gathering, distilling, and synthesising information as they went, while, at home, there was an increasing volume of relevant literature available, including training manuals produced by the coaches themselves. While these works discussed explicit knowledge related to training and diet, there was little attempt to address the more implicit aspect of their work, the practice of coaching itself, because it was assumed that such knowledge could only be achieved practically through experience, observation, and trial and error. Andrews noted, for example, that trainers had a range of experiential methods with which to assess an athlete's potential, although some men were especially gifted in this respect.[25] Many consistently successful coaches have been similarly intuitive, and intuition, an immediate insight made in the

[16] Clegg, A. (1977). Craftsmen and the Rise of Capitalism, *History Workshop* 4 p. 244.
[17] Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[18] *The Era* (London, England), Sunday, December 15, 1850 p. 4.
[19] *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 7 September 1851 p. 3.
[20] Census returns
[21] Moon, G. (1992). *Albert Hill: A Proper Perspective*, Gloucestershire: Greg Moon p. 29.
[22] Hadgraft R. (2004). *The Little Wonder: The Untold Story of Alfred Shrubb, World Champion Runner*, Westcliff-on-Sea: Desert Island Books pp. 255-283.
[23] Census records 1841–1901.
[24] For a more detailed biography see Day, D. (2008)
[25] Andrews, H. (1903) *Training for Athletics and General Health*, London: C. Arthur Pearson, p. 46.

absence of a conscious reasoning process, is a critical feature of the innovation process. After swimming professor Frederick Cavill emigrated to Australia in 1879, he and his family developed the front crawl stroke which emerged from their observation of local practices and a willingness to experiment and innovate.

Although systematic in their approach, these coaches were craftsmen rather than scientists, and they consistently described themselves as practical men. While this has been interpreted as meaning uneducated, it really represents the constant friction between theory and practice that affects almost every area of human endeavour and the tension between empirical 'scientific' knowledge and tacit 'craft' knowledge which intensified towards the end of the century as changes in the social context were accompanied by challenges to traditional coaching practice. The formation of amateur governing bodies of sport by a professional middle class, who valued experimental science, resulted in criticism of working class coaches for their lack of theoretical underpinning and their reliance on traditional maxims.[26] Amateurs were particularly concerned about the potential of intensive training to lead to staleness,[27] reflecting amateur assumptions that overtraining was the inevitable outcome of relying on professional coaches. Wilkinson advised sportsmen to avoid professional coaches and their 'stereotyped code of rules'[28] while others observed that professional training lore developed from experience was 'largely diluted with ignorance and absurdity.'[29] Sinclair argued that their practical knowledge was obstructive, considering nothing possible that had not been actually demonstrated, while theoretical knowledge was progressive, because it suggested new ideas along with modifications of existing practices.[30] The most prominent critics were members of the medical profession. Dr. Henry Hoole observed that while a few coaching practitioners had recorded their training methods a lack of scientific accuracy made their contributions worthless. Unfortunately, these 'shallow, uneducated and often dissolute' trainers had been allowed to determine the physiological content of training so it was no surprise that they left in their wake 'the shattered constitutions' of their athletes.[31]

Caution needs to be employed, however, in interpreting the impact of amateurism and emergent medical knowledge on coaching practices since traditional training methods remained popular[32] and coaches were still expected to be the master of all relevant coaching knowledge. The ability to control diet and develop fitness, the application of psychological techniques, the preparation of stimulants, massaging skills, medical treatments, talent identification, and the individualisation of training programmes, were all critical components in the coaching "toolbox". A more significant and lasting challenge came from the 1920s onwards as scientific developments and the growth of the Olympic Games stimulated the formalisation of the sports sciences leading eventually to the replacement of craft knowledge with a preference for explicit scientific knowledge and specialists. Scientists tested competitors at the 1928 Games and subsequently argued that not only were these investigations of theoretical and practical value but that those involved in sport should actively support an expansion in this kind of analysis.[33] Although they also proposed that these examinations should be obligatory at future

[26] *Cornhill Magazine* 1864 IX (50) pp. 220-229; January 1867 XV pp. 92-94.
[27] *Cornhill Magazine*, January 1867 XV pp. 98-101.
[28] Wilkinson, H. F. (1868). *Modern Athletics,* London: Warne pp. 71-79.
[29] Albermarle and Hillier, G. L. (1896). *Cycling*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. pp. 172-81.
[30] Sinclair, A. and Henry, W. (1893). *Swimming*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. pp. 27-31.
[31] Hoole, H. (M.D.) (1888). *The Science and Art of Training; A Handbook for Athletes*, London: Trübner and Co. Preface, p. 7.
[32] Nelson, A. (1924). *Practical Athletics and How to Train*, London: Pearson pp. 25-26.
[33] Official Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee. — The International Medical And Scientific Union of Physical Education Report on the Laboratory of Research Formed at Amsterdam, 1928. Signed: Dr. Paul Schenk, Professor of Medicine at the University of Marburg; A. Latarjet, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Lyon; Dr. J. Crighton Bramwell, Assistant Physician to the Royal Infirmary at Manchester; J. Buytendyk, Professor at the University of Groningue.

Games the association between sport science and coaches in the West remained essentially informal and unstructured for the next forty years, at which point scientists began to exert more influence. In 1971, Dr. Matthew Maetozo observed that coaches needed to acquire more theoretical knowledge of their work,[34] and two years later, Bloomfield was arguing that international level coaching was no longer a 'matter of techniques which are passed down from the coach to the player, who in turn becomes a coach.' While this 'apprentice-type education' had worked well in the past, so much science was involved in elite performance that a more formal education for coaches was now required.[35]

British attitudes, which had long remained suspicious of the seriousness of an approach regarded as American in nature, changed as the values of amateurism gave way to a greater pragmatism with respect to international sporting performance and the centralisation of sports sciences within the mindsets of British sports administrators has accelerated appreciably over the past three decades. This is reflected within the structures established to fund sport and to deliver coach education, especially in the current climate of professionalisation, and academic sports scientists now claim responsibility for many areas of sports preparation that were previously part of the traditional role of the coach. As a result traditional craft skills have become far less visible although recent studies suggest that communities of practice which prioritise experience over explicit knowledge have retained their potency. Some researchers have argued that an expert coach's 'eye' still remains the crucial, initial stage of talent identification,[36] while soccer players who graduate into coaching employ methods heavily influenced by their playing experiences, irrespective of their levels of formal qualification. Contemporary coaches consistently identify other coaches as their most important resource in terms of developing the skill of coaching, with trial and error or experimentation, and their own past experiences, as other key reference points,[37] with coaches preferring to consult others only if they had actually performed the skill or coached the skill themselves.[38] It seems that coaching communities still play a crucial role with Sage referring to the notion of 'organisational socialisation', where aspiring coaches, in addition to learning the technical, tactical, and physical aspects of the job, are inculcated with shared understandings regarding the coaching role thereby entering coaching already provided with comprehensive 'maps of meaning' from previous experiences as athletes.[39] In all these respects, despite social changes, and scientific

[34] Dr. Matthew G. MAETOZO, The Professional Preparation of Coaches for Olympic Sports Olympic Review March 1971 42 156-161 p.158

[35] Bloomfield, J. (1973). The Role, Scope and Development of Recreation in Australia, In Woodman, L. (1989). The Development of Coach Education in Australia, *Sporting Traditions* 5 (2) p. 206.

[36] Woodman, L. (1985). Talent Identification - is Competition Enough? *Sports Coach* 9 (1) pp. 49-57; Jarver, J. (1982). Do We Need Talent Identification? *Modern Athlete and Coach* 20 (1) pp. 7-8; Kozel, J. (1996). Talent Identification and Development in Germany, *Coaching Focus* 31 pp. 12-13;Starkes, J. L., Deakin, J., Allard, F., Hodges, N. & Hayes, A. (1996) Deliberate practice in sports: What is it anyway? In: *The road to excellence: The acquisition of expert performance in the arts and sciences,* ed. K. A. Ericsson. Erlbaum

[37] Irwin, G., Hanton, S. and Kerwin, D. (2004). Reflective Practice and the Origins of Elite Coaching Knowledge, *Reflective Practice* 5 (3) pp. 430-432, 439; Potrac, P., Jones, R. and Cushion, C. (2007). Understanding Power and the Coach's Role in Professional English Soccer: A Preliminary Investigation of Coach Behaviour, *Soccer and Society* 8 (1) pp. 33–49; Stewart, A. M. and Hopkins, W. G. (2000). Seasonal Training and Performance of Competitive Swimmers, *Journal of Sports Sciences* 18 pp. 880-881; Vallée, C. N. and Bloom, G. A. (2005). Building a Successful University Program: Key and Common Elements of Expert Coaches, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 17 p. 185.

[38] Gareth Irwin, Sheldon Hantona and David G. Kerwin Reflective practice and the origins of elite coaching knowledge Reflective Practice, Vol. 5, No. 3, October 2004 p. 436

[39] Sage, G. (1989). Becoming a High School Coach: From Playing Sport to Coaching, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 60 (1) pp. 81–92.

and technological advances, it appears that craft coaches of the Victorian and Edwardian periods have clear and recognisable links to twenty-first century coaching practice.