

Day, D. (2010) *The "Discerning Eye" of the Edwardian Coach: Identifying Talent and Preventing Staleness*. MMU Research Institute for Health & Social Change, 2010 Annual Conference, Thursday 1 July 2010

When Victorian and Edwardian coaches used the term 'science' they were generally referring to either technique or to systematic training regimes, and the longevity of traditional training practices, derived from experience, observations and intuition, emphasises their effectiveness even at a time when physiologists were increasingly investigating athletic preparation. Scientists studied athletes at the 1928 Olympics, concluding that all aspects of training should be subject to scientific scrutiny, and in Britain they became more involved over the next fifty years as the values of amateurism gave way to a greater pragmatism with respect to international sporting performance. This process has accelerated significantly over the past three decades, reinforced by the centralisation of sports physiology in coach education programmes and within the structures established to fund sport, resulting in physiologists assuming responsibility for traditional aspects of coaching practice. This paper highlights two areas in which physiology has embedded itself into the coaching milieu, talent identification and the prevention of overtraining, to argue that these issues, like many others, were familiar territory to Victorian and Edwardian coaches, and that it is time to re-establish the importance of the experience, innovation and intuition of craft coaches rather than relying on principles of scientific rationalism.