

“ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COACHES” DEBATE

Summary

This is a facilitated debate which enables participants to explore and reflect on the roles and responsibilities of individuals who provide sporting opportunities for young people. There are two case studies; the first “*Drugs in sport*” explores social drug use by an elite amateur boxer whilst the second, “*Family pressures*”, covers the phenomenon of pushy parents who go to great lengths to ensure their children succeed where they, themselves, have failed. Both case studies can be found [here](#). After the case studies have been discussed, a plenary session enables the wider roles and responsibilities of coaches within Society to be explored.

Session delivery

It is suggested that this session be run as a facilitated [debate](#), with the case studies being used to promote discussion between participants. Each case study is approximately 9 minutes long, with three discussion questions within it. The case study should be paused when a question appears to enable discussion of it within small groups (4-6 participants). A raconteur from each group can then briefly present their groups thoughts in a plenary session before restarting the case study. On completion of one or both case studies, the opinions and reflections of participants can be brought together with a discussion of the wider role of sports coaches in Society. If both case studies are utilised, the workshop should last approximately 90 minutes

The following are an overview of each section of both case studies and the questions raised within them, with the responses to each question from participants at session run in June 2012 given in red. These section overviews could be utilised to summarise the case study at that point before participants discuss the question posed. The end of session “wider implications” discussion questions and participant responses to these are provided after the two case studies.

[Case study 1: Drugs in sport](#)

Part 1: Tyler (the boxer). Boxing interests him, wants to be at least an elite amateur boxer in future but has started to use cannabis socially. Dad believes his son is focused on his goal whilst his coach thinks he has the potential to go far in the sport, to turn professional, but is concerned that now he is using drugs, it is going to hinder or prevent him achieving his full potential

Q1: Has Tyler done anything wrong?

- Illegal but common practice, social norm
- Should boxing & personal life be separate
- Training to be pro- new responsibilities, must accept restrictions that brings
- Peer pressure
- No role model
- Deed is going to lead to behaviour change
- Downtime is essential for a boxer to succeed
- Yes, wrong, illegal
- Yes, banned drug, enhances performance then definitely wrong
- No, way to relax, challenge his limited energy, perform better
- No, his choice, freedom
- If it is C, it's his choice
- Not wrong but its helping him to be a boxer.
- It's on banned list
- Not that harmful? Side effects?

Part 2: Dad thinks that the coach is getting involved with things that don't concern him; that boxing and Tyler's personal life should be separate. The coach views his life/lifestyle now as preparation for his future career; that choices and sacrifices have to be made now in order to achieve his future goals

Q2: What ethical responsibilities does Dad have?

- Should be considering best interests of child, helping him towards his goal
- Might be common practice but illegal so is he a good role model?
- Social pressures but what about other social pressures e.g. theft
- Lead Tyler to legally right direction then let him to make a choice
- Align life with Tyler's goals, Quit drugs
- Not great parenting?
- Provide support and guidance, kids don't know full picture
- Dads responsibility → coaches responsibility → own responsibility

Part 3: Tyler believes his coach is taking it too far, his drug taking doesn't affect anybody else and anyway, it is only a class B drug. The coach is considering his options. Should they have shared goal?

Q3: What should coach do?

- Has a duty of care
- Outside of sport so nothing
- Something that is effective without antagonising Tyler. What about warning others in gym?
- Ask him to think about his career, talent & health, encourage him to change current situation
- Ask Tyler's friends & teammates to persuade/support him
- Ask Tyler's parents to persuade/support him
- Group chat, with potential champion status highlighted to show what they can become. Also include parents
- Not brush it under carpet
- Protect reputation of club
- Both adults need to be given scientific guidance, examples, case studies of athletes who have been banned
- Consequences
- Only thing that would stop him would be if it affects his boxing

Post case study discussion questions:

What would you do as a coach & why?

- Word with Tyler
- Word with Dad
- Discuss with all gym without mentioning individuals
- Junior athlete education programme
- Coach athlete parent- need education, potential conflict of interest, pupil centred
- Class A child protection, expulsion
- Education process
- Be seen to be strict, reputation
- Sending out a clear message
- Just stop him & keep him out of the team. In China, no second chance
- If he is only aiming to box as a hobby, stop it. Not just breach of career but health & social effects
- Chat, look at what I want for my gym
- Hobby but still effects other boxers that are in gym
- Other drugs- keep a clean standard, group chat and potential, side chat about effects of drugs (education)

Would any of these be effective, what are you trying to achieve?

Should you stick to the boxing and not interfere with wider social aspects/personal life/values- Can you divorce your actions from these pressures?

- Doesn't show integrity to go against morals
- A business decision
- Right or responsibility to impart your values on your athletes?

Any difference in your response if it was a Class A drug or Tyler was only interested in boxing as a social activity?

What about if it was in an affluent rather than a socially deprived area?

- Still harmful & illegal
- Splitting life into 2 distinct categories with two sets of rules
- If it had been steroids, I would suggest to him not to do it
- Bad for health, if it is Class A stop it as soon as possible
- Is there a need to be obsessive? What about Hatton's cocaine use

Case study 2: Family pressures

Part 1: Mum recognises Rosie's (daughter) passion for gymnastics but is Mum principal driving force, are her goals same as Rosie's? Rosie's coach recognises her talent and potential whilst her Dad is concerned about the sacrifices Rosie is making and the effect her gymnastics career is having on the rest of the family. For her part, Rosie appreciates the sacrifices her mum is making "I'll thank her one day" but is she participating because she wants to or for the right reasons? "People say I'm good at it".

Q1: Is Mum doing the right thing?

- Need to push children occasionally to achieve but she being too pushy?
- Rosie may not see bigger picture
- Is mum living life through daughter, failed elite athlete, treating her like a Barbie doll?
- Need to ascertain what Rosie wants & keep asking, may change with time. Let her have timeout?
- Pushy mum
- Safe route
- Not forcing her
- Daughter doesn't love it
- Are her ambitions realistic?
- Yes: loves her, pushes her to do best. Very supportive. Makes sacrifices, effort & time
- No: other kids, living life through Rosie. Pressure on Rosie to keep competing. Not letting Rosie choose
- Mother's dream
- Thin line between support & pushing her too far

Part 2: Dad is separated from Mum. He has identified Rosie's lack of enthusiasm. Are his views one aspect of wider dysfunctional husband/wife/kids relationship and infighting particularly between him and his wife? Mum thinks Dad only views Rosie's gymnastics as a hobby and that he is never interested in sport. What is wrong with wanting your children to succeed? What about similarities between wanting them to succeed in sport versus academically? Rosie wants to please both should they put her in this situation?

Q2: What responsibilities does Rosie's coach have?

- Should be acting in Rosie's best interests, what child actually wants.
- Put her own personal/business interests aside
- Best development as an athlete
- Shouldn't be acting as go-between parents
- Observe how Rosie is at training

- Put athletes happiness first
- Gymnastics is an escape?
- Athlete- centric?
- Is coach aware of parent situation, should she even speak with them?
- Speak with Rosie, ask what she wants to be, recreation or competitive
- Yes speak- elite level, keep pushing & speak to Dad about her potential. Non elite: speak with mum & drop her expectations
- If she was more able, it's acceptable to push her
- Early specialisation

Part 3: Dad thinks the coach taking mums side. The coach recognises what Rosie needs to do to succeed but is concerned as to whether Rosie really wants this. Whatever she decides, she needs full support of both parents. Dad is thinking about what to do next. Is he mixing this up with the wider issues of divorce/separation?

Q3: *What should Rosies Dad do*

- Ascertain what she wants
- Sort out differences/lines of discussion with mother
- Involve coach with way forward once above sorted
- Re-establish how to communicate with Mum. Hatred is shining out, not speaking with Rosie. Think about bigger picture
- Not Dad's decision to stop Rosie, up to Rosie to decide

Closing discussion questions

What do you see as your role & responsibilities as a coach?

What are your boundaries to your actions?

Should you only be concerned with the sporting aspects or take a wider social role/responsibility?

- Do you own them? Can you dictate their entire life
- Protection from wider/external pressures?
- Wider community as well
- Depends on environment
- Contribution to "Big Society"
- Lack of skills /training to do this
- Responsibilities change depending on athlete environment, level & purpose
- Clear boundaries can be a message to the community
- Coaching philosophy
- Depends on your role as in-loco parents
- Depends on function of sport, fun, development
- Bringing out the best in any athlete
- Push harder outside of school
- Team sports are more ambiguous re success
- Whole person is more important
- Teacher versus coach
- Coaches job is to coach!