Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2014

Department:Educational & Counseling Psychology

Degree:PhD

Title:POSITIVE COACHING AND OLYMPIC SUCCESS: CASE STUDIES OF TRACK AND FIELD
OLYMPIC MEDALIST COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIPS

Competing at the Olympic Games is different than any other performance setting, and presents many challenges to the athlete and coach. This study explored the coach-athlete relationship with Olympic medal winning track and field athletes and their coaches. This qualitative study utilized case study design consisting of multiple interviews with each coach-athlete partnership representing an individual case. The participants consisted of three Olympic medalist athletes and their coaches. The athletes each had won a medal in track and field at the London 2012 Olympic Games. The findings identified the following three general themes: autonomy supportive environment, caring relationship, and mental strength. Based on the findings these three aspects of the coach-athlete relationship were important in the process of developing an Olympic medal winner. Each coach and athlete had developed a unique relationship that worked for each case in helping the athlete to be successful at the Olympic Games. While each case presents a unique relationship, the core methods and theories behind the approach of the coaches and athletes are similar. Consideration of these findings may provide meaningful opportunities for coaches and athletes in the future to learn and benefit from the experiences of these highly successful Olympic medal winning athletes and their coaches. These findings will help contribute to the body of research on Olympic athletes and coaches, which may help improve athlete and coaching education programs.