ABSTRACT

This study examines professional Australian coach and athlete perceptions of effective coaching. Rather than assess the ability or effectiveness of the coaches and teams involved, the purpose was to gather perceptions of what professional coaches and players believe it takes to be an effective coach. Given the broad range of tasks that fit under the auspice of coaching, an important question to address was ‘what’ a coach does in order to be considered effective. In addition, an understanding of ‘why’ and ‘how’ these factors are effective was also essential. These questions formed a starting point in order to find out what professional coaches do (including how they behave), and why players and coaches perceive certain coaching strategies to be effective.

This study employed a qualitative research design to identify perceptions about, and strategies of, effective coaching within the professional sport context. Interviews enabled participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, from their own point of view – a key feature of the present research. Observational data allowed me to view coaching behaviours and interactions with players in training and competition contexts. Using professional Australian coaches and players from cricket, rugby union and rugby league, 6 coaches and 25 players were interviewed while up to 16 coaches and 80 players were observed during 41 observation sessions at training and competition venues. The constant comparative method (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993; Côté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995b; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyse the observation and interview accounts. This enabled rich descriptions of what effective coaches do as well as providing
Findings from the current research indicated that an effective coach possesses specific personal characteristics, qualities and skills as well as a general philosophy or direction for the team. The effective coach uses their own unique leadership, player management, communication and planning skills to create and maintain the team environment to ensure that everyone involved with the team ‘works off the same page’. The interaction of all these features leads to the primary goal of player development, improvement in player performance and winning matches. This thesis identified key perceptions and applications of effective coaching based on Australian professional coach and player experiences.
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There has been an extraordinary range of people who have ‘worked’ through the Doctoral process with me and deserve acknowledgement in this section.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Development of the Thesis Topic

The United Nations (UN) described sport as a universal language that endows people with a focus for their energy, worthwhile goals and can teach the values of hard work, discipline and organisation. From the UN’s perspective, sport also provides a forum for people to develop skills in leadership whilst assisting with the management of essential lessons in life such as victory and defeat (UN, 2005, pp. 5-9). Few individuals escape contact with sport. It forms a significant part of our leisure, educational, economic and social experience (Lyle, 2002). Previous research has suggested that sport contributes to a sense of national pride and unity and is a service to the community (Moraes, 1996) with the coaches of elite sportswomen and men being highly visible to the public (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). As a result, coaches are very important figures, not just in the domain of sport, but also as role models, educators and leaders in society (Gilbert, 2002), whether working with young children or professional athletes.

Although there is an increasing scrutiny of professional sport teams by the media, there has been little academic research conducted in this area of sport. This is because college level and amateur sport teams are more easily accessible for research purposes, particularly in North America where the college sports systems are connected to academic institutions. Furthermore, the difference between first and last in professional sport is often minute, where the ‘recipe’ for success or advantage a team has over a rival team means that
some coaches are unwilling to share these details in the public forum of academic research. It is for these reasons that I decided to embark on a qualitative research project to gain as much insight as possible into professional sport in Australia.

This project began with a desire to learn more about what professional coaches do, and what makes coaches effective at what they do in their day-to-day roles. I had no interest in imposing concepts of effectiveness on the participants through survey research nor did I want to test a hypothesis or theoretical aspect of coaching in the professional arena. Rather than evaluate professional coaches for their effectiveness, I was interested in finding out perceptions of effective coaching based on the opinions of those involved in the professional sport context. I was most interested in seeing what would evolve from the participants’ own voices in relation to their direct experiences with coaches and coaching over time. It is for these reasons that I chose a qualitative methodology for this dissertation.

In order to provide a holistic account of effective coaching, it was necessary to include both coach and player perceptions of the concept; however, learning about what effective coaching involves requires more than just talking to sportspeople. As a result, I decided to observe coaches and players during training, meetings and competition settings in order to see where the rhetoric matched reality. I felt that the combination of these research strategies would enable a more comprehensive representation of effective coaching. The primary aim was to find out what, how and why certain qualities represent effective coaching. A secondary purpose was to provide additional knowledge to existing academic debates regarding effective coaching from an Australian perspective.
1.2 Sport and Coaching

According to Trikojus (2003), the root meaning of ‘coach’ is to transform a person from where they are to where they want to be. The manner in which a sport team operates may be the consequence of the “coach’s leadership style, morale of subordinates, group cohesiveness, performance level, maturity of the members, and size of the group” (Pratt & Eitzen, 1989, pp. 314-315). As such, a knowledge of public relations, learning readiness, pedagogy, psychology, training techniques and motor learning is often required (Gratto, 1983; Schempp et al., 2004). In addition to solidifying the empirical database of coach behaviours, Cushion and Jones (2001) recommended that research is needed to investigate the philosophies, beliefs and motives of coaches for behaving as they do. This would assist in developing a deeper understanding of ‘good’ coaching practices (Cushion & Jones, 2001). These features were considered when constructing this research project and reinforce the suitability of conducting qualitative research.

Effective coaching is a multifarious term described in many ways over time, yet, there is not one generally agreed definition. The definitions of effective coaching vary according to the theoretical perspective (e.g. psychological, sociological, educational, and economic), methodology (e.g. qualitative, quantitative), topic of research interest (e.g. leadership style, instructional behaviours), participants (e.g. athletes, coaches, administrators or a combination of these) and geographic locality of the research project (e.g. North America, Europe and Australia). The term ‘effective coaching’ or ‘coaching effectiveness’ has been associated with other expressions such as ‘successful’ (Sabock, 1973), ‘efficient’ (Webster, 1938), ‘expert’ (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995), ‘experienced’ (Matsakis, 2002), ‘good’ (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004), ‘quality’ (Cassidy et
al., 2004), ‘creative’ (Lynch, 2001) and ‘respected’ (Pyke, 1980). Lyle (2002) attempted to distinguish between the effective, expert, and successful coach and presents a broad representation of the effective coaching concept:

- **Effective** can be defined as having the intended effect, or achieving the desired purpose (e.g. performance goals in sport);
- **Expert** refers to a high level of effectiveness;
- **Success** relates to achievement of an objective and attainment such as winning a competition.

Lyle’s definition of ‘effective’ coaching emerged as a working definition for this project however the present research did not attempt to assess the ability or effectiveness of the coaches and teams involved. The purpose was to gather perceptions of what professional coaches and players believe it takes to be an effective coach in a professional sport context. The aim was not to provide a universal model or paradigm for effective coaching, nor to redefine the term ‘effective’ in relation to coaching, but to provide contextual examples of how coaches work in order to add to the existing literature on effective coaching.

### 1.3 Justification for the Research

In 1993, Woodman argued that the majority of research in coaching addressed the psychological, physiological, tactical and technical development of the athlete. Jones and Wallace (2005) support this notion. They claim that although such knowledge contributes to improved coaching and athletic performance, much of the coach’s world has been portrayed as a rationalistic, sequential process that can be easily interpreted and administered. This clearly ignores the wide range of significant social interactions between
athletes, coaches and managers that are particularly relevant to the coaching process. There
is scant research that examines the actual tasks and roles of coaches that are central to their
professional success (Salmela & Moraes, 2003) or effectiveness. With the increasingly
prominent status of professional coaches in today’s society, relevant research into their
behavioural patterns is required.

Coaches of all standards aim to emulate the tactics, training strategies and mindsets of professional coaches in order to achieve excellence in their given sport. As Gilbert & Trudel (2004) point out:

If the ultimate goal of research with coaches is to improve coaching practice, a logical place to start would be to study effective ... coaches. The study of effective coaches, whose tacit knowledge and general experience can then be shared with young developing coaches, is critical to the application of coaching science (p. 23).

In 2002, Gilbert noted that there was a shortage of research into coaching that has involved participants who work at a professional level – a situation highly prevalent within the Australian context. With the exception of Kellett’s (1999) study of 12 professional Australian Football League (AFL) coaches, most research on coaching occurred in the northern hemisphere and relied on a ‘convenience sample’ based on college or university coaches and club, school or youth coaches (Gilbert, 2002). If researchers are to understand and promote better coaching, we need to identify the behaviours of, and perceptions about, professional coaches consistently excelling in their fields (Bell, 1998). This justifies the need to carry out research within a professional sport context, which forms the main site for the current investigation.

The topic of effective coaching has featured in leadership research (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, Chelladurai, 1984), systematic observation of coach behaviour (Smoll, Smith,
Curtis, & Hunt, 1978; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Smith, Zane, Smoll, Coppel, 1983) and more recently qualitative research with expert coaches (see Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). Over time, research in coaching has typically utilised psychological or pedagogical frameworks as a basis for investigations. As Kahan (1999) argued, most sport psychologists paired investigation of observed coaching behaviour with expectancy theory or perceived coaching behaviour. Alternatively, sport pedagogists often link coaching behaviour to contextual variables or players’ training involvement (Kahan, 1999). In regards to this, Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) and Poczwardowski, Barott, and Peregy (2002) recommended that future investigations address coaches’ individual interpretations of their experiences through in-depth qualitative interviews.

Fasting and Pfister (2000) contend that literature concerning professional player perceptions and the experiences of coaches remains scarce. Similarly, Giaccobi, Roper, Whitney, & Butryn (2002) state that there clearly is a need to observe the behaviours and listen closely to the voices of professional coaches and players. This would assist in gaining a deeper and more complete understanding of the challenges faced by coaches (Giaccobi et al., 2002). Despite the fact that players are regularly exposed to coaching behaviours over a prolonged period, rarely are they asked for their insights into effective coaching.

The current research explores professional coach and player perceptions of effective coaching, closely scrutinising what coaches do (behaviours) and what coaches think (perceptions). According to Gilbert (2002), studies which combine multiple focus areas, such as coaching behaviours and cognition, provide a more in-depth and accurate portrait of coaches and the coaching process. The aim is to provide a detailed analysis of ‘effective coaching’ by observing, interviewing and reporting on professional coaching in Australia.
This project includes a unique range of professional coaches and players from Australian team sport contexts. Some recent coaching studies have emerged from Europe (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004) and North America (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) but none involves an entire sample of professional coaches and players from Australia. It is important to acknowledge that the values, attitudes and beliefs of participants from Australian sport context may differ to those from European and North American localities.

Many research projects on coaching have included participants from one-off events such as the Olympic Games and World Championships (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) rather than those who compete in an ongoing professional league competition. This is significant because the factors that influence coaching during a league season (i.e. a six month competition) compared to preparation for a World Championship event (i.e. competition may run over six days) may result in differing perceptions of effective coaching.

The coach has been utilised as a valued informant for research about effective coaching (Walsh, 2004), but there is a need to include the athlete’s perspective to provide a more complete understanding of this concept. A research study that includes both player and coach perceptions will generate a more holistic representation of effective coaching. In addition, research using in-depth qualitative methods has increased in recent years, yet few studies of coaching involve observations and interviews to gather data in a collective manner. The current project uses observations and interviews to gather contextual information regarding the topic of effective coaching from an Australian team sport setting. Research of this nature will contribute to the existing discussions regarding the behaviours and strategies of effective coaches. It is anticipated that the information gathered could be
used to educate aspiring professional coaches in their preparation for coaching in professional settings.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the concept of effective coaching based on the perceptions and strategies of professional sport coaches and players. A consequent objective was to compare notions of effective coaching across a variety of professional team sport settings. A further aim was to provide a contribution to the existing database on effective coaching. By studying coaches in the top echelon of Australian sport, and enlisting professional players to provide their insights, information can be provided to the sporting world regarding coaching from an Australian context. One central research question directed the research process:

*What are the strategies and behaviours considered effective by professional coaches and players from Australian team sports?*

This question formed a starting point for the project with five focus areas to support the research process:

1. How do professional coaches and players define effective coaching?
2. How do effective coaches interact with their players, assistant coaches and support staff?
3. How do effective coaches establish and maintain effective environments for player development?
4. What are the types of organisational tasks considered effective and how do effective coaches carry out these actions?
5. What type of interpersonal relationships do effective coaches develop with players and support staff, how are these relationships developed, and why are relationships important for effective coaching?

Qualitative research methods are often associated with the collection of the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of a phenomenon rather than the ‘what’, ‘how many’ and ‘when’ which are more
common in experimental, survey, and systematic observation research. Given the broad range of tasks that fit under the auspice of coaching, it is important initially to address ‘what’ a coach does to be considered effective. In addition to what the effective coach does, an understanding of ‘why’ and ‘how’ these factors are effective becomes important. These questions underpin the nature of the current research in its exploration of effective coaching within professional team sports in Australia. In order to gain a holistic perspective on these qualities, data were collected using qualitative observations and interviews.

1.5 Project Outline

This research project comprises eight chapters. This chapter provided an outline for the study including the justification for research using qualitative methods to generate data regarding perceptions of effective coaching form a professional sport sample. In Chapter 2, the literature pertinent to the topic of effective coaching is critically appraised. The methodology and procedures governing the data collection process, analytic techniques and ethical issues are described in Chapter 3. Chapters 4-7 explain the results of the present study in association with a discussion of previous research. These chapters focus on the major concepts that emerged from analysis of the data. The implications of this research, along with recommendations for future studies are part of Chapter 8.

1.6 Chapter Summary

Coaching plays an important role in the development of athletes. Over time, there has been considerable research conducted into what effective coaches do including how they behave during training and competition contexts. In recent times, there has been greater focus on the need to discover why and how certain coaching practices are effective.
Qualitative methodologies enable researchers to uncover not only contextual conditions in which coaches work, but also the perspectives that underpin the varied approaches to coaching. The present study extends previous research by exploring the notion of effective coaching amongst professional coaches and players from team sports in Australia.

The next chapter examines pertinent literature in relation to the topic of effective coaching and provides a critical appraisal of existing research.
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically analyses pertinent literature in relation to effective coaching. Studies examining coach leadership, coach behaviours, and the coaching process were sourced to gain a broader understanding of the psychological, sociological and pedagogical aspects of effective coaching. The aim is to provide an extensive analysis of the varied paths researchers have taken to examine the concepts of effective coaching.

The first section provides a brief historical overview of research into sports coaching while the second section focuses on effective coaching. The third section contains a critique of research on leadership including the coaching styles and personal characteristics, qualities and skills of effective coaches. In the next section, the review examines literature regarding pedagogical features of coaching with particular focus on the systematic observation of coaching behaviour. An assessment of the coaching process follows, with aspects of the coaching environment and research based on the interpersonal relationships of coaches and athletes identified. The final section summarises the key areas of effective coaching and highlights where pertinent gaps exist to justify the need for the current research.

2.1 An Overview of Research in Sports Coaching

Sport coaching is an integrated, interdependent and serial accumulation of purposeful activities designed to achieve a set of objectives centred on contributing to the success of the athlete (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004; Lyle, 2002; Webster, 1938). A highly complex craft, coaching brings together a vast array of skills encompassing virtually all
aspects of the personal, professional, academic and sporting lives of an individual or team (Launder, 1993). It involves an intricate web of decisions and strategies that surround a core function of instructing athletes in tactics, skills, daily responsibilities and the fundamentals of sport. Moreover, an often-stated maxim is that when a team is successful, it is due to the players and when it is unsuccessful, it is due to the coach. Because of these many factors, coaching, especially at the high-performance level, can be rewarding but it can also be stressful and demanding (Fasting & Pfister, 2000).

For over 80 years, there has been research into the coaching profession. In 1925, Griffith provided initial insight into the psychology and principles of coaching. Griffith’s research pioneered interest in the psychology of athletic competition (Fletcher, 2006), yet his legacy was followed by a considerable hiatus in academic research into coaching. While research was conducted intermittently throughout the 1960s, it was not until the late 1970s that research in this area began to flourish (see Chelladurai, & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai, & Saleh, 1980; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt, 1978). Over time, the nature of research into coaching evolved from a focus on coaching behaviours (Smith et al., 1977) and leadership styles (Chelladurai & Carron, 1978) in the 1970s. Coaching styles and athlete preferences for particular leadership styles became the focus of survey research in the 1980s (Terry, 1984; Terry, & Howe, 1984) whilst systematic observation of coach behaviour became the niche for research into coaching during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Lacy & Darst, 1984; Lacy & Martin, 1994; Segrave & Ciancio, 1990).

More recently, the coach’s personal characteristics (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Hardin, 1999) and the cognitive aspects of the coaching process rose to prominence with the aim of developing an appropriate framework for the coaching process (Côté, Salmela, & Russell,
These studies were associated with the growing trend toward researchers using qualitative interviews to investigate coaching from an in-depth perspective. The growth of mixed method research and studies conducted from a sociological perspective has also increased of late, with these projects interested in providing a holistic perspective on coaching (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002). The following sections of the literature review provide an overview of the various research approaches and findings relevant to the concept of effective coaching.

2.2 Terminology related to Effective Coaching

Effective coaching is an extremely broad topic. There is a diverse range of literature available in scholarly journals, scholarly texts, books and electronic sources (e.g. the internet) related to effective coaching. It would therefore be unwise to assume that the term ‘effective coaching’ merely refers to the sporting world. Within the literature available, ‘coaching’ encapsulates topics such as life coaching, psychological coaching, music, drama and management. Although Table 1 only includes definitions from the coaching context, the various terms provide a small sample of the way researchers described coaching ‘to a high standard’.
### Table 1: Definitions of Effective Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>The criterion for effectiveness in sport is the outcome – winning (Woodman, 1993). Effective can be defined as ‘having the intended effect’, or achieving the desired purpose such as performance goals in sport (Lyle, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>“The coach who considers himself (sic) efficient should be able to assess the ability of a pupil and decide upon which particular style will be best suited to that pupil’s physique and mental ability” (Webster, 1938, p.48).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>“Regardless of the level of scientific knowledge and the set of scientific methods, it is often the application of that knowledge and ... individual flair that separates the excellent practitioners from others” (Woodman, 1993, p. 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>The experienced coach is someone who has performed something for a long period (Matsakis, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Engage in 10 years or 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to reach high levels of expertise (Ericsson &amp; Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, &amp; Tesch-Römer, 1993).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Undergraduate university students believe that ‘good’ coaches possess instrumental characteristics (including practical and technical skills such as the ability to teach, knowledge about skills, punctuality) and intrinsic characteristics (including good sense of humour, the ability to motivate, patience and open-mindedness) (Cassidy, Jones, &amp; Potrac, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Quality sports coaches commonly engage in practices usually associated with teaching such as reflection, feedback and instructional methods (Cassidy et al., 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected</td>
<td>Characteristics of the respected coach - knowledge; organisation; frankness; a pleasing personality (Pyke, 1980).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>A successful coach is one who allows for maximum individual development and enables athletes to learn (Kidman &amp; Hanrahan, 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term ‘effective coaching’ is problematic as there has been no generically accepted definition amongst the academic or sport communities. In its simplest form, coaching effectiveness often refers to a team or individual’s win-loss record (Woodman, 1993). However, the multifaceted nature of the term demands that features such as athlete-
coach relationships, team harmony, and level of pedagogical skills defines the effective coach (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2003; Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin, 2004). Importantly, the majority of these features also relate to several social and psychological skills of the coach as opposed to merely incorporating the win-loss record.

The definitions of effective coaching vary greatly according to the methodology and topic of research interest. The implementation of qualitative research enables participants to describe their perceptions of effective coaching based on personal experiences. Additionally, the use of coaches and players who are involved in the highest level of their respective sports helps provide information within a context that is rarely included in academic research. Rather than provide a universal definition, the purpose of the current research is to collect perceptions of what professional coaches and players believe it takes to be an effective coach in a professional sport context.

2.3 Leadership and Coaching

Previous research suggests that the primary task for the coach is to help athletes achieve their best possible level of performance (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Gerdes & Conn, 2001; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Woodman, 1993). Early leadership models in the field of sports coaching assisted researchers by providing frameworks for studying coach and athlete interactions (Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Smoll, & Smith, 1989; Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt, 1978) and the coach’s leadership behaviour (Chelladurai, 1984; 1990; Chelladurai, & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1989; Chelladurai, & Saleh, 1978, 1980). In recent times, leadership research focused on the personal characteristics and philosophical foundations of effective coaches (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). The following section examines early models of coaching leadership including the frequently
cited Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and Mediational Model of Leadership (MM) (Smoll & Smith, 1984, cited in Smoll & Smith, 1989, p. 1534). Following this are some examples of more recent research that applied survey or interview techniques to examine leadership and effective coaching.

### 2.3.1 The Multidimensional-Model of Leadership

In the 1970s, Chelladurai and colleagues established one of the original models of coaching, based on management and leadership theories (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). As one of the pioneers of research into a coach’s leadership behaviour, Chelladurai established a multidimensional model that displayed the components of leadership effectiveness (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: The Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 1990, p. 330)](image)

In the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML), Chelladurai posited that group performance and member satisfaction are a function of the interactive effects of the three
states of leader behaviour – required, preferred and actual. Three antecedents, including characteristics of the situation, the leader, and the group members influence the three states of leadership behaviour (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

Required Leader Behaviour refers to the way a leader behaves in response to the constraints of the situational and member characteristics (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978). Leader behaviour preferred by members is largely a function of the individual characteristics of group members. Additionally, situational characteristics and organisational expectations will influence preferred leadership behaviour (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978). Actual leader behaviours are determined by the characteristics of the leader, including the leader’s personality, ability and experience (Walsh, 2004). Behaviours preferred by subordinates and the contextual factors of the situation will also have some influence on the leader’s actual behaviour (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978).

Performance and satisfaction, described as the most salient consequences for athletes (Chelladurai & Carron, 1978), are the interrelated outcomes of congruence among required, actual and preferred leader behaviour. Perhaps the most pertinent information to emerge from this research and model is that the most effective coaches are able to modify their actions by incorporating the preferred and required behaviours into how they actually behaved.

Chelladurai & Saleh (1980) created the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) to measure constructs of the MML through the five dimensions of training and instruction, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support behaviour and positive feedback. The LSS examines athletes’ perceptions and preferences for coach behaviour as well as the coaches’
perceptions of their own behaviours. Early studies on leadership style indicated that players from team sports preferred an autocratic coaching style (Terry, 1984). Using the LSS in a study on elite university athletes competing at Universiade ‘83, Terry (1984) discovered that athletes in team sports preferred leader behaviours that are training oriented, autocratic and rewarding whilst individual sport athletes preferred more democratic and social support behaviours. It is conceivable that the greater number of people involved with team sports required more direction from coaches and a disciplined approach to manage teams effectively.

The Terry (1984) research also revealed that males preferred more autocratic behaviour than females. This is peculiar because recent Australian based research utilising the LSS revealed an overwhelmingly high level of similarity in the coaching preferences of football (Australian Rules Football or AFL), netball and basketball players (Sherman, Fuller & Speed, 2000, p.389). After administering the LSS to 317 athletes (AFL n=110; Netball n=88; Basketball n=114), Sherman et al. found that positive feedback, training and instruction and democratic behaviour are preferred coaching behaviours and that social support and autocratic behaviour are not preferred. Perhaps this reflects a certain mentality of Australian sports people that differ from others in the international community.

Another reason for the differences is that there has been a significant lapse in time between the Terry (1984) and Sherman et al. (2000) research. During this period, many sports have become professional and full-time athletes may prefer different coaching styles to those of the amateur era. Overall, Sherman et al. (2000) suggest that to achieve improvement in athletic performance, it may be necessary for the coach to engage in coaching behaviours to which the athlete is receptive. Hence, it is important for the coach to
be aware of the coaching preferences of his or her athletes in order to provide satisfactory experiences and improve athletic performance (Sherman et al., 2000).

The MML and LSS have been used to identify athlete preferences for leadership styles and how coaches adapt behaviours based on gender, age, experience and maturity (e.g. Dwyer & Fischer, 1988, 1990; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Sherman et al., 2000). However, as Walsh (2004) points out, the LSS does not take into account the time of season or what happened in previous games as part of the contextual setting in which the coaching takes place. Furthermore, d’Arripe-Longueville, Fournier and Dubois (1998) assert that the MML did not analyse how and why coaches and athletes interact. In order to address some of the inconsistencies of the LSS, Jambor and Zhang (1997) and Zhang, Jensen, and Mann (1997) devised and implemented the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS).

The RLSS is an alternative measure of leadership in sport and includes an additional factor to the LSS called ‘situational consideration’. This factor describes how coaches set up and reach individual goals by carrying out the appropriate coaching behaviours based on the different maturity and skill level of the athlete. Using the RLSS, Jambor and Zhang (1997) examined the leadership behaviours of 162 high school and college coaches. The results showed that there were no significant gender differences in preferences for leadership however, significant differences existed between the different levels of coaching. In a recent study with student-athletes, Beam, Serwatka, and Wilson (2004) used the RLSS to compare gender, competition level, task dependence, and task variability on leadership preferences. Beam et al. (2004) showed that male participants preferred autocratic and social support behaviours while their female counterparts favoured situational consideration, training and instruction behaviours. Interestingly, Beam et al. (2004) discovered that individual sport
athletes desired social support and democratic behaviours, situational consideration, and positive feedback more than their team sport counterparts did. These findings support the results from the Terry (1984) research where differences existed between the preferences of team and individual sport participants.

Although the RLSS provides additional consideration for situational characteristics, there may be further coaching variables not listed on the questionnaire that are important criteria for sport participants. For example, one team may have an 18-year-old rookie playing alongside a 30-year-old veteran. Previous studies have not accounted for these intra-team differences. Qualitative interviews may provide an in-depth understanding of the individual differences that exist regarding preferences for coaching style or leadership behaviour. To complement the leadership information derived from studies using the LSS or RLSS, qualitative observations and interviews could be used to provide the contextual information of instances where leadership style relates to actual performance over time. Another consideration is that this style of research focuses solely on one element of the coaching process – leadership. A broader perspective of effective coaching was required in the current research, which could not be achieved through survey research utilising either the LSS or RLSS.

2.3.2 The Mediational Model of Leadership

In 1978, Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt carried out some pioneering research that measured the effect of coaching behaviour on youth sport participants. This research stemmed from a unique research paradigm that examined adult leadership in youth sport in order to specify the individual differences, situational factors and cognitive processes assumed to mediate coaching behaviours and athlete reactions. Smoll et al. (1978)
developed the Mediational Model of Leadership (MM) to help define what coaches do, how coach behaviours are perceived and recalled by their players, and children’s attitudinal responses to the total situation. In 1989, Smoll and Smith extended their previous research on coach-athlete relationships with the intent of improving their theoretical model and research relating to leadership behaviours in youth sport (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2: A Model of Adult Leadership Behaviours in Sport and Hypothesised Relationships among Situational, Cognitive, Behavioural and Individual Difference Variables (Smoll & Smith, 1984, cited in Smoll & Smith, 1989, p. 1534).]
The major components of the MM – coach behaviours, player perceptions and recall, and players’ evaluative reactions – are influenced by (a) situational factors, (b) the coach’s cognitive perceptions of the players and (c) the individual characteristics of both the coach and athlete. Some of the individual characteristics that influence coaching behaviours and athlete perceptions include previous athletic experiences, and personality and attitudinal variables. Situational variables influencing coach-athlete relationships are the nature of the sport, level of competition and previous success or failure. While Chelladurai and Reimer (1998) argue that many parts of the 1989 MM have not been empirically tested, one of the strengths of the MM is that it highlights the causal relationships concerning the dynamics of leader-subordinate-situational interactions. This means that various sport contexts can be accounted for when evaluating coach-athlete interactions.

In 1978, Smith et al. conducted a field study to establish relationships between coaching behaviours and several player variables specified in the MM. They carried out 202 observations of 51 male Little League Baseball coaches during games while also generating a self-report questionnaire to assess the coaches’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of their own behaviours. This required coaches to describe and give examples of coach behaviours on a 7-point scale regarding how often they engaged in the situations described. Five hundred and forty-two youth sport players were interviewed at the end-of-season to elicit perceptions about their coach’s behaviour and their attitudes toward their coaches during sport performance. The findings from this research demonstrated that coaches’ perceptions of their own behaviour were different from how their players perceived them. This was important for player enjoyment because if the coach’s actual behaviour did not correlate with the players’ preferred behaviour, there was potential for dissatisfaction amongst the
player group. This emphasised the value of considering player perceptions when attempting to determine factors of effective coaching.

One of the main developments from the MM is the creation of a systematic observation guide called the Coaching Behaviour Assessment System (CBAS). This is used to measure coaching behaviour during training and provided the foundation for research into effective coaching behaviours within the youth sport setting during the 1980s and 1990s. The results from studies that conducted research using the CBAS and other systematic observation schedules can be found in the Coach Behaviour section of this chapter (p. 37).

2.3.3 Coaches as Facilitators

The ability to extract detailed information regarding coach and athlete opinions through qualitative interviews is a major advantage for research in the field of coaching. While research using qualitative methodology to investigate sport coaching has increased in recent times, little is currently known about the working behaviours of professional coaches in Australia. In 1999, Kellett produced one of the only studies in an Australian context that focused on the professional sport environment. She conducted interviews with 12 Australian Rules Football (AFL) head coaches in order to discover the coaches’ perspectives on their role, leadership, and the development of athletes. Rather than describe themselves as ‘leaders’, coaches in this study preferred to describe their roles as ‘facilitators’. The coaches believed they had a responsibility to: (a) empower and facilitate leadership; (b) communicate effectively with players and support staff; (c) plan in a flexible manner in consultation with support staff and players; and (d) provide a supportive environment for players.
The head coaches in the Kellett (1999) research felt they should oversee the entire coaching process, utilising input from both players and support staff when making plans and strategic decisions. These coaches facilitated and empowered support staff and athletes in order to achieve player development. This occurred when coaches delegated responsibilities to others to execute specific duties in their areas of expertise. The coaches in Kellett’s research highlighted their role and understanding of their job with regards to social skills and technical knowledge. According to Kellett (1999), the core activities that these coaches considered necessary for player development – communication, counselling, empowering others – are fundamentally social in nature. Empowering others, communication, counselling and group facilitation nurtured the supportive environment in which the athletes and coaches worked. In Kellett’s study, coaches, support staff and athletes established predetermined guidelines that were structured yet flexible to change where necessary.

This is a seemingly player-centred approach to coaching where responsibility is primarily directed away from the head coach. What Kellett (1999) did not describe in detail is whether coaches felt this type of leadership strategy was an effective form of coaching. The results demonstrate that this approach was merely the type of leadership approach employed with their respective teams. Perhaps asking coaches direct questions regarding the benefits of such an approach and the inclusion of player perceptions would provide additional data in this area.

Although Kellett’s study is useful for identifying certain strategies that coaches used to facilitate athlete development, the study included a sample of coaches from only one professional sport in Australia. Furthermore, only head coaches were involved in the
research, which neglects the important views of assistant coaches and players in relation to athlete development. Another point to consider was that no observational data was included in the Kellett (1999) research which meant that the results outlined only what head coaches said they do. This limitation means the study failed to provide observational evidence to confirm that the coaches act as they say they do. To obtain a more holistic overview of effective coaching in Australia, research that includes observations and interviews with coaches and players from other professional sports competitions in Australia is required.

### 2.3.3.1 Empowerment

The concepts of facilitation and empowerment noted by Kellett (1999) are not identified as part of the autocratic or democratic leadership styles in research using the LSS or RLSS inventories. Recent research with professional (Kidman, 2001) and college level (Ravizza, 2002) coaches demonstrates that when coaches employ the empowerment approach, players are encouraged to think, make choices and take ownership of their decisions. Kidman (2001) and Ravizza (2002) argue that empowerment emphasises a player-centred approach to learning and development where coaches asked more questions instead of constantly telling players what to do. It has been suggested that when a coach has total control and players have little input into the values and processes of a team, players become robotic in their actions and thinking (Kidman, 2001). These features are not desirable in sports which require players to react to game situations without coach instruction.

The concept of empowerment also arose in research conducted with expert college coaches from Canada (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and international team and individual sport
coaches (Potrac, 2004). In the Vallée and Bloom research, coaches purposely invested in confidence-building strategies, enhancing maturity, and creating a sense of ownership amongst their athletes by requesting input from the players and promoting their on-court-leadership in basketball or volleyball matches. Furthermore, coaches viewed support staff as valuable sources of help, encouragement and insight both on and off the court to encourage the players’ growth within the team. These findings reflect results from Potrac (2004) who interviewed elite coaches from Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The coaches in the Potrac (2004) research recognised that it was important to train athletes to think independently, prepare them for on field responsibility, and encourage decision-making in order to enhance their individual understanding of the game. Potrac (2004) reported that ultimately, these coaches hoped players would take responsibility for their actions and learn to respond appropriately on the pitch in all situations. Despite the positive intentions of the empowerment approach, none of these studies included players in the sample to confirm the benefits of such an approach.

While Kidman (2001) argues that empowerment does not suggest coaches should give full responsibility to athletes but rather exercises their leadership by guiding athletes toward decision-making, there has been recent criticism of player empowerment. For example, Jones and Standage (2006) point out that many questions continue to exist as to whether coaches can realistically share their leadership function with athletes. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2004) suggest that the empowerment approach has left substantial dimensions of the coach’s work and athlete roles as implicit, unsaid or invisible.

In a recent book chapter about coach power in elite level sport, Potrac (2004) claims that while coaches often provide opportunities for athletes to have an input, ultimately,
they do not really enact what athletes suggest given the coaches make the final decisions.

For example, Lois Muir (New Zealand Women’s basketball coach) stated that there were situations in which she gave players the impression she was listening attentively to their input, yet in reality she was merely “waiting for them to finish because I was going to do my own thing anyway” (Potrac, 2004, p. 161). This raises concerns not only about how much input players really have but also the integrity of the coaches’ intentions in utilising player ideas.

In some cases, players may be ill equipped to deal with the additional responsibilities delegated to them if coaching staff do not provide a clear delineation of role requirements and expectations. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2004) assert that one other negative point associated with this form of leadership occurs if coaches assume that athletes will adhere to the principles of empowerment – this may not always be the case. If for example, some players are not committed to the team’s ethos which is based on an empowerment approach, this may cause significant issues for team cohesion. As research of the empowerment approach is only a more recent phenomenon, further qualitative studies are needed to unpack the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, particularly at the level of professional sport.

2.3.4 Coaches as Orchestrators

In 2005, Jones and Wallace proposed an alternative theoretical paradigm for the coaching process. They argued that the rationalistic assumptions on which the dominant conceptions of the coaching process currently rest are unrealistic and relatively limited in their potential for guiding practitioners. Hence, they developed a framework of coaching based on the metaphor of orchestration. Jones and Wallace (2005, 2006) suggest that
coaches should be seen as orchestrators who form networks with other senior leaders (e.g. assistant coaches, senior players) that are based at different levels. Specifically, this concept promotes a sense of interrelatedness amongst the head coach and his support staff (assistant coaches, medical and administrative staff).

According to this theory, coaches base their actions on their core-belief systems and a set course that has been carefully considered in advance. Jones et al. (2004) support this idea, claiming that in order to be successful, coaches need to develop their own personal approach to coaching rather than imitate someone else. Steering the coaching process through orchestration requires flexibility in planning and coaching practice, assigning specific roles and responsibilities to individuals within the team structure, and providing extensive in-depth feedback to all involved. Unobtrusive coaching is a major feature, where encouragement and incentives are used to channel athlete performance. Furthermore, the development of positive and respectful working relationship with athletes forms an essential component to creating an optimal learning environment (Jones & Wallace, 2005; 2006).

Lyle (2002) claimed that in order to generate and regulate the coaching process, it is necessary to develop a flexible model of expectations, based on the immediate status of the team and identified performance targets. This need for flexibility in the coaching process is consistent with ‘orchestration’ as this type of leadership attempts to cope with the complexity of the coaching situation. In fact, Jones and Wallace argue that coaches should focus on learning how to cope with “relative uncontrollability, incomprehensibility, contradictory values and novelty as parts of everyday coaching life” (2005, p. 128).
Jones and Wallace (2005, 2006) provide an exciting and alternative framework for coaching and are the first authors to apply the theory of orchestration to coaching. Depicting the coach as an orchestrator may be highly applicable to the contemporary role of a head coach in today’s professional sport environment. There are some similarities with Kellett’s (1999) study in that this framework encourages coaches to empower assistant coaches and players with the head coach acting in a similar manner to the facilitator role described in Kellett’s project. However, the Jones and Wallace (2005, 2006) suggestions have not been empirically tested, thus, fieldwork is necessary to understand how relevant this concept is to coaching. Additionally, it seems that part of the focus of this paradigm is to educate coaches about the complex realities and ambiguities that exist within coaching, yet Jones and Wallace do not provide specific examples of these features. Moreover, there was no mention of how the coach decides on what roles to delegate to the relevant assistant coaches, support staff and senior team players. As a result, research with this framework is required before judgement can be passed as to whether ‘orchestration’ fits as a relevant leadership approach within a professional coaching environment.

2.4 Summary of Leadership and Coaching

Early models of coaching were created to help understand coach and athlete interactions (MM) and the coach’s leadership behaviour (MML) directed the early stages of research in coaching. Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) and Côté (1998) point out that these models do not provide an accurate conceptual framework of all the variables involved in coaching, thereby limiting the process of developing an overall model of how and why coaches work as they do. Moreover, these leadership models only described one
component of the coaching process (Bloom, 1996a; Walsh, 2004) neglecting the importance of other skills required to organise the training and competition environment.

These early leadership models also focused on the traditional concepts of leadership such as democratic, social support or autocratic coaches and did not account for the contemporary perspectives of leadership regarding facilitation, empowerment or orchestration. The concepts of ‘empowerment’ and ‘orchestration’ provided contemporary frameworks for investigating leadership in sport. The case for athlete empowerment in professional sports contexts is growing with evidence from Australia (Kellett, 1999), New Zealand (Kidman, 2001; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004) and Great Britain (Jones et al., 2004) of coaches facilitating player development through the empowerment approach. While the concept of orchestration (Jones & Wallace, 2005, 2006) provides a new perspective for coach leadership, further empirical research is required to employ the proposed strategies within a sports context.

2.5 Personal Characteristics, Qualities and Skills of Effective Coaches

Over time, coaches, players, and academics have regularly provided anecdotal commentary regarding the qualities, skills and characteristics of effective, quality, good, expert or successful coaches. As early as 1938, Webster compiled a book called Coaching and Care of Athletes that was the outcome of more than 40 years of practical experience in track and field. He noted that all the great coaches have one common characteristic – “an all abounding confidence in themselves” (p. 52). Webster also suggested that coaches must be knowledgeable about all aspects of training and competition, flexible, open minded and innovative. Finally, Webster (1938) believed that no matter whether the coach is amateur or professional, they must possess patience, perseverance and a willingness to learn. Although
Webster’s comments were not based on scientific research, researchers who studied high school, college and international coaches using qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, detail many of the qualities identified by him.

In research that examined the views of American high school athletes and coaches, Kuga (1993) evaluated the importance of various coaching competencies. Fifty coaches and 69 athletes from men’s basketball and baseball and women’s basketball and softball completed a questionnaire designed to elicit perceptions of effective coaching performance. The results reveal that coaching competencies such as the ability to translate knowledge of the rules and regulations to players as well as organise and supervise safe and efficient practices are equally important to the coach’s ability to develop relationships and manage the general welfare and disciplinary problems of the team. This shows that at a high school level, communication, organisation and management skills were closely linked to perceptions of effective coaching.

In a study of the qualities that American National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic directors (n=147) look for when hiring coaches, Siegel and Brantle (2001) reveal that win-loss records, recruitment skills, and the possession of people skills are what athletic directors valued most. Unlike professions in which a course of theoretical study and practical experiences are valued and required for admission, these athletic directors viewed the latter only as tangential to developing competent practitioners. For the participants in this research, previous coaching successes were the foremost of their interests. It is intriguing that Siegel and Brantle (2001) conclude that a stringent focus on win-loss records is an important quality for hiring coaches. This suggests that even at the semi-professional level, perceived coach effectiveness may be highly correlated to their winning percentage.
In another study at the NCAA level, Gorney and Ness (2000) wanted to identify what dimensions to use when assessing the athletic head coach’s effectiveness. Thirty-four full-time head coaches, athletic directors and student-athletes emphasised that interpersonal and leadership skills, knowledge of the rules and regulations of NCAA and other governing bodies are key measures for a coach’s effectiveness at this level. These results demonstrate the value of interpersonal and leadership skills such as management techniques, organisational skills and goal setting strategies. This provides somewhat of a contrast to the focus on winning in research conducted with NCAA administrators (Siegel & Brantle, 2001). Even though win-loss record featured as part of the survey administered in each study, perhaps the different sample provides the reason for different views regarding effective coach qualities at this level. The inclusion of players and coaches in the Gorney and Ness (2000) study may have lead to a greater focus on the processes of coaching and the requisite characteristics or skills required to achieve the outcomes rather than concentrating purely on the results as in the Siegel and Brantle (2001) research.

A number of researchers have conducted studies about international level coaches (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Fasting & Pfister, 2000; Moser, 1992; Rockwell, 1994). For example, Moser (1992) examined the Norwegian national orienteering team’s perspectives relating to the characteristics of an effective coach. An 18 item ranking scale was employed where athletes (n=46) and coaches (n=10) ranked preferential coaching behaviours from 1 (most important) – 18 (least important). The results show that athletes gave more priority to technical related aspects (e.g. knowledge of the sport, planning and arranging training; developing a good atmosphere amongst the training group) whilst the coaches focused on the need for good psychological qualities and abilities (e.g. being psychologically stable,
confident and aware of personal strengths and weaknesses). In a similar study, Rockwell (1994) compiled a comprehensive list pertaining to elite coach characteristics by surveying 32 Australian Olympic coaches from the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Rockwell revealed that coaches were very knowledgeable regarding the rules, tactics and strategies of their sports and planned extensively for training. Coaches in this study claimed to make the majority of decisions concerning their athletes whilst also providing athletes with necessary motivation and reinforcement.

Each of these studies with national team sport coaches reveals specific qualities and skills for coaching in an effective manner. What is not clear is whether coaches were ineffective if they did not possess these characteristics. In fact, rarely has previous research considered both the effective and ineffective qualities of effective coaches within the one research project. This is one area where qualitative methods could provide a more in-depth insight into not only what characteristics are essential for coaches but also why certain characteristics are effective or ineffective.

Through semi-structured interviews with 38 elite female football (soccer) players from Germany, Norway, Sweden and the USA, Fasting and Pfister (2000) carried out one of the only studies that considers both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ personal characteristics of coaches. They found that good coaches attempt to develop positive social relations between the coach and the team. They did this by treating players seriously, and by being fair and decisive with their decision-making. Coaches took a personal interest in the athletes as human beings through their awareness, understanding and tolerance of their personal lives. Good coaches possess the relevant qualifications and are therefore knowledgeable, honest and effective communicators, who prepare and conduct effective training sessions.
Alternatively, Fasting and Pfister (2000) suggest that bad coaches have deficient qualifications and communication skills, are overly critical, and lack social competence. Bad coaches do not consider the players’ personal lives and conduct boring practices. Ultimately, this results in bad relationships between the coach and the team and in the end, many conflicts. These results demonstrate that athletes possess individual preferences regarding effective coach characteristics. They also highlight that for coaches to be perceived as effective, it is important for them to meet the individual needs of the athletes. Including athletes as part of the sample (as in Fasting and Pfister, 2000) adds to the pre-existing and extensive database of coach characteristics identified by the coaches themselves. As Fasting and Pfister used only European and American female football (soccer) players in their research, the results may not be wholly applicable to the current male Australian professional sport setting. It would therefore be expedient to discover what professional male athletes perceive as effective coaching in the Australian sport context.

In order to deepen the understanding of coach knowledge, characteristics and career development, Bloom and Salmela (2000) conducted 16 interviews with expert Canadian team sport coaches (basketball n=6; field hockey n=3; ice hockey n=4; volleyball n=3). Their analysis illustrates that expert coaches are fervently devoted to their involvement in sport exemplified by a persistent desire for personal growth and learning. The coaches’ personal approach to coaching included a number of features such as a willingness to work hard, communicate effectively, empathise with players, develop an individualised coaching style, have fun during training and attempt to be a good teacher.

In a recent qualitative project with five expert female coaches from Canadian university basketball and volleyball teams, Vallée and Bloom (2005) found that these
coaches possess certain personal characteristics that contributed significantly to the success of the programs they had developed. They noted that coaches were open-minded, caring, composed and genuinely interested in their athletes. The coaches in the Vallée and Bloom (2005) study attempted to create an environment that encouraged excellence, allowed athletes to be empowered in order to learn and grow to reach their potential. These coaches were committed, passionate and motivated about coaching and set high standards for their players, particularly in relation to trust, respect, communication and organisation. The results from the Bloom and Salmela (2000) and the Vallée and Bloom (2005) research demonstrate that expert coaches possess certain personal characteristics, which enable them to develop positive work environments. Similar research within Australian team sport context would be worthwhile, particularly as there is limited evidence from the professional setting.

Despite the different contexts investigated, various research projects with coaches, athletes and administrators from youth, high school, college and international sport settings have generally agreed on the features that characterise an effective, expert or successful coach. Table 2 summarises some of the common qualities, characteristics and skills from these research contexts:
Table 2: Agreed Characteristics, Qualities and Skills of Effective Coaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of their sport</td>
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<td>Willingness to learn from and share information with others</td>
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<td>Retain a high commitment to continued learning</td>
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<td>Innovative and creative</td>
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<td>Possess an all-embracing interest in the subject and are extremely passionate</td>
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<td>Possess highly perceptive and superior problem solving skills</td>
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<td>Exhibit automaticity during analysis and instruction</td>
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<td>Well-developed self-monitoring skills</td>
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<td>Unique coaching style</td>
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<td>Possess excellent communication skills</td>
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<td>Have the ability to teach complex skills in a unique and personalised manner</td>
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<td>to suit the individual needs of the athlete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish an environment in which mutual respect is commonplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is interested in the holistic development of the athlete and therefore attempts</td>
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<tr>
<td>to develop the athlete both on and off the field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deal with each athlete individually, consistently and personably</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely hard working and determined to succeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patient, kind, and honest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possess high moral and ethical standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possess the relevant qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exude leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open minded, flexible and willing to adapt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Summary of Personal Characteristics, Qualities and Skills

There is a wealth of opinions regarding the personal characteristics of coaches at high school, college and elite levels, however, there have been few studies that examine the personal qualities of professional coaches, particularly within the Australian sports context. The current research attempts to add to the existing database of effective coach characteristics and provide contextual examples of how these characteristics influence coach behaviour and player development at the professional level.
2.7 Coach Behaviour

The previous section highlighted the key findings regarding leadership and personal characteristics of effective coaches. This section assesses research into coaching behaviour. Initially, this section briefly identifies how effective coaching draws upon pedagogical and teaching principles with particular focus on physical education pedagogy. Following this are examples of the coach’s pedagogical skills and a critical appraisal of findings from systematic observation and survey research. The final section examines qualitative investigations of effective coaching behaviour.

2.7.1 Pedagogy

Research into coaching effectiveness has drawn its theoretical framework from the teacher effectiveness domain, particularly in the form of physical education pedagogy (More, & Franks, 2004). Often referred to as the art and science of teaching (Martens, 1990), pedagogy draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced (Lusted, 1986). In fact, Lusted (1986) suggests that the prism of pedagogy includes what is taught and how the teaching and learning occurs. These features remain important for the coaching context, particularly in relation to how coaches develop effective practice sessions and coaching programs at their respective clubs.

In explaining pedagogy, Lusted (1986) suggests that pedagogy addresses the production and exchange between the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they produce together. This concept refuses to disconnect the relationship, or to give value to one agency over another, thus denying the notion of the teacher as the neutral transmitter of knowledge and the learner as a passive respondent. It recognises the exchange between and productivity of the relationship between teacher and learner (Lusted, 1986). If adapted
to the coaching context, this means that coaches and players work together, rather than as separate entities to engage in a learning process to create knowledge. Potrac et al., (2000) recommend an examination of the pedagogical strategies employed by coaching practitioners in the coaching environment in order to understand better the meanings and knowledge used to guide coach actions. While the current research does not specifically focus on the development of coaching knowledge, observational and interview data are expected to identify what pedagogical strategies professional coaches implement during training and why certain behaviours are considered effective.

2.7.2 Effective Teaching

According to Hastie and Saunders (1992), coaching settings exhibit many features of the educational setting. They suggest that there is a formal leader with the power to make decisions about the activities athletes perform and systems that operate whereby the players are held accountable for performance in those activities. Similarly, Gerdes and Conn (2001) suggest that an effective coach needs a variety of pedagogical skills including planning for appropriate learning experiences, observation of athlete performance and the provision of meaningful feedback about their performance. It is therefore not surprising that research on coaching utilised classroom studies as a starting point (Hastie & Saunders, 1992). Given the links identified between teaching and coaching above, three teacher-training texts (McInerney & McInerney, 2006; Metzler, 2000; Siedentop, 1991) provided some background information regarding effective teaching skills.

Generalist education experts McInerney and McInerney (2006) and physical education pedagogy expert Metzler (2000) believe effective teachers thoroughly plan the learning goals, task presentation and learning cues to facilitate the flow of the lesson. This in
turn leads to a more efficient use of time, instructional resources and promotes higher levels of student learning. McInerney and McInerney (2006) note that an effective teacher develops specific routines that maintain the flow of activities in the classroom by defining appropriate behaviours for a variety of classroom activities. According to Metzler (2000), effective time and classroom management assist the provision of a clear and organised task presentation and structure of the lesson.

An effective teacher provides specific instructional cues, guidelines and feedback to direct student learning, complimented by good communication skills such as clear explanations and appropriate use of vocabulary. These teachers then present information in a context with which students are familiar and employ many different strategies when presenting material for their students to learn (McInerney & McInerney, 2006). Finally, the use of questions both during the lesson and in review are effective teaching skills, which assist in highlighting the main aims of the lesson and checking for student understanding (McInerney & McInerney, 2006; Metzler, 2000).

In over 30 years work as an academic specialising in physical education, Siedentop conducted numerous teacher-effectiveness research projects. In a synthesis of his work, Siedentop (1991) concludes that an effective physical education teacher becomes actively involved in teaching their students and keeps them consistently engaged. They frequently interact with students, supervising carefully whilst implementing whole and small-group instructional strategies. He posits that the greatest similarities between coaches and teachers occur when providing instructions (Siedentop, 1991). This perspective focuses more on the actual behaviours of effective teachers rather than the organisational and
communication strategies listed by other teacher educators (McInerney & McInerney, 2006; Metzler, 2000) yet each identifies generic skills relevant to a variety of teaching contexts.

The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) (2002) conducted a comprehensive study of Olympians from the United States of America who competed in the Summer or Winter Olympic Games from 1984 - 1998. They asked more than 2000 male and female respondents to rate the qualities that were most important to their development over time. From the 816 participants that completed the questionnaire, the ability to teach was ranked as one of the two most important coaching qualities (the other was the ability to motivate). As such, the USOC (2002) claimed that national coaches who possess qualities that Olympians value such as an ability to teach might yield better performance results. This highlights the significance of developing teaching skills within the coaching context.

2.7.3 Effective Communication

According to More and Franks (2004), communication is directly or indirectly part of every element of coaching and involves sending and receiving messages through verbal and non-verbal means. Indeed Gilbert (2002) claims that effectiveness in coaching rests primarily on effective communication and interaction among various stakeholders. Bloom (1996b) and Lynch (2001) share similar views and suggest that good communication is the essence or cornerstone of effective coaching. Granted the relative importance of communication skills, it is surprising that few studies have focused specifically on the communication skills of coaches. In Gilbert’s (2002) annotated bibliography of over 600 articles coaching from 1970-2000, there were only seven articles that reported on research which investigated communication between the coach and athlete. Much of the research on coach communication reflects anecdotal evidence from experienced coaches (see Dorfman,
2003) or falls into behavioural categories as part of systematic observational research (see Smoll et al., 1978; Lacy & Darst, 1984). This section provides a brief overview of some of the key aspects of effective communication from both perspectives.

In 1997, Anshel devised *Ten Commandments of Effective Communication in Sport* based on observations and interviews with athletes, a review of the literature on sport psychology and media reports. These “must do” (p. 207) practices for effective communication are summarised in Table 3:

| 1. Be honest |
| 2. Be consistent |
| 3. Be empathetic |
| 4. Praise and criticise behaviour not personality |
| 5. Respect others |
| 6. Use positive non-verbal cues |
| 7. Teaching skills |
| 8. Interact consistently with all team members |
| 9. Do not be defensive |
| 10. Do not be sarcastic |

Anshel did not specifically describe whether these “Ten Commandments” were most suited to youth, amateur or professional sport settings yet they provide a basis for what he believes effective communication involves. Many of these commandments arose in other research projects. For example, in a project researching players’ perceptions of coaching effectiveness, Hastie (1993) found that coaches who constantly and positively encourage and urge their players to achieve better performances are not only perceived as ‘better’ coaches, but also achieve greater levels of player-reported participation in practice sessions. Furthermore, if a coach is interested in maintaining productive behaviour and positive social
relations between players and coaching staff, More and Franks (2004) argue that the majority of comments should be positive in nature.

In 2003, Dorfman published a book called *Coaching the Mental Game* that provides recommendations for coaches in communicating with players. He claims that direct and honest communication is the best while effective communicators also consider when, where, how, why and whom to communicate with before delivering information. In this sense, effective coaches consider athlete needs (who), the timing of messages (when), the setting in which communication takes place (when), and the players’ motivations (why).

According to the elite team and individual coaches in the 2004 Potrac and Purdy study, effective communication involves providing athletes with information regarding “what they are to do and why they are doing it” (p. 25) in order to explain and rationalise appropriate action. Effective communication also involves evaluating player performance through the provision of “timely and high quality ... feedback for each individual” (Potrac, 2004, p. 78).

Similarly, Kidman and Hanrahan’s (2004) suggest that effective explainers make brief and clear statements about what skills and tactics are to be learned, when to use them and how to do them. They direct and redirect attention to important parts of the skill or technique by creating images and using cue words to build on previous experiences or skills. Furthermore, Kidman and Hanrahan (2004) claim that effective explainers question the athletes to determine their understanding, remind them of previous learning, and to encourage them to make decisions. Dorfman (2003) also claims that effective communication reflects being able to listen, ask questions, be objective, in control and communicate specific information. He suggests that mutual respect, being personable, compassionate and able to relate to players is essential.
For Yukelson (1993) and Shoenfelt, Hall, Ballinger, & Yambor (2005), open communication is the key, as it leads to mutual respect and trust, thereby creating a positive climate in which successful teamwork develops. Open communicators demonstrate competence in verbal, non-verbal actions and listening skills, whilst minimising barriers to effective communication such as overloading athletes with complex messages, eliminating prej udgement and inability to adapt to the individual communication styles of athletes (Shoenfelt et al., 2005). Pre-empting Anshel’s (1997) first two commandments, Yukelson (1993) also recommended that coaches needed to be honest, direct and consistent with both verbal and non-verbal messages.

In one of the rare studies that did focus specifically on coach communication, Bloom, Schinke, and Salmela (1997) utilised in-depth interviews to examine the development of communication skills among six expert basketball coaches. The international level coaches in this study reported that the players’ commitment to the team’s vision could only come via two-way communication. They are receptive listeners and established open lines of communication with their athletes. Constructive feedback, clear communication, fairness, listening skills and honesty are integral to successful communication at this level. This is similar to the way previous researchers described the link between effective communication and synergy in the team environment (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Yukelson, 1993). These researchers claimed that open lines of communication could alleviate many problems that may arise within athletic environments particularly when differences in opinion existed (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Yukelson, 1993).

These results demonstrate the importance of effective communication to help players learn and in creating a positive environment for them to train. Previous research
showed that communication has a significant impact on coach-player relationships and homogenous behaviour in the team environment (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Yukelson, 1993). Furthermore, Lynch (2001) suggests that good communication between coaches and athletes fosters and instils confidence, courage, compassion, cooperation and a sense of community amongst their athletes.

According to Yukelson (1993), a coach’s communication style should be consistent with their overall coaching style and philosophy. In addition, Shoenfelt et al. (2005) suggests that communication is critical when establishing the team philosophy, identity, values, norms and goals. This links a coach’s communication skills to the way they lead the team and highlights that communication forms a significant part of any coach’s role. As Bloom et al. (1997) provide one of the only specific studies on coaching communication from a qualitative perspective, there is an opportunity to investigate further details about effective communication in the professional sport context using in-depth interviews to unpack the important characteristics based on coach and player perspectives.

2.7.4 Systematic Observation of Teaching and Coaching

The majority of research examining the pedagogical strategies of coaches in training and competition utilises systematic observation instruments to quantify coach behaviour and instructional strategies. In fact, Kahan (1999) notes in his review of systematic observation research literature, that the systematic observation of coaching and teaching behaviour has been a prominent research methodology in the field of sport pedagogy for over 20 years. Prior to this, coaching and teaching effectiveness were primarily evaluated via self-reports of behaviour or student and athlete perceptions of teaching and coaching behaviour generated from interviews or questionnaires (Kahan, 1999).
More and Franks (2004) suggest that systematic observation permits a trained observer to use a set of guidelines and procedures to observe, record and analyse events and behaviours. Furthermore, the systematic observation of coach behaviour successfully analyses patterns of behaviour such as frequency of feedback, information giving and use of questioning (Jones, Housner & Kornspan, 1997). According to Chelladurai (1990), the basic premise of research which utilises systematic observation is to (a) assess and code the coaches’ behaviours, (b) train the coaches to improve their behaviours, (c) reassess their behaviours and, (d) measure the effects of these changes on players’ enjoyment and satisfaction. These were used as a set of behavioural guidelines to develop leadership effectiveness in various sport contexts (Smoll & Smith, 1989).

Systematic observation research helped identify the dominant coaching behaviours of coaches from youth sport settings to professional contexts. As a result, coaches have an opportunity to incorporate effective instructional behaviours into their own work (More & Franks, 2004; Vangucci, Potrac & Jones, 1997). This is advantageous according to Lacy and Darst (1985), as coaches become aware of personal behavioural habits, they can modify their behaviours to become educators that are more effective.

Studying coaches through systematic observation has identified different coaching behaviours in a number of contexts and contributed to an extensive database of behaviours displayed by effective coaches. Analysis of previous research indicates that numerous observation schedules exist which specifically assess coaching behaviour. Some examples include the Coaching Behavior Recording Form (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976); Coach Behavior Assessment System (CBAS, Smith, Smoll & Hunt, 1977); the Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI, Lacy & Darst, 1984); the Revised Coaching Behavior
Recording Form (Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999); and the Rugby Union Coaches Observation Instrument (RUCOI, Brewer & Jones, 2002) among other adaptations of the abovementioned instruments.

Each of these instruments provides grounding for the types of behaviours researchers could potentially observe when conducting research within a sport environment. Over time however, behavioural categories progressed from describing purely instructional behaviours (CBAS, ASUOI) to instruction and feedback (RUCOI). While the early systematic observation instruments identified differences between instruction provided pre or post activity, ambiguity exists between the early and more recent systematic observation schedules in their description of certain types of feedback and instruction. For example, Concurrent Instruction from the ASUOI (Lacy & Darst, 1984) and RUCOI (Brewer & Jones, 2002) was very similar to definitions of Post-instruction (ASUOI), Concurrent Correction, Correction and Feedback (RUCOI) and reinforcement behaviours in the CBAS (Smith et al., 1977).

Post-instruction (ASUOI) and the Correction behaviours from the RUCOI involved correction, re-explanation or instructional feedback given during or after the execution of the skill or play. Examples of corrections included comments such as “Get lower” and “More depth on the run” (Brewer and Jones, 2002). Similarly, descriptions of positive feedback from the RUCOI as well as encouragement and positive reinforcement from the CBAS (Smith et al., 1977) involve positive rewarding actions or comments (verbal and non-verbal) relating to performance in a skill attempt, drill or play. The category Instructional Feedback (RUCOI) is also problematic as various observation schedules divide the instruction and feedback into separate categories. Classifying them together potentially insinuates that each
communication technique involves the same type of information or outcome. This highlights that there are certain inherent weaknesses within systematic observation schedules, and that there needs to be greater clarity when defining the independent categories of coach behaviour. Furthermore, Brewer and Jones (2002) claim that the ASUOI was never formally validated meaning that previous researchers assumed the tool to be an effective and valid measure of coach behaviour.

While the current research does not assess coaching behaviours systematically during training and competition fixtures, previous systematic observation schedules were used as a basis for what I looked for when carrying out semi-structured observations during the data collection phase of the current research. In particular, categories from the ASUOI and RUCOI helped guide the semi-structured observation of training and competition settings in the current research (see Appendix D for full descriptions of the CBAS, ASUOI and RUCOI). These procedures are explained in association with the data collection methods throughout Chapter 3 (pp. 103-113). The next section reviews various studies which used systematic observation to observe coach behaviour across youth, college or professional settings.

2.7.4.1 Utilising Systematic Observation in Youth Sport Settings

Youth sport settings have been the primary site for systematic observation over time. In fact, Kahan (1999) states in his review of research literature on systematic observation from the 1970s to the 1990s, that over 68 percent of studies focused on either youth or school aged sport participants. In a study of youth basketball coaches, Smith, Zane, Smoll and Coppel (1983) compared the results from observations using the CBAS to player interviews and found that coaches who employed frequent supportive and instructive
behaviours garnered better responses from their players. Alternatively, coaches who were highly punitive when players made mistakes elicited negative responses from athletes in this context. Ultimately, their research demonstrates that the manner in which a coach behaves has a significant impact on young athletes’ perceptions of the coach. This highlights how coaches can have a significant impact on children’s enjoyment of sport participation.

Segrave and Ciancio (1990) carried out an observational study of a successful youth football (gridiron) coach in the USA. Using the Coaching Behavior Recording Form, they found that instructional behaviours (e.g. cues or comments regarding performance during a skill, drill or play) were the most common actions. Similarly, Cushion and Jones (2001) conducted a systematic observation of youth football (soccer) coaches using the ASUOI. They found that instructional behaviours accounted for over half the total amount of behaviours (approximately 60 percent). According to Segrave and Ciancio (1990), the intent of providing frequent instruction is to increase skill and knowledge of players and thus enhance game performance. Metzler (2000) supports this theory and claims that providing students with direct instruction encourages the most efficient use of class time. Furthermore, Metzler (2000) suggests that direct instruction provides students with the opportunity for many supervised practice attempts so that the teacher can deliver equally high rates of effective feedback. Perhaps the fact that the players in the Segrave and Ciancio (1990) study were relatively new to the sports investigated meant that coaches were required to ‘tell’ the players what to do in order to improve performance.

2.7.4.2 Utilising Systematic Observation in College Sport Settings

Perhaps the most frequently cited systematic observation project to date is Tharp and Gallimore’s (1976) observation of University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) basketball
coach John Wooden. Tharp and Gallimore found that the instruction was the most dominant coaching behaviour, followed by hustle (comments to intensify effort), scold (verbal and non-verbal signs of displeasure), reinstruction, and praise (verbal or non-verbal signs of acceptance). This shows that research within youth sport settings are analogous with the results from college settings. In 2004 however, Gallimore and Tharp revisited their 1976 study, only to conclude that their initial findings lacked depth and the appropriate instrument to interpret the nature and tone of Wooden’s pedagogical practice.

Another study with a similar focus to Tharp and Gallimore (1976) is the Bloom, Crumpton, and Anderson (1999) research. They conducted a systematic observation of an expert basketball coach who had similar success to John Wooden in the NCAA championships. The findings from Bloom et al. (1999) concur with previous research in youth and college settings where instructional behaviours were the most common. However, the Bloom et al. (1999) research indicates that almost one-third of all instructions related to teaching strategies to the team, which differ from beginner and intermediate level coaches. These coaches primarily focus on teaching the fundamental skills to their athletes rather than tactical strategies. This may be because college athletes already possess the basic technical skills often taught to younger sport participants. This supports Segrave and Ciancio’s (1990) assertion that different coaching strategies are required when coaching athletes from different age groups.

In other research at the college level, Lacy and Martin (1994) use the ASUOI to examine coaching behaviours in different segments of women’s volleyball preseason practices. Their observational data reveals that silence was the highest single category observed although they did indicate that instructional categories accounted for
approximately 40 percent of behaviours. This is significant because silent was not a finding that was regularly recorded in youth sport settings. A notable aside was that the praise to scold ratio was 7:1, which they suggested might be due to the coaches’ initial efforts to promote a positive atmosphere as the season begins (Lacy & Martin, 1994). Interestingly, when Segrave and Ciancio (1990) compared the youth sport coaches’ behaviours to previous research with college coaches, they found that the youth coach was relatively positive in his behaviours while the college coaches were primarily negative in character. One reason for the difference may be that Lacy and Martin (1994) observed women’s sport settings while Segrave and Ciancio (1990) examined men’s sport. This once again highlights the contextual nature of the coaching process even within similar sport settings (i.e. college level).

2.7.4.3 **Utilising Systematic Observation in Professional Sport Settings**

In a systematic observation of professional women’s football (soccer) coaches, Vangucci, Potrac, & Jones (1997) used the ASUOI to examine five male coaches from three descending divisions in England. Their findings once again confirm previous research where instruction was the most prevalent coaching behaviour. However, they found that coaches at the apex of women’s football (soccer) engage in different coaching behaviours than those employed at lower levels. At the highest level, the coaches were more involved in post-instruction, positive and negative modelling and praise while the coaches in the lower leagues delivered more concurrent instruction and hustle behaviours. They account for this by suggesting that players at a higher level are more highly motivated and therefore do not require as much concurrent commentary from the coach to participate with full effort in training activities. Vangucci et al. (1997) also claim that the research was conducted at the
end of the season (i.e. where teams are trying to win competitions, gain promotion or avoid relegation) which may have influenced the behaviours of the coaches.

Two recent studies (Portrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002; Schempp et al., 2004) investigated the pedagogical and instructional patterns of professional coaches in football (soccer) and golf respectively. Both studies aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of the dominant coaching behaviours and the rationale that underpinned these behaviours. Essentially, the results from the systematic observations of the coaches reveal similar results to those carried out in the past (Bloom et al., 1999; Segrave & Ciancio, 1990; Vangucci et al., 1997) with instructional or information giving behaviours being the most dominant form of interaction with players. However, the in-depth interviews enabled coaches to account for their behaviours by discussing the reasons why they behaved as they did during training.

Potrac et al. (2002) found that instructions accounted for nearly two-thirds (63.9 percent) of all the coded behaviours with the expert football (soccer) coach. During the interview phase, the expert football (soccer) coach revealed that he placed great emphasis on instructional behaviours, because they were integral to the development of successful teams and improvement in individual players’ technique and decision-making abilities (Potrac et al., 2002). “Brian’s” – the expert football (soccer) coach – high level of instructional behaviours reflected his belief that coaches must possess and be able to demonstrate extensive knowledge of the game in order to gain the players’ full confidence (Potrac et al., 2002).

Consequently, the high levels of instruction observed during this study represented the coach’s efforts to prove his knowledge and expertise to his players, in an attempt to enhance his power over them (Potrac et al., 2002). This is worthy of note because the high
use of instruction reflects what researchers of youth sport suggest is necessary to increase skill and knowledge to enhance performance. These contrasting opinions demonstrate the different aims coaches have across various settings concerning their instructional behaviours.

Interestingly, the qualitative analysis from the Schempp et al. (2004) study reveals that expert golf instructors asked questions regularly to initiate learning-related discussions. Furthermore, the coaches in the Schempp et al. study claimed that instructors asked questions to develop knowledge of each student that could then be used to individualise future instructions based on their background, ability, knowledge, and motivations. The instructors’ acceptance of students’ ideas also correlated with the students feeling safe and encouraged to express their insights freely (Schempp et al., 2004).

This demonstrates several different strategies used by expert coaches in professional settings. The differences could be attributed to the nature of the contexts studied. For example, in team sport settings there is less opportunity to spend time coaching individual players as there are often more players involved during team sport sessions (e.g. football) than within an individual sport setting (e.g. golf). This may require coaches to provide direct instructions rather than ask questions to facilitate learning.

### 2.7.5 Similarities from Systematic Observation Research

Systematic observation techniques have been used to examine the behaviour of coaches at a variety of levels in many different sports (see Schempp et al., 2004; Segrave & Ciancio, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). According to the Kahan (1999) review of the literature on systematic observation, ASUOI studies indicate that coaches spent 30-40 percent of their time instructing players before and during performance whilst the CBAS
studies offered a different view of coaching behaviour with 36 percent of total instructional behaviour given after performance. Kahan (1999) attributes this difference to the fact that the CBAS was predominantly used in youth settings where reinforcement and hustle is probably more evident than at other levels of sport. The results from systematic observation research demonstrated that no matter what sport, or the level at which the coach worked, instructional behaviours were the most commonly exhibited behaviour by the coaches. 

Douge & Hastie (1993) found other consistencies across studies from varying contexts and summarise the key behaviours as follows (pp. 15-16):

- frequently provided feedback and incorporated numerous prompts and hustles;
- provided high levels of correction and reinstruction;
- used high levels of questioning and clarifying;
- predominantly engaged in instruction; and
- managed the training environment to achieve considerable order.

Despite the similarities noted by Douge and Hastie (1993), Poczwardowski, Barott and Jowett (2006) claim that focusing only on coach instruction and feedback and their impact on a limited number of variables creates an incomplete picture concerning the multifaceted nature of the coach-athlete dyad. Similarly, Tinning, Kirk and Evans (1993) point out how results from effective teaching research have been inconclusive, as what seemed important in one context was often considered trivial in others. What this suggests is that rarely has research of this kind demonstrated the coach’s ability to cater for the individual differences in the maturity, age, experience and preferences for instruction or feedback techniques.

Further research in a variety of settings is warranted as the demands, pressures and goals of
coaches differ from youth to professional sport. It would therefore be advantageous to engage in research that provides further details regarding the reasons why coaches behave as they do in professional settings.

2.7.6 Qualitative Research into Effective Coaching Behaviours

Research into effective coaching has traditionally involved the systematic observation of coach behaviour. However, systematic observation studies focused purely on the interactional behaviours that coaches displayed in training and games and therefore did not cater for the personalised nature of the coaching process. Results from recent qualitative research provided a more detailed insight into these important areas of coaching yet further research is required using qualitative methodology to unpack the reasons why coaches behave as they do during training.

In 2003, Côté and Sedgwick completed comprehensive study on rowing coach effectiveness that included World Championship and Olympic coaches (n=10) and athletes (n=10). The aim of this research was to gain a broad outline of the strategies and behaviours most effectively applied by expert rowing coaches from Canada. The seven major categories that emerged from their findings are described in Table 4.
### Table 4: Effective Rowing Coach Behaviours (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan Proactively</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours aimed at developing a progressive plan for training and competition. Coaches plan proactively by preparing systematic training for the short and long term and by preparing their athletes for unexpected situations that can occur in training and competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Positive Training Environment</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours aimed at creating positive situations which stimulate athletes’ enthusiasm and competitive desire. Coaches created a positive training environment through the establishment of structured and competitive training sessions in which a tradition of a hard work ethic was fostered. Coaches’ own desire and excitement contributed to the positive atmosphere within the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate Goal Setting</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours aimed at helping athletes define their long and short-term goals. The process of goal setting began with a coach-athlete agreement on an ultimate goal for the athlete to achieve. Then coaches establish intermediate goals in collaboration with athletes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Athletes’ Confidence</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours specifically aimed at building athletes’ self-confidence. Coaching strategies to build athletes’ confidence included: maintaining consistent attitude and behaviours in training and competition; regularly expressing confidence in athletes' performances; acting as a role model by exuding self-confidence; coordinating the logistics of training and competition; and introducing athletes to the use of mental preparation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Skills Effectively</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours aimed at developing athletes' technical and physical skills. Included in this category were coach behaviours aimed at communicating instructions and giving feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize (sic) Individual Differences</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours characterised by a concern for athletes’ individual needs. Coaches needed to consider individual differences when dealing with different genders, personalities, and physical attributes of their athletes, as well as each athlete’s role on the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a Positive Rapport with Each Athlete</td>
<td>This category included coaching behaviours that nurtured a positive rapport with each athlete. Meaning units in this category focused exclusively on the personal relationship that coaches maintained with individual athletes. Coaches' behaviours that nurtured understanding and respect emerged as an important factor in developing positive rapport with athletes.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Côté & Sedgwick’s (2003) findings can be summarised in a modular format presented in a set of three circles. They explain that the outer ring consists of the organisational skills
of the coach including the ability to plan proactively and create a positive training environment. The coaching behaviours in the middle circle represent the coach’s ability to facilitate goal setting, build athletes’ confidence and teach skills effectively. The effectiveness of these behaviours is determined by the coach’s specific knowledge of the sport and by the way a coach transmits knowledge. The centre circle represents the coach’s interpersonal skills. This includes the ability to recognise individual differences and establish positive rapport with each athlete. Côté & Sedgwick (2003) state that all these coaching behaviours are interactive and dependent on each other.

Côté and Sedgwick (2003) claim that their research provides dimensions of effective coaching behaviours that had not surfaced in quantitative research which predominantly focused on coaching behaviours exhibited within the training or competition settings. For example, interpersonal and organisational behaviours such as planning and the formation of rapport with athletes were identified as effective in the Côté and Sedgwick (2003) study yet not included in systematic observation studies of the coaching environment. In this sense, responses from the interview process represent specific coach behaviours perceived to be effective rather than reflecting the behaviours bounded by the categories from systematic observation schedules (e.g. feedback and instruction patterns). This is advantageous because it enables a deeper understanding of what effective coaching involved. Ultimately, this may result in better training for coaches in relation to the specific areas identified as effective by the coaches and players themselves.

Despite the contribution of this study to knowledge on the interpersonal and organisational skills, there is a distinct need for further research in relation to these topics with respect to effective coaching. Côté and Sedgwick (2003) provide excellent insight into
the coaching behaviour of coaches from Canadian national teams, yet research within other contexts is required to see what behaviours coaches and players perceive to be effective in a variety of sports. This is particularly important in ongoing league-type competitions to determine if coaches and players have similar or different perspectives on effective coaching than those in one-off tournaments such as the Olympic Games and World Championships.

2.8 Summary of Coach Behaviour

Systematic observation of coach behaviour became a key focus for research in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most of the inventories were constructed in North America and were based on youth or college level athletic systems and standards. Thus, they may not be entirely applicable to the professional context within Australia and limited evidence exists of research that has incorporated this technique. Cushion and Jones (2001) recommend that future research, in addition to solidifying the empirical database on coach behaviours, needs to use qualitative methods to investigate the philosophies, beliefs and motives of coaches for behaving as they do. They believe that this will develop a deeper understanding of good coaching practices. Part of this investigation looks at the coaching behaviours exhibited by professional coaches during training and competition. These will be compared to the preferences delineated by players from each of the professional teams in this research.

2.9 The Coaching Process

The previous section identified research into coaching behaviour including examples of the coach’s pedagogical skills and effective coaching behaviours from systematic observation, survey and interview research. This section provides an overview of existing
models of the coaching process including an assessment of numerous instructional coaching models (see Fairs, 1987; Franks, Sinclair, Thomson & Goodman, 1986; Launder, 1993; Sherman, Crassini, Maschette & Sands, 1997), the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) and research based on elements of these models.

2.9.1 Coaching Process Models

Definitions of the coaching process highlight a simplistic pattern involving the coach and athlete in a variety of contexts. For example, Woodman (1993) states that the coaching process is:

...the same whether teaching a basic skill to a beginner, using a complex coaching activity to help an elite athlete refine a performance element, or attempting to develop cohesion in a team (p.5).

Côté and colleagues (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté et al., 1995b) suggest that the coaching process involves applying knowledge to establish optimal conditions for training and competition with the overall goal of developing athletes. More recently, Lyle (2002) stated that the coaching process consists of a purposeful, direct and indirect, formal and informal series of activities and interventions between the athlete and coach designed to improve competition performance. While Côté et al. (1995b) referred to the knowledge of coaches in relation to the coaching process, Woodman (1993) and Lyle (2002) focused on the practical aspect of coaching. These differences underline the complicated nature of the coaching process which is explored below.

2.9.1.1 Instructional Coaching Models

Franks et al.’s (1986) key factors model is a seven-step process that begins with performance analysis, prioritising the needs of the athletes, and a session plan that outlines training objectives and performance expectations. Upon completion of the session, a critique is carried out as a means of assessing coaching effectiveness. These are the seven steps outlined by Franks et al.:

1. Analyse performance
2. Prioritise the needs of the athlete
3. Outline training objectives
4. Plan the coaching session (including outcomes and performance expectations)
5. Include realistic practices
6. Conduct the practice session
7. Critique the session afterwards

One year later, Fairs (1987) developed a new systematic model involving a series of sequential and interrelated steps used as a basis for decision-making and helping athletes solve problems (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Fairs (1987, pp. 17-19) 5-step Coaching Model
Coaching, according to this model, involved the ability to assess situations, apply coaching principles and evaluate the coach’s actions to determine their effectiveness. Initially, the process involves data collection, diagnosis and assessment of the information collected. Following this is the development of a plan of action and finally the implementation and evaluation of the plan.

Although Launder (1993) emphasised the need to focus on the craft of coaching as opposed to concentrating on coaching as a quasi science, he offered another regimented model of coaching based on six distinct stages. In the first stage of the model, coaches are encouraged to observe the actions of the athletes. Next, coaches should compare the athletes’ actions with their own mental model of ideal performance. The coach then needs to decide if there are any significant differences in the performance and where required, determine the cause of the variation. The fifth stage requires the coach to establish coaching priorities to prescribe appropriate corrections. Finally, the coach must only deal with the athletes’ performance and ensure that there is transfer to the competition environment.

Each of these representations of the coaching process suggests that the procedure is the same regardless of the context. To an extent, a systematic and unchanging model is advantageous as it becomes easy to follow for coaches of all standards. In fact, Salmela & Moraes (2003) contend that these broad overviews are useful when trying to conceptualise the exact nature of the coaching process. However, there was no attempt to illustrate the complexity of the coaching process or explain what specific data to collect when assessing athletes (Lyle, 2002; Sherman et al., 1997). Furthermore, Sherman et al. (1997) claimed that both Franks et al. (1986) and Fairs (1987) models merely analyse skill acquisition, negating
the important assessment of performance outcomes. Additionally, no examples of the types of data required to evaluate the coaching process were expressed.

These relatively simplistic models provide the basic actions required for assessment of performance in the coaching process. However, Launder (1993) neglected to provide details about how to assist the athlete with corrections and how to ensure the athlete transfers the required behaviour into the competition environment. Failure to address these issues may in turn negate the ability of the coach to satisfy the needs of the learner in relation to developing their specific level of knowledge and understanding of the required actions of a sporting skill.

In order to present a model for sports coaching that was “less art and more science” (Sherman, Crassini, Maschette & Sands, 1997, p. 103), Sherman et al. (1997) reconceptualised sport coaching as *Instructional Sport Psychology*. They believed that their own model, which includes analysis of both motor skills and performance, enables coaches to gather a better understanding of the movements and actions required to achieve desirable outcome results. They claimed that their model was “not just another model of motor skill acquisition” (Sherman et al., 1997, p. 108) and proposed six fundamental components of the sports coaching context as shown in Table 5:
Table 5: Components of the Instructional Sport Psychology Model (Sherman et al., 1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>The motor skills and performance outcomes to be achieved after instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>The assessment of the novice’s competencies in performing specific motor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Physiological and psychological processes assumed to occur during the transition from novice to expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Specification of instructional procedures to facilitate learning and promote transition from novice to expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance or Achievement Evaluation</td>
<td>Assessment of the novice’s skill after instruction using performance results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Evaluation</td>
<td>Reflection on, and assessment of, the instructional processes carried out by both coach and learner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One advantage of this model was that coaches are able to design an effective environment to satisfy both the learner and instructor by gaining information regarding each athlete’s aptitude, knowledge, interests, and performance. This may assist coaches in deciding on effective instructional and environmental specifications required for effective instruction and the development of motor skills. Furthermore, it enables coaches to modify the coaching process to accommodate the ability of each individual learner (Sherman et al., 1997). However, this model focuses specifically on only one part of the coaching process – instruction of motor skills (Lyle, 2002). There is no consideration given to how this model is applicable in the competition environment or what contextual factors influence the nature of instruction.

The *Instructional Model of Coaching* (Sherman et al., 1997) does not present evidence regarding the specific organisational skills required to assist the learning and instructional processes. For example, there are only tentative suggestions for coaches with regard to what questions should be asked when reflecting on their own instructional content. Furthermore, the features of the Sherman et al. (1997) model are pertinent for
coaches of novice athletes given its focus on skill instruction. This model may therefore be impractical for the professional setting, where coaches spend less time providing skill instruction and more time teaching tactics.

Measuring the coaching process is not an exact science, as different situations require different actions, instructions and responses. Although the previous models could be used as general guides for coaching, trying to quantify the coaching process through a definitive procedural model is fallible. Even if these rigid, scientifically driven coaching models were applied to every coaching situation, the characteristics of each individual coach in their implementation of the model would be likely to differ. It is therefore difficult to consider the coaching process as an exact science that can be replicated in a similar manner in any given context.

Representations of the coaching process through instructional models have been criticised for their rigid depiction of a far from basic routine. Previous researchers (Jones, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac & Purdy, 2004) argued that coaching is more than a simplistic, systematic, depersonalised set of standards elicited from models and procedures. Similarly, Lyle (2002) suggests that these models do not illustrate the complexity of the coaching process or explain what specific data to collect when assessing athletes. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2004) believe that coaching is a complex process where it remains wholly unprofitable to seek a one-size-fits-all model of effective coaching.

### 2.9.1.2 The Coaching Model

Perhaps the most significant model of coaching developed in recent years is the Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell (1995) Coaching Model (CM). They carried out qualitative interviews with 17 expert gymnastic coaches from Canada. The main purpose of
their research was to understand the concepts and strategies that high-performance gymnastic coaches use when coaching. In doing this, Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) attempted to identify the content, structures and processes that promoted and facilitated skilled performance. The researchers sought out information to rationalise the coaching domain, by identifying variables that could affect high-performance coaches in their work. Finally, much like Smoll, Smith and colleagues (Smith et al., 1977; Smoll et al., 1978, Smoll & Smith, 1989), Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) wanted to assist future research in the area of coaching by providing a theoretical framework for coaching knowledge. They also aimed to develop a grounded heuristic model of how a coach’s knowledge is processed to solve problems and develop athletes.

The components of the CM describe a coach’s work, at the elite level, from the coach’s perspective. Central to CM are the coach’s goals and mental model of athlete potential. There are three core components of the coaching process, which represent actual coaching behaviours in training, competition, and organisation (Côté, 1998). These three components are affected by three peripheral components defined as athlete characteristics and level of development, coach characteristics and contextual factors. In this sense, features of the Mediational Model (Smoll et al., 1978) and CM are similar with the main components of the coaching process influenced by situational factors and the individual characteristics of both the coach and athlete. However, where the MM outlined the mediational relationships between coaching behaviours, player perceptions and evaluations, the CM highlighted the coaching procedures associated with developing athletes. Figure 4 provides a visual depiction of the CM.
According to the CM, the coach initially creates a mental impression (or mental model) of the athlete’s potential, taking into account their own personal characteristics (e.g. philosophy, perceptions, beliefs or personal life), athlete characteristics (e.g. ability, stage of learning) and contextual factors (e.g. politics and working conditions). It is from this assessment that the coach decides what needs to be done in the organisation, training and
competition components of the coaching process, in order to achieve the overall goal of developing the athlete.

The coaching process represents the actions of the coach in organisation, training and competition, all of which have a direct impact on the goal of developing athletes. The organisation component, which takes place before, during or after training, aims to establish optimal conditions for training and competition. Organisation involves developing goals, planning training, working with assistants and helping athletes with personal concerns. Training involves the coach applying knowledge to assist athletes acquire and perform skills in relation to their physical, technical, tactical and psychological development. The training environment includes the instructional style of the coach, the training of athlete technical and mental skills and the use of simulation to develop athlete skills. These two phases are then tested in competition, where coaches use their knowledge to help athletes perform and achieve their goals.

The CM provided information regarding the variables observed and assessed by the coach in building a plan of action for developing athletes. Furthermore, Gilbert and Trudel (2000) suggest that the CM also provides an accurate conceptual framework for understanding the coaching process by outlining the most important factors in this process. As the CM emerged from a study with coaches of an individual sport, Gilbert and Trudel (2000) attempted to examine the validity of the CM in a team sport environment.

Their research involved one Canadian university ice hockey team and showed that all six components of the CM were applicable to the team sport setting. Additionally, new components materialised, which built on the initial findings of Côté et al. (1995a), where Gilbert and Trudel (2000) found that the goals of the coaching process in this study
contrasted the lone goal of the original CM (i.e. to develop athletes). Two process goals (promote athlete personal development and develop technical and tactical hockey skills) and one outcome goal (to qualify for the playoffs) were identified in this study whilst one new category was developed (intervention style). All other categories found in this study matched the existing categories of the CM.

While the Gilbert and Trudel (2000) study provided a validation of the CM, the results were from research conducted on only one team from the college setting. Therefore, more research is needed in order to further examine the results of this study and corroborate or challenge the veracity of their conclusions. A study that includes the opinions of numerous coaches from one team sport or coaches from a variety of team sports would be appropriate as it provides a more in-depth examination of the coaching process. In addition, perspectives from a professional sport context would provide further credence to the research conducted by Côté and colleagues (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995, Côté et al., 1995a) and Gilbert and Trudel (2000).

Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) provided a broad model that outlined the majority of the roles of an elite sports coach. However, the expansive scope of the research means that in parts, the model lacks detail regarding technological advancements in sport, and perhaps other contemporary components including dealing with the media. Additionally, their research only focused on expert gymnastic coaches’ knowledge. This means that some pertinent issues related to team sports were neglected, including elements of team cohesion and the role of the coach in time-outs (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000). Moreover, Bloom (1996a) and Lyle (2002) argued that Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) examined factors affecting the knowledge of coaches for developing elite gymnasts, rather than categories
affecting the process of expert coaching. Gilbert and Trudel (2000) also criticised the CM for its lack of an explanation regarding the main goal – to develop athletes. They claimed that the model did not make it clear as to whether or not the goal includes non-sport related development.

The CM was created nearly 15 years ago and as a result, a more contemporary model that builds on the roles, tasks and aims of professional coaches in today’s society is needed. As society has evolved over time, so have the practices of coaching. This present research investigates the contemporary picture of sports coaching in professional settings. It addresses Australian professional coach and player perceptions of effective coaching, whilst providing insight into the training, competition and organisational components of the coach’s work. To this end, the current research explores how coaches establish optimal settings for their players to learn and develop.

2.10 Summary of The Coaching Process

This section outlined various aspects of the coaching process. Numerous coaching models were compared and assessed in terms of their applicability to the professional and other sport contexts. Many of the early instructional models highlighted a simplistic pattern of the coaching process and were inadequate representations of the entire coaching process. In 1995, Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) developed a unique model of the coaching process which outlined the actions of the coach in organisation, training and competition. However, their research only included coaches of gymnastics in the sample meaning that some aspects of the Coaching Model may not be appropriate for other sport contexts. The current research aims to extend the existing knowledge of the coaching
process within the team sport context by interviewing and observing coaches and players involved with professional sport in Australia.

2.11 Interpersonal Coaching Skills and the Learning Environment

Having considered research that focused on effective coaching behaviours, personal characteristics, leadership styles and the coaching process, it is necessary to assess the sociological and interpersonal aspects of the coaching process and the team environment. Woodman (1993) suggests that researchers have continuously argued that the majority of research in coaching addressed the psychological, physiological, tactical and technical development of the athlete. Similarly, Lyle (2002) asserts that coaching studies have not investigated interpersonal relationships sufficiently well to be able to describe these with confidence. Jones and Wallace (2005) support this notion, claiming that although such knowledge has contributed to improve coaching and athletic performance, much of the coach’s social world has been portrayed as a rationalistic, sequential process that can be easily interpreted and administered. These views highlight the wide range of significant social interactions between athletes and coaches that are particularly relevant to the coaching process and the learning environment. Investigations that employ qualitative interviews are well suited to address the individual interpretations of coach and player experiences of effective coaching.

Siedentop (1991) argues that effective teachers not only promote academic growth, but also tend to do so using interpersonal skills to create warm and nurturing educational climates, within which good teacher-student relationships exist. Similarly, Bloom (1996b) highlight that interpersonal skills are essential for the coach, particularly in order to develop the athlete on and off the field. According to Bloom (1996a), coaches use their interpersonal
skills to show concern for both the athletic and personal development of athletes. As a result, they are able to establish respectful on-and-off field relationships with their players. Recall that earlier in this literature review, Côté and Sedgwick (2003) identified that expert rowing coaches possessed effective interpersonal skills based on their ability to recognise individual differences and establish positive rapport with each athlete (pp. 54-57). In the eyes of one professional football (soccer) coach, the interpersonal nature of coaching is the most essential feature for practitioners to consider if they wish to be successful (Potrac & Purdy, 2004). This suggests that over time, interpersonal skills have been consistently acknowledged as integral to effective teaching and coaching. The next section provides an analysis of literature that includes research conducted on interpersonal relationships and the learning environment.

2.11.1 Humanistic Coaching and Holistic Athlete Development

Coaches at the professional level have expressed the need to be concerned about athlete welfare and not totally focused on performance-based criteria. For example, Wayne Bennett, a professional rugby league coach for more than 20 years in Australia, insisted that his players were there to learn and develop skills, knowledge and expertise not just in football, but also life (Bennett & Crawley, 2002). In support, Kevin Sheedy (2005), a former coach of one professional Australian Rules Football (AFL) team for 27 consecutive seasons, recently suggested that one of the most important aspects about playing football at his club was to develop as a player and the person. Additionally, the Kellett (1999) research on professional AFL coaches revealed that all tasks constructed in the training environment were based on the philosophy of developing the players as athletes and as people.
The Humanistic model of athletic coaching is an educational model devoted to the total development of the individual. Lyle (2002) states that the Humanistic approach to coaching “... is a person centred ideology that emphasises the empowerment of the individual towards achieving personal goals within a facilitative interpersonal relationship” (p. 174). It is athlete-centred, and focuses on enhancing the athlete’s self-awareness, growth and development. The coach encourages and supports athletes as they develop into authentic and valued adults. Humanistic coaches are empathetic, ask many questions and require athletes to figure out strategies and the underlying reasons for both motor and team performances (Lyle, 2002). Athletes and their thoughts are critical to the functioning of the team, and as such, athletes must be given opportunities to be heard. The team is viewed as a co-operative group, although the coach cannot fully relinquish the responsibilities inherent in their assignment as the adult leader (Lyle, 2002). In some respect, many of the Humanistic ideals relate to the characteristics of empowerment and facilitative leadership outlined earlier in this chapter (see pp. 23-26).

Lyle (2002) argues that sport has enormous potential for personal growth and development if it is centred on humanistic aims. However, he maintains that performance coaching does not have this essential purpose as winning often provides the measure for player and coach development at the professional level. The Humanistic approach to coaching provides a viable theoretic proposition for coaching however it is yet to be determined if the parameters of this model are practically viable in professional sport. There is limited evidence to suggest what coaches are required to do in order to implement this approach particularly concerning the organisational process and relevant coach behaviours before, during and after training.
The aims of Humanistic coaching tend to focus on leadership attributes or a philosophy toward coaching rather than describing how coaches can perform in an effective manner. Furthermore, few, if any, studies to date have investigated the core values of professional coaches or their approach to coaching in a professional environment. Therefore, research that specifically investigates the extent to which coaches employ this model is necessary. This would assist coaches with how to employ such methods in the field, and establish whether certain coaching models are best suited to youth or professional sport.

One study that looks at developing successful coaching programs is the Vallée and Bloom (2005) research of five expert university coaches in Canada. Using the Multidimensional Model (Chelladurai, 1990) and the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) as a basis, Vallée and Bloom (2005) found that coaches invested in the personal development of the athlete rather than instilling a winning-at-all costs attitude, as this vision achieved better long-term results in the athletes and overall program. The results of this study complement that of previous research on Canadian coaches where the coach’s main objective was to develop successful athletes (Côté et al., 1995a; Côté et al., 1995b; Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). In order to achieve this success, Vallée and Bloom (2005) indicate that the presence of four key elements was necessary. These were (1) Coach Attributes; (2) Organisational Skills; (3) Individual Growth; and (4) a Team Vision.

In explaining these components, Vallée and Bloom (2005) state that coaches need to possess certain personal characteristics preferred by their athletes in order to display appropriate leadership. These university coaches had a distinct desire to foster individual player growth through athlete empowerment and their thorough organisational skills.
Ultimately, it was a detailed vision, which included the goals and directions for the program, that linked together all of these elements (see Figure 5).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 5: Building a Successful Coaching Program (Vallée & Bloom, 2005, p.185).**

Coaches in the Vallée & Bloom (2005) study motivated athletes by setting goals, organising appropriate strategies to achieve them, and developing a vision which provided a collective summary of these aims. Successful coaches gained the commitment and enthusiasm of their athletes by exhibiting personal attributes and qualities such as leading by example and demonstrating trust and respect for the players. Caring for the person and communicating with players helped form healthy working relationships. This enabled coaches to empower their players by involving them in decision-making and delegating
responsibility both on and off the court. The coach’s organisational skills helped develop creative, challenging and effective training sessions that resulted in athletes achieving higher levels of improvement. Further to this, coaches respected individual differences and aimed to empower each athlete as an individual.

The findings outlined by Vallée and Bloom support previous research with Dale and Janssen (2002) suggesting that success as a coach is not solely judged on the quantity of wins you have, but also on the quality of relationships you develop with your athletes. In fact, both studies argue that to be considered truly successful, coaches must also help their athletes develop to their full potential on and off the court or field. For Dale and Janssen, successful coaches not only teach their players sports skills, they also teach them life skills (2002). While other studies specifically examined coach behaviour through the interview process, Vallée and Bloom were primarily interested in how coaches defined and then went about achieving success through their respective sports programs. Their research outlines other important aspects of effective coaching and in particular, addresses a gap in the literature pertaining to the organisational skills of the coach.

Despite the holistic perspective regarding the development of a successful program, the limited sample size and use of only females in Vallée and Bloom’s research might provide different concepts to that of a male sample. This is because previous research (see Chelladurai and colleagues, 1978, 1980) indicated how different personality variables and contextual factors affect actual and preferred leadership behaviours. This warrants further investigation from a qualitative perspective to decipher whether any differences exist. In addition, Vallée and Bloom (2005) only considered the coaches’ perspectives, which is interesting because players form a major part of any team’s success. Including the players’
perspectives in similar research would provide valuable insight in relation to developing successful team programs. Nevertheless, the definitions of success were generated directly from the participants in the interview process, which provided detailed and personalised accounts of how success was developed by the coaches in their independent team environments.

2.11.2 Interpersonal Relationships

2.11.2.1 Coach-Athlete Relationships

In order to advance research within the field of interpersonal relationships in sport, Poczwardowski et al. (2006) claimed that an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. They argued that previous behavioural approaches missed the interpersonal element of the relationship and as such provided an incomplete picture of the coach-athlete dyad.

Wylleman (2000) notes that an in-depth approach to gathering data on the quality of interpersonal relationships is required, as survey research limits the responses gleaned from the participants to what is on the questionnaire schedule. Furthermore, he suggests that this type of research will provide data about athletes’ perceptions of interpersonal behaviours as they actually occur as well as how the athletes prefer the relationships to be.

In support of this, Poczwardowski et al. (2006) assert that without reference to the multiple units of analysis (e.g. players and coaches; observations and interviews), the coach-athlete relationship cannot be fully understood. Hence, the qualitative perspective provides an opportunity to continue in-depth research into the nature of coach-athlete relationships.

In sport, interpersonal relationships exist within the team or club at all levels including athletes, coaches, support staff, and administrative staff. According to Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002), a relationship implies a two-way interaction
that in some cases shapes the players’ entire sporting experience, thereby having a profound impact on the quality of both practice and competitive performance. Through in-depth observations and interviews with six female college gymnasts, their three coaches, and the team’s athletic trainer, Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002) found that coach-athlete relationships were a recurring pattern of (a) mutual care between the coach and athlete; (b) relationship-oriented activities and interactions; (c) meanings that athletes and coaches made about this relationship. Important items such as trust, respect and belief were found to be the product and building tools of the coach-athlete relationship. As Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002) indicate, trust and respect grew because of a better relationship. This relationship was enhanced when coaches showed or told the athlete they trusted, respected and believed in their abilities. Coaches of elite team and individual sports also acknowledged the importance of trust and respect as crucial for connecting with athletes and getting the best out of them during training and competition (Jones & Brewer, 2004; Potrac & Purdy, 2004).

For Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002), a positive relationship occurs when coaches and athletes intentionally interact with each other during practice, competitions and in other situations not directly related to their sport. They enjoy spending time together on both a personal and professional level. Findings from research with one professional football (soccer) coach support these ideals (Potrac et al., 2002). This coach indicated that getting to know each athlete as a person assisted in the provision of an environment that was stimulating, comfortable and enjoyable while also generating greater commitment from his athletes (Potrac et al., 2002). Research carried out with Olympic rowing coaches and athletes from Canada also revealed that the positive personal rapport
coaches had with their athletes was a very important factor of effective coaching (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003).

According to Baker, Côté, and Hawes (2000), negative relationships or negative personal rapport between the coach and athlete have a detrimental impact on performance. Furthermore, Scantling and Lackey (2005) observed that poor player-coach relations was the most common reason for dismissing high school coaches in the American state of Nebraska over the last 30 years. In Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002), negative relationships occurred when relationships were solely based on working towards specific goals. In this setting, there was limited interaction between athlete and coach because they did not make any effort to communicate or spend time on non-sport activities. This is noteworthy because many authors noted the importance of not becoming too friendly with their athletes in order to maintain respectful working relationships (Bloom, 1996b; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones, 2004a; Jones & McKenzie, 2004; Sedgwick, Côté, & Dowd, 1997). For example, the national team coach for the New Zealand women’s netball team believed in keeping a social distance from the players because this made difficult decisions, such as choosing the squad, a little easier (Jones & McKenzie, 2004). Furthermore Cassidy et al. (2004) suggest, being best mates with the athletes did not guarantee excellence in participation.

Despite the importance of establishing mutual respect and rapport amongst athletes and coaches, it is clear that ambiguity still exists in relation to the most suitable type of coach-player relationship in sport settings. If a coach does not interact positively with the team, the effectiveness of instruction and player application to training may be undermined. Furthermore, Reimer and Chelladurai (1998) point out that the coach-athlete relationship is
very important because a satisfied athlete is a necessary pre-requisite for athletes to perform at the highest level.

Jones (2004a) argue that additional qualitative research in a professional setting regarding how the coach and athlete connect, bond and generally get on with each other would provide a deeper understanding of effective coach-athlete relationships. In addition, Poczwardowski and colleagues (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Perego, 2002) note that systematic research on athlete-coach relationships only measures certain aspects of this phenomenon. In regards to this, previous researchers recommend that future investigations should address coaches’ individual interpretations of their experiences through in-depth qualitative interviews (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Perego, 2002). Determining what coaching behaviours impact positively or negatively on coach-player relationships forms an important part of this research.

2.11.2.2 Team Cohesion

Previous research defines cohesiveness as a group member’s tendency to maintain commitment to the group’s aims and where group members like each other (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004). Kidman & Hanrahan (2004) believe team cohesion is important because it creates more open communication channels, increases levels of trust and respect between athletes, increases satisfaction, and contributes to improved team performances. In 2005, Shoenfelt et al. claimed that taking a group of individual athletes and building them into a cohesive unit was one of the most challenging tasks faced by coaches in any team sport.
According to previous research, cohesiveness develops through various mechanisms such as establishing team goals and cultivating ownership of these goals by involving support staff and players in the planning process (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004; Mack & Gammage, 1998). In a Canadian study that investigated coach considerations for building an effective team, Mack and Gammage (1998) found that the coach should introduce group norms in consultation with athletes and aim for the group leaders to demonstrate the behaviours to the rest of the team. This includes outlining the consequences of team norm violation. Similar to the earlier notions of empowerment (see Kidman, 2001), consulting players when developing a team vision increased their commitment to the team’s ideals.

Bloom, Stevens, and Wickwire (2003) carried out qualitative interviews with a group of Canadian intercollegiate coaches to discover their perceptions of team building strategies. These coaches believed in and implemented team building activities because they felt that a stronger bond amongst the team resulted in better performances. The coaches in this study indicated that there were no activities which immediately bound a group together, however, a number of carefully planned social, physical or psychological team building activities at crucial times of the season were thought to enhance the cohesiveness of these university teams (Bloom et al., 2003). Their research, along with various other research projects developed a number of similar strategies to enhance team cohesion (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Desjardins, 1996; Moraes, 1996). These are summarised in Table 6:
Despite the detail provided by previous research in relation to how coaches enhance team cohesion, there is limited information from the players’ perspective regarding effective strategies to develop this. Furthermore, many of the strategies outlined arose in collegiate sport contexts may be different to those required in professional environments. Therefore, research conducted in a professional sport setting is needed in order to investigate how coaches develop relationships within the team. This could take into consideration the quality of interpersonal relationships in order to gain greater insight into the characteristics of the relationships players prefer in the team setting (Wylleman, 2000).

### 2.11.3 Learning Environment

Research in both teaching (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Siedentop, 1991) and coaching (Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2004) highlights that the learning environment is crucial for maximising student and player potential. In addition, previous researchers demonstrate that the interpersonal dimension of the coaching process and

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<th>Table 6: List of Strategies to Develop Team Cohesion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Team dinners</td>
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<td>Initiations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going for ten kilometre runs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions of variables integral to team success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity in attitude about performance goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for player behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes of conduct for practice, games and external sports contexts</td>
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learning environment is wide-ranging in its impact on coach effectiveness, player satisfaction, and coach and player roles (Bloom, 1996b, Lyle, 2002). Understanding how learning environments are established and maintained in a variety of professional sports forms a major part of this investigation.

In one significant research project on the development of talent, Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) conducted a comprehensive four-year study that scrutinised more than 200 teenagers in the United States. They examined talent in five areas – art, athletics, mathematics, music and science. Importantly, Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) acknowledged that most effective teachers provided a supportive learning environment that enabled students to maximise their potential. The teachers supported and genuinely cared about their students’ interests and development. This helped create a stimulating environment for learning where teachers were creative, worked collaboratively with co-workers and continually challenged students to develop their skills to a higher standard. In summary, Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) established that teachers who formed an atmosphere in which students felt inspired and supported had the greatest influence on their students’ development.

In several recent studies, researchers investigated the nature of the practice environment and coaching behaviours exhibited during training. From this, they provided recommendations for creating an appropriate learning environment to maximise athlete development (Chambers & Vickers, 2006; Patterson & Lee, 2008; Vickers, Reeves, Chambers, & Martell, 2004). In Canada, Vickers et al. (2004) conducted observations of experienced coaches from a variety of team and individual sports to determine whether the decision training approach had any impact on athlete performances. The decision training
approach included tools such as random and variable practice, the use of questioning and drills, or a sequence of drills that simulate competition conditions along with cognitive skills required to solve a problem or make the correct decision (Chambers & Vickers, 2006; Vickers et al., 2004). This is similar to the way Metzler (2000) describes both the inquiry and tactical games teaching approach. Rather than showing and telling students what to do, the inquiry approach requires the teacher to use a series of questions to prompt student engagement in both the cognitive and psychomotor domains. The tactical games model encourages teachers to plan a series of learning activities in game-like contexts to develop student skills and tactical knowledge in smaller versions of the game (Metzler, 2000).

Vickers et al. (2004) found that for athletes from a variety of developmental levels (beginner to Olympic representative) and age groups (11-30 years old), improvements in motor performance occurred when coaches used decision training methods to increase cognitive effort and decision-making during training. Similarly, Chambers & Vickers (2006) found that notable improvements in swimming technique and race times resulted when coaches of 14-17 year old swimmers delayed feedback and replaced this with questions. A recent qualitative research (Jones & Brewer, 2004) interview with international rugby coach Ian McGeechan supported this notion. McGeechan indicated that he attempted to contextualise practice sessions by replicating specific game situations, as he believed this enhanced the players’ fundamental game skills and strategies (Jones & Brewer, 2004). This evidence highlights that providing fewer direct instructional comments during training as well as the opportunity to practise game-specific situations encourages athletes to become more dynamically connected to the learning process.
According to Patterson and Lee (2008), when coaches make fewer comments, players become more actively engaged in the learning process as they independently detect and correct their own errors during performance. They recommend that decreasing the provision of feedback as either the practice session progresses, or as performers increase skill proficiency, or by presenting feedback in the form of a summary after a certain number of trials reduces the players’ dependency on the coach in the learning process and encourages players to self-regulate good and bad performance. To a certain extent, this argument covers the needs of both the novice and experienced performers by acknowledging the need for more frequent feedback early in sessions or with those who possess fewer skills before reducing the frequency of feedback as the session progresses and skill level increases.

While research in the decision training area is in its infancy, the findings suggest that the coaching behaviour during practice, as well as the nature of the activities practised, may be shifting from the traditional forms of coach-directed instructions as found in observational research using systematic instruments concluded in the 1970s-1990s. Lacy and Martin (1994) claim that the issue of how athletes spend their time in practices is important for understanding what constitutes coaching effectiveness. In the current research, observational data are expected to provide detailed information regarding the context of training where the coach’s role and tasks carried out by the players are identified.

2.11.3.1 Positive Environment

Various authors (Armour; Cushion; Jones; Jones & Brewer; Jones & McKenzie; Potrac; Potrac & Brewer; Potrac & Purdy, all 2004) contributed to a significant and recent book on effective coaching compiled by Jones, Armour, & Potrac (2004) called Sports
Coaching Cultures. This text examines the ways in which individual life and career experiences influence coaching styles and personal beliefs about effective coaching. Through qualitative interviews; these authors explore definitions, qualities and behaviours of effective coaching through the eyes of expert male and female team (soccer, rugby, basketball, netball) and individual (track and field, swimming) sports coaches. One of the key themes to emerge from Sports Coaching Cultures is that effective coaches provide a positive and supportive environment, which reflects an important element of effective teaching (Bell, 1998; Siedentop, 1991). In fact, Siedentop (1991) highlights that in order to construct a positive learning environment, an effective teacher conducts the class in a clear, warm and enthusiastic manner.

The coaches involved in the Jones et al. (2004) book reveal that a positive and supportive environment is created by appearing relaxed and confident, getting to know individual athletes and attending to their needs as well as developing positive relationships with athletes. These findings concur with Potrac et al. (2002) who found that one professional football (soccer) coach felt that in order to be perceived as effective, he needed to establish a positive learning environment in which he could be regarded as easily approachable and able to relate to his players as both footballers and, more importantly, as people. Similarly, the expert golf coaches in the Schempp et al. (2004) research display behaviours associated with “creating informative, active, accepting, and positive instructional environments” (p. 69). The coaches in both these studies reveal that players respond better to positive comments from the coach, as negative comments were believed to be totally unproductive and harmful to the all-important athlete-coach relationship.
These findings are supported by recent research carried out by Horton et al. (2005, cited in Horton & Deakin, 2008, p. 83) who suggest that while Canadian national team coaches are highly demanding of their players in relation to effort and intensity, they also create a practice environment rich in praise and encouragement. In sum, coaches from a variety of sports indicate that positive feedback or praise are crucial to developing a positive learning environment (Jones, 2004b; Potrac et al., 2002; Schempp et al., 2004).

The athletic trainers (equivalent to strength and conditioning coaches) interviewed by Malasarn, Bloom, & Crumpton (2002) suggested that elements such as loyalty, caring about athletes, exhibiting a passion for the job and exuding a strong work ethic promote a learning environment that allows athletes to grow. They enable this by allowing athletes to take risks, make mistakes and by guiding them in the right direction. Similarly, the elite coaches interviewed in the Jones et al. (2004) book reveal that some of the key responsibilities of a coach involve caring for players (by knowing and acknowledging personal details of the athletes), creating a stable environment in which players feel relaxed and secure, and providing support both on and off the field. Showing concern for both the athletic and personal development of athletes enables coaches in Jones (2004b) to establish working climates whereby athletes respect the coach as a competent professional and a person. This was especially important for Bob Dwyer, an acclaimed international rugby coach. Dwyer (cited in Armour, 2004a, p. 107-108) believed that:

... the total environment is essential and is affected by what you do both on and off the pitch. It’s about developing a sense of confidence, self-worth and well-being in players which can have a real impact on them and their performance.
Dwyer’s comments support previous research which indicates that a coach needs to possess an interest in the overall development of each of their athletes both on and off the field (Bloom, 1996a; Mack & Gammage, 1998; Sabock, 1973). An understanding of their athlete’s academic achievements, conduct, problems, concerns, successes and the lives they lead outside the sporting environment is essential. Ultimately, coaches need to know players as individuals and be able to view the world from their perspectives (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2004).

According to Kidman and Hanrahan (2004), one of the hallmarks of successful coaches is that they guide their athletes by establishing well-defined boundaries with enough room for the athletes to expand and grow. In fact Lyle (2002) states that the key factor is the quality of the interpersonal relationship that does not stifle creative thought, depersonalise the athlete, abuse the authority of expertise or become one-dimensional. All the coaches in the Jones et al. (2004) study emphasised the need for detailed preparation and specific delineation of roles for athletes. Essentially, these coaches recommended that athletes and coaches should establish specific yet flexible goals whilst ensuring that players understand their individual and team roles both on and off the field. This was thought to be vital for building athlete confidence, providing a clear sense of purpose and improving performance overall (Jones, et al., 2004).

Previous research indicates that coaches should aim to create a learning environment where athletes are encouraged to pursue excellence in a manner that allows them to learn and grow to reach their potential (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004; Malasarn et al., 2002; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). Kidman and colleagues (Kidman, 2001; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004) highlight the importance of such behaviour, as they believe it increases the
commitment of athletes because of the greater investment they had in the process. This type of environment is similar to the way in which Metzler (2000) describes peer teaching. In the peer-teaching context, the teacher creates a learning environment in which some students carry out many of the key operations of instruction to assist other students in the learning process. Kellett’s (1999) research with professional AFL coaches demonstrates further evidence of coaches aiming to develop a similar context to the peer-teaching concept.

Based on 20 in-depth interviews with head coaches from AFL teams, Kellett (1999) found that the core task of the coach is not to teach or direct but to create and maintain an environment that supports shared development of skills and teamwork. She describes the learning environment as a place that provides opportunities for players to develop themselves. For example, one coach in her study mentioned that the senior players conducted team meetings with the head coach merely overseeing operations. Similarly, Ian McGeechan (international rugby union coach) advised that involving players in discussions regarding team directions encouraged a sense of empowerment amongst the team members (Jones & Brewer, 2004). In such cases, the head coach became more of a facilitator who encourages input from support staff and the athletes themselves. In this role, the coach became more of an advisor, mentor and source of information rather than strictly a director of the coaching process in order to encourage players to work together in a mutually supportive and reinforcing atmosphere (Jones et al., 2004).

Previous research has paid little attention to the development and maintenance of the learning environment, instead focusing on coach behaviour. This is because the evidence required to describe features of the learning environment (such as interpersonal
exchanges) has not suited the predominant behavioural research paradigm (Lyle, 2002). This interaction will be a major component of the current study when the coaches and athletes are observed in action. As Pensgaard & Roberts (2002) note, in-depth studies of the team climate in elite sport provides researchers, coaches and administrators with important information about what a productive climate should emphasise and ultimately, how to create athlete-friendly-contexts in major sport competitions.

### 2.12 Summary of Interpersonal Coaching Skills and the Learning Environment

An effective environment is one that is educational, supportive, fun and challenging for athletes (Jones et al., 2004) and ensures that athletes feel a sense of acceptance and belonging (Lynch, 2001). Recent research with professional coaches (Armour, 2004a; Armour, 2004b; Jones & Brewer, 2004; Jones et al. 2004; Kellett, 1999; Potrac & Brewer, 2004) presents empirical support for the notion that a positive learning environment enhances athlete performance.

There are many components which make an optimal environment for athletes to learn, interact and develop both physical and personal skills. This environment is most effective when coaches and athletes work collaboratively in planning and goal setting to provide expectations and boundaries for the team. Côté & Salmela (1996) suggest that in order to understand this area of the coaching process, researchers need to observe coaches in their natural settings to provide an insight into how they deal with athletes’ personal concerns. In addition to this, the researchers argue that few studies provide an in-depth examination of coaches’ organisational knowledge and strategies that are drawn upon in
order to make the optimal use of training and competition settings. Importantly, they also recognise the value of including athletes’ perceptions of coaching. One of the main aims of the current research project is to establish how coaches develop an effective environment for their athletes to develop their physical, social, psychological, and life skills. The benefits of such developments will be scrutinised in order to understand why these strategies are effective.

According to Potrac et al. (2002), coaches operate as social beings within a social environment in which the coaching process is inextricably linked to both the constraints and opportunities of human interaction. Sociological analysis of coaching practice is a largely underdeveloped and under-researched area (Potrac & Jones, 1999) and currently there is a paucity of research which relates to coaching in the social world (Potrac et al., 2002). While many authors cite the need to investigate the realities of human interaction (Lyle, 2002; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac et al., 2000; Potrac et al., 2002), there is an opportunity for more thorough examinations of the social and contextual portions of the coaching process to take place. The current research project aims to provide clear contextual evidence of not only what coaches and athletes consider an effective learning environment to be, but also how these environments are developed and maintained over time.

2.13 Summary of Literature Review

Considering the aim of this project is to provide contextual evidence of effective coaching, a thorough review of previous literature is necessary. Initially, researchers used quantitative surveys to investigate leadership in sport. Following this, researchers carried out systematic observations of coach behaviour to understand the frequency and timing of behaviours exhibited by coaches during training and competition. More recently, there has
been the expansion of research investigating the coaching process, as well as the pedagogical and social aspects of coaching using qualitative interviews and mixed methods to provide a holistic perspective of effective coaching. It is the latter style of research that is most relevant to the current thesis given the aim is to provide a holistic overview of effective coaching in Australia.

Despite the fact that no generally agreed definition of coaching effectiveness exists, past research indicates that effective coaching behaviours vary according to the contextual status of those involved in the sports environment. Due to the various research strategies employed to examine coaching effectiveness, much of the previous research has restricted attention to a few measures of effectiveness. Indeed, Kahan (1999) noted that systematic observation research, for example, is “incongruous with and insensitive to the peculiarities of coaching and the unique conditions under which coaches act” (p. 42). Whilst such inquiries have provided valuable knowledge regarding the pedagogical interventions utilised by coaches in training and competition (Potrac et al., 2002), insight into the contextual and social factors that underpin and impinge upon coach behaviour has not been achieved (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Kahan, 1999; Potrac et al., 2002). With the prominence of sport in today’s society, further research is necessary in order to keep pace with the trends of contemporary coaching practice and in particular, the contextual nature of the coaching process.

It is worth highlighting that previous research into effective coaching has produced mixed results. Coaching research has not been at the forefront of academic agendas in the professional sport environment, nor within the Australian context. Given that sports systems in other parts of the world differ from those within the Australian context, results
may vary in relation to perceptions of effective coaching. Alternatively, similar perspectives could emerge, thus strengthening pre-existing knowledge about effective coaching.

Over time, researchers have consistently called for studies with experienced and successful athletes and coaches to identify the key principles employed by coaches in order to incorporate these concepts into educational programs (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990; Griffin, 1925; Kellett, 1999). Although research into coaching has increased considerably during the last two decades, an area of relative neglect has been that of the professional coach (Cushion & Jones, 2001). Indeed Gilbert (2002) contends that the accumulation of behavioural knowledge in relation to coaching has largely been focused on amateur sport, while its professional counterpart has been somewhat ignored.

After a review of previous literature pertinent to effective coaching, it emerged that few research projects had unequivocally examined the total coaching environment in order to ascertain beliefs and actions reflective of effective coaching in professional team sports. The call to coach holistically has gained credence in recent years and such a stance recognises the social nature of coaching and the need to ensure the rounded development of athletes (Jones, 2006). In fact, Wylleman (2000) claimed that as late as 1995, a more complete overview of sports coaching could only be gained by corroborating research from the fields of sport psychology, sport sociology, and sport pedagogy.

Previous research cited the need for future studies of the coaching process to examine the coach’s goals to see if they include sporting, educational and personal goals for the athletes (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). Essentially, they wanted to know if the holistic development of athletes
was a concern for all coaches, a concern addressed in the current research on effective coaching. Hence, there is a need to observe the behaviours and listen more closely to the voices of professional coaches and players in order to gain a more complete understanding of the challenges faced by coaches (Giaccobi et al., 2002) in this context. This was taken into account when constructing the current project and reflects the suitability of conducting qualitative research to provide a holistic investigation of effective coaching. The aim is to understand the types of things that drive coaching programs and provide details regarding how coaches carry out their daily role.

The topic of effective coaching featured prominently in leadership research and systematic observation of coach behaviour. In comparison, there has been limited research that focuses on the perceptions and meanings of both players and coaches with respect to this phenomenon. This is despite the recent advancement of qualitative research on the coaching process. This justifies the need for a contemporary and holistic investigation of effective coaching within the Australian professional sport context.

The current research project aims to extend previous research in coaching conducted with expert individual and team sports coaches and (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Poczwardowski, Barott & Henschen, 2002), Canadian university team sports coaches (Vallée & Bloom, 2005), Australian coaches (Kellett, 1999) and various elite coaches (Jones et al., 2003, Jones et al., 2004) from a qualitative perspective. Rather than focus on one isolated part of the coaching process, such as the coach’s leadership style or behaviours during training, the current thesis aims to expand the existing database of effective coaching literature by gaining insight into the perceptions and practice of professional coaches and players involved in team sport in Australia.
The next chapter justifies the methodological choices underpinning this project and outlines the data collection and analysis processes.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the qualitative framework for the project and verifies the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and the methods for data collection and analysis. The first part of this chapter explains the underlying research tradition and justifies the multi-mode case study approach used to explore the research questions. The second section discusses the sampling techniques and professional sample used in the study. This followed by a description of the various stages of the research process, which includes an overview of the observation and interview strategies employed. The next section of this chapter classifies the methods used for analysing the data and acknowledges some of the trustworthiness issues related to the project. The final part of the chapter highlights examples from the pilot study and concludes by identifying the ethical considerations for the current research. The research parameters and limitations of this thesis are addressed in Chapter 8.

3.1 Qualitative Research Traditions

This project investigates perceptions of effective coaching and observed coaching behaviours in Australian professional team sport environments. The study aims to provide a rich description and interpretation of the participants’ feelings, thoughts, emotions and beliefs about those experiences. Whilst quantitative research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, qualitative research attempts to capture the individual’s point of view and examines the constraints of everyday life to secure rich descriptions of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).
Qualitative research traditions are committed to emic, idiographic, case-based positions, which direct their attention to specific details of particular instances (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This research style should be measured using words, statements and other non-numerical channels that generate the data from the viewpoint of the participant. Detailed and personalised responses where the participants create their own definitions of effectiveness are required, rather than research which focuses on pre-determined definitions that request participants to rate their beliefs on a scale. As such, a qualitative paradigm guided the research framework, in order to address the research question and focus areas outlined in Chapter 1.

3.2 Orientation of the present research

Within the field of qualitative research, there are different interpretations of ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological practices (cf. Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). These resources were consulted to help direct parts of the research process. However, the aim of this chapter is not to critique their philosophical stance. Rather, the purpose is to demonstrate and justify what guided the decisions regarding the current research strategy. Crotty (1998) listed a series of steps that helped guide the philosophical underpinnings of a qualitative research project. In the case of the current research, Crotty’s (1998) work was utilised because of its clear explanation of the ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods associated with qualitative research. These are addressed below.
3.2.1 Ontology

According to Crotty (1998), ontology sits alongside the epistemology to inform the theoretical perspective because each theoretical perspective embodies an understanding of what is (ontology) as well as what it means to know (epistemology). The theories of relativism and realism, which recognise that different people hold differing viewpoints of the world, underpin the ontological position of this project. This reflects diverse ways of thinking and knowing, and distinguishes varied sets of meanings and realities (Crotty, 1998). This is an important point because it allows individual opinions to emerge by engaging both professional coaches and players from different team sports in Australia in the research process. Further to this, coaches and players with a variety of experience (from early career to veterans) were included in the sample in order to investigate a broad range of perceptions regarding effective coaching.

3.2.2 Epistemology

According to Crotty (1998), constructionism advocates that in the understanding of knowledge, people construct meanings in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Constructionism explains that there are multiple realities and truths whereas an objective approach maintains that only one truth exists (Crotty, 1998). In order to gain as broad a perspective as possible, participants were asked (in the interviews) to review all their experiences with a variety of coaches in order to establish their ‘meaningful reality’ in relation to effective coaching. The aim here was to elicit descriptions from the different contexts which participants had previously experienced in their sport careers as each situation may have influenced their construction of ‘effective’ coaching. Each participant’s response was therefore treated as uniquely developed and based on personal experiences.
and needs.

### 3.2.3 Theoretical Perspective

This present study aims to make sense out of coach and athlete perceptions of effective coaching while also providing an understanding of coaching as a complex social phenomenon. As interpretive research attempts to explore and uncover meaning, values, and explanations while also identifying and explaining any emerging concepts (Schwandt, 2000), it is a suitable approach for research into perceptions of effective coaching. A positivist approach follows the methods of natural sciences by the way of allegedly value-free, detached observation in seeking to identify universal features of humanity and society (Schwandt, 2000) and thus is not appropriate for the current research.

Poczwardowski, Barott and Peregoy (2002) argue that the aim of interpretivism is to understand the world of experience from the point of view of those who live in it. Ultimately, this brings forth concepts that a positivist approach might miss (Gratton & Jones, 2004) and enables greater insight into the natural settings in which professional coaching takes place. An interpretive approach is therefore the most apposite strategy to uncover the concepts that are most important to participants regarding effective coaching. The interpretivist approach shaped this research project as it looked for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world in the form of participants’ individual interpretations and perceptions of effective coaching.

Key to determining perceptions of what makes a coach effective is understanding why and how professional coaches enact these strategies. In his 1998 text, Crotty describes phenomenology as part of the theoretical perspective associated with interpretive research. Since the aim of this project is to investigate complex issues such as perceptions of effective
coaching, player-coach relationships, and the team environment, a combination of phenomenological and grounded theory approaches were thought to be the most appropriate way to explore each individual’s experiences. These approaches assist in generating theory regarding what effective coaches do as well as providing information on how and why they carry out certain actions.

Phenomenology examines how people give meaning to their experiences, and provides greater potential for detailed insight into participants’ encounters with effective coaches. Commentary on the methodological perspective (Patton, 2002; Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004) and research with players and coaches (Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregy, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006) indicates that a phenomenological approach uncovers a particular phenomenon and the complexity of structures associated with that experience from the perspective of the participant or those involved. As a result, a phenomenological investigation requires participants to express personal experiences regarding their perceptions of the research topic. This phenomenological strategy enables coaches and players to express their opinions in an amicable forum based on personal accounts.

3.2.4 Methodology

The current study employs a multidimensional case study method based on the methodological framework outlined by Robert K. Yin (1994, 2003). Cohen et al. (2000) indicates that the paradigm most suited to case study research is that which emphasises the interpretive and subjective dimensions of phenomena – two key features of this research. According to previous researchers, the case study approach is a comprehensive research strategy that provides methodological strategies for design, analysis and reporting (see
Freebody, 2003; Silverman, 2006; and Yin, 1994, 2003).

Case studies present situations in ways that are not always prevalent in numerical analysis by investigating complex, dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors unique to specific situations (Cohen et al., 2000). The case study methodology enables the researcher to uncover contextual conditions and meaningful characteristics that are pertinent to the phenomenon under investigation. This is because case study research examines the dynamics of situations and people with the focus on the significance of events and meaning rather than frequency, as in quantitative traditions (Yin, 1994, 2003). In case studies, researchers strive to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, providing participants’ lived experiences, thoughts about and feelings for a situation. Furthermore, the case study methodology engenders a holistic understanding of life events and relationships with a particular group, organisation, sports team or individual (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Yin, 1994, 2003).

Multidimensional case study research is useful for assessing a coach’s knowledge and their practical application of coaching skills. Studying the components of effective coaching based on a case-by-case scenario provides great clarity regarding the similarities and differences exhibited across different professional sport teams and codes. In fact, Yin (1994, 2003) claims that case study research allow perceptions of important events and situations to speak for themselves. This is an important feature of this research and is the reason why observation techniques are included.

3.3 Sampling

For qualitative fieldwork involving case study evidence, Stake (2000) recommends a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also known as purposeful or criterion-
Based sampling, involves selecting participants because they serve a purpose to the objectives of the researcher and cover contextual conditions highly pertinent to the area of study (Cohen et al., 2000; Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003). Thus, it was important to select the most appropriate participants who could provide detailed insights about particular experiences within the coaching process. An example of the recruitment process can be found in Appendix B.

Previous research focusing on expert gymnastic coaches (Côté et al., 1995a; Irwin, et al., 2004), expert team sport participants (Bloom, 1996a), successful Australian junior elite coaches (Walsh, 2004), university athletes and coaches (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and Olympic and World champion rowers and coaches (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) neglects the professional sport sample. Research that includes participants from ongoing professional competitions (e.g. National Leagues) rather than one-off events (such as Olympic Games and World Championships) needs more attention. This is because players in team sports might respond differently from their coaches in comparison to athletes and coaches from individual sports (Hastie, 1993). In addition, the elements that affect performance over a sustained period (i.e. a 26-week season as compared to a 3-week Olympic tournament) might have different implications for perceptions of effective coaching. To expand on pre-existing knowledge in the area of effective coaching, researchers need to scrutinise a diverse range of sports and participants.

The present research included players and coaches in the sample to gain detailed information regarding the topic of effective coaching. This is important because it allowed individual opinions to surface by engaging different sport teams as well as coaches and
players in the research process. Previous research (Kuga, 1993; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) demonstrates that including coaches and players in the sample is integral to gathering a holistic account of effective coaching. In support, Smoll and Smith (1989) show that coaches possess limited awareness of how frequently they engage in certain behaviours and players often provide descriptions of coach behaviours that are more accurate. As a result, the current study examined the practical realities of the coach through the multiple perspectives of two key participants (players and coaches) in conjunction with live data from the observations.

3.4 Participants

The sample in the present study includes professional male coaches and players who currently work with teams that compete at a national league level (or equivalent) in Australia. These players and coaches train and compete in Australia (and abroad) at the highest possible league level and at the level below international stage (i.e. national representation). National League tournaments run on a weekly basis over a minimum four months. Utilising current coaches and players enabled concurrent evaluation of their performance rather than just relying on retrospective accounts from previous experiences at a professional level.

At the time the research project was constructed, professionalism in sport had not expanded to the realms of all national league sports in Australia. This was particularly evident in women’s sport where currently only one professional, full-time team sport competition exists (Netball’s ANZ Championship, established in 2008). Some of the women’s coaches and players work professionally (they train and compete full time and are paid to do so); however, most carry out their participation in a semi-professional manner. As a
result, no female sport teams were included in the sample.

Although six professional male team sport codes exist within Australia, for this project accessibility issues meant that the sample was limited to cricket, rugby union and rugby league. A variety of codes were chosen rather than concentrating on three teams from the one sports code despite the focus on single sport contexts for many significant studies in the past (e.g. Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995 with gymnasts; Côté and Sedgwick, 2003 with rowers; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000 with ice hockey; Kellett, 1999 with AFL coaches). While research with three teams from the one sport would have provided the project with some uniformity, I believed that a cross-code investigation would give a broader perspective on the topic of effective coaching and provide an opportunity to see if differences of opinion existed across professional sporting codes within Australia.

The only condition required for participation in the present study was that the teams involved were participating in a professional national league sport competition in Australia. Rather than entrust the professional sample to enlighten us as authorities on the topic of effective coaching, the aim in this research was to gain insight into the perceptions of professional coaches and players from a range of playing or coaching experience (e.g. first year rookie to ten-year veteran) and compare their perspectives from experiences over time.

Other research projects have used years (e.g. 10 years) and hours (e.g. 10,000 hours) experience as a basis for validating the views of their ‘expert’ participants (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). Such parameters were not included as criteria for entry into this project. This is because some coaches and players considered elite (e.g. coach or played in high performance settings), successful (e.g. won
premierships) or effective at the national league level may not have accumulated the ten years or ten thousand hours required to reach high levels of expertise as defined by previous research (e.g. Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). Ultimately, the purpose of the present research was to determine whether professional coaches and players with a variety of experience levels shared similar or different perceptions of effective coaching.

Only team sports were included in this sample, as few professional national league competitions for individual sport exist in Australia. For a detailed description of each team’s context (i.e. level of competition; specific details regarding coach and player age or experience; and time commitment to training and competition) refer to Appendix C. Appendix C was created in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the participant details and provide clarity regarding how Australian professional sport teams function.

The players volunteered for the interview sessions whereas observations included the entire squad of players. The sample included a balance of early career (i.e. in their first two years of participation in professional sport) and experienced (i.e. eight to ten years participation) and players from a variety of positions within the team (e.g. in rugby union, a mixture of forwards and backs) in order to investigate a broad range of perceptions regarding effective coaching. Furthermore, assistant and head coaches were included in the sample as perceptions of effective coaching held by coaching staff might differ based on their role within the team.

Coaches and players from the following summer and winter team sports were recruited to participate in the current research: National Rugby League (NRL), Super 14 Rugby (rugby union), and the Sheffield Shield, One-day and Twenty-20 competitions (men’s
national cricket league). Three male, professional sport teams participated in the present study. Six coaches – two each from Rugby League (RL), Rugby Union (RU) and Cricket (CR) – and 25 players (RL=10; RU=7; CR=8) were involved in the interview process. There were between two and seven full time coaches as well as between 11 and 30 players who were observed during training or competition. A total of 41 observation sessions were conducted with 13 in three weeks at rugby union, 16 across five weeks in rugby league, and 12 in four weeks for cricket. Refer to Appendix E for timetable of the dates and times for each interview and observation.

3.5 Methods

The data collection process involved observation (including detailed field notes) and semi-structured interviewing. Previous research successfully employed such methods in both team (Potrac et al., 2002) and individual sport (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002) contexts. These methods provided detailed information for me as the researcher, and enabled a more personalised examination of professional coaching practices. This type of data collection enabled me to gain an insight into how professional teams operate on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Furthermore, observational data made it possible to gather supplementary evidence to assist with the understanding of whether participants’ perceptions matched the coaches’ behaviours in real-life coaching situations.

3.5.1 Observations

Unobtrusive methods (Gratton & Jones, 2004), such as non-participant observation, allow the researcher to observe the phenomenon directly in real time, in the natural setting, thereby identifying specific behaviours not be identified by other methods (e.g. survey
research). Furthermore, observations enable researchers to discover things that participants may not freely talk about in interview situations. Observation techniques also gather information about the context observed (Burns, 2000), meaning that I was not wholly relying on retrospective reports of people’s behaviour (as is the case with questionnaires and interviews). As a result, I was able to gather data based on what professional coaches do, or how they potentially act, in a manner they considered effective. Observational data also enabled me to view both coach and player reactions to the activities at training and the way in which both parties communicated. These data, as indicated previously, provided useful supplementary evidence to the perceptions of coaches and players involved in the study.

Observations can be (a) highly structured – where researchers know in advance what they are looking for; (b) semi structured – where there is an agenda of issues to be examined, or (c) unstructured – where researchers observe what takes place before deciding on its significance (Cohen et al., 2000). Although structured observations have been employed extensively in coach effectiveness research in the past (see Bloom et al., 1998; Cushion, & Jones, 2001; Lacy, & Darst, 1985; Lacy, & Goldston, 1990; Moser, 1992; Tharp, & Gallimore, 1976; Vangucci et al., 1997), the hypothesis testing, frequency count, and rigid nature of these instruments are not suited to the purpose of the current study. Furthermore, structured observations neglect critical incidents that are not part of the schedule or are beyond the scope of the instrument.

As I was interested in broad descriptions of the actions which took place in training, meetings and competition environments, semi-structured observations are most suitable. Unlike unstructured observations, this type of observation technique directed my field notes
yet also enabled flexibility in the research process. Furthermore, semi-structured observations provided the opportunity to delineate detailed descriptions of all events in the context observed rather than focusing on strict elements or incidents from a structured schedule.

The observations primarily focused on the first three of the four settings outlined by Morrison (1993 cited Cohen et al., 2000, p. 305): 1) physical – physical environment; 2) human – characteristics of individuals or groups; 3) interactional – interactions and pedagogic style and; 4) program – resources. The observation notes provided a detailed explanation of the context in which the coaches and players work. This included a description of training and competitions venues, training and competition times, environmental conditions, and the number of participants. A report on the training activities observed included the style of activity (e.g. physical drills, game oriented scrimmage, and individual technique practice) was also included.

3.5.1.1 Recording the Information from Observations

In order to provide rich contextual data from the observations, I wrote down field notes in a research diary in the form of what I heard, saw, experienced, and thought during the course of collecting and reflecting on the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Observational field notes were recorded in a manner that was based on recommendations from previous research both in qualitative methodology texts (Cohen et al., 2000; Flick, 2006; Patton, 2002) and a research project (Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002) that employed observational techniques to gather data.

The observations recorded both verbal and non-verbal communications, including direct evidence of the actions that preceded communication between player and coach. The
coaches’ communication style (including use and timing of questioning, instructions and provision of feedback), management of the players and planning or organisational skills also came under scrutiny in the observations. Any factors that appeared to affect coaching performance, whether positive or negative (e.g. player misbehaviour), were also noted. Player and coach reactions were listed pre and post interaction.

I constructed an observation guide (see Appendix D) prior to conducting any observations in order to familiarise myself with potential key areas to note in the field. I based this guide on instruments used previously in research on effective coaching research (e.g. Arizona State University Observation Instrument (Lacy & Darst, 1984); the Rugby Union Coaches Observation Instrument (Brewer & Jones, 2002). Although it may seem contradictory to use information from systematic observation instruments, I utilised the categories (i.e. instruction, feedback) rather than the stringent methods (i.e. frequency counts of behaviours using a checklist) to inform and assist with the data collection procedures.

3.5.1.2 Procedure for Observations

Cohen et al. (2000) assert that the key to preventing ethical dilemmas is in establishing good relationships with participants. This, they conclude, develops feelings of rapport, trust and confidence between the researcher and participant. On the day that observations were scheduled to take place, I arrived approximately 15 minutes before each session (whether it be training or a meeting or on match day). I often engaged players and coaches in informal conversations prior to the sessions in order to develop rapport and increase familiarity between the participants and myself. General topics were discussed such as how players thought their performance was going, what they did with their free
time, whether they held any additional jobs or were studying. This process aimed to develop mutual trust and respect between the participants and me.

When training began, I noted the time, number of coaching staff present, as well as player numbers, and type of session (e.g. skill session; defence session; tactical strategy session). I positioned myself within hearing distance (generally within five metres outdoors, indoors this was not a problem), usually to the side of the coach and next to the players, from the moment the coach first addressed the players (i.e. to begin training, gain their attention to start a meeting, or address them prior to a game). Coaches do not generally remain stationary during training sessions or games. I therefore made a particular effort to trail the coach, wherever he went, so that at all times I could hear the coach’s comments to players. I recorded notes in the fieldwork diary as they occurred in the field including the time length for each training task and additional thoughts that came to mind pre, during, or post player or coach action. I repeated this process in all of the observation sessions in order to gain insight into what coaches said and how they behaved during training sessions and games.

Throughout the training sessions, I noted key phrases, abbreviations and words used by the participants in the research diary as they occurred (an example of one observation transcript is available in Appendix E). Not all comments could be recorded during observation sessions due to background noise, the frequency or length of coach comments, and the positioning of the coach (i.e. in the centre of the field or area where training took place). During these times, I did not record the coach’s comments and noted this fact down in the research diary. At the end of each session, I thanked the coaching staff for allowing the observation to take place.
Immediately following observation sessions, I transcribed all hand written notes verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. This transcription also included any additional thoughts or patterns noted throughout the session. The process also assisted with familiarising me with the data and in the preliminary analysis of the information generated. On occasion, useful documentary data (e.g. coach handouts, coach plans, pamphlets given to players, website information about player and coach histories, calendar events) were obtained to develop a greater understanding of what coaching at a professional level involves.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviewing has often been associated with the collection of the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of a phenomenon rather than the ‘how many’ and ‘when’ which are more commonly collected in survey and systematic observation research (Cohen et al., 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2004). In fact, some researchers argue that interviews frequently cover rich topics and are therefore better than questionnaires for handling open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2004). This project aimed to utilise observations (to gather data relevant to ‘what’ and ‘when’) in conjunction with interviews to discover in more detail the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of effective coaching.

Given that the purpose of this research is to illuminate perceptions of effective coaching, semi-structured interviews served the ultimate purpose of allowing for pure information transfer and detailed data collection. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore pertinent information in line with the research questions yet allowed me to probe for additional information from the participants regarding significant topics that were not included on the interview schedule.
As professional sport teams involve many people with limited spare time for involvement with academic research, I aimed to conduct individual interviews with coaching staff and focus group interviews with the players. It was anticipated that the coaches would have more in-depth knowledge of coaching practice and therefore, interviews with the coaching staff would take longer. This is why individual interviews were conducted with the coaches and not the players.

In each of the teams, there were more players than coaches and in order to maximise the amount of information collected in the most efficient manner (mainly to suit the needs of the team), focus group interviews were carried out with multiple players at one time. As focus groups are interactive they allowed for more detailed explanations from participants and the opportunity for respondents to reflect and comment on events that have already occurred (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2004). The focus group sessions consisted of two and four individuals at a time yet the numbers generally depended on player availability to attend sessions during a time that was convenient for them. Six coaches (two participants per team) and 25 players (totalling seven to ten players per team) were interviewed. Individual and focus group interviews lasted from 30 to 87 minutes. On average, each interview session lasted approximately 45 minutes.

### 3.5.2.1 Semi-structured Interview Format

After two weeks in the field or at the completion of the observation period, I carried out interviews with coaches and players in order to explore their perceptions of effective coaching. Carrying out the observations prior to the interviews helped establish rapport with participants and familiarity within the setting. These, according to Burns (2000), are important elements for qualitative interviews to be successful. Berg (1998) and Patton...
(2002) recommended that the sequence of questions should flow from general and descriptive questions to questions that more specifically target the proposed research area. Hence, the thematic categories of the interview schedule followed this protocol in order to explore the professional coach and player experiences regarding effective coaching.

The interview schedules were similar for the players and coaches having been informed by previous research, the main research question and the five focus areas of the current research. The first category focused on coach and athlete perceptions of effective coaching in training, competition and organisation. Questions in this category initially explored the participants’ individual definitions of effective coaching with the aim of generating broad responses from participants in relation to this topic.

The second category attempted to understand how coaches establish and maintain an effective learning environment for their players to develop their skills. Here questions explored issues relating to the extent to which coaches plan, perceptions of effective training sessions, the interpersonal relationships that exist between players and coaches, strategies coaches use to develop rapport with their players, how coaches get to know each athlete as an individual, and how they respond after both good and poor performances. Additionally, team cohesion ideas and strategies were discussed in this section specifically in relation to why coaches and players felt it might be important to develop interpersonal relationships with one another.

The final section provided participants with the opportunity to highlight important points or recap on anything missed during the interview. The interview always ended with the following question: “Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to the topic of effective coaching?” Affectively worded interview questions such as those
beginning with ‘why’ may produce an emotional response as they are often interpreted as antagonistic (Berg, 1998). This may inhibit the subjects from answering freely and as a result, ‘why’ questions were reworded to evoke similar responses in a less intimidating manner. For a full outline of the interview guides, refer to Appendix D.

Overall, the interview attempted to cover a wide range of topics related to effective coaching. The data collected reflects the many different contexts and previous experiences within their sporting careers that influenced the participants’ constructions of effective coaching. Each participant’s response to the phenomenon of effective coaching was treated as uniquely developed as each response was based on personal experiences and personal needs.

3.5.2.2 Procedure for Interview Sessions

I carried out all the individual and focus group interviews at a place (e.g. meeting room at training venue) and time (e.g. prior to training) that suited the participants. This assisted in generating much needed trust and confidence in the research project. The process began with informal conversations with the participants to generate rapport, make the participants feel comfortable and fill in time while waiting for the interview to commence. When the participants were ready to begin the interview, I made preliminary comments about the aims, significance of the study and its potential benefits as well as providing a concise explanation of important ethical issues surrounding the project.

The participants were then invited to review a participant information sheet (see Appendix A) and then read and sign a participant consent form (see Appendix A), before granting permission to continue with the interview. I outlined information regarding the focus of the interview, advised the participants that, with their consent, the sessions would
be audio taped and that notes might be taken concurrently during the interview process. I notified all of the participants that the information gathered would (a) remain confidential, (b) be looked at only by my supervisors and myself, and (c) would be stored safely in a locked cabinet at the University of Sydney.

Researchers in qualitative methodology must also take into account the notion of *inter alia* in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study. *Inter alia* refers to the production of socially acceptable behaviours on behalf of the participants, where they deliberately try to mislead the investigator or provide information that they believe the researcher wishes to record (Burns, 2000). To minimise the possibility of this occurring, I underlined that there would be no right or wrong responses and that I was only interested in the honest, individual views of the participants. I also informed the participants that they could decline to answer any questions and withdraw at any point during the interview.

These preparatory methods aimed to minimise anxiety and foster rapport with participants by constructing a comfortable atmosphere that was conducive to honest and open responses (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Burns, 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2004). During the interviews, I asked questions in a similar manner and provided respondents with comparable clarification of answers (e.g. a nod of the head, ‘mhmm’, and ‘okay’). Overall, I carefully implemented these procedures throughout the entire project. After ensuring that the participants recognised the terms and procedure, the interview began.

Yin (1994, 2003) advises that case studies should be flexible in order to cater for new information generated about the cases. As a result, the interview format in this research project combined what Patton (2002) describes as an interview guide and standardised interview approach. This approach enabled me to specify certain key questions whilst
leaving other items as topics to be explored at my discretion. The implementation of some
standardised questions assisted in making the interview flow more efficiently in its
exploration of effective coaching whilst also ensuring that key concepts relating to the
research question were covered.

During the interview, the order of the questions varied as often the participant
answered more than one question with one statement. This meant that to assist with the
flow of the interview, I did not ask all questions in the precise order of the interview guide.
Furthermore, participants were probed (Patton, 2002) to ensure that what they were saying
was understood, that they had enough time to complete their response, and to explore any
issue or idea which seemed important or needed further clarification. This oral negotiation
of questions and responses during interviews, served to increase the integrity of responses
by participants (Berg, 1998).

Throughout the group interviews, I acted as moderator in order to manage the
dynamics of the group by encouraging all respondents to participate. This meant that group
members generated and discussed an idea which was advantageous because participants
were able to hear each other’s responses and make additional comments beyond their own
original responses as they heard what other people had to say (Berg, 1998; Gratton & Jones,
2004, Patton, 2002). I noticed that if participants were not responding to the immediate
questions or group member responses, they verbally or non-verbally (e.g. nodding) agreed
with other people’s responses. The group negotiation was vital to obtaining collective and
detailed definitions regarding effective coaching. In addition, the group interviews were rich
in data, cost effective in their nature, and seemed to be enjoyable for the participants.

As team sports were investigated, it was assumed that players generally felt
comfortable speaking candidly in front of each other as the majority of meetings are conducted in this format. On occasion, however, I directed questions to those who may not have contributed as often as other members of the group. After the interview, I thanked the participant(s) for their valuable insights and reinforced that their contribution was worthwhile.

3.6 Time in Field

The data collection period lasted nine months from pilot study to the final professional team’s involvement. This lengthy period spent in the field assisted with establishing rigour in the project and developing rapport and good relationships with the participants. The research was conducted during different stages of the season as it was based on a period of time that suited the participants. Although it would have been advantageous to carry out all the research during the same period of the season (e.g. pre-season), this became logistically impossible based on the availability of the participating teams. For each team, I carried out an average of 13 observation sessions over three to five weeks at training sessions, team meetings and games. Individual observation sessions varied in length depending on the nature of sport and time of season. For example, cricket training sessions extended for approximately 2 hours each whilst in rugby league and union, sessions generally lasted 90 minutes.

All of the observations and interviews were conducted in the short space of time rather than over several visits throughout the year. This was due to the limited access imposed by the professional teams on the research process. Although the timeframe may be viewed as problematic, it meant that my presence had a minimal impact on the overall coaching program. Carrying out the research within a three to five week period enhanced
3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a complex process that involves going back and forth between concrete and abstract, inductive and deductive reasoning, description and interpretation (Merriam, 1998). When analysing the data derived from case study interviews, field observations and documents, the range of material provides an intensive and holistic description of phenomena (Merriam, 1998). It is therefore imperative that events and comments are reported and interpreted through the eyes of the participants rather than interpreted, evaluated or judged principally by the researcher (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003; Hardin, 1999).

As a research strategy, the case study incorporates both data collection and analysis. Although Burns (2000) and Yin (1994, 2003) provided various analytic techniques linked to case study projects, Patton (2002) suggested that it is possible to employ any form of qualitative analysis to case study data. Hence, I utilised the constant comparative analytic procedures outlined by previous researchers both methodologically (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and in coaching research (Bloom, 1996a; Côté et al., 1993; Côté et al., 1995b; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Walsh, 2004) to examine the concept of effective coaching.

The present study focused on descriptions of player and coach experiences in relation to effective coaching. The study looked at how the participants’ ideas about effective coaching evolve from individual experiences over time. Given the philosophical stance of this project, I assumed that different informants would share certain experiences across a variety of contexts given that multiple realities (Crotty, 1998) exist in relation to certain sport and coaching situations. I used the participants’ descriptions of coaching
strategies and behaviours to find out what aspects of professional sports coaching were most effective as well as why and how they were considered effective.

The analysis of data involved Grounded Theory (GT) analytic procedures within the framework of phenomenological and constructivist philosophies. These constructs focus on the participants’ subjective meanings regarding their experiences with effective and ineffective coaches over time. GT follows from data rather than preceding it, which means that the researcher does not begin with a theory and attempt to prove it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and whatever is relevant to that research topic is allowed to emerge. This approach aligns with the aims and phenomenological perspective underpinning this project.

Although initially intended by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to be a means of developing theory, the basic strategies outlined in the GT process have evolved and been linked to many other inductive, concept-building research projects (Côté and colleagues 1993, 1995b, 2003) including those that did not seek to build substantive theory (Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, Pidgeon and Henwood (2004) make a distinction between GT research and research using GT. The former is characterised by following the precise procedures outlined by Glaser, Strauss and colleagues (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1994, 1998) whilst the latter pertains to elements of GT that have been used with other ideas from social science research methodologies. In this project, I used GT research strategies rather than conducting GT research. Using the constant comparative analysis process, derived from constructivist approaches to research, I was interested in patterns of action and interaction between and among various types of social units (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998). This aligned with the theoretic framework for the thesis.
Although GT methodology corresponds to the nature of this project, it was unsuitable to employ all of its strategies as an underlying framework. I felt that conducting a background literature review would be beneficial prior to commencing the initial fieldwork tasks – a task not recommend in the strict procedural guidelines of GT. Grounded theorists believe that research should begin almost immediately and with minimal investigation of previous literature. However, the literature review provided me with insight into where researchers focused previous investigations in coaching and thus, where gaps could be examined. In this instance, the case study approach encouraged me to explore these concepts, develop research questions and the most appropriate methods to gather data in the area of effective coaching. As a result, the case study methodology provided guidance mainly for the framework of data collection procedures, the storing of data and in the initial write-up of the project. The analysis of data and generation of a conceptual model employed GT procedures.

The decision to use an analytic technique not specifically linked to the methodology has its inherent risks (e.g. lack of consistency) and leaves the researcher open to criticism for failing to abide by an independent methodology. In this case, however, Côté et al., (1993) provided instruction for this critical part of the research process with a detailed explanation of the procedure required to successfully code, categorise and conceptually link the data in projects topically related to coaching. This is critical as analytic strategies in qualitative research are often blurred and criticised for their lack of rigour.
3.7.1 Procedures for Interpreting the Data

Initially, I transcribed verbatim copies of the interview tapes and observation notes into Microsoft Word\(^1\). This increased my familiarity with the participants and my own subsequent interview performance. I then uploaded the data and saved it in a qualitative software program (NVivo7) to store and assist with the analysis of transcribed data. Côté et al., (1993) explained the importance of using electronic data instruments as opposed to manual measures and reported on how electronic instruments increases the efficiency and consistency of processing data. In the current research, NVivo7 assisted me in tagging and categorising text and decreased the chance of data loss.

I organised all the interview transcripts, field notes and memos for each team into a case study record (Patton, 2002) or database (Yin, 1994, 2003) within the NVivo7 program. This assisted me with cataloguing and locating particular information relevant to intensive data analysis (Merriam, 1998). I was also able to make memos and queries within the NVivo7 files, which assisted in the development of interim categories and linkages between themes.

Multiple case studies involve collecting data from several cases where two stages of analysis often exist – ‘within case’ and ‘cross case’ analysis (Merriam, 1998). Within case analysis gathers data about each case so that the researcher can learn as much as possible about the individual circumstances existent in each case. Therefore, I initially considered each team as an individual case. Once all individual reports were completed, I employed an

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\(^1\) To protect the anonymity of the participating teams, players and coaches, I have only included a limited number of verbatim transcripts from the observation and interview sessions (see Appendix D). Even with the use of pseudonyms, I felt it may be possible to speculate who the participants are based on the comments made during the interview and observation sessions.
interpretative stance in order to uncover how individual meanings, values and actions evolved. After each individual case was analysed, cross-case analysis began, using the same strategies as above, with the aim of building broad explanations across cases (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994, 2003).

In qualitative research, hearing and seeing what others do involves giving voice (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 43) to the participants. This was achieved by representing participants’ responses as accurately as possible. To assist with the interpretive process, the researcher must periodically step back and ask “What is going on here?” and “Does what I think I see fit the reality of the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 45) or as adapted for this research, “What are the participants saying and doing?” and “What do the participants highlight as the most important aspects of effective coaching?” Hence, I regarded initial theoretical explanations as provisional before confirming them later with data from subsequent interviews and observations. Overall, the main attempt was to report findings based on the perspective of those who participated in the study.

Constant comparison is an inductive process whereby categories emerge from the interviews and differ from predetermined (a priori) categories. Bloom (1996) explains that during the constant comparison process, the researcher must compare, contrast, and re-analyse the data to make sure that what is reported accurately details the information from the interviews and observations. This involves several stages including: (a) creating tags, (b) creating properties, (c) creating categories, and (d) developing a conceptual model. Such a procedure enables information to emerge inductively (i.e. from the data) rather than being established prior to data collection and analysis. Although very time efficient, I chose not to auto code using content analysis, because it is not as rigorous and does not enable multiple
layers of analysis.

3.7.1.1 Creating Tags

This procedure begins by identifying *meaning units*. These were established based on text segments that contained one idea that was appropriately coded with a provisional descriptive name (Tesch, 1990; Côté et al., 1993). Using the NVivo7 program, I was able to highlight words, sentences or paragraphs and code these items, which were then automatically transferred into separate ‘free node’ files. The table below was adapted from a segment of the union coach interview to demonstrate the initial coding process:
Table 7: Development of Meaning Units in Rugby Union Coach Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Transcript (union coach)</th>
<th>Meaning Unit Codes (free nodes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew: In relation to building rapport and relationships with the players, how do you go about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing that sort of thing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex: I work from the premise that it’s easy to be liked but hard to be respected so it’s quite</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easy to do things to make players like you but it doesn’t mean they'll necessarily respect you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So you've got to be careful how that looks, so the respect comes from being fair and being able</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ... and when I say fair, honest doesn't mean they have to agree with you, but at least you've</td>
<td>Honest communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have given them a fair hearing and an honest appraisal ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparable information emerged, the same code was re-used and the NVivo7 program automatically collated the new text with the previously developed code. The free nodes were refined and given Tags when illuminating interview content emerged. For example, the meaning units constructive criticism, honest feedback, and positive feedback were assembled into the tag called Effective Feedback Strategies under a distinct ‘tree’ node file as shown in Table 8 (adapted from Rugby League NVivo7 file):
### Table 8: Initial Development of Tags from Rugby League Case Study Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units (Free Nodes)</th>
<th>Tags (Tree Nodes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructive criticism</td>
<td>Effective Feedback Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One on one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise is always good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of games situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We sort of have to fill out sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You gotta reward players</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactical instruction</td>
<td>Instructions - a variety of styles, timings and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use game scenario when explaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations outlined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains the aim</td>
<td>Instructions - outlines expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating the AIM of each drill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being honest with yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen and be willing to take advice on board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coach being honest with you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coach gets you prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You've got to be able to listen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find that balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As often as possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both individually or as a team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know how and when to portray the message</td>
<td>Timing of Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback to individuals - when and how</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull players aside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t want it said in front of the other boys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I repeated this process for each level of analysis first within the individual cases, then as part of the cross-case analysis. Further examples of this level of coding from each team can be found in Appendix F.

3.7.1.2 Creating Properties

Creating properties involved the development of higher-order groups based on similar features from the initial level of analysis (Côté et al., 1993). In this case, I re-read and re-analysed previously coded text and tags to see where similarities and differences existed. Where there were similarities across each context tags were assembled into the property group (new tree node files). For example, the tags coded as Feedback and Instructions were grouped in the property called Communication for Player Learning and Development (see Table 9) while other tags such as Coach Behaviour and Coach Performance were allocated to the property entitled Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Behaviour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback - most during the session some post session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback and instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often to provide feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to provide the feedback</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of providing feedback (for selection)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal venue for feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues with feedback provision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive feedback</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Post match</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce the positive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tech feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-way feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When to provide the feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blokes have gotta say something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental trigger points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educates players about the inevitability of making mistakes - everyone is fallible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating the players for their development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educating the players - teaching technique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage athletes in the learning process through your feedback and video analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction prior to action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative modelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGY - question, listen, provide tips or advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tactical instruction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team meeting content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The way people learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Video as tool for review and feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7.1.3 Creating Categories and Developing Concepts

Further analysis of the data identified similarities between the property groups, which I then collated to make up the categories. According to Bloom (1996a), this necessitates additional inductive analysis of the properties whereby relationships are identified and then organised into higher-order groups. In the case of the properties Honest Communication, Open Communication Channels, Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication and Communication for Player Learning and Development, all were stored in NVivo7 ‘sets’ in a category called Communication (see Table 10).

Table 10: Extract from Cross Case Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Category (sets)</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tags</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest communication</td>
<td>Honest Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussions</td>
<td>Open Communication Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open with players</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach reactions to performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in demeanour</td>
<td>Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in the way you handle things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective feedback strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Communication for Player Learning and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public or private communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eventually, I converted these sets into a conceptual model (see Chapter 7 for a detailed explanation of the ‘Effective Coaching Model’) that reflect the key areas of effective coaching based on participant beliefs and observational data. According to Merriam (1998),
linking conceptual elements (or categories) together in some meaningful way (e.g. a
 diagrammatic representation) can effectively capture interaction or relatedness of the
 findings. A deeper exploration of the data analysis and the results gleaned from this process
 occurs throughout Chapters 4-6.

3.8 Establishing Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is regularly criticised in relation to the authenticity of findings
based on subjective communication, whether observations or interviews. Traditionally,
positivist research has addressed issues of rigour in the research process by identifying
internal and external validity, objectivity and reliability. Qualitative research developed four
related terms to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Denzin
& Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Addressed below are a number of techniques
outlined by previous research (Burns, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Patton,
2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to ensure
trustworthiness in qualitative research.

3.8.1 Credibility

Methods for ensuring credibility, authenticity and veracity of the participants’ and
researcher’s interpretations involve several different procedures including triangulation,
peer debriefing, member checks, long term observations and familiarity with the
researcher’s position. The following section describes the procedures used to establish
credibility throughout this research project.

3.8.1.1 Triangulation

To minimise the possibility of misrepresentation, data should be triangulated by
using multiple perceptions to clarify and verifying consensus of meaning from an
observation or interpretation (Stake, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 1994, 2003). To assist with this process, I collated each case in this project into an individual case report before the final cross-case analysis took place (see Appendix F for codes from cross-case analysis). Triangulation was achieved through a combination of data collection methods (use of observation and interviews), and participants (both players and coaches). The interviews triangulated the data gathered from observations while also providing me with a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind certain coaching behaviours carried out by the participants. In a similar vein, the results from individual and focus group interviews were used to verify the meanings and interpretations of the coaches against the players and vice versa.

3.8.1.2 Rigour in Data Collection and Analysis

Rigour in data collection and analysis occurred in the form of detailed descriptions of reported findings, peer examination (or auditing) of findings, and through member checking techniques (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregy, 2002). In this case, the detailed description involved full transcription of analysed material from each individual case study (i.e. observation field notes as well as coach and athlete data from each team). In the current research, I attempted to describe cases in sufficient detail so that readers could vicariously experience the content of the case and draw their own conclusions (Stake, 2000).

3.8.1.2.1 Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing, in the form of critical appraisal of the findings by academic colleagues, took place regularly throughout data collection, analysis and writing up of the final reports. Academic staff (i.e. Chief and Associate Supervisors) at the University of
Sydney was the primary source of auditing in this instance, although regular meetings with other postgraduate research students assisted in formulating ideas and reviewing research procedures. By circulating preliminary drafts of chapters, articles or conference presentations during fortnightly supervisor and ‘writing group’ meetings (where fellow postgraduate students and the academic staff provided feedback on my writing), I gained a clearer view of personal preconceptions, data interpretations and methodological issues.

**3.8.1.2.2 Member Checks**

Member checking occurred after transcribing each interview. Data and tentative interpretations were taken back to the participants to seek verification for their accuracy. I provided each participant with a full copy of the interview transcript and encouraged them to edit or correct any information they deemed incorrect or damaging (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). In this instance, I personally delivered the transcripts to the participants involved. None of the participants requested changes to the data.

**3.8.1.2.3 Long Term Observations**

As explained earlier in this chapter, the time spent observing each team was crucial for understanding how the coach interacts with players and support staff before, during and after training in the professional sports environment. Furthermore, rapport between participants and I improved as participants became more familiar with me and as the time in the field progressed. Before or after training and meetings, I was able to engage in informal conversations with several participants to reinforce the reason for my presence, which also enabled me to get to know players on a more personal level.

As Burns (2000) stated, observations occur in natural settings and often record processes of change, meaning they are vulnerable to replication difficulties. In an attempt to
minimise such limitations, I conducted multiple observations over a three-to-five week period with each team. Immersion in the field through long-term observations enabled me to reflect on the reality of the life experiences of the participants more accurately (Merriam, 1998).

3.8.1.3 Familiarity: Positioning the Researcher

In qualitative investigations, the primary instrument of the study is the investigator (Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002). Therefore, it was essential that I conducted the investigation in an ethical manner. One of the greatest concerns with case study research is the role of human subjectivity when selecting evidence to support or refute particular evidence. In order to increase the credibility of the project, previous qualitative researchers have outlined their own assumptions, their familiarity with the subject and data collection methods, and the impact that these experiences and knowledge have on the research process. Furthermore, Glaser (1978) and Strauss and Corbin (1990 [cited Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280]) suggest that effective theoretical coding is also greatly enhanced by theoretical sensitivity.

Theoretical sensitivity consists of disciplinary or professional knowledge, as well as both research and personal experiences that the researcher brings to his or her inquiry. According to previous research, self-reflection makes personal characteristics clear to the reader and is more likely to enable researchers to be more attentive to the issues of the research when taking an interpretive stance on the data collected (Bloom, 1996a; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I am a middle-class, white male in my late twenties. I have completed an
undergraduate Honours research degree in the related field of Human Movement and Health Education. My thesis was on the reasons for continuation or discontinuation with elite track and field participation beyond high school. I have undertaken courses and attended seminars in both qualitative methodology and coaching. These courses helped develop my knowledge of the relevant subject matter, methodological foundations, theoretical issues and tactics for this project. Having completed previous research in Australia with elite track and field athletes, I was familiar with the basic terminology associated with the method, as well as the Australian sporting culture, jargon and mentality of high-profile sports personnel. I hoped that these experiences would help gain access to the required participants and generate the necessary rapport during the project. Furthermore, I am currently involved in many dimensions of sport including participation, coaching and education.

Being introduced to the team during the first meeting with the participant group also seemed to assist in the process of familiarising the teams with me as the researcher (background), the purpose of my visit (research not media) and what I would be doing (observations and interviews). I felt that being male, small in stature and being dressed appropriately to fit in (e.g. similar attire to coaching staff) assisted in my remaining unobtrusive throughout the observations.

3.8.2 Dependability

According to Bloom (1996a), dependability of data is another method of ensuring trustworthiness closely linked to the procedures required to achieve confirmability. Achieving dependability involves recognising whether certain aspects of the research project are appropriate and identifying where, if any, methodological shifts took place.
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, I conducted a pilot study in order to work out where observational and interview techniques potentially needed to be refined prior to conducting research with the professional teams (this is explored in detail in the ‘Pilot Study’ section of this chapter).

### 3.8.3 Confirmability

While Bloom (1996a) describes confirmability as a task “comparable to an accountant who must audit the books of a business” (p. 66), Merriam (1998) points out that the aim of qualitative research is not to produce replicability in the same manner as quantitative research, but to provide results that are consistent with the data collected. This can be ensured by clearly stating the investigator’s position, triangulating data collection and analysis, and providing an audit trail of accounts that outline and authenticate how data was collected. In addition, describing how categories were derived and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry helps achieve confirmability (Bloom, 1996a; Merriam, 1998). While previous sections of this chapter outlined my position as researcher and how I triangulated the data, the following paragraph describes the audit trail process.

The construction of an audit trail, a notebook-style collection of accounts, outlined and authenticated my data collection and analysis procedures. The audit trail also assisted with the theoretical development of the topic and was particularly useful for documenting any new ideas, theories, models and developments in the project. Theoretical progression, the development of interview questions, evaluations of previous research, and memos for important ideas during interview transcription and data analysis were particularly prevalent in the audit trail. Constant reflection on my own actions and observations in the field, as well as on impressions, irritations and feelings (Patton, 2002), enabled me to gain clarity
regarding the direction of the project and assess key topic areas relevant to the research questions as the project developed. Patton (2002) argues that the documentation and reflection of the ongoing research process makes the research more explicit. Overall, the audit trail enabled me to provide an open and honest description for what was happening throughout the project.

In addition, case study protocol (Burns, 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003) contains rules and procedures to increase the reliability of the study. Protocol reminds the investigator of what the study is about and forces the investigator to anticipate any problems that may arise. I kept a chain of evidence (Yin, 1994, 2003) to enable an external observer to follow the research project logically from the original research questions to the conclusions.

3.8.4 Transferability

The constructivist approach places all understandings (scientific and non-scientific) on the same footing where no objective or absolute truth is generalisable (Crotty, 1998). Further to this, case studies based in qualitative paradigms merely attempt analytic as opposed to statistical generalisations where essentially, the generalisation is left up to the reader. This is because case studies can be generalised to theoretical propositions but not to populations or universes. The researchers’ goal may be to expand and generalise theories or to generalise findings from a single case into a multiplicity of cases rather than enumerating statistical generalisations (all Yin, 1994, 2003). Therefore, external validity is not of great importance as case study research focuses primarily on the characteristics of the particular case (Burns, 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003). Although there was no attempt to provide generalisations beyond the contexts investigated, I provided rich descriptions of data throughout this project so that readers could make their own generalisations from the
findings.

3.9 The Pilot Study

In general, researchers carry out pilot studies in a convenient and accessible proximity where many different phenomena can be trialled. The pilot study helps investigators assess the appropriateness of the methodological processes, refine their data collection plans, and can provide conceptual clarification for the project (Cohen et al., 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003). For these reasons, I carried out a pilot study in a context closely related to the final project. This pilot study covered both substantive and methodological issues and the research process provided considerable insight into technologies required for data collection, sharpened my analytic skills, and assisted in shaping the final articulation of the study’s theoretical orientation.

After the pilot study was conducted and analysis of the data complete, I reflected on the following logistics of field-based inquiry and the prevalent organisational issues:

- the best place to stand to record data;
- how to record data accurately;
- important aspects of coaching to be monitored;
- who to monitor more scrupulously (e.g. head coach, assistants and players as opposed to just the head coach);
- the best time to approach members of the team for informal conversations; and,
- interview questions and the approach taken during the interview.

The pilot study also assisted in honing my interview skills. It helped in the development of facilitation techniques in the focus group interviews and memorising specific questions to
assist with interview flow. Some questions were eliminated from the interview schedule while issues such as my interview manner, ways in which to encourage participant interaction and where to sit were also considered. In addition, I deliberated over the most appropriate time and locations for conducting each interview. I decided that it was generally best to interview before training because the participants had to come in for training regardless.

3.9.1 Pilot Study Procedures and Major Findings

The analysis of data revealed several important concepts which are briefly outlined below. The constructivist approach to this research project enabled findings to surface not possible utilising quantitative and systematic methods. This is significant because certain aspects of coach communication and people management emerged as important areas of effective coaching, although they were not part of the initial research.

The sample population for the pilot study included observations with one first grade Sydney club rugby team (players n=22; coaches n=4) where two male coaches (head coach and assistant) and five players were interviewed as part of the study. This research was carried out during rounds two-six of the Tooheys New Cup. I attended twelve observation sessions (training n=8; games n=4) including two training sessions and one match per week for a total of four weeks. The analysis of the data revealed six higher-order categories, which reflected coach and athlete perceptions of effective coaching and related observational data. The categories were Possesses Key Personal Characteristics, Communicates Effectively, Creates a Challenging and Enjoyable Team Environment, Develops Relationships and Team Cohesion, Individual Differences, and Thorough Preparation and Analysis. The following paragraph provides an explanation of each of the abovementioned categories.
The results reveal that effective coaches possess personal characteristics crucial for effective communication, the development of appropriate athlete-coach relationships, and a suitable environment to learn and develop personal and life skills. Open and honest communication is fundamental to establishing trust and respect, which in turn, have a significant impact on the club’s culture, athlete development and the relationships within the club. Individual and team performance reviews and analyses are core organisational components that form the basis for intense training, team strategy and selections. Individual needs must be attended to whilst elements of the team’s trademark culture serve as precedents for selection and player behaviour. Overall, each component is related to the effectiveness of the coach when considering perceptions and behaviours of effective coaching.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research can be difficult given its somewhat intrusive capacity in data collection methods and as a result, developing trust is essential (Gratton & Jones, 2004). It is therefore extremely important to take care when conducting research and provide the informants with adequate motivation to take part. In order to achieve this, respondents need to see the study as worthwhile and that participating in the project will be enjoyable and satisfying (Gratton & Jones, 2004). I sent out an information letter regarding the project prior to the commencement of the research. This letter outlined the research topic, assured anonymity to participants, informed those involved that the research was only for scholarly purposes and would initially be published for the completion of a doctorate at The University of Sydney. Most importantly, this letter included evidence of ethics approval to carry out the research by the University of Sydney’s Research Ethics Committee (see
Appendix A).

Prior to the data collection period, I made a ‘pre-research’ visit to each club to meet the contact delegate of the club, the head and assistant coaches and any other members of the support staff who were available. This visit allowed me to highlight the procedures and purpose of the study, the potential benefits of participation for both myself as researcher and the club, and to thank those involved for allowing the research to take place. At this point, coaching staff or the club contact provided me with a timetable for training and matches including a list of the sessions available for observation (i.e. some were restricted so I could not attend). I also discussed possible areas for the interviews to take place as well as access to the training and competition facilities. Overall, I stressed that the project was not to pry into the personal lives of the coaches and players. Personal opinions were required during interviews, however, sensitive issues were not intentionally explored in the current research. Finally, I informed the participants that a pseudonym would be used to conceal their identity throughout the report.

3.11 Summary

The current study aims to make sense out of coach and player perceptions of effective coaching while also providing an understanding of why and how professional coaches enact these strategies. Effective coaching is an eclectic topic that draws upon insights from numerous theoretical perspectives and value orientations. In order to address the concept of effective coaching in detail, I used a qualitative paradigm based on case study methodology to guide the study. Within the qualitative framework, I employed a constructivist and interpretive approach to explore and uncover meaning, values, and explanations whilst allowing concepts to emerge as the project developed. Furthermore,
constructionism enabled me to understand the world of experience from the point of view of those who live in it. As such, it was necessary to examine subjective experiences of effective coaching in order to understand the development of personal and professional definitions. Ultimately, this brought forth concepts that a positivist may have missed (Gratton & Jones, 2004) and enabled greater insight into the natural settings in the professional sport settings investigated.

The data collection process involved semi-structured observations (including detailed field notes) and semi-structured interviewing. The present research examines the practical realities of coaching through the multiple perspectives of the two key participants (players and coaches) in conjunction with live data from the observations. This enabled me to gain a detailed and holistic account of effective coaching. Three male, professional sport teams participated in the current study with 41 observations carried out along with 6 coaches and 25 players participating in interviews.

I utilised the constant comparative analytic procedures (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bloom, 1996a; Côté et al., 1993; Côté et al., 1995b; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Walsh, 2004) to examine perceptions of effective coaching both within and across each context investigated. As a result of these analytic procedures, I created a conceptual model of effective coaching that reflected the key participant beliefs and observational data.

This chapter explained the methods used to gather and analyse the data for this research project. A qualitative, constructivist perspective using case study methodology was the most appropriate to provide a holistic examination of professional coaching within the Australian context. The qualitative, multidimensional research approach was rationalised, and significant issues relating to the selection of participants and research procedures
explicated. Finally, I provided a clear indication of the ethical considerations for the current research.

The next chapter identifies and explains the key findings from the research project as well as providing commentary on the implications of the results in light of the research objectives and existing research.
CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This thesis investigates the perceptions and strategies of professional sport coaches and players with the aim of producing a holistic representation of effective coaching. The term ‘effective coaching’ is problematic given the inability of previous researchers to provide a definitive representation of the concept. I treated each participant’s response to the phenomenon of effective coaching as uniquely developed having been based on contextual information and personal needs. The phenomenological research approach highlights the distinctive perspectives of the participants and as a result, the players and coaches in the present study were able to discuss with me their own personal experiences of effective and ineffective coaches or coaching. In doing so, they provided a detailed description of what effective coaching involves and why certain coaches are effective based on how they carry out their roles. Incidents from past contexts were thought to have shaped the participants’ current perceptions and therefore, all previous experiences were considered. Analysis of data revealed however, that participants mainly reflect on events with their current teams.

This next four chapters outline the results that emerged from interviews conducted with six coaches and 25 players as well as 41 observation sessions with rugby union, rugby league and cricket teams from Australia. These chapters provide examples from the cross-case analysis of data and in particular focus on the major themes that emerged in relation to the research questions. The use of Grounded Theory (GT) analytic procedures underpinned by a phenomenological theoretic framework aimed to uncover the perceptions and
meanings associated with effective coaching from the perspective of professional sport coaches and players. This involved comparing and contrasting interview responses and observational data in relation to the research questions, which were stored in an NVivo7 database.

A total of 953 raw data units emerged including comments, statements and quotations from a few words to entire paragraphs. There were a similar number of meaning units per sport with cricket accounting for 317, rugby league 317 and rugby union 319. Further inductive analysis revealed 70 tags, 22 properties and 8 categories. The 8 categories were ultimately conceptualised into 3 higher-order concepts (see Table 11). In accordance with GT protocol, I developed a conceptual model (see Chapter 7) of effective coaching that best described the current coach and player perceptions of effective coaching.
Table 11: Properties, Categories and Concepts of Effective Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knows the Rules and Tactics</td>
<td>Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge</td>
<td>The Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachability, Trust, Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Coach Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ineffective Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Player Development On and Off the Field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delegate Responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a Personalised Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honest Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Communication Channels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication for Player Learning and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>Managing Team Dynamics</td>
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<td>Individual Characteristics of Group Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning for Optimal Player Preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Effective Training Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoyment and Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Safe Learning Environment</td>
<td>Develop a Positive Team Environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Direction for the Team: Everyone on the Same Page</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Player-driven Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Cohesion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching Skills</td>
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<td>People Management</td>
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<td>Planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Environment</td>
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</table>
It was impossible to include all the participant perspectives throughout this section. Given the enormity of data generated however, selected statements and comments were used to emphasise important concepts from interviews and observations. This means that at times there are a disproportionate number of responses from certain participants in some of the topic areas explored. The concepts, categories and properties used to identify effective coaching principles represent the common perceptions suggested by the sample of coaches and players in the current research. Unless expressed otherwise, it can be assumed the results reflect the responses of all participants from each context explored in this research. I used the terms from participants that best described each of the concepts, categories and properties of effective coaching. For a tabulated version of the analysis categories, associated properties, tags, and meaning units, refer to Appendix F.

In order to maintain anonymity, all participant names were changed. To help connect participants with their respective sport, all players and coaches from rugby union were given names starting with ‘R’, rugby league beginning with ‘L’ and cricket commencing with ‘C’ (see Table 12).

Table 12: Participant Pseudonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rugby Union</th>
<th>Rugby League</th>
<th>Cricket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Players</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Richard</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Leslie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. Larry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Lachlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Luca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, I used square brackets ‘[ ]’ to identify information where audibility issues during interviews prevented the full quote from being transcribed verbatim. Finally, details for the observation context and session number are summarised throughout the results and discussion chapters in the following manner: Cricket Observation Session One = CROS1; Rugby Union Observation Session Seven = RUOS7; Rugby League Observation Session Ten = RLOS10 and so on.

This and the two following chapters include a description of the major concepts of effective coaching in the form of The Coach (Chapter 4), Coaching Skills (Chapter 5) and The Environment (Chapter 6). I have not listed chapters in order of importance, as each concept is equally influential to the coaching process. Essentially, the results indicate that as a starting point, coaches possess certain personal characteristics, qualities and skills considered effective. Some of these characteristics influence the coach’s philosophy of coaching and leadership style while also forming the basis for the concepts of people management, communication, and planning. As a result, the categories aligned with The Coach are discussed in the first section of this chapter.

The Coaching Skills chapter follows because the coach’s leadership, communication, people management and planning skills are required to set up an appropriate team culture and facility to plan, train and review performance. The next chapter includes concepts relating to The Environment as this involves using personal characteristics, the coach’s philosophy and overall coaching skills to maintain the direction, enjoyment and confidence of players within the team. Chapter 7 summarises the key findings generated from the data in relation to previous research and includes an overview of the ‘Effective Coaching’ model.
It is important at this point to reiterate that the emergent concepts from the analysis process are interrelated and do not exist in isolation.

The introductory section for each major concept throughout Chapters 4-6 incorporates an overview of the data generation process in that area. This includes an outline of the questions posed during the interviews and identifies the major categories and properties related to effective coaching within the concept. Each category overview section presents a brief synopsis of the main points raised by the participants in that category as well as tabulated data of the associated properties and tags. The text that follows includes specific evidence from interview and observation sessions and a more detailed explanation of the key topics related to effective coaching. A summary of each category and major concept is also provided to reiterate the major points that emerged from the research process.

The next section explores the first major concept of effective coaching as identified by the professional Australian coaches and players involved in the current research. The concept defined as The Coach includes the categories of Personal Characteristics and Coach Philosophy.

**4.1 Data Generation in the Concept of The Coach**

The use of semi-structured interviews and a constructivist approach to research encourages participants to develop their own definitions and meaning of concepts. The first interview question aimed to elicit detailed responses in relation to the topic of effective coaching. I was then able to probe for deeper explanation of participant responses to get a broader understanding of the components of effective coaching that were most important to them.
In response to the first question “Could you give me some examples of the things that you think make a coach effective?”, players and coaches from each team identified personal characteristics, qualities and skills they believed effective coaches possess. The following is an example of one participant’s response to the first interview question:

*Just a good communicator, that’s probably important, so it’s just man-management when it’s all said and done. Having a knowledge of your sport is obviously very important. And I think um, being a good organiser as well. Being able to organise, communicate, know your sport and know your product I think is probably three of the qualities you’re looking for.*

(Leopold, league coach)

Asking participants specifically about concepts such as “man-management”\(^2\) was not part of the initial interview schedule. Participants were invited to explain the meanings of terms such as these in more detail as the interview progressed. The reason for this is that many of the participants highlighted certain characteristics as being most important to them in relation to their perception of effective coaching.

Another topic that surfaced in response to the first interview question related to what coaches and players described as the coach’s philosophy or direction for the team. The categories within this concept also emerged when coaches were asked to elaborate on the aims of their coaching programs or the types of responsibilities delegated to assistant coaches and players.

\(^2\) Please note the term ‘Man-management’ reflects how all participants (with the exception of one player) described what I have now referred to as ‘People Management’. Despite the fact that the research occurred in a male domain, I felt a less gender-biased term would be more appropriate.
4.2 Concept Overview

The first major concept of effective coaching is The Coach, which includes two categories referred to as Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge, and Coach Philosophy. Underneath the category Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge are properties reflecting the qualities and skills which the players and coaches believed to be essential for effective coaching. The description of this category provides information about participants’ beliefs about why certain personal characteristics are required for effective coaching. In discussing these features, coaches also offered insight into their coaching philosophies that underpin their approach to effective coaching.

Underneath the category Coach Philosophy are properties that refer to player development and descriptions of the reasons why these coaches coach as they do. The participants highlighted that effective coaches used their own personal philosophies of coaching to form the basis for how the team operates in relation to what the team aims to achieve. While the players did not provide extensive details regarding the coach’s philosophy, they did mention that effective coaches must have a general philosophy or direction for the team to be successful. Alternatively, each of the coaches outlined their personal philosophy, which they employed to coach their respective teams. In addition to this, players and coaches conveyed information regarding what they believe the coach’s role involves at this level.

Observational data presented insight into how the coaches enacted these qualities during training sessions and meetings, which provided a broader understanding of effective coaching. Analysis of results revealed many similar examples of personal characteristics, qualities and skills of effective coaches, however, there were several distinguishing views
about the best way to lead a team. In this respect, this section demonstrates how the roles and approach to coaching may be different across varying contexts yet still be considered equally effective. Table 13 represents the collective properties, categories and concepts related to The Coach concept.

Table 13: Properties, Categories and Concepts in The Coach Concept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knows the Rules and Tactics</td>
<td>Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge</td>
<td>The Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachability, Trust, Respect</td>
<td>Coach Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective Coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Player Development On and Off the Field</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge

4.3.1 Category Overview

The wide variety of qualities, knowledge and skills outlined by the participants in the current study suggest that there are specific characteristics valued by both coaches and players from different team sport contexts. According to the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia, an effective coach possesses or learns to demonstrate the following qualities, characteristics and skills. They must be:

- knowledgeable about the technical and tactical aspects of their sport;
• able to communicate\(^3\) well with players by creating open communication channels between coach and player, delivering messages, disciplining, and developing rapport with players;
• empathetic and approachable in order to build trustworthy and respectful relationships, and support players;
• able to manage people\(^*\) and plan\(^*\) effectively in order to maintain the team dynamics, get everyone on the same page and develop effective practice sessions;
• able to identify and then cater for the individual differences\(^*\) amongst the players within the team; and
• able to lead\(^*\) the team in a manner that aligns with the perceptions, characteristics and skills considered effective by the team.

The aim of the current study was to let participants explain in their own words what they felt were the most important characteristics of effective coaching rather than carry out frequency counts to measure the importance of one response over another. Table 14 indicates the key tags and properties that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge:

\(^3\) The terms marked with an asterisk (*) represent key findings from the data analysis process. This section only briefly mentions what these concepts involve to avoid an overlap in reporting of the ensuing chapters where they are explored in more detail.
Table 14: Tags and Properties in the Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach Characteristics and Knowledge Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tags</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the game</td>
<td>Knows the Rules and Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows players strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily accessible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to listen</td>
<td>Approachability, Trust, Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop mutual trust and respect between players and coaches</td>
<td>Ineffective Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being understanding</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictator, authoritarian or over coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, many similarities existed between the results from the present study and that of previous research with expert coaches and athletes from the North American collegiate sports systems (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Masalarn, Bloom & Crumpton, 2002; Siegel & Brantle, 2001) concerning the need for a coach to be willing to work hard, empathise with players, and communicate effectively. These collegiate coaches set high standards for their players, particularly in relation to trust, respect, and communication. In support, participants in the current research claimed that effective coaches were open to player ideas and attempted to use their personal skills to create a positive, supportive environment where excellence was encouraged. Similar to previous research which highlighted the important organisational role that coaches at all levels carry out (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2004; Kellett, 1999; Vallée & Bloom, 2005), participants mentioned the need for coaches to be well prepared. For example, Curtis (cricket player) highlighted that:
... organisational skills ... are pretty important particularly when you come to game days and training sessions ... I think if you’ve got training sessions that are well organised and well run, that makes everyone else’s life a lot easier.

Organisational skills, along with being confident and displaying integrity towards the players, helped gain the respect of the players and were crucial for effective coaching. Furthermore, the participants suggested that effective coaches possess the ability to lead by example yet listen to, and accept other people’s opinions. This means that modern coaches understand they do not have all the answers for success or player development and thus place greater trust in others to help create a suitable team environment. In the past, coaches were more autocratic (see Terry, 1984) and therefore less likely to listen to other people’s ideas regarding the direction for the coaching program. The following paragraphs highlight the key characteristics that emerged from the analysis of data to describe effective coaches and effective coaching.

4.3.2 Knows the Rules and Tactics

All the players and coaches in the present study agree that being knowledgeable about the rules, technical and tactical aspects of the game is a key effective coach characteristic. For example, Cain (cricket player) suggested that effective coaches have “A good knowledge of the game ... not just sort of technical issues but actually knowing the ins and outs of the game as well”. Widely acknowledged by previous research with coaches and players from high school to Olympic level in both team and individual sports, is that being knowledgeable about the rules, tactics and strategies of their sports is a crucial coach characteristic (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Hardin, 1999; Kuga, 1993; Moser, 1992; Rockwell, 1994).
Participants mentioned that knowledge of player strengths and weaknesses particularly concerning individual differences in motivation, personality, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and physical attributes is important for the coach to perform effectively. In fact, one rugby league player (Lloyd) suggested that a knowledgeable coach was:

... someone that you have the confidence in that you can go to, if you’ve got a problem with your game or something or some part of your life, that you’re pretty certain that they’ve got the answer for it ...

In other words, players stated that effective coaches not only possess a deep knowledge of the game but also intimately understand each player’s personal circumstances off the field (e.g. knowledge about their cultural and family background). This means that effective coaches are able to provide total support for the player. Knowledge is important because as Leonardo (league coach) suggested, effective coaches:

... gotta have a lot of knowledge. If they ask the questions you gotta have the answers or you’re gonna go and get the answer ... you don’t come up with the right answers you’ll soon lose respect.

This demonstrates that being knowledgeable is an essential starting point for coaches. If they are not able to transfer this knowledge to players correctly, or in a manner they understand, players may not be able to use the information in an appropriate way to aid their own development and success of the team. Therefore, effective coaches not only possess a deep knowledge of the game, but they must also be articulate in conveying the information to players to assist with player learning and development. Knowledge alone is not enough to be an effective coach. Providing accurate information through effective communication is integral to effective coaching. The importance of communication to the
participants in the current study warranted the classification of communication as a stand-alone category as discussed throughout Chapter 5 (pp. 188-221).

While the current research did not specifically examine the type of knowledge most important for coaches in professional sport, it became evident that a deep technical knowledge of the game is essential to coach at all sport levels. Interestingly however, the type of knowledge coaches utilise at different levels to train their players effectively may differ based on the level of sport competition. For example, knowledge of skill acquisition techniques may be utilised more frequently in youth sport settings than at the professional level. This is because coaches in the professional context place greater emphasis on the tactical nature of competition and players already possess many of the necessary technical skills to progress into professional sport settings. Future research could confirm this by directing attention to understanding the complex requirements and depth of coaching knowledge across a variety of sport age groups.

4.3.3 Approachability, Trust and Respect

Approachability is an appealing coach quality that six players and three coaches linked to creating an open, relaxed environment or enhancing two-way communication between players and coaches. These are two typical responses regarding the notion of approachability:

_Going back to the coach qualities, it’s being able to be open with players during a game or training session ... that makes him much more approachable ..._ (Callum, cricket player).

_... just give off the presence the player can come off, come up and have a chat to you about stuff, not be untouchable, or unapproachable._ (Richard, union player).
Four other players and two coaches described the need for coaches to be approachable to establish rapport and build relationships with the player group. For example, Lee (league player) stated, “I think the more relaxed and approachable [the coach is] it definitely means the players can get a bit extra out of the relationship” while Leon (league player) felt that an effective coach was someone who is “… easily accessible. You know you can talk to them about personal issues”.

These perceptions are similar to those described by the male English football (soccer) coach in the Potrac et al. (2002) study. He felt that in order to be perceived as effective, he needed to establish a positive learning environment in which he could be regarded as easily approachable and able to relate to his players as both footballers and, more importantly, as people. This perspective closely aligns with the professional coaches and players in the current research, which indicates the high priority coaches, and athletes place on a coach’s social skills at the highest level of team sport. In fact, it is interesting that Leon (league player) highlighted the importance of talking about personal issues. From the analysis of data, it became evident that the participants frequently referred to personal elements of effective coaching. Features such as the importance of communicating honestly, building relationships between players and coaches and developing a suitable team culture were cited as crucial to effective coaching rather than specific technical or tactical elements of the game. These factors are discussed in more detail throughout Chapters 5 and 6.

Another finding reveals that effective coaches manage team dynamics, relationships and individual needs in positive ways while boosting player confidence; all seen as crucial skills. Effective coaches also develop and execute well-planned and coordinated training
sessions. In addition to this, coaches who display respect and trust for players had more positive relationships and greater rapport with players than those who lack these qualities. For example, Connor (cricket player) indicated that effective coaches “... have that respect of the players so that the players will listen and be prepared to follow the line or the goal that’s been set”. Similarly, Lenny (league player) asserted that:

... you want to play for a coach that you have the respect of. I think it’s the same for the coach, he wants to coach the players that respect him. I think if he sees that we respect him and that we’re kind of accepting his game plan, we believe in what he’s doing is right and is the best for the team, I think that makes him feel more confident and you know it’s just that mutual trust kind of thing. We trust what he’s doing is right and he’s got the trust that we can go out on the field and pull off his ideas ...

This indicates the value of respect and trust to not only relationships between players and coaches but also the preparedness of players to align with the coach’s daily mantra and overall objectives. Based on the links made by the participants in the present research, it became clear that being approachable and open to other people’s ideas are important qualities for effective coaching. Furthermore, the participants linked the notion of respect to aspects of communication, interpersonal relationships and the team environment – concepts discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.3.4 Empathy

Another quality that both players and coaches linked to effective coaching is being able to display empathy towards players. For example, Cortez (cricket coach) claimed:

Good coaches were former players who really understood how you were feeling at any given time whether it was a high or a low because they’ve actually been through it themselves ... ”
Similarly, Ronnie (union coach) highlighted that it is essential to have “... *empathy and compassion ... and just having an understanding of their world ... so that their worth is never compromised*”. Being empathetic involves an understanding of individual needs and feelings to make players and coaches feel secure and confident in the team environment. Anshel (1997) suggests that effective coaches remember how they felt when they were athletes and do not attack the athlete’s character, are sensitive to the feelings of others and do not allow peers or teammates to become verbally abusive. As with the Anshel (1997) study, the participants in the present research agreed that empathy is derived from the coach’s experiences as a player at the professional level and crucial for social-support during difficult times both on and off the field.

While the participants in the current study described empathy as a key characteristic of effective coaching, previous research portrayed empathy as a communication tool to boost player confidence levels (Anshel, 1997; Dorfman, 2003). Confidence results from coaches being empathetic and as the assistant cricket coach pointed out, empathy helps in supporting players during the highs and lows of professional sport (e.g. when players are in poor form). Empathy also assists in the development of a comfortable learning environment for the players. As Richard (union player) suggested, he found that coaches “… *who don’t fall out of touch with the players, have a kind of grip on what they’re going through ... builds good team management*”.

These findings partially support research carried out in a high school context where the researchers evaluated coaching performance based on the coach’s ability to show general concern for academic performance and handle disciplinary problems effectively (Kuga, 1993). The main difference is that in the high school context, academic performance
was of major concern. This was not a highly prevalent issue in the current professional environment given the full-time commitment to sport at this level. By contrast, the importance of being selfless, honest and displaying integrity when communicating with and managing player needs are qualities that are very apparent in the professional sport context.

4.3.5 Ineffective Coaching

When asked to describe what makes a coach ineffective, many participants simply stated that the opposite of what was considered effective applied. For example, Lloyd (league player) claimed that:

... it’s the opposite of what we’ve been saying, you know, someone who ... hasn’t got that relationship or respect of the players and um, not really the confidence of the players ...

As such, the participants were not probed for further details on ineffective coaching as the focus of the present research centred on perceptions of effective coaching.

While the observational data provided in this section were limited, the ensuing sections expand on several key coaching areas and provide supplementary observational data to participant perceptions of effective coaching. For example, some of the observational data garnered regarding the coach’s personal characteristics are explored during the leadership section of the next chapter. This is because characteristics such as being relaxed or assertive form part of how certain coaches lead their team.

Some of the features outlined by the participants in the current study are reflective of the Coach’s Personal Characteristics from the Coaching Model (CM) (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). In the CM, the coach’s characteristics included knowledge, sources of
satisfaction, personal concerns and approach to coaching. The gymnastics coaches in Côté and colleagues research (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Salmela, 1996) used these features to organise the training and competition environments and develop athlete potential. In the present research however, the coaches and players revealed that the coach’s philosophy and leadership style influences the lives of the players both on and off the field. This acknowledges the important and holistic role a coach plays in the professional team sport context in Australia. This point is developed further in the Leadership section of Chapter 5 (pp. 172-187).

4.4 Summary of Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge

Many of the characteristics outlined in the current research relate to previous research carried out with players and coaches from a variety of sports, geographic localities and levels of participation (see Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Kuga, 1993; Masalarn et al., 2002; Siegel & Brantle, 2001; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In sum, regardless of the type of sport, the geographic locality of the research or the method for collecting data, both coaches and players shared similar perspectives regarding the personal qualities of effective coaches. The present research adds to the existing list of qualities, characteristics and skills outlined by previous research in relation to the topic of effective coaching by describing the perspectives of professional coaches and players from Australia. They also suggested that if a coach displays characteristics and skills opposite to these concepts, they are perceived as ineffective.

What the participants in the present study did not clearly stipulate is the degree to which coaches are considered effective if they possess some of the qualities, characteristics and skills listed, but is deficient in others. Some coaches inherently possess certain
characteristics outlined by the participants in this project. For those who do not initially possess these personal qualities and skills, many can be developed over time through (a) coach education programs, (b) drawing on personal experiences as a player, (c) learning from other coaches, and (d) reading literature in the field of coaching.

4.5 Coach Philosophy

4.5.1 Category Overview

The current results indicate that the philosophy of the coach reflects the coach’s goals, actions, values and approach to coaching, which in turn is underpinned by personal qualities and skills. The coach’s philosophy forms the basis of what the coach believes is necessary to (a) coach effectively, (b) develop a successful program, and (c) guide player development. This is closely linked to the coach’s leadership style. Ultimately, the head coach’s philosophy influences the manner in which he communicates with players and staff, organises the training environment, and manages the team. This relates to what Cassidy (2004, p.55) identified as “why coaches coach as they do”.

The results from the current study indicate that the articulation of a philosophy is critical to providing the team with direction, endowing players and coaches with on-and-off-field responsibilities, and developing an appropriate framework for the team. This needs to be communicated not just to the players, but also to all those involved in the organisation from assistant coaches, to support staff and ultimately those in key administrative positions (e.g. Chief Executive and the Board of Directors). As suggested by Cyrus (cricket coach): “You’ve gotta have the basic philosophy of what you think is right and ... that’s gotta be
Each coach’s philosophy evolved from personal experiences as a professional player, previous employment, observing other coaches, and from reading literature based on coaching.

According to the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia, an effective coach places a strong focus on player development by employing their own unique approach to coaching. It must be acknowledged however, that the coaches described their own philosophies, which they inherently believe to be effective. They did not suggest from their experiences, what they thought other effective coach philosophies included, yet the analysis of data reveals some similarities across the three sports contexts. Table 15 indicates the key properties which emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of Coach Philosophy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach Philosophy Category</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of the coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the player and the person</td>
<td></td>
<td>Player Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate the players</td>
<td></td>
<td>On and Off the Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not purely focused on results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.5.2 Player Development On and Off the Field

One of the common aims described by the coaches in the present research is the need to focus on player development, player education and trying to get the best out of each individual. This involves developing the player and the person both on and off the field as shown in the following examples of coach perceptions:

*I think the first part’s gotta be making sure that rugby league players have got their own lives in order ... that he’s ... happy at home ... he’s*
using his finances to set himself up for the future ... if he’s got everything around him happening in good order and then he can concentrate solely on his rugby league. Then I think the next thing as a coach is to take the individual and concentrate really heavy on the individual becoming a better player, a more skilful player, a player that continues to learn and improve and I believe if you get enough players doing that then the team builds around that. (Leonardo, league coach).

I think you’ve gotta have outside interests ‘cause if you just focus on cricket and think about it every day, a lot of the time it’s just negative stuff, you know especially if you go through a bad run ... I think coaching ... look[s] at the person as a whole, not just the sporting side of it so ... you know what their background is, what their work thing is what their family is ... if they’re happy in that it’ll help the other side of it as well. So there’s more of a responsibility than just trying to produce a bloke who can bat or bowl ... (Cyrus, cricket coach).

So I think effective coaching comes down to ... how you develop them on and off the field. (Ronnie, union coach).

In each context examined during the current research, the coaches claimed that players are there to learn and develop skills, knowledge and expertise not just in football, but also life. This lends support to the Humanistic ideals of coaching (Lyle, 2002) and suggests that an effective coach is more interested in a holistic approach to developing the players in their team. The focus on developing the player and the person is a stance also highlighted in academic research with professional AFL coaches (Kellett, 1999) and anecdotal evidence by two of Australia’s most successful and long-standing coaches: Wayne Bennett (rugby league) and Kevin Sheedy (AFL) (see Bennett & Crawley, 2002; Sheedy, 2005). In fact, one recent study on expert gymnastic coaches suggests that reducing the coach’s role to merely one that is focused on increasing athletic performance misjudges the kinds of influence that coaches have on their athletes (Poczwardowski et al., 2006).
Observations and informal conversations with players and coaches in the current study indicate that in each context, players are actively encouraged by coaches to pursue study or work in their spare time away from training. Players in the present research are not required to carry out any additional work or study, as is the case in high school and college contexts. However, in the rugby league team for example, two players recently developed a small business whilst another player is studying to become a physical education teacher. This is becoming more widespread in modern professional sport where there is a greater focus by coaches and their clubs to help players achieve a work-life balance whilst playing sport full-time. In addition to this, clubs now play a greater role in the career transition of players from professional athletes to permanent work after they cease their professional playing commitments. It is therefore important for coaches to consider the personal context of each player while also helping them develop into respectable and productive people both on and off the field.

The overall goal of player development outlined by the coaches in the current study is resonant with previous research in individual (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) and team sport contexts (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). While Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) found that the main goal of gymnastics coaches is to develop the athletes, the volleyball and basketball coaches aimed to develop each of their athletes’ athletic abilities as well as individual attributes (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). The results from Gilbert and Trudel’s study (2000) extended the Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) findings where expert ice hockey coaches suggest that two process goals (promote athlete personal development and ice hockey skills) and one outcome goal (qualify for the playoffs) result from the coaching process.
The current findings partially support the Gilbert and Trudel (2000) conclusions, where each coach reported their aim for player development both on and off the training field. However, the coaches in the present research did not refer to the outcome goal of winning matches to qualify for the playoffs as an essential component of effective coaching despite the incessant demand to win matches at a professional level. Perhaps the goal of winning matches in professional sport need not be stated given the constant pressure to win at this level.

Similar to the goals of the coaches of gymnastic, volleyball and basketball coaches (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Vallée & Bloom, 2005), assisting players reach their individual goals and performance outcomes or finding areas to improve in the player’s game are far more important than winning in the eyes of the coaches interviewed in this research. Collectively, they felt that winning or success on the field is a consequence of first developing the individual player and the team. As a result, the coaches involved in the present study centre their philosophies on player improvement, educating players and setting the club up to function effectively in the long term. Below is an example of Leopold’s (league coach) views regarding this topic:

I more teach improvement and personal best rather than winning. I’ve had that as a philosophy. Winning comes as a result. A lot of coaches see winning as the only thing and often are short term in that respect. I see myself more as a long-term coach in a club in that I’m prepared to sit down and say that we will improve as we go and we will get results ...

Cyrus (cricket coach) has a clearly articulated coaching philosophy and highlighted five main points that focus on individual and team development as the key areas to achieve success both on and off the field:
... my basic philosophy ... I’ve always worked on is, One – The team ... we always use the philosophy or the acronym [TEAM] “Together, Each, Achieves, More” ... The second thing that I have is pride in who you’re playing for ... and those two combine together pretty closely ... The third thing I’ve always worked on is a strong work ethic ... if you’re going to play, you’ve got to work hard ... the fourth thing is planning ... You’ve got to have a full understanding of the opposition ... but I think that one of the most important sort of things is planning for ... your own team game ... And my fifth thing, and I think it’s the most important ... is enjoyment um and I’ve got to create an atmosphere and a culture that has people enjoying what they’re about ... you know ... getting people to realise that if you have got a successful team, the individual success will follow.

These comments demonstrate that a primary role for the modern day coach involves a wide range of ‘off-field’ tasks before the players begin any on-field preparation. Observational data confirmed that none of the coaches solely focused on winning as there were no occasions where coaches mentioned the need to win during training sessions or meetings. The activities and communication during training sessions and meetings primarily concentrated on the tasks players are required to carry out in order to improve on weaknesses, develop their ability to execute the required tactical strategy or personally improve their current form on the field.

As stated earlier, the current findings are largely reflective of previous research with coaches at college level (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In Vallée and Bloom’s research, the expert volleyball and basketball coaches claim that winning a national championship is not the “be all and end-all” (p. 191) of coaching success. In fact, much like the philosophies outlined by the coaches in the current project, the volleyball and basketball coaches aim to develop their players’ athletic abilities as well as their individual attributes of confidence, maturity and sense of ownership. They believed that success would emerge following a genuine investment in the personal development of these behaviours and attributes. Similarly, these
concepts reflect what Lyle (2002) described as the *Humanistic* approach to coaching where the coach displays a concern for the personal growth and development of the individual.

In 2006, Jones argued that the “call to coach holistically has gained credence in recent years and such a stance recognises the social nature of coaching and the need to ensure the rounded development of athletes” (p. 9). Similarly, Lyle (2002) stated that the *Humanistic* approach is a person-centred ideology that encourages and supports athletes as they develop into authentic and valued adults. He argues that sport coaching has enormous potential if it is centred on *Humanistic* aims yet he believes that these values are not inherent in the current performance-coaching context. This, he claims, is because performance sport is driven by commercialism and a lack of concern for ethical standards and conduct, and is reinforced by a reward system for both coaches and athletes that emphasised outcome success.

The results from the current study support Lyle’s goal for developing a *Humanistic* approach to coaching but contest the fact that this approach cannot exist in professional sport. As each of the professional Australian coaches in this research emphasised a strong focus on the *Humanistic* goals of developing the total person both in and out of the sport context, it is evident that effective coaching in the *Humanistic* ideals underpin coaching in the current professional team sport environment in Australia.

If the consensus is that the development of the person or *Humanistic* approach is the key to effective coaching, then why are many coaches sacked based on inadequate results? Often in professional sport, there is the expectation from administrators, the media and fans that winning will be achieved quickly. Coaches are frequently sacked early into their contract if they do not achieve results in the desired time. This is a curious point because
the current results show that coaches require time to develop players in order to produce a winning club. Some coaches may not be given the time to focus on player development before success is achieved or expected. For an effective coaching situation, it seems important that the coach philosophy, goals and expectations align with their club (or organisation), especially as the type of philosophy employed by the coaching staff has a significant influence on player satisfaction, enjoyment and performance level.

It is not clear from the results in the current study, if coaches are hired based on their own personal philosophy or whether they are hired to maintain the pre-existing philosophy, goals and aims of the club. The difference between these positions could have implications for how coaches approach their role, the length of their tenure, and their relative effectiveness. This debate has significant implications for the hiring and firing of professional coaches and highlights the importance of developing an appropriate and similar philosophy for all those involved with the club.

4.6 Summary of Coach Philosophy

The coaches and players in the current study emphasised that effective coaches possess a clear philosophy or direction for the team. This reflects the coach’s own personal characteristics and forms the basis for how the coach leads, communicates, manages and organises the team environment. The current research highlights that the development of the total person is a high priority for each coach. They believe that if you develop the player and the person, this will likely result in on-and-off field success. These results concur with previous research that recommends a holistic approach to coaching and developing player potential (see Jones, 2006).
4.7 Summary of The Coach

This chapter introduced the first major concept of effective coaching as identified by the professional Australian coaches and players involved in the current research. The concept defined as The Coach includes the categories of Personal Characteristics and Coach Philosophy. The participants outlined a wide variety of personal coach characteristics, qualities and skills of effective coaching, which strongly resemble findings from previous research that investigated the characteristics of coaches at all performance levels (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Kellett, 1999; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). According to the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia, an effective coach is knowledgeable about the technical and tactical aspects of their sport and able to communicate well with players and other staff before, during and after training. Effective coaches are also empathetic, approachable, and able to identify and then cater for the individual differences within the team. The results show that effective coaches are also able to lead the team in a manner that aligns with the leadership preferences of their players.

In the Coach Philosophy section, the participants in the current research outlined that effective coaches possess their own unique philosophy of coaching with each coach describing their main values, attitudes and objectives for why they coach as they do. The coaches in the present study place a strong emphasis on Humanistic goals for their coaching programs with their desire to develop the player and the person. According to recent research (Jones, 2006), this emerging trend highlights the importance of the social aspects of coaching.

The next chapter addresses the major concept entitled Coaching Skills by examining the categories of Leadership, Communication, People Management and Planning.
CHAPTER 5 - COACHING SKILLS

5.1 Data Generation in the Concept of Coaching Skills

It is important to reiterate that some of the categories in the present study emerged throughout the analysis process rather than being imposed on participants during the interviews. While several participants identified these key categories in response to interview question one (“Could you give me some examples of the things that you think make a coach effective?”), some did not, and thus were probed for further evidence during the course of an interview.

5.1.1 Leadership

When the participants were asked to describe what they thought made a coach effective (interview question 1), many responses related to the leadership style or coaching strategy they perceived as most effective. Coach leadership styles also emerged when participant coaches were asked to describe the main aim of their coaching program and the types of roles and responsibilities coaches delegated to assistant coaches, support staff, and players.

5.1.2 Communication

The first interview question also elicited responses from coaches and players who highlighted communication as the most important quality or skill for effective coaching. As a result, participants were asked for further details as to why communication is significant, and what effective and ineffective communication involves. The participants mainly discussed the importance of good communication in relation to team meetings, training,
and providing instructions. In doing so, they accounted for when, where and how coaches communicate with their players, assistant coaches and support staff. The communication styles of the coaches also surfaced through the analysis of observational data from each context. All participants were also asked to describe effective feedback strategies.

5.1.3 People Management

In relation to effective coaching, both players and coaches mentioned that people management is a key skill or role undertaken by coaches, particularly at the professional level. The concept emerged when participants were asked to describe effective coaching (interview section 1), the coach’s role (interview section 1), or interpersonal relationships (interview section 5). As this topic was not part of the initial interview schedule, participants were asked for more detailed responses regarding what the term meant and how the concept related to effective coaching. Coaches and players described aspects of people management in relation to catering for individual differences, components of the team environment, effective feedback strategies, and factors that influence player learning and development.

5.1.4 Planning

As with the other categories in this concept, players and coaches identified being organised as one of the key qualities of effective coaches in response to the initial interview question. The participants were asked about their beliefs regarding effective planning or what it meant to be ‘organised’. For example, the coaches were asked: “What types of organisational and planning activities to you undertake?” and more specifically focused towards training sessions: “What are the types of things that you plan for or consider when you’re planning for training?” Questions for the players and coaches included: “What types
of things do you think the coach should do to ensure that training is effective?” and “What do you think makes a training session effective?” Although coaches and players were initially asked different questions in this section, it became apparent that players were involved in the planning process and as a result, questions and evidence regarding the topic featured in both coach and player interviews. The responses throughout this category primarily indicated what coaches and players thought were effective or ineffective planning strategies.

5.2 Concept Overview

The second major concept of effective coaching – Coaching Skills – includes four categories referred to as Leadership, Communication, People Management, and Planning. Underneath the category Leadership are properties that outline the contrasting leadership styles perceived to be effective by the participants in the present research. The description of this category provides information about participants’ beliefs regarding the delegation of responsibility and briefly discusses the manner in which coaches communicate with other people and manage the training environment.

The category named Communication underpins many of the other aspects of effective coaching and is frequently referred to in each of the major concepts and categories. In the Communication category, coaches and players describe their perceptions relating to the way in which effective coaches communicated before, during and after training. Underneath the category People Management are properties that refer to how, why and what type of interpersonal relationships effective coaches form with players, assistant coaches and other staff. In addition, properties relating to how an effective coach
manages the team dynamics and accommodates the individual differences within a team are explored.

The final category, Planning, relates to how effective coaches prepare players for competition through the development of challenging, enjoyable training sessions. Overall, each of these major categories are discussed in relation to effective coaching with links made to the preceding properties of personal characteristics and the coach’s philosophy (Chapter 4) and upcoming concept, The Environment (Chapter 6). Table 16 below represents the collective properties, categories and concepts related to the Coaching Skills concept.

**Table 16: Properties, Categories and Concepts in the Coaching Skills Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Concept</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegate Responsibilities</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Personalised Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Communication Channels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication for Player Learning and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>People Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Team Dynamics</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Characteristics of Group Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Optimal Player Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Effective Training Sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Leadership

5.3.1 Category Overview

The results from the current study provide evidence that certain personal qualities and skills reflect the way coaches behave during a broad range of situations. In addition to this, analysis of data reveals that the coach’s philosophy or approach to coaching influences the way in which they lead their team. All of the participants agreed that a pertinent focus for effective coaches in today’s current professional environment involves being able to communicate effectively and manage the dynamics of the team which in turn, are directly influenced by the coach’s approach to leadership. The players and coaches in the present study indicated that the coach’s behaviours or actions also influence the club’s atmosphere and players’ actions. As a result, the coach’s personality, philosophy toward coaching, and personal leadership approach affects the way in which the environment within a club is developed.

According to the perceptions of professional coaches and players in Australia, an effective coach possesses their own personal approach to leadership. The findings also indicate that various leadership strategies are considered effective. This means that there is not one specific recipe for leadership success. Furthermore, effective coaches delegate responsibilities to other coaches and players; although the extent to which each coach delegates tasks differed in each context. Table 17 indicates the key properties that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of Leadership:
Table 17: Tags and Properties in the Leadership Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Category</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Develop a Personalised Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amiable dictator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assign roles for players and coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Delegate Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop accountability and decision-making skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make major decisions</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Develop a Personalised Approach

Two somewhat contrasting philosophies emerged regarding the strategy of coaching that best reflects effective coaching. While Leopold (league coach) described himself as an “amiable dictator”, the rugby union and cricket coaches focused on facilitating player development. For example, Ronnie (union coach) stated that “… effective coaching comes down to less about over direction and more about facilitating in a nutshell”, while Cyrus (cricket coach) highlighted that:

... the whole aim of my coaching is to end up not doing a lot because it’s player-driven and if someone steps out of line, that the other blokes are saying ... “you’re not working with us, what’s your problem?”

The analysis of data revealed that the leadership approach of each of the coaches reflects their philosophy regarding empowerment of others, and the extent to which they delegate responsibilities to assistant coaches and players. This ultimately influences the role of the coaches and the manner in which they lead the team. The discussion in this section focuses on the type of empowerment believed to be effective, whereas the following section
(Delegate Responsibilities, pp. 180-186) examines the extent to which coaches delegate responsibilities to their players, assistant coaches and support staff.

The cricket and rugby union head coaches both believe their role is driven by managing team dynamics and individual player needs. To achieve this, Cyrus (cricket head coach) claims that he must empower coaches and players and encourage them to come up with solutions. This is evidenced by his admission that he “can’t do everything” so he aims to “just monitor, really”. Further to this, he encourages others to make important decisions regarding performance, training and strategy: “The times that you have a successful team you have individuals that are prepared to make decisions and back themselves and I think that’s one thing I’ve always encouraged.”

Similarly, observational data from the rugby union setting revealed that Rex (head coach) assigns the majority of the tasks carried out at training to his assistants with the intention of observing player action from a distance. During the interviews, Rex (union coach) explained that this type of empowerment is an effective leadership strategy as it means that other coaches can cover areas of the game where his knowledge was limited:

... head coaches don’t um, can’t really hope to be good at everything. They don’t understand everything they won’t necessarily be the best at everything. So you need to acknowledge your weaknesses and people around you that are going to fill in the gaps ... You have a level of understanding about the game so you bring that to the table, if you haven't got that you need to surround yourself with people who have ...

Rex’s comments provide significant insight into the role of a head coach in professional sport. His view acknowledges that each coach involved with a team brings certain expertise to the coaching program. The aim in this case would be to account for coaching strengths
and weaknesses of each coach to provide the best possible knowledge to help their players learn, develop and perform at an optimal level.

In much the same way as the cricket and rugby union coaches described their role, the professional AFL coaches in Kellett’s (1999) research suggested that the coach intervenes, or facilitates, only when the supportive environment is compromised. The coaches involved in her study believed that they were facilitators rather than leaders and had a responsibility to empower and facilitate leadership. Rather than directly instructing people, the head coach’s role in the present study was to oversee the entire coaching process by communicating effectively with players and support staff. This involved empowering people with the relevant expertise and incorporated a flexible approach to planning in consultation with the support staff and players.

Observational data indicated that Rex (rugby union head coach) and Cyrus (cricket head coach) roam around training and observed player action while only occasionally getting involved in conducting an activity or providing feedback to the team. Alternatively, Leopold (rugby league head coach) is more hands-on. He shares the coaching load with his assistant by organising, conducting and managing a proportionate amount of each session. One of the potential advantages of the roaming role is that it enables the head coach to observe training action and take players aside to communicate with them individually, where the coach felt necessary, while other players continue with training. This occurred regularly throughout the observation period and was a highly valued strategy according to Curtis (cricket player):

*Being available. Being able to get around to players and just talk to them and just see how they’re going and offer any advice whether it’s technically or in any other sort of sense. Just to be able to help out in that sort of way, that’s how I see the coach’s role...*
This type of scenario also means that the players are able to receive expert tuition from specialist coaches while the head coach spends more time evaluating player form, attitude and interactions to help guide weekly selections.

The roaming role embarked upon by the head coaches in cricket and rugby union is very similar to one of the central tenets of orchestration – a recent evaluation of the coaching process by Jones and Wallace (2005, 2006). Through the leadership approach of orchestration, Jones and Wallace suggested that little direct leadership occurs as this type of coaching role involves detailed observation and analysis where no apparent coaching takes place. Accurately termed “unobtrusive coaching”, the Jones and Wallace (2005) template for the modern, less rationalised approach to coaching reflects two out of the three current contexts where the head coach acts as the orchestrator, or, as described by the coaches in union and cricket themselves, a people manager.

Unlike the head coaches in rugby union and cricket, Leopold (league coach) carries out a more active role in leading his team. Rather than predominantly observing player behaviour, he was regularly observed conducting training activities whilst providing concurrent commentary throughout each activity. When one of his assistant or specialist staff was running an activity, he became less involved. Even in this context however, he was noted to offer advice to the players where he felt it necessary. This aligns with his approach to coaching in what he described as more of a “... dictatorship but what you’d call an amiable dictator” who listens to staff and players but is ultimately responsible for making decisions, inspiring his players and leading the team.

The regular communication exhibited by rugby league coaches indicates a more coach-directed ‘teacher-student’ style relationship with players. Alternatively, the coaches
in cricket and rugby union place greater onus on the players by facilitating their learning through self-analysis (where feedback was limited). Although the rugby league coaches indicated that they empowered assistant coaches and the players, Leopold (league coach) cautioned against giving players too much responsibility, particularly concerning team discipline:

... whether it’s old fashioned or not ... I don’t believe a sporting club is a democracy. I hear of coaches with player ah leadership groups. I do not believe in that. I do not believe players should be judging other players. I believe players should lead other players and it naturally happens. The leadership comes from the coach. The coach and his staff lead the team and lead the club. Players want direction. They want input. I listen to my staff ... I ask players for feedback ... But I do not let players for instance set rules or um, judging players for being late to training I just don’t believe in it at all ... you don’t put the troops in charge of running the place ...

Leopold believed that greater control was necessary in order to coach effectively. Leopold’s comments support Jones and Standage (2006), who suggest that while some coaches are willing to forgo their power, some athletes are unwilling to accept the responsibility and see this as the coach not doing their job properly. This may indicate that empowerment could be seen as destabilising, because it has the potential to descend into a mass of conflicting micro politics and breakdown team cohesion. Therefore, the degree of empowerment needs to be carefully considered for effective coaching.

The rugby league coaches’ approach reflects a more top-down style of coaching whilst their counterparts in cricket and rugby union exhibit a more player-centred or bottom-up model. The main area in which differences existed relates to empowerment of players and amount of communication with players, particularly during training. While all coaches declared that delegating responsibility is important to increase player
accountability, the cricket and rugby union coaches believed in bestowing many responsibilities to assistant coaches and the players. The results of the current study show that there has been a shift in the beliefs about effective coaching from a more traditional, top-down, coach-centred approach to the more modern, player-centred approach.

An important consideration from the results of the current research is that both styles can be equally effective, so long as the environment created is reflective of the coach’s philosophy. This philosophy needs to be aligned, in a collaborative fashion, with the values, beliefs and attitudes of assistant coaches, support staff and players regarding how an effective coach and team should operate. For example, if the players feel that it is the coach’s responsibility to direct the team, construct the learning, and make the majority of decisions; as long as the coach communicates that this is how the team will operate, the coaching strategy may be considered effective. Alternatively, if the coaches and players believe in a more player-centred approach, where greater responsibility is placed on the players for decision-making and their learning, then a modern or facilitative approach to coaching may be more effective. Ronnie (union coach) highlights these perceptions:

"... There has to be a strong element of who you are ... but you also have to know that if that’s not resonant with the players, then it’s going to get you nowhere ... You find a good strong base for the way you see the game and then you find out how they can see that game, or how they see the game and then blend that philosophy together."

The effective coach is therefore someone who can align the coach and player beliefs, regardless of the leadership style they use to try to create an environment that is consistent with the ideals of both parties. Players are more likely to respect the coach, form relationships with them, and want to work hard for them if they (the players) are satisfied with the coach’s approach.
These findings support previous leadership research (e.g. Chelladurai, 1978; 1990; Sherman et al., 2000) as the participants in the present study provided examples of key parameters for effective coaching that depended on whether the coach and player views aligned. Attributes from the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai and colleagues, 1978; 1990) highlighted that player satisfaction and performance increases when coaches’ behaviours were compatible with those favoured by players and those required by the environment. The present findings are also comparable to the results from the Sherman et al. (2000) study. In their research, Sherman et al. (2000) found that it was important for the coach to be aware of the coaching preferences of his or her athletes in order to provide satisfactory experiences and improve athletic performance. Given that the results displayed in the current research revealed a variety of coaching styles from highly facilitative (empowering) to more autocratic (amiable dictator), it is plausible that perceptions of effectiveness are dependent on the relationships developed between coaches and players as well as the context in which they exist.

Finally, the results from the present study indicate that there is no best fit or recipe for the coaches in the present research. Rather, the current research acknowledges that coaching is a contextual process where the coaching strategy adopted reflects their own personality and beliefs regarding effective coaching. Ultimately, the coaches in the present research indicated they had similar philosophies in aiming for player development both on and off the field, yet their approach to achieving these goals varied. While each method has achieved successful on-field results (i.e. winning premierships), the current results indicate that the key to effective coaching was to ensure that there is alignment between the preferred and actual coaching styles.
5.3.3 Delegate Responsibilities

In the current research, players and coaches agreed that the head coach sets the initial strategy for the team, yet empowers others to “micro-manage” (Ricardo, union player) parts of the organisational, training and competition framework. This was a more recent phenomenon in coaching, a fact outlined in Leopold’s (league coach) comment below:

*As a professional coach these days, you have staff who will run around and organise the nitty gritties of the session. It’s changed over the years. There’s no doubt that I would control everything when I first started. I would tell the trainer what to do. Now of course, you basically employ full time people, you have to empower them by, ... after consultation of course, ... relying on them to do that type of thing for you.*

The leadership style and philosophy of the head coach influenced what was delegated to players and coaches in planning, team roles, performance review, and communication. For all participants, empowerment enabled an open and flexible environment in which players and support staff were delegated with tasks such as planning for training, conducted parts of training sessions, and encouraged to express ideas during meetings and training sessions. For example, Cyrus (cricket coach) described empowerment in the following way:

*... it’s just allowing them to make decisions ... at the beginning of the season I might bring a couple of blokes in and ask them well ‘what do you think of training?’ or ‘what do you think we need from here on in?’ ... just involving discussion with them and communication, that’s what it’s about ... them taking a session ...*

Rather than abrogate responsibility, head coaches delegate tasks and responsibilities to certain players and coaching staff in order to increase player input, investment and commitment to the team’s direction.
Observational data indicates that coaches asked players and assistant coaches for their opinion to assist with planning for training, development of tactical strategy and in some cases management of player behaviour. Further to this, players from each team were empowered to review their own individual performance as well as parts of the team performance and to present this information to the team. It was evident that each head coach empowered players to run certain aspects of team meetings. The following observational data is a typical example taken from the cricket context:

CROS1, 11.15am: Team meeting; Players split into batsmen and bowlers:

- Batsmen head into room next door for ‘round table’ discussion about opposition bowlers, lead by captain.
- Captain asks players what they know about opposition bowlers and their bowling style.
- Each player given opportunity to voice opinion on strengths and weaknesses of opposition players.
- Captain gives occasional confidence boosting, reassuring, and positive reinforcing comments to other players (demonstrates belief in them – e.g. “runs are around the corner for you Cavanagh”).
- Batting Coach interjects with some positive feedback for players regarding last week’s match.
- Captain discusses the importance of players keeping focus for this game, despite success of last match.
- Captain provides goals for players in terms of wanting to be the best batting team in the competition and for every match, making it their aim to only bat once.
- Captain reiterates what one other player suggested in terms of being ‘greedy’ with runs: this was the final comment from Captain – e.g. “let’s make the theme for this match ‘is to be greedy’ fellas”.

There was very limited coach intervention during these meetings with the assistant coach (batting) only intervening once throughout the fifteen-minute meeting. This type of situation enabled players to formulate individual strategies for their own performance while also gaining a deeper understanding of team goals for the upcoming game. Conducting
meetings such as these provided initial direction for players with the aim of enhancing confidence, increasing their focus at training and heightening each player’s awareness of what everyone in the team should be doing both on and off the field.

Similar to the nature of the team meetings held by the teams in the current research, Kellett (1999) described that senior Australian Rules Football (AFL) players were encouraged to provide input and run team meetings with the head coach merely overseeing the process. Like the Jones et al. (2004) study, this meant that the coaching staff became more like advisors, mentors and sources of information rather than strictly directing the coaching process.

For the coaches in the current study, the aim of empowerment was to delegate responsibility in order to encourage people to become decision makers and accountable for their assigned roles and overall performance. For example, Ronnie (union coach) specifically stated how he attempted to engender his philosophy in a rugby union context:

... the ability for them to learn and understand what they select and the decisions they make is your key objective, particularly at the elite level ... we should be exposing them to the environments where open learning and decision-making ... and critiquing themselves and understanding ... why they make those decisions.

Players from each context agreed with this, suggesting that as coaches did not take the field with them when they competed, it was important to learn how to make effective decisions and take responsibility during the occasions where coach input is minimised. Lenny (league player) provided a detailed description of the ways in which he felt coaches delegated responsibilities to players during the weekly training schedule:

... during the season ... sometimes he’ll make us ... look at another side and come up with a game plan that we think is right and then he’ll take some of our ideas on board ... Then, the last session before the game, he’ll
let us have a captain’s run ... He’ll just stand back and he won’t get involved in the session, just let the team run through the session on their own which I think is good ... because it kind of gives us that responsibility and ... makes us kind of take control a bit ... because he’s not going to be on the field with us.

This illustrates that effective coaches must ensure players have a deep enough understanding of the key technical and tactical domains of their sport so that when players make mistakes in competition for example, they are able to correct themselves at that point in time. The participants believed that effective coaches helped players develop these decision-making skills through the activities practised at training (e.g. game-based activities) and the coach’s use of questioning. These features coincide with aspects of the Player-driven Culture described later in the Team Culture category (p. 278-297).

The players and coaches also suggested that empowering others meant clearly identifying individual roles within the team. On-field delegation to players was broken down into training and match responsibilities. During competition, for example, empowerment included being in charge of certain tactical areas. In rugby union there were lineout and backline callers, in cricket, the captain organised the bowling attack and fielding positions whilst in league, players were responsible for components of defence or attack as shown here:

... when they go out on game day, they’ve all got their own little captaincy areas ... You might have a centre and he could be in charge of kick chase. So if game day, the kick chase is not good, you say, ’mate what’s happening, you’re captain, what’s happening?’ So they’re looking after that ... (Leonardo, league coach).

The idea was to increase player accountability for both good and bad performances within their assigned tactical or technical area. These results were consistent with research
conducted with teachers (Siedentop, 1991), effective communicators (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998) and elite coaches (Jones et al., 2004). These researchers claimed that when everyone knows each other's roles, this provides greater incentive to work together in order to achieve collective goals. Therefore, in recent times there has been an expansion of player roles to include aspects of performance evaluation and planning. These tasks were traditionally the domain of the coaches yet the current findings indicate that some of these tasks have been filtered down to the player group. Perhaps this reflects the advent of full-time training within professional sport, where the players are required to spend more time at the training site, and coaches must devise more tasks for player development.

In several recent studies conducted with professional coaches (Potrac et al., 2004), college coaches (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and coach educators (More & Franks, 2004), empowering others was considered essential to gaining player confidence, loyalty, trust and respect. In addition, the results from the current research demonstrate that giving assistant coaches, other staff and players responsibility for and ownership over what they are doing enhances their focus, commitment and energies towards a desire to achieve personal and team goals. In this case, Cyrus (cricket coach) again suggested that:

... you’ve gotta try and ... empower people as much as possible to make the decisions ... people respond to responsibility and the more responsibility you can give to people, the better.

Leonardo (league coach) agreed, claiming that delegating responsibility enhances team and individual accountability:

... I think ah, putting responsibility and someone is answerable, it’s to different areas on the field it makes everyone accountable and if you’re proud of what you do and wanna achieve, you wanna be accountable ...
Therefore, the current research supports previous research which indicated that delegating responsibility to players was advantageous on a number of levels (see Kidman, 2001, Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004; Ravizza, 2002). Similar to Kidman and colleagues (Kidman, 2001; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004), the current results suggest that empowerment not only trains players to be able to make decisions, it also accelerates learning because of the greater investment and commitment players have in the learning process.

The college coaches in the Vallée and Bloom (2005) study empowered others by encouraging and valuing athlete independence, ideas, roles, and growth within a team in order to equip each person with skills, strategies, behaviours, and values that would build each athlete into a champion on and off the court. This reflects the aim of the coaches in the current study in which the delegation of responsibilities helped create an environment where players and coaches felt valued, accepted and respected. As explained by Lenny (league player), coaches were considered ineffective if they did not listen:

...I had a coach in the juniors that what he said went, and if you did anything other than it you’d get into shit for it ... if you said I think we should be doing this, he’d say nup, I don’t care, we’re doing it my way ...

It remained unclear from the observations and interviews as to whether the ideas put forward by the player group needed to be ‘activated’ or whether just listening to players’ ideas was enough to maintain player respect and interest.

In a recent study with elite team and individual sport coaches, Potrac (2004) pointed out that while coaches appeared to provide opportunities for athletes to have an input, on occasions they did not really listen to what athletes were saying and ultimately, they would make the decisions. Perhaps the players accept that their ideas will not always be converted into reality. At the very least however, it appeared that the participants in this study
believed that effective coaches listened to player ideas with the view to developing respectful relationships and a comfortable team environment.

The empowerment approach was recently identified in sports contexts with professional rugby union (Kidman, 2001); Canadian college volleyball and basketball (Vallée & Bloom, 2005); and professional AFL (Kellett, 1999), which demonstrates that this type of approach is suited to the adult sport contexts. Although the college system does not involve full-time training as in the professional context, coaches still have wide-ranging access to the players which influences their ability to empower players with certain review or performance tasks. The empowerment approach may not be wholly appropriate for use in high school or youth settings. This is because the players may not be mature enough or possess the requisite knowledge and skills required to take on the roles described here in the professional setting. Future research could investigate the extent to which empowerment exists with school aged athletes to broaden the knowledge available regarding the use of empowerment techniques within this setting.

5.3.4 Decision-making

From the players’ perspective, coaches must be assertive and take responsibility for decisions made. This means that even with a player-centred or empowerment approach, both the players and coaches agreed that the final decision must remain the coaches.

Ronnie (union coach) summarised this crucial point:

... the buck ultimately still stops with the coach and I think that is a key area ... in the end, decisions have to be made ... they have to make decisions and the players need to understand that and you need to let them know ... And that’s one of the most important functions of coaching, particularly for the head coach ... When it comes down to key organisational or key areas, or major decisions, that affect individuals that should be the domain of the coach.
This response strongly correlates with Jones’ (2004) description of the coach’s role in leading the team. The coaches of elite team and individual sports people believed that, “although they valued athlete opinions, it was their responsibility to make the ‘big’ decisions” (p. 129). What this suggests is that both coaches and players agreed that under certain circumstances (e.g. final team selections, player recruitment), decision-making should be left to the coaching staff. In the three professional contexts examined however, the extent to which each coach delegated responsibility varied greatly. Only Leopold (league coach) suggested that too much empowerment was considered ineffective while the players and coaches did not indicate how much effective coaches did or did not delegate. Overall, all participants agreed that effective coaches delegate certain responsibilities to players, assistant coaches and other staff to increase the responsibility and commitment to the team. The players and coaches also agreed that one of the most important skills of effective coaching is the ability to make decisions, regardless of the leadership style or coaching strategy employed by the coach.

5.4. Summary of Leadership

Leadership strategies differed from coach to coach yet each style was considered effective if it aligned with player preferences. In the current study, each coach possessed a similar philosophy regarding player development, yet their approach or strategy or leadership style to achieve this goal differed across the various contexts. This means that aspiring elite or professional coaches should not merely imitate other coaches because various coaching styles or philosophies can be similarly effective if the coach and player philosophies align. The current findings highlight that empowerment remains a complicated
issue where head coaches must decide what, why and to whom certain types of responsibilities are delegated. In sum, effective coaches employ their own strategy in leading the team. They empower other coaches, players and support staff to varying degrees with the aim of developing the players both on and off the field.

5.5 Communication

5.5.1 Category Overview

The prominence of communication means that it is necessary to provide a detailed explanation of this concept as a stand-alone category. Based on player and coach perceptions as well as observational data from the three contexts examined, effective coaches possess excellent communication skills and communicate in an honest, consistent manner to encourage open, two-way dialogue between players and coaches. The participants also suggest that an effective coach knows that the timing and location of communication was important as well as how to communicate information to players based on the needs of the individual and team. This includes providing clear, concise instructions and asking questions to initiate learning and develop player decision-making skills. The findings identified that effective coaches also provide a balance of positive, negative and constructive feedback. Table18 indicates the key properties which emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of Communication:
Table 18: Tags and Properties in the Communication Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Category</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest communication</td>
<td>Honest feedback</td>
<td>Honest Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest feedback</td>
<td>Be fair</td>
<td>Open Communications Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussions</td>
<td>Two-way dialogue</td>
<td>Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open with players</td>
<td>Coach reactions to performance</td>
<td>Effective feedback strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way dialogue</td>
<td>Consistency in demeanour</td>
<td>Communication for Player Learning and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in presentation</td>
<td>Consistency in the way you handle things</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal</td>
<td>Effective feedback strategy</td>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Timing of communication</td>
<td>Public or private communication</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The importance of communication to effective coaching cannot be understated. In his review of over 600 coaching journal articles, Gilbert (2002) concluded that effectiveness in coaching rested primarily on the quality of the communication and interaction among various coaches, players and support staff. Similarly, Bloom (1996a) and Lynch (2001) believed that good communication was the essence or cornerstone of effective coaching. Kellett (1999) described communication with players and staff as a major role of AFL coaches whilst Shoenfelt et al. (2005) indicated that good communication was critical to enduring positive interactions between coaches and athletes. The current findings support the evidence from recent research into coaching which suggests that communication is a fundamental skill that underpins effective coaching. Discussion of the major themes of honest communication, open communication channels, consistency in verbal and non-verbal behaviours and types of communication follows.
5.5.2 Honest Communication

The semi-structured interviews used in the current study enabled a deeper exploration of why honest communication was effective and how coaches and players communicated honestly. Throughout the interview phase, the players and coaches from each context continuously emphasised the importance of honest communication to effective coaching. In relation to this, the players and coaches indicated that they preferred the coaches to be honest about player form and ability as well as part of general communication as shown by the comments below:

... honesty is another one, the last thing you want to hear is that your coach has been bullshitting you along. You definitely want to know whether it’s good or bad to be told the honest truth of what they think, or how you’re playing, or whatever the case may be. (Ricardo, union player).

Honesty is really important and that is the key ingredient between a player and coach. It’s no good blowing wind up a player’s ass when deep down inside you know that he hasn’t got it. Right if he hasn’t got it, you don’t say it in the first place. You don’t create false expectations ...

(Cortez, cricket coach).

This correlates with previous research across numerous sports where honesty was consistently classified as an important personal characteristic and communication technique for coaches regardless of the level of competition (Anshel, 1997; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Dorfman, 2003; Fletcher, 2006; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). As a result, honesty had a significant impact on the manner in which effective coaches delivered instructions and feedback to players. The importance of feedback and instruction to effective coaching will be addressed later in the Communication for Player Learning and Development section (pp. 198-220).

The current results showed that any behaviour where the coach was not open, approachable and honest with players would harm the relationships and denigrate team
culture. For example, Ronnie (league coach) advised that: “... a coach who lacks integrity, loses players pretty easily ...”, a view also highlighted by Anshel (1997). Anshel stated that being dishonest with players could ruin a coach’s credibility. The following examples demonstrate why honesty was considered essential:

I think that honest feedback is the biggest thing. No one likes to be told they’re playing well when they’re not ... (Leonardo, league coach)

... honest feedback ... If I wasn’t in a team I’d like to be told why I wasn’t in the team rather than saying, you know, you could do this better. Just be upfront and say, “look you’re not doing this well enough, this bloke’s doing this better than you. This is why this is.” I found that pretty effective. (Ryan, union player)

... when people get dropped, I think it’s important that they’re told why and what they have to do to come back, and I think that’s how you do it rather than finding out through the papers or something like that so I think that’s where we talk about honest communication ... (Connor, cricket player)

In the present study for example, player and coach perspectives aligned when considering the need for honesty in making team selections, presenting feedback to individuals and the team, and in developing relationships between players, coaches and support staff. Further to this, honest communication was linked to coaches providing a realistic assessment of players’ on-field performances during training (i.e. when learning a new play) and when reviewing performance from the weekend or during competition. This is similar to Dorfman’s (2003) ideals, who proposed that honest feedback aims to help rather than hurt the player and provide a learning experience in relation to where they need to improve. In considering the findings from the current results and the comments from previous research (Anshel, 1997; Dorfman, 2003), it is difficult to comprehend that players would prefer
coaches not be fully transparent when encountering the above contexts, or perceive a coach to be effective if they are not honest with the players.

Players and coaches also suggested that honesty was integral for building team harmony, to ensure that everyone works cohesively and to address any issues or cliques that may have developed. For the participants in the present study, being able to communicate in an open, honest manner boosted player’s confidence while also igniting vital trust and respect that underpins effective working relationships. For example, Lee (league player) stated that:

… building trust with his players, always being honest with his players and never backstabbing his players, just being straight up with them ... if he’s going to drop them, tell them they’re going to be dropped, rather than just reading it in the paper. I think it’s very, very important that you be honest with your players and that’s the best way to earn their trust.

Effective coaches encourage players to be honest by being honest themselves and communicating the value of honesty to the players so that “nothing is left under the carpet” (Rex, union coach). Furthermore, Ronnie (union coach) mentioned that not being honest and up front may cause issues in the future:

I should probably be less diplomatic sometimes and be a little bit...more direct with how I think about something ... Because ... if I spoke up a lot more often, I would probably find that some things would be less of an issue later on.

The findings from the current research highlight that effective coaches possess the ability to be honest with players across a range of contexts within the team environment.
5.5.3 Open Communication Channels

Similar to the way in which previous research (Shoenfelt et al., 2005; Yukelson, 1993) implied that open communication is essential for developing effective teams, the participants in the current study claimed that open communication is crucial for alleviating problems, accommodating for individual needs and developing a positive team climate.

Coaches and players in the current research indicated that effective coaches encouraged open discussion as part of this concept in order to create a team environment where players and coaches may share ideas and issues in a comfortable forum. This involved two-way dialogue between the coach and other parties (i.e. assistant coaches, players, support and administrative staff), in which opinions from other personnel were valued. For example, Cyrus (cricket coach) outlined why he felt open communication was an effective coaching strategy:

I believe you’ve gotta have full honesty and you’ve got to also expect the honesty to come back the other way ... I’ve always encouraged that a guy can come to me in the right situation, and have a very open discussion and maybe disagree with the things that I’ve been doing because there’s two things that can happen. One, I’ll learn from him, or two, he hasn’t got the understanding of what we’re actually trying to achieve ... (Cyrus, cricket coach)

This comment suggests that asking players questions and encouraging them to share ideas opens up communication channels and forms an important tool for facilitating player learning and development. While this property focused on using questions to open up communication channels, the use of questions as an educational strategy is discussed later in this chapter under the Instructions section (pp. 199-207).
Players in the current research suggested that it was important for coaches to listen to player ideas as this made players feel like they are contributing to the team. This in turn heightened feelings of respect for the coaches as well as players’ commitment to the team:

... if you have a team meeting and a player brings up a point ... the coach will show a player respect if he takes that point on board. But then if he was to disrespect you saying like “ohh look, ... that’s not what I want to talk about” then you’d lose respect for a coach ... Even the best coach doesn’t know everything and he can still learn from other players. (Lee, league player)

This supports the beliefs of the AFL coaches in Kellett’s (1999) study where skills such as listening and being empathetic were considered essential for nurturing a supportive environment. Similarly, Schempp et al. (2004) indicated that in the school setting, when a teacher listens to and accepts students’ comments, they feel safe and are encouraged to express their insight freely. As a result, honest and open communication were strongly linked, particularly as they were essential for supporting individual needs while also contributing to the total environment in which the team or students operate. These views also support research with other international coaches, where Bloom et al. (1997) found that commitment to the team could only come via two-way communication.

Bloom et al. (1997) explained that two-way communication exists where coaches are receptive listeners and establish open lines of communication with their athletes. As Lee (league player) warned above, if the coach is not open to player ideas, respect diminishes. This ultimately results in an ineffective working relationship. Essentially, the present findings suggest that effective coaches listen to players’ ideas to help with the planning process, build respectful relationships, facilitate learning and maintain a harmonious team environment. One important factor to reiterate is that while listening to players ideas is
considered effective coaching, this does not mean that all their ideas will be accepted or implemented.

While the extent of open communication between coaches and players was broader in the cricket and rugby union contexts than in rugby league, each team developed contexts in which players could formulate their own ideas and then share them with coaching staff. This primarily occurred in performance review sessions where players would evaluate previous performances and provide tactical input to assist coaches in planning for upcoming training and matches. The following excerpt is an example of this open style of communication during RUOS7:

Team Meeting - Review of the Weekend Performance:

- **Head Coach (HC) asks the backs to report on previous match:**
  - Vice Captain (VC) responds in that they reviewed their tackling, discipline and unforced errors.
- **HC:** “Just on that topic, I had a look at our turnover rates and there are issues there in terms of decision-making and skill execution under pressure. We’ve got to look at improving that. Our error rates are too high for us to improve our game”.
  - VC continues with tactical feedback, tactical discussion and corrective feedback regarding what they need to do for upcoming match – also explained why and how this would be achieved (need more depth in attack).
- **HC interjects with another question:** “How are we going to make that happen?”
  - VC responds with positive and negative feedback followed by corrective feedback; provides suggestions for training as well.
- **HC interjects again:** “How is that going to happen?”
- **No one responded so HC provided tactical instruction regarding ‘A’ zone and calling structure and a greater understanding required between backs and forwards.**
- **Further interaction encouraged by HC by asking players for answers, providing an open forum for discussion:** “who did well attitudinally, who let us down?”
- **HC:** “Anyone come up short?”
  - One player responded suggesting that he was unhappy with giving away two penalties which led to six points being scored.
In this context, the coach aimed to generate open, honest discussion about the previous match. The current results suggests that effective coaches are honest communicators who create open, two-way communication channels with all those involved with the team from players, to assistant coaches, the media, support staff, administrators and supporters. In addition, if the coach was not approachable, this was thought to inhibit communication pathways and the relationships between coaches and players. Overall, open communication pathways helps alleviate boundaries between coaches and players, which in turn, enhances the respect and relationships between those parties.

5.5.4 Consistent Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

When carrying out qualitative research, it is not unusual for unexpected results to arise. The notion of consistency in both verbal and non-verbal communication were not included as part of the research or interview questions in the current project. However, when talking about communication and the manner in which coaches should react to good and poor performances, the participants suggested that an effective coach remains consistent in their verbal and non-verbal communication. This was because the participants in each context believed that the coach’s verbal and non-verbal behaviours had a significant impact on player confidence levels, maintaining player focus at training, and ultimately how they performed in competition. For example, Leopold (league coach) explained, “... your body language is very important. Players pick-up on it, as does everyone. I try and make my staff the same, so that everyone stays relaxed ... and no one distracts anyone”. This perspective was similar to the findings from the Côté and Sedgwick (2003) research where rowers’ confidence increased when coaches behaved consistently and maintained a consistent demeanour in training and competition.
Communicating consistently did not necessarily mean communicating all the time, rather, it reflected the perception that effective coaches must maintain a consistent attitude, or act in a consistent manner when reacting to athlete performance. For example, Lee (league player) stated:

... I think a coach [should] ... stay the same after wins and losses ... If the team sees a coach panicking then that creates panic among the players so I think if a coach can remain calm and focused then you’d get the same out of the players.

In each of the three sports contexts, observations matched coach and athlete perceptions where the coaches were noticeably calm and in control of their behaviours. Both the cricket and rugby union coaches displayed a relaxed demeanour when observing players in action. Furthermore, when the time arose to be serious (e.g. when discussing previous team performances during meetings), each coach was measured in how they communicated with their players. Although the head coach in rugby league was more vocal than either the cricket and rugby union head coaches, he remained calm and behaved in a consistent manner throughout the observation period.

In the current research, one player also mentioned that a steady, transparent approach in day-to-day coaching was effective:

I think you like to know what you’re going to get with your coach on any day ... What I can work out with Leopold [his current head coach] so far is every day ... he’s sorta the same ... With Lain [his former coach] ... one of his biggest weaknesses was that you didn’t know what you were going to get on any given day at training ... Or up until the last minute before a game, you might think you’re starting in a team [but then] he decides to change the team. (Lloyd, league player)

This shows that knowing what to expect from your coach on a daily basis, including how the coach will react to various situations, was important for player confidence and that any
inconsistent behaviour was considered ineffective. Dorfman (2003) suggested that predictability allows athletes to focus on what they are doing instead of what the coach may do. Similarly, Anshel (1997) argued that consistency in coach behaviour provides confidence and security for the players. The results from the current study confirm that effective coaches demonstrate consistency in how they communicate with players to maximise concentration, confidence and overall performance. As a result, it is important for all the coaching staff to remain consistent in their behaviours so that players remain relaxed, focused and confident.

5.5.5 Communication for Player Learning and Development

Participants in the current study mentioned that effective coaches understand how their players learn and tailor their communication strategy to suit their needs. For example, Rex (union coach) suggested:

*Knowing their learning profile ... is important, you know whether they are auditory or oral or visual or kinetic. You’ve got to know and have an understanding of what makes them tick.*

Alternatively, Cecil (cricket player) highlighted how effective coaches consider:

*... personality ... the way people learn ... different individuals learn better with different techniques. Some of them might be more visual, whereas another person might have to actually do drills ... identifying that sort of need for every individual ...*

The coach’s knowledge of each player’s age, experience, position, and learning style therefore influenced the way they communicated before, during and after training. A combination of observational data revealed that coaches in each setting used visual (e.g. video clips of players in action), verbal (e.g. providing tactical instructions), and kinaesthetic (e.g. practise tactical or technical plays) tasks to cater for the players’ various learning styles.
In this sense, visual data was used in conjunction with what was written on paper (e.g. statistics) to support what was being said during meetings.

The results from the current study support previous research regarding the need for the communication style to be adapted to individual needs (More & Franks, 2004; Wikeley & Bullock, 2006). In the present research, the communication techniques used by the effective coaches reflected whom they were dealing with, the relationship between the player and coach, and the context. In this sense, coaches needed to communicate in a manner that players understood and accepted – a concept previously acknowledged as crucial for effective coaching (More & Franks, 2004; Shoenfelt, 2005). Much like the results from Côté and Sedgwick’s (2003) study on rowing, analysis of the current data revealed that one of the categories to emerge referred to the coach’s pedagogical strategy or the ability to teach skills effectively. This primarily involved coaching behaviour aimed at developing athletes’ technical and physical skills through communicating instructions and providing feedback (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003).

While the next part of this chapter focuses on coach use of instructions and feedback and the perceived effectiveness of these communication strategies, there are strong links between effective communication and the manner in which effective coaches identify and cater for individual player characteristics. As a result, the categories which highlight how and why effective coaches treat players as individuals is discussed in more detail throughout the People Management section (pp. 222-244).

5.5.5.1 Instructions

Players and coaches stated that effective coaches use instructions to (a) provide a general overview of what each session involves, (b) provide a purpose for each training
activity, and (c) redirect players in relation to their execution of a particular task. These results from the current research are comparable to several of the key ‘instruction’ behaviours described in previous research and systematic observation schedules (see Bloom et al., 1999; Brewer & Jones, 2002; Franks, Hodges & More, 2001; Lacy & Darst, 1984; Smith et al., 1977). While the current research does not attempt to quantify the regularity with which each of these communication categories occurred, general accounts of these instructional behaviours were noted. The following subsections explain the participants’ perceptions regarding the role of instruction to effective coaching as well as examples from observational data of how coaches implemented these behaviours.

5.5.5.1.1 Provide an Aim, Focus or Purpose for Each Session and Activity

Despite the earlier claims from the players and coaches for empowerment of players (see the Leadership section, pp. 172-187), analysis of observational and interview data revealed that instructions were used to direct player behaviour before, during and after training by introducing or redirecting session aims, strategies, and individual activities. Observational data from each context showed that coaching staff provided an overview of the aim for every session and outlined the activities to be practiced. The process was repeated throughout the session when introducing each activity. This was similar to the ‘Organisation’ (Smith et al., 1977), ‘General instruction’ (Bloom et al., 1999) and ‘Pre-instruction’ (Brewer & Jones, 2002; Lacy & Darst, 1984) categories from various systematic observation instruments. While the rugby union team carried out a formal full team meeting in the hour prior to training (the meeting generally lasted for 30-45 minutes), the cricket and rugby league teams conducted more informal on-field briefings immediately before the
training session to discuss the upcoming organisational and training tasks for the week. In
RUOS9 for example, the following occurred:

1.18pm:

- Ronnie (assistant coach): carries out the review of ‘Bolters’ [upcoming
  opposition team].
- Uses visual media to illustrate key tactical points of opposition and what
  ‘Terminators’ [his own team] need to do (e.g. strong defensive line).
- Ronnie: “Once they’re under pressure, they’ll pick and drive. So if we’re really
  strong at the reload, we may be able to force a turnover”.
- Ronnie: “They will shift wide, so we need to be eyes up … ”.
- Explains what they do (with video footage) and explains how ‘Terminators’
  need to counter, or attack those areas (uses specific names of opposition
  players too).

These instructions often provided an explanation of the required attitude of players as well
as what and why certain activities are included in the practice session. The timing of
meetings was also crucial to ensuring that specific tactical information for training was fresh
in the players’ minds and aimed to assist with the smooth running of training sessions. This
strategy also helped align the tasks and proposed tactics from meetings to training sessions
and matches.

The type of instruction witnessed during RUOS9 (team meeting) reflects what
Metzler (2000) described as ‘Direct Instruction’ where decidedly teacher-centred decisions
and teacher-centred engagement patterns for learners exist. While this indicates a more
coach-driven context where players are told what to do rather than empowered to make
decisions for themselves, the players and coaches acknowledged that effective coaches
ensure that players clearly understand what they are required to do when they arrive at
training (or competition fixtures) and during each session. For example, Leslie (league
player) suggested that an effective coaching strategy was to provide players with a clear overview of what the session involves because it:

... switches everyone on and you know sets the tone so you get in there, rip in and get it over and done with ... ‘cause some sessions drag out ‘cause the players don’t really know where they’re headed or what the coach is after ...

Further to this, the players and coaches believed that effective coaches communicated clear roles to players so they knew what to expect and would be confident in executing that role.

For example, Ryan (union player) suggested that

... being transparent in terms of explaining new ideas ... so once you get out on to the training field everyone knows what their job is, where they’re going, particularly for each skill and drill, they know where they’re going ...

These quotes support what Anshel (1997) described as effective instructional techniques where communicating the goal of the instructional session was essential to assist with player learning and application of skills in game situations. In addition, Jones (2004a) found that with the elite coaches in his research, failure to establish clear expectations generated confusion and frustration among the athletes. While players may not like being told what to do all the time, it is crucial to inform players of what the upcoming training session involves and to introduce each new activity to be practised.

The participants claimed that effective coaches communicated well to accommodate for the various learning styles in a team. They achieve this by providing verbal explanations, visual demonstrations and the opportunity for players to practice the required actions. The aim was to provide players with maximum clarity about the aims, expectations and tasks for the session. Observational data confirmed that each of the coaches used real life situations
and real player names to convey tactical information to their players and contextualise their learning. For example, both league coaches were regularly noted to explain the aim of the drill (e.g. “to work on kick defence”; Leonardo) by suggesting how they wanted players to execute the aim – “… tight forwards to put pressure on kicker” (Leopold) – and why – “[because they] won’t be able to score out wide” (Leopold). This type of explanation was thought to be effective as it gives the team a sense of purpose for each drill or the training session. This confirms previous findings (Franks et al., 2001; Potrac & Purdy, 2004) which indicate that the coach is responsible for teaching the athlete what to do, how to do it, and why they are doing it. As a result, the findings from the current study highlighted that effective coaches provided clear statements about the aims and expectations for each session using key words to direct player learning before, during and after skill execution.

5.5.5.1.2 Using ‘Cues’ to Support Key Learning Concepts and Redirect Player Action

Players and coaches in the present research highlighted that effective coaches provide trigger points for players to learn and develop important skills or strategies. In relation to this, Cortez (cricket coach) suggested that:

... coaching isn’t about just getting one shot right, it’s about player education, it’s about them understanding what technique and what the sequences are so they can go out there and if they make a mistake in the middle they can actually correct it themselves.

In Ronnie’s (union coach) opinion, effective communication involved the development of key terminology that the team and individuals understand:

Effective communication is knowing first and foremost, what we stand for and basically is … creating a consistent dialogue … So you build your own terminologies and if those things are the commonalities that are coming out, then you’re on track.
In this case, using consistent terminology that the players could understand was believed to be an effective coaching strategy to develop player knowledge. In turn, the players become increasingly familiar with the required terminology which they then use during training sessions and competition fixtures.

According to Kidman and Hanrahan (2004), a key communication skill involved using cue words to remind players of how to perform a task correctly. Whether providing instructions or feedback to players, these comments were thought to deepen each player’s understanding of the game and ultimately enable them to refine their own performances when in competition (Kellett, 1999). In each context, cues were used to remind players of the key technical skills or tactical strategies required to redirect or improve execution of the actions required. The following are some examples of how technical and tactical cues were used during team training sessions:

**RLOS2:**
- *More instruction from the head coach:* “Interlude runner go with him”. and *assistant coach:* “Keep elbows in”.

**RUOS10:**
- *Concurrent instruction provided by skills coach:* “Stay square and slow your legs down”.

**CROS10:**
- *Bowling coach interjects with tactical instruction:* “When the ball gets older, try new things, bowl round the wicket”.

In each of these contexts, the coaches provided simple verbal cues describing important areas to focus future performances. These types of comments were similar to ‘Concurrent Instruction’ and the ‘Technical’ and ‘Tactical’ instructions outlined by previous research (Brewer & Jones, 2002; Bloom et al., 1999). Tactical communication was the most prevalent form used in each of the professional sports studied in the present research.
The results of the current study only partially support Côté and Sedgwick’s (2003) findings where expert rowing coaches prioritised technical instructions, provided instructions with technical cues, and provided explanations of instructions with analogies. While the coaches in the current research did not provide instructions with analogies, they used cues to assist player understanding of particular training task requirements or game strategies. Furthermore, technical instructions were rare during the observation period as coaching staff preferred to focus on tactics. Even in cricket, a highly technical game, few technical instructions were noted during the observation period.

Perhaps the highly technical nature of rowing demands frequent technical cues while the dispensation of tactical information is more pertinent at the professional level in the team sports of cricket, rugby league and rugby union. This also relates to the fact that elite rowing races generally last around 6 minutes as compared to the 80-minute fixtures in rugby union and rugby league, and a minimum of 4 hours in cricket where many more tactical elements are considered. Overall, the participants’ perceptions of effective coaching include the ability of coaches to provide clear instructional cues to assist player learning and development.

5.5.5.1.3 Using Questions to Direct Learning

While asking questions and providing opportunities for players to share their ideas with the team were discussed as important concepts for empowering players, the coaches in the current study suggested that asking questions was an effective method for engaging players in the learning process. One example reflecting these beliefs came from Cortez (cricket coach):

*I think one of the big points as a coach you really need to do is ask questions. You find that a lot of people will tell the athlete this is what you*
are doing instead of asking how that felt and trying to get the player involved in the immediate process ... one of the tools that I try and use is when a player plays a ... shot in the nets or against the bowling machine ... stop the player and say 'ok how did that feel?' ... And how can you do it again? And get the player to start communicating.

According to Cortez, the aim was to engage players in a process where they developed an understanding of the correct technique so they can self-regulate in future occasions where good or poor performance occurs.

Previous research indicates that questioning provides a method to check for understanding of the recently learned subject matter while also encouraging learning through problem-solving, guided discovery and performance awareness (Chambers & Vickers, 2006; Schempp et al., 2004). Surprisingly, observational data revealed that coaches in any context did not use questioning on a regular basis. This contrasted with the importance each coach placed on wanting to create player-centred team environments. Perhaps it is the case that these coaches lacked skill in this area and that this is a potential area for coach development.

Tactical instructions and feedback were far more common across each context in the current research which concurs with the results from a study conducted with women’s football (soccer) coaches from various divisions in England (Vangucci et al., 1997). In their study, Vangucci et al. (1997) found that questioning accounted for only three percent of all behaviours and was consistently low throughout all divisions while instructional comments accounted for 36 percent of all behaviours. It seems that although coaches are aware of the benefits of using questions for effective coaching, the reality is that coaching at a variety of levels utilises other forms of communication more frequently.
The limited use of questions by coaches suggests that communication between coaches and players was generally more of a coach-driven phenomenon. Perhaps coaches find it easier to ‘tell’ players what to do as the questioning style may be considered too time consuming when attempting to get a point across. Questioning during a training session means that an activity may take longer to complete as players spend more time waiting rather than actively training. In addition, using questions to direct learning often requires more planning and preparation prior to a session. These may be some of the reasons why questioning was limited in each professional context.

5.5.5.2 Feedback

According to Kidman and Hanrahan (2004) providing feedback is a key tool for player education and occurs when information is delivered to players about satisfactory or unsatisfactory behaviour as well as how performance can be altered. The participants in the current research support this definition. For example, Ricardo (union player) recognised that feedback was an important process for the players to “learn about what we’re doing right and wrong, being able to review your own performance” and therefore aid understanding of the concept being taught. Both players and coaches also mentioned it was crucial to receive ongoing, honest feedback regarding player performance to justify selection or de-selection from the team.

Observation and interview data revealed that feedback was provided verbally, through visual and print media, and often in conjunction with tactical or technical instructions. Feedback was also delivered though non-verbal communication such as “… a signal, just an acknowledgement” (Leonardo, league coach). From the observations and interviews, it became apparent that feedback occurred both in public and private settings.
before, during and after training, during meetings and through informal conversations outside ‘business hours’. Observational data provided further evidence of the type, timing and setting for feedback provision. The following are some examples of how feedback was delivered during observation sessions in each context:

RLOSS5:
- Head Coach (HC) - “If the play the ball is slow, you need angled runs. If the play the ball is fast, you don’t need angles”.

CROS10:
- HC interjects - “You gotta vary it up but keep putting the ball in good areas”.

RUOS4:
- Defensive Coach (DC) provides corrective feedback to inside centre (player): “[You] gotta work harder to get round the corner every time”.
- DC holds play up to give tactical feedback to players “In the zone, the more we run it, the more petrol we take out of the [opposition’s] tank”.

Knowing when and how to provide feedback to players is an important skill associated with effective coaching. For example, Lenny (league player) claimed:

... that’s what makes a good coach though. Knowing when to come in and say you’re not doing this good or you know, sometimes they’ve just got to leave you alone ‘cause you’re playing well and you’ve got that rhythm.

This concurs with previous research (Potrac, 2004; Wang & Ramsey, 1997) which suggested that effective communication also involved the provision of “timely and high quality” (Potrac, 2004, p. 78) feedback to each individual. For Leonardo (league coach), providing effective feedback to players involved the following:

... sit down and not only tell the player where you think he’s got um, needs some improvement but also sit down and show some footage of actually the performance where he wasn’t up to scratch, or where he’s had good [performances]. You know it could be a strength, it could be a weakness ... we’ll identify it, again show footage of it being done probably correctly and then go out on the football field and do it time ... and time again.
When providing feedback to players, effective coaches considered the individual differences amongst the team members, particularly regarding preferences for learning styles and feedback based on age, experience and personality. For example, Callum (cricket player) noted that delivering feedback involved the following strategy:

*Well positive feedback is probably welcomed individually and in front of the peers but negative feedback it depends on the character. He might be trying to make a point in a group situation, where knowing the coach knowing that [a certain player’s] personality can handle that, you know, cannot get too offended by group situations, and probably deal with players who don’t like being pointed out in front of their peers, ... do it privately.*

For Ronnie (union coach), the players ‘fit’ into certain groups:

*... you’ve probably have three or four different styles of players ... some like to be talked quietly to, and we source it out together, some like to be confronted individually, some like to be, confronted in a team environment and some like to be talked with in a controlled and logical fashion in a team environment.*

It is unusual that Ronnie used the term “confronted” to describe how some players prefer to receive feedback because it is difficult to imagine what would be achieved by confronting a player in front of his teammates, particularly if the feedback is negative. Perhaps Ronnie alludes to the fact that some players cope better when coaches provide corrective feedback to players in front of their teammates. The relationship between feedback and effective coaching are explored throughout this section.

5.5.5.2.1 Effective Coaches Know How Frequently to Provide Feedback to Individual Players and the Team

In relation to age or experience, coaches and players from each context suggested that younger players require more feedback than their senior counterparts. For example,
Riann, a senior rugby union player explained that “... in an environment where you’ve got young guys ... you have to basically spell everything out for them ... ”, while Lewis, a less experienced league player, stated he wanted feedback “... as often as possible you know like, the more feedback you’re giving the coach and the coach is giving you the better off you’re going to be”. Similarly, Lee, a senior league player said that:

... when I was a young bloke, I used to get all the information. I probably needed all that then but these days I think because I’m a bit older, I don’t need to be told/directed as much as the young guys do.

According to Leopold (league coach), this was because the younger players were less aware of their strengths and weaknesses than the senior players and required more comfort and assurance to make up for their lack of experience and confidence in their own ability.

Previous systematic observation studies suggest that coaches who frequently provide feedback, instructions, prompts and hustles are effective (Douge & Hastie, 1993), yet evidence from the current research suggests that this is not wholly appropriate, particularly in a professional team sport context. Although the present study did not intend to carry out frequency counts of coach behaviour, it seems that the current trend for head coaches in particular is to carry out more of an observational rather than highly communicative role during training sessions. This relates to some recent research with elite Canadian coaches, who claimed that 60 percent of the coach behaviour in their study was non-verbal or observational (Horton & Deakin, 2008).

One argument against constant communication is that it diminishes independent player decision-making and learning. If coaches continuously communicate with the team, the players may switch off and not interpret the message correctly, or not know which message was the most important. Further to this, they may become over-reliant on coach
instructions and feedback, which may hinder their decision-making ability during training and competition. This means that effective coaches avoid talking too much as both players and coaches indicated that excessive feedback was ineffective. Alternatively, if coaches provided too little information to players, they may not learn when they were right or wrong and improvements become limited.

Modern studies on skill acquisition confirmed that frequent feedback during practice might create a dependence on this information to guide error detection and correction (Patterson & Lee, 2008). What they suggested was that if players had too great a dependency on coach feedback, their independent learning and ability to intrinsically detect errors and correct them diminishes. This may inhibit player decision-making during competition and overall motor skill performance when coach feedback is no longer available. Rather than giving the players feedback continuously, coaches could ask questions to player to help them analyse their own performances.

The findings from the current research indicate that as players get older and their experience with training on a full-time basis increases, their ability to detect and correct errors improves. Therefore, their dependence on coach-driven feedback would be gradually reduced not only throughout practice sessions but also as their skill proficiency increased over time. This suggests that coaches play an important role in assisting players develop intrinsic feedback mechanisms to facilitate not only the learning process but in error detection and correction. Furthermore, it highlights that as players develop from novices to experts and gain more experience in professional settings, the need for regular feedback decreases.
Effective Coaches Communicate in a Positive Manner

In each of the three contexts, positive communication in the form of feedback and praise emerged as crucial to effective coaching. In fact, Connor (cricket player) felt that “... for a coach to be effective, I think the most important ingredient is to be positive”. This linked with Cortez’s (cricket coach) comments about his main role being to “... reinforce the positive” where he implies that his aim is to be a “... positive influence in that player’s practice routine so that the player can get back to the basics that got them in a form cycle in the first place”. In the current research, positive feedback and praise was used to reinforce behaviour and influence players’ confidence levels. For example, the key to Luca’s (senior league player) confidence related to “... positive reinforcement just after a game, just at training and that ... just helping you believe that you can, you know, do it”, while Robert (senior union player) also indicated that during training “... saying ‘good pass’, this will create momentum for confidence”.

Research with professional coaches in Britain (Potrac et al., 2002) and Canada (Horton & Deakin, 2008) also showed that players and coaches prefer positive communication to assist player development, create positive learning environments and maintain player confidence levels. In the qualitative study with Canadian national team rowers, Sedgwick et al. (1997) found that the provision of feedback to athletes was a common strategy used to build athlete confidence.

Confidence is an important characteristic for players and coaches because self-belief enhances a person’s ability to perform consistently, cope with the demands of professional sport and maintain commitment to a particular sport (Jones et al., 2002; Weiss, 1993). Alternatively, a lack of confidence may diminish a person’s commitment, which highlights
the important role coaches have in maintaining player confidence. It became clear in the current study that positive reinforcement, encouragement and praise were also used as tools during training and team meetings to reinforce behaviour or to ensure that bad habits did not creep into the players’ performance. For example, Leonardo (league coach) stated that:

... you show ’em and you encourage them and tell them that they’re looking better, you gotta reward players. And the same on the field ... If you were tackling at 88 percent and you go to 90 percent well let the player know ... so that the player can see the work he’s doing ... it’s getting the rewards.

In addition to this, the coach’s ability to communicate verbal (e.g. praise comments such as “good ball”), non-verbal (e.g. clapping) and visual (e.g. video footage of correct or successful performance) messages in a positive manner were all strategies that assisted players to learn particular tactics for upcoming games. Similar to these findings, previous research (Hastie, 1993; Horton & Deakin, 2008; More & Franks, 2004; Potrac et al., 2002; Schempp et al., 2004) claimed that coaches who use praise were more likely to motivate players, instil a positive attitude, improve self-esteem and elicit better responses from players as compared to coaches who used criticism and punishment in response to player behaviour.

Observational data supported this notion where coaching staff from both rugby union and cricket showed the team footage of previous experiences of success (e.g. taking wickets in cricket; being patient in the attacking (‘A’) zone in rugby union). This example occurred during RUOS9:

- Showed footage of what they did well when they were playing well in previous seasons with focus on being patient in the ‘A’ [attacking] zone.
- Approximately five minutes worth of clips focusing on holding possession and being patient in the attacking zone.
This information, when provided with appropriate feedback or instructions, served to boost confidence of players but also to make them believe that they were capable of executing the required tasks. Importantly, observational data from the cricket context indicated that positive visual footage did not necessarily need to be supported by verbal communication to have an impact on player confidence and the team environment.

During observations of cricket, coaching staff often organised for footage of players taking wickets or scoring runs to be already running before players arrived for training, meetings or matches. This meant that players would stop and watch the footage at will and generate conversations with teammates about the visual data shown. It could be said that the intended effect of this strategy was to raise players’ awareness of previous good performances, to inspire players, and to heighten player confidence and team morale.

While the players and coaches in the current study indicated a preference for positive communication from the coach, they also warned that a key aspect of effective coaching was to ensure that coaches provide a balanced approach to communicating with players. For example, Cooper (cricket player) stated:

I think with a coach is maybe find a balance between being negative and being positive ... sort of you can’t have a coach being negative the whole time and saying “oh this is crap”, then again you can’t really have a coach pumping your tyres up every second ... if he hands out praise every day and every second day it sort of loses effect quite badly and you just end up laughing at it.

This comment suggests that too much positive feedback had a negative impact on player perceptions of coach effectiveness. This was similar to Potrac et al. (2002), where an expert football (soccer) coach revealed that the players perceived too much positive feedback as insincere and this ultimately had a negative impact on their learning and development.
Furthermore, Gould, Hodge, Peterson, and Giannini (1989) and Weinberg, Grove and Jackson (1992) indicated that both college and elite junior tennis players felt most confident when coaches used rewarding statements liberally. What this suggests is that while players prefer positive communication, they recognise that effective coaches focus on both the strengths and weaknesses of players. Coaches should not overuse praise or positive feedback as the message may lose its intended effect or be perceived as insincere and render the coach ineffective.

Across many sports contexts, players, coaches, administrators and media often consider performance results (i.e. wins, losses, or statistics) as the distinctive measure of success and a person’s confidence. In the current study, players and coaches also mentioned that the coach’s personal characteristics, the communication strategies used and the team environment created, positively or negatively influenced player confidence levels.

5.5.5.2.3 Effective Coaches Know How to Deliver Feedback to Players

Earlier in the Communication section, the findings showed that effective coaches are honest when providing feedback to players (see the Honest Communication property, p. 190). Interestingly, all except two rugby union players suggested that how coaches provided this corrective, honest feedback depended on the individual receiving the feedback. For example, Ricardo (union player) said that:

_There’s no point sugar coating it. If they’re supposed to be coaching you to be better on the day and can’t tell you what you’re not good at or what you can improve on it becomes really difficult for the player to get to the next level._

Alternatively, Leopold (league coach) explained, _“Depending on who it is ... you sugar coat it, a little. A kid doesn’t always take it as a veteran ... it’s still gotta be honest ...”_. This
demonstrates that with some players, coaches can be more direct when providing feedback while others may require some positive feedback because they are not as resilient or experienced in dealing with criticism in the form of honest and corrective feedback.

The use of the term ‘sugar coat’ is also intriguing and potentially reflects the need to provide some positive information to players when delivering feedback. Lachlan (league player) supported this view and suggested that an effective feedback strategy involved the following: “It’s all right being criticised ... as long as ... a negative [is followed by] another positive”. This is similar to the ‘Sandwich Technique’ for providing ‘constructive criticism’ to players (Smith et al., 1977 cited Anshel, 1997 p. 218) where coaches provided a positive statement (e.g. “Good try, Gene”) followed by future-oriented positive feedback (e.g. “Next time do this”) and at the end, a compliment (e.g. “You almost got it. Good improvement Doug”) (Anshel, 1997, p. 218). Anshel claimed that negative remarks generally ended with the player avoiding listening while positive remarks engaged the player to a point where they were more likely to be receptive of the feedback and recall the message conveyed.

Leslie (league player) identified a similar message in stating that, “If ... you get in there and your coach just blasts the shit out of you, you just go off and stop listening ...”. This suggests that coaches must be wary of the manner in which they provide feedback to individuals as the message may be missed if the issue is presented in a negative manner. Further to this, Anshel (1997) claimed that if the criticism is constant, players begin to fault themselves and others, which ultimately diminishes trust and self-confidence. Hence, constructive criticism using the sandwich technique is a useful method for ensuring that player mistakes are corrected in a sensitive manner. Ultimately, the current results show
that including positive comments is an important effective coaching technique when providing feedback to players. In fact Rex (union coach) asserted that:

*Feedback has to have a positive ... So we try and take the negative connotation out of it ... I tend to only really get on negative things ... if it's repeated week in and week out ... Ultimately ... it's always ... better to find good things to say about players.*

This was supported by Conrad (cricket player) who said:

*If you’ve sort of ballsed up a bit they still tell you how it is, but they’re still positive in the sense they don't get negative about things ... everyone starts playing better and everyone has a lot more fun ...*

Therefore, how feedback is communicated to players has a significant impact on player confidence levels in the team environment and effective coaching.

While players may not like being told they have made a mistake, there needs to be an element of accountability in accepting responsibility for doing the wrong thing because receiving all forms of feedback is imperative for learning and development. As part of this process, coaches analyse player performance and often use feedback as a mechanism to redirect player performance. In relation to this, participants in the current research discussed whether negative feedback should be provided to players in a team (public) or individual (private) setting. For example, Ricardo (union player) felt that:

*I think most of the criticism should be done in private because we’ve had ... coaches [in] previous years who have just gone and marked players in front of the rest of the team. It doesn’t serve them and it only embarrasses the player, and shatters confidence*

Similarly, Laurie (league player) suggested that:

*I’ve played under some coaches who... single you out in a video room and say you know this is pathetic and you did this and that and everything and you feel like ducking into a little shell in the corner.*
In this sense, criticising players in public settings could be interpreted as ineffective coaching because player confidence is compromised. Riaan (union player) supported these beliefs and suggested that under no circumstances was it beneficial to criticise the player publicly because, “everyone knows who is doing the wrong thing anyway”. These findings support the results from previous research (Kellett, 1999; Potrac et al., 2002) who found that the most suitable way to provide feedback was to take the player aside or have a quiet word after training in order to address the issue concerned.

In contrast to these opinions, Rex (union coach) believes that there are times when feedback should be delivered in a public forum:

> It's not behind closed doors ... we actually do a lot of the stuff in front of the teammates, so I think peer pressure is actually a useful tool to get to drive change. The players are more worried about letting their teammates down than the coach. So sometimes you need to expose 'em on repeated errors in front of their teammates so you actually get a faster result ... People say it's mean ... but it's being honest, that's the truth ... I don't mind bringing up truth in front of them, 'cause ...the team probably knew it anyway, so secretly they're happy these issues have been raised.

In support, Ronnie (union coach) claimed:

> I think that feedback is valuable when you’re in-group as well ... that’s a little bit different to say confronting someone about discipline. It’s talking about what happened and why did those decisions happen or why do you think the opposition made that poor error and then they start to build an understanding ...

These two opinions provide a distinction between critiquing players in relation to skill performance or discipline. While the players above suggested that no criticism was worthwhile in public, the coach beliefs indicate that if the feedback provided to players relates to performance rather than discipline issues, the team environment is a suitable
avenue for correcting player performance. The following are some examples of where coaches criticised player performance during observations from each setting:

RUOS3:
• Defensive Coach provides feedback to team: “The kick counter isn’t about scoring out wide, that’s twice now we’ve stuffed it out there”.

CROS3:
• HC provided feedback regarding yesterday’s play in relation to poor bowling on the first and last ball of each over (used stats sheet to provide visual, additional or back up stimulus to players).

RLOS4:
• Assistant Coach adds some feedback “C’mon! Thirty-five tries were scored [against us] last year on the last tackle!”

It is important to note that these examples do not focus on the person or individual’s personality, but rather the behaviours of the team in relation to a specific context.

According to Anshel (1997), one of the key features of providing feedback to players involves never criticising the character or personality of players. Even in the case where Rex (union coach) suggested that feedback involved exposing players’ “repeated errors in front of their teammates”, the focus was on changing the behaviour rather than assessing the personality of the player. Regardless of the type of feedback provided, effective coaches aim to provide feedback on the player behaviour rather than the person. This is because comments which critique the player as a person provide no direction for how to improve their actions or performance.

The variation in personalities across each player group warrants feedback provision to be tailored to their preference and personality in relation to delivery (i.e. sugar coated or direct honesty), the setting (i.e. private or public) and frequency (i.e. more or less frequently) with which feedback is provided before, during or after training sessions and matches. Failure to consider differences in individual personalities, knowledge and learning
styles, or using just one strategy to train and educate players, may lead some players to become unmotivated or not understand the coach’s desires. This may then result in diminished player development and team success. As acknowledged by the participants in the current research, the effective coach knows how often to communicate with players based on the situation and individual player needs. The implication here is that all players need to receive feedback to improve yet the effective coach determines what is said, how and where it is delivered as well as how frequently it is provided to players.

5.6 Summary of Communication

Based on the analysis of data in the present study, communication ties together all aspects of effective coaching. Communication is critical to developing a positive learning environment whilst also being a requisite for establishing effective relationships with those in the organisation. Furthermore, communication plays a role in the organisational processes of planning, reviewing performance and then delivering instructions and feedback to players. Effective communication skills such as being honest and consistent help manage individual player needs and in turn, build and maintain player confidence in the coach and team performances. The results revealed that communicating honestly and creating an open forum for players and coaches to communicate, enhances coach approachability and player respect for the coach. In addition to this, being positive, asking questions and listening to player ideas lead to players feeling more comfortable in the team environment and more willing to listen to the coach.

According to the current participants, effective coaches ask questions, deliver simple messages and use cues to guide learning to ensure that players understand the messages conveyed. This relates to how information is delivered as well as the timing (or frequency)
and setting (i.e. public or private contexts) in which communication occurs. Effective coaches are able to pick the right time and place to provide a balance of positive and negative feedback. This often depends on the mood of the group and the feedback preferences of the individuals within the team. Effective coaches are also sincere with the messages conveyed and ensure that players understand that the coach’s role is to help, not attack players when providing feedback to players.

5.7 People Management

5.7.1 Category Overview

As mentioned previously in the introduction to this chapter (see p. 168), People Management was not included as part of the interview schedule yet emerged as a significant effective coaching skill. When talking about people management, the participants in the current research indicated that effective coaching involved the ability to develop and then manage relationships with and between players, and create a team environment where everyone works cohesively towards common outcomes. Players and coaches from cricket, rugby league and rugby union argued that people management also included identifying and catering for individual needs within the team. For example, Leopold (league coach) indicated that:

... you’ve got umpteen groups of people ... players at all levels, in age and experience and you know, races for instance ... so you’ve got those sort of issues to contend with. You’ve got middle and senior management ... And peripheral to everyone in this is their families ... and so on that you’ve gotta have dealings with and being able to relate to ... young players and families, having children, issues at home and those sorts of things. And you’ve got media, fans, your own family, so there’s ... a plethora of people that you’ve really gotta understand and try to get to blend
together to come up with what you call that x-factor which is team spirit, club spirit. Without it ... you can go through the motions but you need that blending of people where they’re all working together ...

Leopold’s description revealed that the coach’s people management skills were required to blend together and deal with the various groups of people involved with the team to develop team spirit within the club. The other aspect of people management involves identifying and catering for the individual needs within the team as shown by Cyrus (cricket coach):

... it’s treating everybody as individuals within the group ... In a way, you’ve gotta be more of a psychologist, you’ve got to work out how each person is going to react to different things ... I think it’s more treating them as an individual and letting them know that they have individual needs and I’m prepared to listen to them ... but also then understanding that if they’re not going to work within the group situation, they know exactly where they stand ...

There were strong links between some of the concepts discussed in people management and those elaborated on in the Communication category (pp. 188-221) as well as the ‘The Environment’ concept (pp. 265-298). These included the importance of honest communication, creating open communication channels, developing relationships, working together and attending to individual differences. For example, when Connor (cricket player) described the importance of player management to effective coaching, he suggested that “player management ... comes from good communication in the team environment and individually ... [through] honest communication and feedback”. This is not surprising because without well-developed communication skills and an appropriate environment for the team to operate, it is virtually impossible for a coach to manage all the personnel involved with their team in an effective manner. This section focuses primarily on how effective coaches
manage the team environment and the individual needs of each player as well as why people management skills are important to effective coaching. In relation to this, the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia revealed that an effective coach possesses excellent people management skills which involved being able to:

- form relationships with players by being approachable and getting to know features of the player’s ‘off-field’ life in order to effectively manage the team dynamics; and
- identify and then cater for individual player characteristics based on their personality, age and experience, learning style, injury status, motivations, and goals.

These themes are explored below and Table 19 indicates the key properties which emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of People Management:

**Table 19: Tags and Properties in the People Management Category**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Management Category</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open door policy</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Honesty, trust and respect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regular dialogue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate an interest in players</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family atmosphere</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monitor team harmony</td>
<td>Managing Team Dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimise cliques</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify individual characteristics</td>
<td>Individual Characteristics of Group Members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Treat players as individuals</td>
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**5.7.2 Relationships**

The exploration of interpersonal relationships in the current study led to participant descriptions of the relationships that exist between (a) coaches and the players, (b) the playing group, and (c) coaches, assistants and support staff including those in administrative
positions. The relationship between coaches and players as well as between coaches and support staff form the focus for this section. Player-player relationships will be explored as part of the Team Cohesion property in the Team Culture category (see pp. 290-297).

The results from the current study indicate that effective coaches develop open, honest and respectful relationships with players. According to Ronnie (union coach), this is because “a relationship with the players can’t exist without honesty and trust”. In attempting to develop rapport with the players and break down any preconceived coach-player barriers, the participants in the current research identify several strategies used by effective coaches. Effective coaches (a) take an interest in player development both on and off the field; (b) initiate regular dialogue with players in both formal and informal contexts; and (c) create an open-door policy to enhance feelings of approachability. These strategies strongly correlate with several themes explored throughout the Communication category (see p. 209). To avoid an overlap with the previous section, this section focuses on how communication aids the process of managing people rather than assisting player learning and development.

The findings in the current study suggest that effective coaches earn respect not only through their previous experiences in the sport (i.e. success as players and coaches in making representative teams and winning premierships) but also through their actions. In response to interview questions regarding how coaches formed relationships with their players, Leopold (league coach) suggested the following:

[you] gotta be honest ... and also tempered with the ability to say look if there’s an issue, be it if you’re not in the team next week, giving them a way out ,with what you’ve gotta do and then showing an interest in helping them get out of that problem. Helping them solve the issue rather than just telling them they’ve got an issue breeds trust. And I think um, and breeds trust and breeds the respect, I think you earn their respect by
showing an interest in people and um, showing um that you’re there to improve them.

Leopold’s comments identify several key areas that are crucial to establishing trust and respect between coaches and players. Gaining respect was essential according to Lenny (league player) as shown by the following comment made by him during the interview phase: “… you want to play for a coach that you have the respect of. I think it’s the same for the coach, he wants to coach the players that respect him”. In the Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen (2002) study, the participants acknowledged that trust and respect worked as both the product and the building tools in the coach-player relationship. This suggests that some players possess a similar mentality to coaching staff concerning the formation of personal bonds with the coach outside the traditional performance-based relationship to enable both the coach and player to perform effectively. Coach-player relationships that foster trust and respect may enhance the atmosphere at the club and in turn encourage players to be more receptive of coach feedback, decisions regarding team strategy, training activities and selections.

Much like the participants’ explanations in the current study, Jones et al. (2004) argued that being aware of what individual players are experiencing both on and off the field helped establish rapport and positive relationships between athletes and coach. Similarly, results from the Portrac et al. (2002) study revealed that to be completely successful, an elite football (soccer) coach needs to be easily approachable and able to relate to his players not only as footballers but more importantly, as people, to gain their confidence, trust and loyalty. Instigating these actions demonstrates that effective coaches care about team members and attempt to make players feel comfortable in the team
environment. In relation to initiating regular dialogue with players, Richard (union player) explained that effective coach-player relationships involved:

... touching base with them maybe not every week but maybe once every fortnight, seeing how they’re going, what they’re thinking, what their thoughts are on the team’s development, and just get a feel for how they are and just not to lose touch with them ...

Curtis (cricket player) supported this view stating that if “you don’t talk to your coach a lot then I think you can feel a little bit alienated and that they’ve not been helping you as much as what you think they could”. Similarly, Callum (cricket player) suggested how both people management and communication were integral when dealing with player selections:

... with getting dropped, I think a good coach, or manager of a squad, when players do have those down times, is that they’re treated and communicated with in a pretty similar to when they were in the team. I remember a situation with ‘Cornelius’ (former coach) in my first year I had a good year, and he was great, he was always communicating and bringing me up, went out of his way to help me in training out of hours ... and in the following year, um, my form dropped, I got dropped and all communication and helping ceased, you know and that is something that I found extremely negative ... whereas someone like ‘Cyrus’ (current coach) ... has always backed his players.

What this suggests is that Callum felt it was necessary for coaching staff to maintain contact with players during periods of good and bad form. Furthermore, the coach’s personal characteristics, such as empathy, are important for supporting players when they have been deselected from a team.

Lenny (league player) suggested that effective coaches are “... a kind of people person, someone you can approach and talk to ... have a joke with here and there ... you don’t just wanna be [talking] footy 24/7”. Similarly, each of the coaches mentioned that informal conversations in the corridor or when travelling assisted with the development and
maintenance of relationships with players, as this observation from Ronnie (union coach) demonstrates:

*You just have your conversations with them and sometimes they’re structured and organised. But some of the more important ones I’ve been in it’s just casually ... You do a lot of them in travelling and touring. You just ... checked in and sit down at a table with them and have a coffee and you just talk generally ...*

This type of comment confirms results from previous qualitative research with elite coaches of team and individual sports (Cassidy et al., 2004). They suggested that the quality of coach-athlete relationships was determined by the “degree to which the coach connects with his or her athletes as social beings” (Cassidy et al., 2004, p.99). Similarly, several cricket and rugby league players indicated that they enjoyed having a beer with the coach in order to get to know a little about him, find something in common and to relax and feel comfortable in the coach’s presence. The premise here was that if a coach fails to communicate regularly with their players or give off the impression that they are unapproachable, they are likely to be considered aloof and thus ineffective as shown by Lee’s (league player) comment below:

*... the kind of coach who, you know, if you go up to and you say ‘ohh coach can we have a chat?’ and he’s just like ‘ohh I’ll talk to you later’ and he’s just really cold and that kind of thing ... if I had a coach like that it’d be disgraceful.*

For these players, it was important to be able to relate to coaches, share jokes with them and even possess a similar “*hobby ... outside the game*” (Curtis, cricket player).

Alternatively, several participants from the rugby union context believed that both players and coaches need time away from the team environment. Ryan (union player) believes that there is a “*time and place [where] you’ve just got to step away from rugby*”
while Robert (union player) claimed that “too much rugby rots your brain”. This demonstrates that some professional coaches and players feel socialisation is important for the development of coach-player relationships while other participants believe that effective coaches know when to talk ‘work’ and when to generate informal conversations with players.

In relation to the type of coach-player relationship developed, several players and coaches claimed that a professional distance must exist if the coach is to be considered effective. The “professional” (Rex, union coach) relationship existed where coaches and players remained at arm’s-length distance from the coach in which coaching staff remained “approachable but not matey” (Rafael, union player). In this context, the coach and players made a distinction between being a ‘coach’ and a ‘mate’ because decision-making became easier if a professional distance was maintained. For example, Rex (union coach) stated that:

> I don't socialise with the players ... I'm pretty controlled ... it doesn't mean I won't have a beer with them or something but ... I'll never go out with the players ... So I'm quite clear where the lines of responsibility are ... Some people say well maybe it's a bit impersonal but it makes it better, [when] the hard decisions come it makes it much easier to make them ...

Ricardo (union player) shared this perspective where he explained that, “It’s very hard when you’re one of the boys because you’re picking teams and making tough selection choices, you can’t be staying one of the boys”.

Perhaps these participants believed that coaches do not need to be friends with players in order to be effective but still prepared to work for one another. Being liked and respected was a bonus in the coach-player relationship but as Rex (union coach) pointed out “it’s easier to be liked than respected” as a coach. Alternatively, being liked but not respected or neither liked nor respected can be disastrous for the coach-player relationship.
This is because a lack of respect in relationships restricts communication between coaches and players. Furthermore, limited or no respect may also have a negative impact on player selections, the team culture, and ultimately, commitment to and achievement of team goals.

Much like the current findings, previous research has been inconclusive in relation to the type of interpersonal relationships coaches and players consider most effective (see Cassidy et al., 2004; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002). Cassidy et al. (2004) suggested that being mates with the players did not guarantee excellence in participation. This supported the perspectives of coaches and athletes from Olympic team sport who indicated that a personal relationship was crucial but it must be kept at arm’s-length in order to remain one-step away from players (Côté and Sedgwick, 2003; Sedgwick et al., 1997). In contrast, Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002) described relationships as negative when limited interaction occurred between athlete and coach and where relationships were purely based on working towards sport-specific goals. Poczwardowski and colleagues (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, et al., 2006) also demonstrated that a positive relationship occurs when coaches and athletes intentionally interact with each other during practice, competitions and in other situations not directly related to their sport and where the athletes and coaches enjoy spending time together on both a personal and professional level.

The findings from Poczwardowski and colleagues (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, et al., 2006) correlate with many of the cricket and rugby league player and coach perspectives in the current research. These participants indicated
that close relationships should be established between coach and player in order to encourage those involved to become like a ‘family’:

A good clean relationship ... a lot of these boys, they become virtually family to you and that’s how I think it should be ... you gotta be a little bit careful that you don’t get too emotionally attached but at the same time I think it’s pretty important that there’s that little bit of a family atmosphere ... (Leonardo, league coach).

Similar to this, the cricket head coach and two cricket players highlighted that they built their relationships on the concept of “Together Each Achieves More” (or the acronym ‘TEAM’). Recall that earlier in the Coach Philosophy section (pp. 159-167), this concept formed part of Cyrus’ own approach to coaching. Cyrus (cricket coach) indicated that he aimed to develop close relationships between players, coaches and support staff and encourage people to work together to achieve the team’s goals:

I think that ‘TEAM’ situation ... includes everybody ... So I have a physio bowling in the nets or whatever, so they feel part of what it’s about ... you might have a room attendant, ok, you don’t treat him like a piece of shit because he’s important to what you’re about ... because without him, the team’s not going to function well.

This demonstrates Cyrus’ attempt to ensure everyone involved with the team feels comfortable and part of the team environment. He felt that if all personnel involved with the team were closely aligned, effective working relationships would result.

The results from the current research suggest that professional or family-style relationships are considered appropriate for effective coaching. This demonstrates that various types of relationships can exist across different sport contexts yet still be considered effective. The type of relationship established within the team reflects the coach’s philosophy and beliefs of the players. Therefore, the type of individual relationship coaches
have with each player may differ given that one player might want a close, amicable relationship with the coach while another could prefer an arm’s-length, professional relationship. This highlights the importance of considering the players’ needs, wants, and beliefs when developing a team and once again illuminates the need for alignment between coach and player perceptions for effective coaching to result.

Although differences existed amongst coach and player perceptions within and across sport contexts regarding the type of relationship that is most suited to effective coaching, all participants highlighted the need for some form of relationship to exist. This correlates with Vergeer (2000), who stated that the significance of interpersonal relationships is likely to differ across varying competitions, and social circumstance. The results from the current study suggest that the nature of the sport has no bearing on the relationship developed – it is more of a personal choice of the players and coaches. Without a genuine relationship, management of the team falters because developing relationships assist coaches in managing the team, establishing a comfortable team environment, and enhancing communication between the players and coaches.

5.7.3 Managing Team Dynamics

Based on the present research findings, managing team dynamics forms one of the major roles for an effective coach in the current professional context in Australia. Creating a cohesive team while also possessing the skills to manage the individual differences between players within the team are crucial to maintaining the team environment and a coach’s perceived effectiveness. For example, Rex (union coach) stated that:

*You need to get everyone on the same page, so man management [involves] understanding the team dynamics ... with each individual ... you need to have a full understanding of their environment and certainly*
being ... far more tolerant of individuals that have external factors at play, cultural and family circumstances.

The current results concur with previous research where a professional football (soccer) coach in England revealed that effective coaches possess the ability to manage people and in so doing, encourage players to work together (Jones et al., 2004). Effective coaches work on the team culture and dynamics of the team environment continuously to ensure that their team is working harmoniously. For example, Leopold (league coach) claimed that coaches need to be “working at that all the time ... 24 hours a day ...”, while Rex (union coach) suggested that:

*It’s not something you do once a month or check yourself once every six months or something; you’re doing it every day, you’re thinking about it all the time.*

One area of concern in relation to team dynamics was the notion of selfish players or cliques forming within the player group. In team sports, it is not unusual for some players to develop closer relationships with certain other players. For example, Leonardo (league coach) suggested that:

*... you’ll find that at some clubs it breaks into your senior players ... high paid players that might get together ... then you sorta get this group that’s sorta somewhere in between all that, then you get a younger group.*

Part of the coach’s people management role is to make sure that players are not dragging each other away from achieving the team goals. According to Connor (cricket player), coaching staff should closely monitor selfish behaviour because “blokes ... [who] wouldn’t be willing to put their body on the line for the side when it counted ... take away from what the team’s trying to achieve”. Any narcissistic tendencies must be dealt with quickly, as both
players and coaches felt that this destabilises the team. According to Connor (cricket player), this is where the effective coach takes control:

... it’s a job that the coach then has to address and has to find the best way to try and come through that tough time and get everyone again, into a situation where they’re all happy and wanting to fight and do well for each other.

Leonardo (league coach) mentioned that effective coaches identify and address the notion of cliques early:

... well again it comes back to honesty. If you see groups starting to develop, I think you’ve gotta hit it on the head straight away, you’ve gotta talk to players why, why, why? It’ll do harm to the side and even to the stage where you might release players ... if they’re not fitting in ...

In addition to this, Rex (union coach) claimed that coaches needed to influence the “middle bunch” in order to ensure that everyone is working together:

I think in any group there's always a handful of stars and there's always a handful of guys that are on the bottom edge and there's a whole bunch in the middle ... you've got to influence that middle bunch ... it's quite easy to have a couple of ... passive aggressive [individuals] sit there and try and drag the group the other way. You've got to work out who they are, give 'em a chance to change and work with them because otherwise they just impede your progress.

By discussing with the players the negative impact that cliques and selfish players have on the team, coaches can minimise any potential damage caused. In sum, managing the team dynamics has important implications for the team harmony and player motivation to train and compete in a manner that places the team ahead of the individual. Effective coaches of team sports ensure that their players are ‘singing off the same song sheet’ and perpetually look to enhance the group dynamic.
5.7.4 Individual Characteristics of Group Members

For the players and coaches in the current study, one of the most crucial aspects of effective coaching is being able to understand each player’s individual characteristics. This includes developing knowledge about their independent personality, goals, sources of motivation, and learning style. This important feature of effective coaching has been widely acknowledged by previous research on leadership (Jambor and Zhang, 1997; Zhang, Jensen, & Mann, 1997) and coaching behaviour (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) as well as across a variety of team (Kellett, 1999; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and individual sports (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). The way in which effective coaches adapted their communication style to suit individual learning styles and feedback preferences was explored previously in the Communication Skills section (pp. 188-221). To avoid overlap, this section focuses primarily on how coaches identify individual player characteristics and the way in which they use this information effectively to treat each player as an individual.

5.7.4.1 Identifying Individual Characteristics

The results from the current study demonstrate that effective coaches source as much information as possible about each individual to build an understanding of (a) what motivates players, (b) their learning and feedback preferences, and (c) any potential outside influences on their professional career. Effective coaches aim to develop a holistic understanding of their players in terms of on-field capabilities and the lives they lead outside the sporting environment. Knowing these intricate components assists in developing appropriate training sessions, providing instructions and feedback, establishing and maintaining relationships within the team. This information also helps with managing the
team dynamics and making decisions regarding discipline or team selections. For example,

Cyrus (cricket coach) suggested that:

... you’ve constantly [got to] be looking at assessing the mood of the group ... if you see that they’re tired ... you might do something else. But if they’re slacking off, you might run the hell out of ‘em. And that really just sparks them up as well you know, that’s another way that sometimes you’ll go harder and sometimes you’ll go softer.

A player’s personality influences their motivation, learning style and feedback preferences as “everybody approaches the game in a different way” (Cortez, cricket coach).

For coaching to be effective, Leon (league player) claimed that a blanket or one-size-fits-all approach was not suitable and that an individual approach was necessary:

A really good coach will adapt to each individual personality. We had a coach in the past that he did it the way he did things [in coaching] the way he did them as a player. He was a very hard player and put a lot of pressure on the younger kids, and they didn’t respond to it very well, um, yeah so if he can adapt and work out the players different personalities ... [it’s] going to go a long way to getting better results. (Leon, league player).

In fact, the findings from the present research revealed that ineffective coaches did not consider the individual’s needs or implemented a “dictatorial” (Cyrus, cricket coach) approach to coaching. According to Cecil (cricket player):

... the best coaches I’ve seen they identify the individuals and don’t try and mould them into one ... type of bowler or something like that. You get a few coaches that tend to think that a certain way of bowling is great and or even batting and try and shape everyone who comes through them to that mould. You can’t do that. Everyone’s got their own sort of style and everyone’s make up and body is completely different.

Likewise, Cain (cricket player) said, “It’s just sort of managing those personalities ... in a sense you’re not going to find two people that can be dealt with in the same way”.
Similar to previous research with expert rowing coaches and athletes (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003), the players and coaches in the current study believed that effective coaches build a catalogue of knowledge regarding each player’s personality, physical characteristics, cultural and family background, learning style and feedback preference. In addition, Cassidy et al. (2004) found that sexual and socioeconomic identities must also be taken into consideration – findings that did not surface in the current research. To assist coaches in recognising the different motivations and interests of each player, effective coaches collected information through formal and informal conversations, meetings and observation of individuals both on and off the field. Leonardo (league coach) was one participant who maintained that regular communication with the players was imperative to getting to know the nuances of each person’s life:

*I just reckon it’s communicating with them and ... talking to them regularly, you get to know em, you get to know their habits ... you also hear occasionally from one player that maybe another player is having a bit of a hard time ... asking them things about their life. Have they ... bought their first house? Are they still getting educated? And you’ve gotta talk and find it out ... maybe not into your office the first time. I think it’s a lot of its just walkin’ up and [saying] “How’s things mate? How’s your mum and dad? How’s your wife? Kids started school?”... Any sort of general talk to break the ice ... normal chitchat ... make them feel comfortable.*

These conversations also helped develop rapport and relationships between players and coaches as well as contributing to a comfortable team environment. Overall, developing an understanding of the individual characteristics of players is an evolving process. In this respect, effective coaches observe athletes in varying situations to see how they interact with other players (e.g. who they interact with) and how they react to certain adverse or
challenging situations. For example, Ronnie (union coach) and Cyrus (cricket coach) stated that:

*I think ... part of the skill of coaching is knowing how your players react in all environments. How they react in terms of media, how they react in terms of travelling with your team-mates.* (Ronnie).

*I sit and watch blokes a lot in the group situation to see how they fit in and you can get an idea of how blokes are going to respond to different tasks that are put at them.* (Cyrus).

These findings are similar to the ‘Athlete-Centred’ processes in the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) and ‘Recognise Individual Differences’ in Côté and Sedgwick’s (2003) model of effective coaching behaviours in rowing. In the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995), gymnastic coaches created a mental impression (or mental model) of the athlete’s potential, taking into account personal characteristics (age, ability, stage of learning) and contextual factors (politics, parents and working conditions) which directly influenced how they communicated with and coached their team. Likewise, the Olympic coaches in the Côté and Sedgwick (2003) study catered for differences in personality, learning styles, and roles in the team by adapting their coaching style to different situations and individuals. The current findings show that the better understanding a coach has of the different personalities within the team, the more effective they will be in developing player potential and dealing with team and individual issues. Analysis of the data in the current study revealed that effective coaches also tailored their training sessions, management and communication strategies based on the age, experience and expectations of players within a team.

5.7.4.2 Treating Players as Individuals
The coaches in the current research felt that effective coaches clearly outline their policy of treating everyone as individuals. For example, Leopold (league coach) stated that “I start the season off by saying I’ll be very consistent in treating everybody differently and that’s the way it’s going to be ...”. Therefore, being honest and consistent in dealing with behavioural and discipline issues is an effective people management strategy. Similar to the peripheral features of training, competition and organisation in the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995), the current results highlight that knowledge of each player’s personality have an impact on how coaches communicate, organise and manage the team. In fact, coaches and players from each context mentioned that there should be different expectations of the senior and younger players concerning their knowledge of the game, training schedules, and in making team selections. For example, Cyrus (cricket coach) stated:

... it’s when you sort of do one thing with one bloke and one thing with another ... and that’s mainly in your training and things like that ... We used to have ‘Coning’ [former player] ... He’d been playing for 10-15 years, he’s got bad knees ... But he’ll be doing something.

In this statement, Cyrus acknowledged that for a senior player who is also carrying an injury, the training program would be different to the rest of the team. While the expectation is that all will be at training, sessions may vary depending on the seniority and injury status of players. On the surface, it appears contradictory to treat everybody differently where some players are training less however, each of the head coaches highlighted that the key is to treat the issue in a consistent fashion while considering the individual context. This is particularly relevant for dealing with discipline issues.

Players and coaches from each context emphasised that effective coaches consider individual circumstances when dealing with disciplinary issues and selections by “treating
each player on their own merits” (Leonardo, league coach). In the rugby union context, Rex (union coach) explained that:

You need to be consistent and honest and fair all the time ... the team needs to see that ... being fair doesn't necessarily mean you’re going to do the same thing with each individual. So you need to have a full understanding of their environment and certainly be far more tolerant of individuals that have external factors at play [like] cultural and family circumstances ... so we’d try and read the situation but we’re consistent and we don't leave things unattended ... You don't miss out on discipline, you always get dealt with. It's just a question of ... how it actually happens

Cyrus (cricket coach) provided a specific example of how effective coaches must be consistent in dealing with discipline issues, even when the player is high profile or one of the team’s best players:

... there was a situation where ‘Chandler’ [a high profile player from Cyrus’ team] was late to the bus ... so I left him there, and he had to find his own way to the airport ... it’s simple and that’s what we do ... they understand ... It’s that consistency with the message that you’re giving them and ... they like that.

This supports the More and Franks (2004) research that highlighted that if coaches are fair and consistent, players are more likely to commit themselves to the coach’s methods.

Rather than displaying favouritism to one player over another, being able to deal with discipline issues in an honest, consistent manner ultimately laid the foundation for effective management of individual needs.

Each of the coaches varied his approach to coaching in team meetings and on the field during training. The following example from an informal conversation with Cyrus during CROS12 demonstrates how he considered Cecil, Cade and Connor’s personalities when coaching:
Cyrus noted that he recognises individual differences because he understands that they all react differently to feedback and they have different personalities.

He then suggested that Cecil was one of the people you can say anything to: “Some blokes you can’t criticise and others you can say anything to.” Further explained that Cade lost confidence easily and therefore needed “lots of praise” while Connor just “liked to be praised”.

Cyrus was particularly attentive to Cade where he regularly praised Cade during observations sessions 2, 4 and 7. The following example from CROS2 shows how the coach spoke with Cade twice in one day to boost his confidence:

1pm:

- Head Coach (HC) provided some support and a confidence boost to player who lacked it earlier (Cade). E.g., HC: “How’d that feel Cade?”;
- Cade: “Yeah better”;
- HC: “Good”.

5.30pm, end match day 1:

- HC again goes back to individual player (Cade) and chats to him to boost confidence and reassure him.

While the varying roles and different communication techniques of coaches were discussed in the Leadership (pp. 172-187) and Communication (pp. 188-221) sections respectively, this is an example from the cricket context where the head coach adapted his coaching style to suit the personality of one of his players. Based on Cade’s personality, Cyrus felt it was necessary to speak with him on an individual level and frequently throughout a day, rather than talk about Cade’s performance in a team situation or confront the player. He took the time to sit down with him, more frequently than any other player throughout the
observation period, to provide reassuring comments with the aim of boosting or maintaining his confidence levels.

The consensus amongst participants in the current study is that in order to be an effective coach, people management of individual needs is essential. This ultimately involves “being able to do the right thing by the individual player” (Ronnie, union coach). The current research therefore supports Jones et al. (2004), who claimed that in order to account for the various ways and rates that players learn, coaches need to be flexible in their approach and tailor communication and training programs to suit individual needs. An understanding of individual player characteristics is integral not only when considering how an athlete learns, but also when creating an appropriate environment for players and coaches to work. This also supports Bloom et al.’s (1999) research with international level coaches. Bloom (et al., 1999) noted that a favourable coaching climate occurs when coaches adapt their coaching behaviour to meet player preferences. Therefore, finding out information about a player’s personality not only impacts on the relationships established with players but also in managing their individual needs in different contexts.

5.8 Summary of People Management

The results from the current study indicate that effective coaches developed open, honest and respectful relationships with players, coaching and support staff. This is because relationships that fostered trust and respect enhance the atmosphere at the club. In particular, developing respect between coaching staff and players encourages players to be more receptive of coach feedback, and the decisions made by coaching staff regarding team strategy, training activities and selections.
While effective coaches were noted to develop rapport and relationships with all players, the type of coach-player relationships considered most effective varied amongst the participants. Some participants indicated a preference for close interpersonal relationships with players, coaches and support staff, while others felt that a professional distance must exist for a coach to be effective in decision-making. The current findings showed that the type of relationship established between coaches and players reflected the coach’s philosophy and beliefs of the players.

Effective coaches of team sports ensure that their players are working together and are perpetually looking to maintain or enhance the group dynamic. The ability to gel the team together while also possessing the skills to manage the individual differences amongst players within the team is critical to effective coaching. The concept of identifying and attending to individual differences relates to understanding each individual’s personality, motivation, goals, learning style, and cultural and family circumstances. Effective coaches are aware of these forces and have good strategies to support them. Ultimately, this individualised approach helps to boost player confidence, develop appropriate training sessions, and communicate in the most appropriate manner with each individual in the team.

The current research shows that effective coaches communicate on a formal and informal basis with the team and individuals to build and maintain relationships, organise the team environment and confirm players’ roles within the team. The effective coach communicates regularly with players to discuss any issues that exist both on and off the field. This often occurs at opportune times either before or after training, whilst travelling and during informal social gatherings. Communicating in this manner is integral for
maintaining relationships but also gathering information about each individual’s life outside of team sport participation – a feature that is crucial to dealing with selection and discipline issues. Hence, communication has a distinct and crucial link with developing and maintaining relationship within the team environment.

Overall, the results from the current research indicate that the people management skills of the coach are crucial to perceptions of effectiveness. This highlights the need for aspiring professional coaches to combine the requisite technical and tactical knowledge with the humanistic processes associated with managing relationships, the team dynamics and individual player needs within the team.

5.9 Planning

5.9.1 Category Overview

While the coaches were asked more specifically about the planning activities they undertake, coaches and players were also asked about effective training sessions. In response to both topic areas, the players and coaches described many of the concepts for effective planning, organisation and management of training sessions. The analysis of data revealed that as part of the planning process, effective coaches reviewed team and individual performances and organised training sessions to ensure that players were involved in high quality practice. Furthermore, the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia showed that effective coaches plan thoroughly for training to ensure that sessions are (a) relevant to the needs of their sport, (b) challenging and enjoyable, and (c) progress smoothly from one activity to the next. These findings strongly correlate with previous research on expert coaches where the coach’s organisational skills helped develop creative, challenging and effective training sessions that resulted in athletes achieving
higher levels of performance (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Vallée & Bloom, 2005).

This section focuses on perceptions and observations regarding how effective coaches plan, review and manage player performance in both training and competition contexts as these themes emerged as important qualities from the data gathered. Table 20 indicates the key properties that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category of Planning:

Table 20: Tags and Properties in the Planning Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tags</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a purpose</td>
<td>Planning for Optimal Player Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance review</td>
<td>Planning Effective Training Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training intensity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practise reality - replicate game situations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.9.2 Planning for Optimal Player Preparation

The analysis of data in the present study revealed that effective coaches plan for optimal preparation by reviewing team and individual performance. This information could then be used to create an appropriate purpose for team meetings or training sessions. The participants believed that plans should be flexible to cater for the individual needs of the team and any unexpected situations that may arise during training sessions (e.g. weather or

As this thesis focuses on concepts of effective coaching, only the themes that are specifically related to what the coach does, why and how are presented rather than an analysis of the specific technical drills and physical competencies of the players. Aspects of physical preparation are present but detailed analyses of these concepts were beyond the scope of this thesis.
injuries). The complexity of the planning process means that a wide range of personnel is involved in the optimal preparation of players. In the current research, effective coaches were said to carry out planning as a consultative process. This meant that the head coach determined the timing, location and strategy for each session with the input of assistants, support staff and players. For example, Ronnie (union coach) said:

> For me I need to have clarity about what we want to achieve in that day and that session. Once we get an idea of those bases or basics ... I source information from players ... And I involve particularly the senior or most important players within that group. So, that would be say 60 percent of my work.

Hence, the players were “part of the solution rather than just being told what to do” (Leonardo, league coach). This supports the beliefs of professional AFL coaches in Kellett’s (1999) study where coaches specifically suggested that the head coach must oversee the entire coaching process yet input from both players and support staff was sought when reviewing performances and planning for training. The extent to which assistant coach, support staff and player opinions were included in the overall planning and training process varied at each of the clubs and was reflective of the coach’s philosophy or style of coaching (see the Leadership section, pp. 172-187).

The players and coaches in the current research claimed that planning and being organised were essential skills for effective coaching. In response to the interview question “What makes a coach effective?” Cyrus (cricket coach) highlighted the importance of planning:

> ... It’s planning of the opposition. You’ve got to have a full understanding of the opposition ... how they play, their weaknesses, their strengths ... but I think that one of the most important sort of things is planning for your own game and your own team game.
Coaches in the current study highlighted that effective coaches plan on an annual, seasonal, weekly and daily basis. For example, Rex (rugby union) suggested that the rugby union team has:

... A yearly plan, which we review at, probably into the sections of the season which we function from. Then we review that probably every two weeks, change the training we have every week.

In the case of rugby league, Leopold (league coach) claimed he planned training based on a “checklist” that:

... covers a cross-section of everything ... whether it’s passing to angles to offloads to support play and I have a checklist that I’ve developed over the years which I think covers just about every aspect of the game.

These procedures are widely acknowledged as crucial roles for coaches at all levels when developing progressive short- and long-term plans for training and competition (see Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 1990; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). From the observational data, it became apparent that the coaches in each context prepared monthly timetables and considered how many meetings and training sessions would occur each week, the length and purpose of each session, and who should attend.

In the Vallée and Bloom (2005) research into the development of successful university sport teams, planning involved creating a seasonal plan, preparing practices, ensuring readiness for games, and providing adequate rest time for recovery. The participants in the current research however, did not highlight the additional responsibilities raised in the Vallée and Bloom study such as recruitment, community involvement, and fund-raising projects. The difference here may be that the Vallée & Bloom (2005) research focused on Canadian college coaches whereas the coaches in the present study are
employed at a professional level. In professional sport, administrative personnel rather than
the coaching staff would be chiefly responsible for initiating fund-raising tasks. In addition,
coaches in professional settings are only partially involved in recruitment of players as
management executes the final negotiation of contracts with players or their agents.

According to Kidman and Hanrahan (2004), a productive training program begins
with good planning and the creation of an optimal learning environment that allows players
to learn. The participants in the current study strongly supported these ideals. The players
and coaches from each team agreed that effective coaches create sessions which allow for
maximal learning and development. More specifically, they stated that effective coaches
plan challenging and enjoyable sessions that focus on the fundamental skills of the game,
position-specific skills, and team oriented strategy. For example, Ronnie (union coach)
declared that:

... Players like to be challenged. So coaches that can engender a spirit of
inventiveness and courage and [enable players] to find out how far they
can push themselves ... and then they get invigorated by that. And I think
ah, [this is] an important part of coaching ...

This is important as previous research with expert performers discovered that if the practice
environment was unstimulating, athletes or students lost interest, become bored and failed
to make any significant progress in their area of specialty (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993).
Further to this, the results revealed that ineffective sessions were disorganised, lasted
longer than the proposed time limit, did not flow and were inflexible.

5.9.2.1 Create a Purpose
When discussing planning, participants from the current research initially suggested that effective coaches established a clear purpose for training. For example, Cain (cricket player) mentioned that:

\[ \ldots \text{making sure they actually have a clear aim in mind and the player has an outcome they want to get to, not just sort of having a training session, a bat and a bowl for the sake of it but actually getting some purpose to it.} \]

These feelings were also raised during one rugby union focus group interview where Riaan (union player) suggested that planning for training must "... be specific ['Yeah' – Ricardo agreeing] ... So everyone should have a core of plays that you should be practicing."

Participants in the current research also acknowledged that effective coaches thoroughly prepared players for training and competition in order to boost player confidence and ensured that sessions ran smoothly based on achieving the predetermined aims. For example, Lloyd (league player) suggested:

\[ \ldots \text{Having a coach who can fully prepare you, you know week in week out gives you heaps of confidence going into a game. Knowing you’ve done everything the works been done, you know what you’ve got to do, you relax. That sort of stuff I think is what gives you confidence.} \]

In addition, Leopold (league coach) mentioned that mistake free training sessions also positively influenced players’ confidence levels: "... getting close to game time during the season, you like to have less errors a training, it tends to breed um, a lot of confidence when you leave the field both player and staff.” As suggested in the Communication section (pp. 212-215), confidence is an important characteristic for players and coaches. Believing in your ability enhances your capacity to perform consistently, cope with the demands of professional sport and maintain commitment to the chosen sport (Jones et al., 2003; Weiss, 1993). If coaches are able to plan activities in training sessions where players can experience
success and feel thoroughly prepared for the upcoming match, it is likely the players’
confidence will rise. Therefore, effective coaches are able to develop specific and detailed
plans to provide players with thorough preparation prior to competition.

Observational data from each setting indicated that coaches provided players with
simple practice drills while also initiating activities that replicated match-specific situations.
These findings support previous research conducted with Olympic athletes and coaches
(Sedgwick et al., 1997; Gould, Guinan, Medbery et al., 1999), where coaches enhanced
confidence by coordinating logistical issues for training and competition (e.g. times for
sessions and races), preparing for unexpected situations (e.g. environmental conditions),
and through structured, competitive training sessions. Replicating Game Situations is a
theme explored later in the Planning section (pp. 244-263) however; observational data
revealed that the practice of simple, sport-specific skills formed an integral component of
each team’s weekly preparation. For example, the warm-up in rugby league always involved
basic passing drills prior to executing the broader tasks of strategic attack or defence
training.

Overall, effective coaches were thought to develop a clear purpose for each training
session in order to aid the thorough preparation required to perform at an optimal level in
the upcoming match. Thorough preparation for matches based on what the coach planned
for training also had a significant influence on player confidence levels and the manner in
which they prepared for competitions.

5.9.2.2 Performance Review

Observation and interview data revealed that effective coaching involved setting up
a review system for players and coaches to conduct performance evaluations
independently, in team units (e.g. forwards or backs in rugby league or rugby union) and as a team. The players and coaches indicated that the review process formed a crucial organisational task for players and coaches to assist with planning for training and help guide player learning and development. For example, Lee (league player) suggested that performance review was linked to the feedback process:

... After each game, you have to mark your game and go through all your tackles and all your hit ups and rate yourself and all that kind of stuff. After we hand that back in, he [one of the coaches] gives us feedback tells us what we’re doing well, things that he wants us to try more and that kind of stuff. So not only does he verbally tell you but he gives you stuff on paper that you can read through and look back on throughout the year.

Over time, there has been an increasing focus on the importance of video analysis of individual player, team and opposition team performance in sport coaching. Developments in technology (e.g. data analysis software programs specifically suited to specific sport codes) as well as the increasing professionalism of sport in Australia (i.e. full-time commitment means there is more off-field time to carry out performance reviews) have enhanced this process. Previous research discussed how video analysis and scout reports were integral to planning effective and enjoyable practices (Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In fact, Potrac and Cassidy (2006) argue that coaches should encourage athletes to reflect on their performances by providing them with video-recordings of competitive performances. They thought this would help to guide subsequent discussions between player and coach and aid the learning process.

Across each of the three professional contexts in the present research, players were required to review video footage and statistical data to identify personal strengths and
weaknesses of previous performances. For example, Ricardo (union player) commented that:

... reviewing what we’ve done, like the video of the skills stuff, we can go back and say oh right that was good or looked good, but actually it wasn’t much good cause it had this, this and this wrong, change that. So I think that’s quite handy actually being able to learn about what we’re doing right and wrong, being able to review your own performance.

Similar to Potrac and Cassidy (2006), the review of performance in the current research not only enabled players to learn from previous performances and helped coaches formulate plans for training and competition, but also assisted in designating specific roles to the appropriate personnel on an individual, unit or team level. For example, Cyrus (cricket coach) highlighted how planning for team roles includes a review of player strengths and weaknesses:

... I think that one of the most important sort of things is ... having an understanding of exactly what your role is within the group. Having an understanding of what the strengths and weaknesses are of your game and where you’re going with that. But also understanding the roles of everyone else within you’re group and that includes all the support staff.

Similarly, Lee (league player) noted that:

Every player gets a sheet at the start of the week ... You write down some weaknesses for the opposition, you know where we’re going to attack ... some weaknesses and strengths from the opposition ... That way you can read it through that several times during the week or before the game so it’s fresh in your mind before you run out.

This demonstrates that for effective coaching, planning involves a thorough analysis at both the team and individual level. Developing an understanding of player strengths and weaknesses assists in delegating roles to players within the team and planning training sessions accordingly. The aim here was to help players practise the execution of match-
specific roles with the view to improving performance during competition. In relation to this, Cecil (cricket player) stated that:

*Identifying every players’ role is definitely going to help the individual player be able to … know … that they’re required to do this job, so that in training they can actually focus their training on those sorts of specifics.*

Understanding the different areas in which you individually, and your own team, require improvement is an important aspect of planning. Similar to the findings from the current study, previous research also showed that that effective teachers, coaches and communicators provided clear expectations and roles for students so that class or team members knew each other’s duties and responsibilities (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Jones, 2004b; Siedentop, 1991; Truman, 2003). In research with elite team and individual sport coaches (Jones, 2004b), this was thought to be vital for building athlete confidence (by explaining their individual abilities and how they contribute to the team), providing a clear sense of purpose (encourages players to make effective decisions) to increase homogeneity amongst the group and improve overall performance. As a result, the findings from the current research show that effective coaches consider their own team and the opposition team when reviewing performance, planning for training sessions, and providing players with clear directions regarding individual player and team roles.

**5.9.2.3 Flexibility**

Coaches and players in the current research mentioned that effective coaches develop session plans bounded by specific yet flexible guidelines. Leopold (league coach) highlighted that coaches must:

*... be flexible ... because of one reason or another, something will change, the weather change ... there’s been injuries or you’ll sense, the staff will*
be sensing there’s a problem so you might have to cut something back a bit or add something that you didn’t allow for.

The current research supports previous research by Kellett (1999) where planning involved working to predetermined guidelines that are flexible to change. These perceptions contrasted the systematic nature of planning described in various instructional models from the late 1980s and early 1990s (Franks et al., 1986; Fairs, 1987; Launder, 1993). When planning, being flexible meant that coaches could consult players on their condition (i.e. injury status and fatigue level) and develop appropriate training tasks based on specific individual needs and fitness levels. Further to this, the cricket players and coaches believe that coaches need to plan flexible sessions where players could utilise the expertise of assistant coaches at various times throughout a training session. In relation to this, Callum (cricket player) explained that:

... You want to have structure but you also want to allow people to do what they need to do to improve and everyone is different. And whether that be a net session where people train differently ... there’s times throughout a season, that a batsmen might need to be doing something different [from] what the other batters are doing. So to have that flexibility and the coach is trying to keep an eye on the players, they need to be working on something a little bit different or a bit out of the structure of training, it’s extremely important ... A bad environment is when you’ve got players wanting to do other things to help their game personally and not having the time or being able or having the facilities with coaches to do it ...

Flexibility in training enabled cricket players to carry out specialised practice of position-specific skills during a session where coaches had planned for the appropriate facilities and coaches to assist in this process. These beliefs strongly resembled the nature of each cricket-training session. For example, general observation notes made after CROS11 indicated that sessions revolved around a specific circuit in which players were required to
do the team warm up and then take part in the net (batting and bowling) activities in the early parts of the session:

OS11, 11.30am, End of Session:
- Sessions seem to be flexible in that players are required to do the team warm up and nets sessions. Then when they’ve completed their own tasks, the players decide individually when they finish up and go into fielding or catching with each other or coaches.

Not all players were able to bat at the same time (due to facility and personnel limitations). Therefore, while certain players performed batting and bowling, others practised fielding by utilising the specialist fielding coach or other players to assist with their training. Cade (cricket player) explained the importance of flexibility as an effective coaching strategy in the cricket context:

*It’s up to the individual most of the time and he [Cyrus] sets out the plans of what he wants [us] to do – ok this is what we’re going to do, you do your warm-up, your nets and all that ... [but] it’s up to the individual in training sessions. You can bowl for 30 minutes flat out and then like I’ll go up to Cyrus [and say] ‘I’ve had enough’ [and he’ll say], ‘No worries, stretch up, go do either catching, fielding, or someone could be running’, so that’s the basic training ... if I feel I need to do anything extra, I’ll do extra.*

This style of training was specific to the cricket context as the rugby union and rugby league teams carried out more structured training sessions where specific times and locations were used to practice forward set piece (e.g. lineout training in rugby union) while the backs practiced kicking and catching. The cricket players and coaches felt this flexibility was an effective strategy for training however, the lack of evidence from the other two contexts creates doubt as to whether this would be an effective coaching strategy in other professional settings.
It would be interesting to know if other professional cricket teams from Australia and other parts of the world carry out planning and training in a similar manner. The vastly different nature of the sports in the current study warrant different training techniques yet it would be interesting to compare these findings with research into how other professional coaches of team sports in Australia plan for optimal player preparation.

5.9.3 Planning Effective Training Sessions

Participants in the current study suggested that effective coaches not only created sessions that were challenging and enjoyable, but they also managed the intensity of the session by including a variety of training tasks, monitored rest time and ensured that activities flowed smoothly from one task to the next. For example, Curtis (cricket player) claimed that training sessions must be:

… *Well planned and well organised* … *so you can utilise your time the best that you can so that … you’re not sitting around doing nothing. There’s always something that you can be doing, always something that you could be working on.*

In this situation, observational data revealed that training was broken down into team practice, team unit practice (e.g. forwards and backs in rugby union and rugby league) as well as specialist position practice (e.g. kicking training in rugby league; front row forward scrum training in rugby union; wicket keeping practice in cricket). In this case, effective coaching arose through careful planning and involved constructing an appropriate framework for training sessions to accommodate both team and individual training needs. Planning in this instance was essential for providing players with sessions in which they would enhance their understanding of the tactical and technical requirements for upcoming matches.
5.9.3.1  Training Intensity

According to the participants in the current project, a key aspect of planning sessions is to incorporate drills or activities that progress smoothly throughout the session. Effective coaches also control the amount of discussion and rest during training to enhance the flow of training and the management of time so that the session does not extend beyond the planned length. According to Rafael (union player), the preference for quality, smooth flowing training was mainly because players did not want to be “moving from drill to drill [where] there’s a lag in time” because training sessions may extend beyond their planned time. Ricky (union player) supported this notion, where he suggested that:

"Time management is a good thing though, if ... they say you’ve got a 100 minute training session but with drinks breaks and chats, your instructions it ends up being 150 minute session ... it’s not good for the players."

These features related to the intensity with which the players train and some players suggested they preferred shorter more intense sessions. For example, Laurie (league player) indicated that effective coaches ensured training sessions were “... short and sharp” while Ryan (union player) claimed that training should focus on quality rather than quantity:

"... when it’s time to sort of knuckle down, it’s time to knuckle down ... I think also the quality of the training sessions ... If you do five minutes of really good quality work then when you walk to get your drink you can have a chat and then you go on to your next thing and the quality maintains."

Furthermore, Leopold (league coach) suggested that given the intensity during competition fixtures varies at different points throughout a match, coaches should consider this feature when planning for training:
You just cannot play at the same level for 80 minutes ... you must be able to take your game up and back and control the intensity and lift the intensity and drop the intensity and control the intensity ... Trying to get that happening I think is important so at training, there are times when you want intensity and other times when you want them concentrating and listening ... lift for 10 minutes and then drop, control the play ...

These findings support previous research with a professional football (soccer) coach who claimed that training sessions should be “fast moving with emphasis on quality as opposed to quantity” (Jones et al., 2004, pp.18-19). This indicates that players at a professional level prefer sessions that are intense and challenging where practice occurs in short, sharp bouts rather than in long-lasting activities during the session. Hence, effective coaches consider the aims of the training session and build into their plan appropriate times for rest and communication with the team, as well as vary the intensity of the activities included.

5.9.3.2 Variety

All participants except the rugby union assistant coach considered providing a wide range of tasks for players during practice to be an effective coaching strategy. In this case, Ronnie (union coach) stated that:

... if you’ve got 25 drills that you do and you change it every session, all you’re doing is learning a drill every time ... rather than what you’re trying to achieve [in performing the drill]. You would have seen the coloured drill with the hats we do. I’d like to keep that in for the next five weeks and just do it.

Perhaps Ronnie felt that when his players learned new drills they focused more on the structural aspects of the drill (e.g. where to stand before starting the drill, when it is your turn), rather than focus on the intended skill development associated with executing the
activity. While there is some merit in Ronnie’s suggestion, no other participant supported his view. For example, Lenny (league player) highlighted that variety at training was important because “… you don’t want to be coming into training everyday doing the same thing over and over. It gets a bit boring”.

Planning a variety of activities meant that practices were not monotonous and players executed many of the skills required for their particular sport within each session – features noted as integral to an enjoyable training environment. Connor (cricket player) discussed a previous experience that he considered ineffective:

... we warmed up the same everyday and it wasn’t particularly enjoyable and on the days off we went and did the same kind of coaching, same kind of training and stuff like that and in the end, you almost go to training with a poor attitude. And ... the quality of training is poorer because of it, you know, you’re not willing to just do that little bit extra, whereas perhaps if you were happy and things were going well you’d be more prepared to do it.

This comment indicates that variety has an impact on player enjoyment of, and attitude toward training. This is an important point because the warm-up is potentially one area where variety can easily be implemented. For example, the cricket team used other sports to assist in the warm up process such as small-sided football (soccer), mini-AFL and touch football. The following is an excerpt from CROS2:

9.15am
- On arrival, players and coaches play a juggling game with a soccer ball, indicating light hearted, fun, enjoyable culture with good relationships. Also included in the warm up was a game of football (soccer), plus some throwing.

A sport-specific warm up may also be appropriate in the early stages of a training session however, modified games such as these provide an alternative and fun activity to successfully warm-up the players for training. This encourages players to look forward to
training as it enables them to enjoy themselves while slowly preparing themselves for the training session.

There is limited evidence in coaching research that specifically mentioned variety as an important facet of planning for training sessions. Perhaps the recent focus on deliberate practice (see Ericsson, 2003), or game-based approaches (see Kidman, 2001; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004) to developing player skills, are considered more important than providing variety in professional sport settings. An attractive task for future research would be to use qualitative observations and interviews to investigate what type of variety exists in other professional sport settings and how this influences player learning and development.

5.9.3.3 Practise Reality – Replicate Game Situations

According to the results from the current research, effective coaches create training sessions that enable players to practise reality and develop their decision-making skills through (a) the tasks they set up or context created at training, (b) the dialogue between coach and player, and (c) repeated practise of game oriented situations. Alternatively, training sessions that provide minimal opportunity to practice relevant game related skills were thought to be ineffective. For example, Ricardo (union players) suggested that:

Nothing is more annoying than when you actually start drills where you just can’t see any relevance to what you’re supposed to be doing on the weekend ... The idea ... is you’re supposed to be training in the order of making the 80 minutes as good as you possibly can so the relevance [in training] has got to go very close to what you’re trying to do.

Ricardo perceived that training sessions must have some relevance to what occurs in competition, otherwise players lose interest and decrease their efforts at training. For
Ronnie (union coach), creating game-based activities was integral to developing player understanding of the required skills:

... *What you’re doing is taking snapshots or components of the key decision times when they have to understand what they do and ... the consequences of what they do.*

This aim was to create activities that replicated game situations and encouraged players to practise making similar decisions to those required during competition fixtures. These results concur with Kidman and Hanrahan (2004) who claimed that game-centred learning helped athletes learn skills, which in turn enhanced their memory retrieval of the skills and respective techniques. Kidman and Hanrahan (2004) also suggested that learning through meaningful games enhanced athlete performance through intrinsically motivating activities that involved tactical decision-making.

Ronnie (union coach) believed that training sessions should be developed to enable players to build an understanding of unstructured contexts and learn to select the right decision or understand how the wrong decision places the team under pressure:

... *We’re trying to create worlds where they have to make a decision ... so most of our training would be developed into that area ... They should be able to source the right selection for their skill base, for the environment, for that moment ... “What are the cues in front of us? How should we play that now? What’s the best option? ... What decision’s going to create a better situation for us, rather than one that puts us under pressure?”*

The aim of developing training sessions that focused on match specific conditions supports the sentiments of previous research (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2004) where coaches planned proactively to prepare athletes for unexpected situations that occur during competition fixtures. According to Côté and
Sedgwick (2003), this type of training also builds players’ confidence and assists in developing appropriate decisions during competition.

Analysis of observational data revealed that the focus of training sessions, more so in rugby union and rugby league than cricket, involved developing contexts in which players practised their decision-making skills rather than drilling them through repetitious skill-based or technical activities. This may be because professional players are expected to possess the requisite technical skills to compete at this level and thus, there is limited time spent on training these skills for example, as compared to youth sport settings.

The professional coaches in the current study engaged their players in game situations through small-sided games (e.g. 6v6 attack versus defence in rugby league) or whole team practice (e.g. lineout jumping and backline set plays where the starting 15 practised against the reserves in rugby union). Many of the tasks involved practise to counter opposition strategies and building on their own tactics, strengths, and style of play. Practising match specific situations, when supported by the appropriate communication, provide players with knowledge relevant to their roles or related situations from game situations.

In the Vickers et al. (2004) study, athletes aged 11-30 from developmental to Olympic level competitor experienced improvements in motor performance occurred when coaches used methods that increased cognitive effort and decision-making during training. These coaches implemented random and variable practice, the use of questioning and drills or a sequence of drills that simulated competition conditions where cognitive skills were required to solve a problem or make the correct decision. Similarly, the current findings showed that effective coaches set up tasks that were relevant, challenging and specifically
aimed at replicating match conditions to develop player decision-making skills and confidence. This demonstrates that an effective approach to coaching involves developing activities in training that match the reality of situations encountered during competition in order to train player decision making skills.

While the coaches in the present research prepared many training sessions that accurately replicated various game situations where players were required to make decisions based on match-specific contexts, their use of questioning was limited (as previously described in the Communication Skills section, pp. 288-221). What this suggests is that while professional coaches recognise the importance of preparing situations for the players to practise under match-specific conditions, there is room to educate coaches at the professional level about combining decision-training exercises with appropriate questioning to elicit greater improvements in motor performance. Perhaps coaches need to think about the type of questions that could be directed towards players during these types of activities as part of the planning process for each session.

5.10 Summary of Planning Section

A significant quality identified by the participants in the current project was that effective coaches were meticulously organised in planning for, conducting, and managing training as well as being exhaustive when reviewing both team and individual performance. Participants recommended that effective planning involved reviewing performances and developing sessions based on the different stages of the year that the team trained (i.e. the pre-season, in-season competition, and post season). Furthermore, effective coaching involved consulting players and assistant coaches to establish flexible short- and long-term plans for the team.
Effective coaches plan a variety of challenging and enjoyable sessions to enhance commitment to the team. Developing sessions that focus on practising strategic game-related tasks are thought to be an effective method for improving player decision-making skills and boosting their confidence in unexpected situations. This also contributed to the varying intensity of training sessions. Because of their planning skills, effective coaches also ensure that sessions flow smoothly and do not extend beyond the allocated time. Overall, planning forms a major component that influences the framework for the team environment and in particular the confidence of the players leading into competition.

5.11 Summary of Coaching Skills

The Coaching Skills concept represented the skills as perceived by coaches and players that effective coaches implemented to develop and maintain the training environment. The way in which the coach leads, communicates, manages and plans was influenced by their own personal characteristics and philosophy of coaching. When considering effective leadership, varying perspectives emerged regarding participants’ beliefs about the delegation of responsibility and the manner in which coaches behaved in the training environment. In this sense, the participants did not state that one specific leadership approach was most effective. However, the results signified that the coach’s leadership approach must align with player perceptions of effectiveness for the coach to lead the players, coaching and other staff effectively.

Communication is one of the key skills that underpin all aspects of effective coaching and player development. Effective coaches communicate honestly and create open communication channels between coaches and players. Being consistent and knowing when to communicate, where, and how is integral to a coach’s perceived effectiveness and
demonstrates the coach’s ability to cater for the different individuals in their team. These communication strategies are closely linked closely to the coach’s people management techniques. The people management section highlighted the effective coach’s role in managing team dynamics and treating each person as an individual. This was acknowledged as an increasingly important role for effective coaches in modern professional sport teams.

The final coaching skill relates to planning. Effective coaches are meticulous planners who consider the strengths and weaknesses of individuals from their own team as well as the opposition before creating tactical plans and training sessions. Having the ability to create sessions that are challenging, enjoyable, and involve various, game-specific activities is crucial to a coach’s perceived effectiveness.

The coaching skills of effective coaches are interrelated and have a significant impact on the day-to-day operation of the team and player development. How the coach utilises these skills determines coach and player perceptions of their effectiveness. The next chapter explores the overarching concept called The Environment and explains the meanings generated in the categories of Develop a Positive Team Environment and Team Culture.
CHAPTER 6 - THE ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Data Generation in the Concept of The Environment

In this section, data were accumulated by asking participants to explain their perceptions of the team environment in which players train, learn and develop. During interviews, for example, the coaches were asked: “If you were in an ideal world, what type of environment would you create that is effective for both your athletes and coaches to train and compete in?” and “How would you go about creating this environment?” Questions for the players included: “What do you believe is necessary for the development of an effective environment for you to train and compete in?” and “What are the types of things that you think are essential to help you learn and develop as a player?” The initial response for many referred to the importance of developing a good culture or atmosphere at the club where everyone works collectively to achieve team goals. The common categories that emerged from the data analysis related to developing a positive team environment and establishing a team culture.

6.2 Concept Overview

When describing elements of the environment, players and coaches in the current study commented on the physical environment, the personnel in the organisation, and the social and psychological aspects of the environment. Rex (union coach) for example, provided a broad description of how he perceived the environment at his club:

*The environment's what you see when you walk in the door! ... the physical environment ... the space we've got to work ... You can definitely*
control the environment about what guys wear to training and discipline ... so the look of the team is important. Just how they behave, you know, what’s tolerated and what isn’t ... There are other behavioural things about how they work off the field and analysing opposition and things like that, so we create an environment through technology.

Previous research with elite and expert coaches described the learning environment (Armour, 2004a) or optimal learning environment (Bloom, 1996a; Bloom, 1996b; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004) as the atmosphere, culture or climate established and maintained by effective coaches. Several terms such as the supportive environment (Kellett, 1999), positive environment (Jones et al., 2004) and healthy environment (Bloom et al., 1997), have also been used to describe what is referred to as The Environment in the current study. There were further similarities with other research (Jones et al., 2004; Kellett, 1999; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) that highlighted the importance of establishing a suitable learning and social environment for athletes to develop both their professional and personal skills. In fact, one acclaimed international rugby coach (Bob Dwyer) interviewed by Armour (2004a) believed that creating the total environment was about developing a sense of confidence; self-worth and well-being in players, which had a real impact on the performance of the players he coached.

According to the participants in the current study, effective coaches possess the technical, organisational and communication skills to create an appropriate environment for their teams. They suggested that the team environment embody the behaviours required for the team to achieve their goals. This includes making players accountable for good and bad performances both on and off the field. Further to this, the team environment established by the teams in the current research provides a framework for organising and
implementing enjoyable, challenging and varied training sessions in order to maximise player learning and development and enhance the chance for team success.

To achieve the ultimate goal of player development on and off the field, the participants in the current research suggested that effective coaches create an environment that makes players feel confident and comfortable. This results in them gaining satisfaction from enjoyable, challenging training sessions and playing better. The professional coaches and players in present study claimed that effective coaches develop a positive team environment. This includes creating a supportive, enjoyable team atmosphere where players are happy both on and off the field. The participants also suggested that effective coaches create a team culture where everyone works together in order to encourage players to train hard to develop their skills and improve their performance.

This concept includes categories that closely link to other categories of effective coaching such as leadership, communication, people management and planning. It is also not surprising that many of the themes within this concept reflect some of the key personal characteristics and coaching philosophies outlined previously because without these underlying qualities and skills, a suitable team environment would be difficult to establish. This section identifies the key components of an effective team environment, how an effective coach creates the environment as well as why such an environment is necessary for effective coaching. Table 21 below represents the collective properties, categories and concepts from The Environment concept.
Table 21: Properties, Categories and Concepts in The Environment Concept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment and Support</td>
<td>Develop a Positive Team Environment</td>
<td>The Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Safe Learning Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction for the Team: Everyone on the Same Page</td>
<td>Team Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Player-driven Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Develop a Positive Team Environment

6.3.1 Category Overview

According to the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia, an effective coach creates a positive, supportive and safe team environment for players and coaches to learn, develop and work. Effective coaches were said to create and maintain an environment in which “everyone is happy” (Leonardo, league coach), where individual needs are considered, and player opinions are valued. Participants in the current research believed that players feel part of the environment when they are challenged to improve through the provision of good facilities and innovative technology. As Cortez (cricket coach) pointed out, this is because “... you look forward to going to an environment that you really feel comfortable in”. When this occurs, the players are more likely to be happy and motivated to perform well.

Analysis of the interview and observation data revealed that a positive team environment influences the team’s day-to-day approach to training, as well as how they communicated and interacted with one another. The players and coaches in the present study advised that the coach’s personality, leadership style, communication patterns, and
behaviours influence both the team environment and individual player actions. The following discussion focuses on the features of a positive team environment, as well as how effective coaches develop positive contexts for players and coaches to work. Table 22 indicates the key properties that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the category Develop a Positive Team Environment:

### Table 22: Tags and Properties in the Develop a Positive Team Environment Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging training sessions</td>
<td>Enjoyment and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for players to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge personal details of players and coaches</td>
<td>Create a Safe Learning Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a comfortable team environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support each others’ success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage risk-taking during training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn from mistakes rather than punish errors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.2 Enjoyment and Support

One of the biggest challenges facing today’s professional sports coaches is maintaining a focus on player enjoyment derived from being part of a team and seeing improvement in their own skills. Each of the coaches interviewed highlighted effective coaching involved being able to create an enjoyable and supportive environment where people are happy and satisfied. How this was achieved differed in each context. With players increasing their focus on making money through professional sport, Cyrus (cricket coach) believes that coaches must attempt to refocus their attention to things they enjoy:

... if you’re not enjoying it, you don’t perform well and you don’t put the effort in ... The biggest thing working with elite sportsmen is that ... because of the money ... they take their eye away from the reasons that they’re actually playing the sport ... if you can get them focused on ... enjoying themselves, they’ll achieve all the other shit in the end.
Cyrus indicated that if the players were not enjoying themselves in the team environment, they would not be prepared to work hard for the team. This is an important point because if players are not willing to work hard for each other, team morale is likely to decrease which ultimately has a negative impact on team performance. Moreover, participants from each team mentioned that enjoyment was crucial to their participation and ongoing interest at training with the coach being primarily responsible for developing and maintaining an enjoyable and supportive context. This supports Riemer and Chelladurai’s (1998) assertion that athlete satisfaction is a pre-requisite for success at the highest level. A similar view was held by Leonardo (league coach) who suggested that a “happy” environment resulted from players being able to see and gain satisfaction from improvement in on-field skills:

“Ohh a happy one. Where blokes wanna come to train. They wanna come to training ‘cause they enjoy it, because they’re learning and getting better ... I mean that’s why we all played the sport originally because we all enjoyed it and we want to be a part of it. But you gotta have your discipline of course ... And the other one is satisfaction which you get from playing better.

While the cricket and league coaches acknowledged the significance of enjoyment to a positive team environment, Callum (cricket player) noted that “a bad environment is when you’ve got players wanting to do other things [during training] ... and not having the ... facilities ... to do it”. In explaining this point, he suggested that if players wished to extend themselves by working on a personal aspect of their game outside the regular training time, it was important to have enough coaches and adequate facilities or equipment available for this to happen. An example of this included carrying out additional net sessions (batting) with an assistant coach who provided specific tips to help improve player performance. This
again links with the notion that the ability to improve has a significant impact on player enjoyment level.

Training sessions form a major area in which coaches provide enjoyment and support for players. As indicated throughout the Planning section (pp. 244-263), players and coaches suggested that training sessions are effective if they are enjoyable, challenging, provide opportunity for improvement and are specifically related to the needs of their sport. In the context of developing an enjoyable environment in which to train, Laurie (league player) claimed that:

... playing well it breeds happiness at training and if you’re happy at training ... you play well ... if you just enjoy training with each other and you enjoy playing alongside your mate then ... it’s gunna ... breed success.

This indicates that experiencing enjoyment and success during training and competition are inextricably linked. These results concur with the findings from the Côté and Sedgwick (2003) research, where effective rowing coaches created a positive training environment. In their research with expert rowing coaches and athletes, the coaches’ ability to design competitive training sessions and stimulate athlete enthusiasm as well as competitive desire, helped create a positive environment. This confirms the importance of a positive environment for both coaches and players to perform at an optimal level.

Leopold (league coach) highlighted another method for assisting players to feel comfortable and part of the team. He suggested that remembering certain personal information about the players was the key:

... doing things like ... remembering their birth dates, or wedding anniversaries, or these sorts of things ... just to make sure that people understand that we feel for them more than just what they do for the club.
In the rugby union team, each coach and player received a folder that included a calendar of events for training, media and other commitments. Listed at the top of each day were details of player and staff members’ birthdays. While the rugby union and cricket participants did not mention it during interviews as a method to develop a team environment, the awareness of player and staff birthdays would surely boost morale amongst those involved with the team.

In addition to the coach and player perceptions regarding a positive team environment, certain features recorded during observations indicated players and coaches were relaxed and able to enjoy themselves in the environment created. An example of this reflected the change-room atmosphere in the cricket context prior to, during and after training where one player brought his stereo in for the team to listen to music. As mentioned in the Planning section (pp. 244-263), light-hearted activities or modified games such as touch football as part of the warm up were included to encourage players to enjoy themselves while at training.

These findings were similar to responses from the international team and individual coaches interviewed in the book *Sports Coaching Cultures* (Jones et al., 2004). In their research, Jones et al. (2004) found that a positive and supportive environment was created by appearing relaxed and confident, getting to know and attend to individual athlete needs and developing positive relationships with athletes. They revealed how caring for players by acknowledging their personal details, creating a stable environment in which players felt relaxed and secure, and providing support both on and off the field, were some of the key responsibilities of a coach.
The professional rugby coach in the Potrac et al. (2002) study also highlighted several components that were vital to the creation of a positive learning environment. For example, getting to know each athlete as a person, being approachable, involving players in discussions regarding team directions and the coach’s high use of praise were emphasised as crucial to developing a positive learning environment (Potrac et al., 2002). This demonstrates that coaches have a significant impact on the type of atmosphere within the team environment. If coaches are able to make players feel comfortable in the team environment by acknowledging them on a personal and professional level, players are more likely to enjoy themselves and be happy as part of the team.

The cricket players and coaches specifically indicated that effective coaches created a positive environment by providing social support for players as well as encouraging players to be supportive of one another and celebrate each other’s successes. For example, Callum (cricket player) noted that:

... he [current head coach] really built a culture around enjoying each other’s success, supporting each other, kinda get the individual mentality out of it ... which is you know a little bit cliché and it’s what you expect with team sports anyway but it’s not always achieved in the teams because you do have those egos.

This helped build a more supportive team atmosphere within the club where players worked hard for one another. These actions and the type of atmosphere that resulted emerged as significant contributors to the overall club culture in each context, which are explored in more detail throughout the Team Culture category (pp. 278-298).

Armour (2004a) interviewed a prominent international rugby coach from Australia (Bob Dwyer) who highlighted that developing a supportive environment was essential to what players do both on and off the field. Dwyer explained that in such an environment,
expectations are clear and underpinned by an open, honest and flexible learning framework that suits the players’ individual needs. In support of Armour’s (2004a) findings, the current results also highlighted that in an effective team environment, open and honest communication resonated throughout the team’s framework and engendered positive relationships between coaching staff and players. For example, Ronnie (union coach) suggested that:

... what makes a great team is driven by what you create together and how you create the dialogue and communication and trust ... an understanding of what you’re trying to achieve ... creating a world where they can feel comfortable ... through your building of relationships and dialogue ...

Previous research suggested that the effective environment is one that is educational, supportive, fun and challenging for athletes (Jones et al., 2004) and ensures that athletes feel a sense of acceptance and belonging (Lynch, 2001). Furthermore, recent research with professional coaches (Armour, 2004a; Armour, 2004b; Jones & Brewer, 2004; Jones et al. 2004; Kellett, 1999; Potrac & Brewer, 2004) presented empirical support for the notion that a positive learning environment enhances athlete performance. Therefore, the concept of developing a positive, enjoyable and supportive team environment is highly pertinent to effective coaching within the Australian professional sport context.

6.3.3 Create a Safe Learning Environment

It is interesting to note that while the coaches mentioned the importance of allaying feelings of fear within the environment, none of the players alluded to this in their descriptions of the team environment. Player descriptions focused mainly on the need to create a positive and supportive team environment as compared to the coaches who emphasised the need to create a safe learning environment to enhance player
development. Perhaps this is due to the fact that players are primarily the recipients of information rather than teachers within the learning environment.

In each of the contexts, the coaches suggested that an effective coach encourages players to make decisions, take risks, and try new things where making mistakes is an acceptable part of learning as long as players learn from the mistakes made. For Cyrus (cricket coach), this means encouraging players to take risks without fear:

... you have individuals that are prepared to make decisions and back themselves ... I let people know they’re going to make mistakes and I haven’t got a problem with anybody making a mistake. And I think that’s where you’ve gotta make it clear to the whole team that people are going to make mistakes ... What you do then is you learn from that and if you’re in that situation again, what are you going to do? ... It’s the guys that make the same mistake ... that’s when you become annoyed.

These beliefs are similar to the responses identified by Jones (2004). He suggests that developing a positive working climate where athletes feel relaxed enough to make mistakes in front of the coach as they strive for improvement promotes a learning environment that allows athletes to grow. Alternatively, Ronnie (union coach) suggested that “... if you create an environment of um, doubt or anxiety, then ... they’ll come back here less”. This highlights that if players do not feel comfortable they fear trying new things when at training which results in an ineffective learning environment. This type of environment would not be conducive to improving player performance through experimentation or risk taking.

The coaches in the current study develop a safe learning environment by allowing athletes to take risks, make mistakes and by guiding them in the right direction rather than punishing them for errors made. Two of the observation sessions from rugby league training
confirm this perspective, as the league head coach directly communicated to the players his expectations about learning from their mistakes:

**Observation Session 11:**
- **HC provides overview of session:** Focus on second phase. Also explains why they’re working on it (not doing so well in the game) and relates to game situations.
- **HC also indicates that there will be a focus on player decision-making during the session and explains about the need to be able to make decisions in offence and defence.**
- **Also suggests there will be lots of mistakes and gives examples of the types of things he’s going to be doing e.g. 3v3’s.**

**Observations Session 14**
- **HC provides reinforcement and confidence boost** – “I expect the mistakes” and suggests that the activity practised (for pretty much the entire session) encourages them to think quickly and readjust, but that he expects the mistakes.

Providing players with the aim and expectation for each task means they can be confident and play without fear of failure or repercussions for poor performance. In conjunction with a coach’s positive outlook, providing a supportive environment where players are free to experiment with new actions is another strategy to ensure that players feel comfortable and supported in their endeavours for improvement. Therefore, an effective coach is able to provide a positive, supportive and engaging environment where players feel comfortable in their endeavours for improvement.

**6. 4 Summary of Develop a Positive Team Environment**

Overall, effective coaches are able to develop a positive, supportive, enjoyable team environment where players feel comfortable and confident to train, learn and develop. This results from positive communication with players, providing opportunities to challenge players, and encouraging enjoyment while at training. Effective coaches aim to focus player attention on things they enjoy because if the players do not enjoy themselves in the team
environment, they may not be prepared to work hard for the team. Training sessions are a major site in which coaches provide enjoyment and support for players. Effective coaches create training sessions that are enjoyable, challenging, present opportunities for improvement and are specifically related to the needs of their sport.

If coaches are able to make players feel comfortable in the team environment by acknowledging them on a personal and professional level, the players are more likely to enjoy themselves. By offering adequate support for the players both on and off the field, the players are more likely to be happy and commit to the team as well as improve overall performance. In each of the contexts, the coaches suggested that an effective coach makes players feel comfortable and supported by encouraging them to make decisions, take risks, and try new things where making mistakes is an acceptable part of learning. The coaches in the present study felt that if players did not feel comfortable, they would be afraid to try new things when at training. This, they claimed, results in the development of an ineffective learning environment. The findings from the current research therefore highlight that effective coaches are able to create a positive team environment for players and coaches to work.

6.5 Team Culture

6.5.1 Category Overview

In order to create an effective environment for the team and its constituents, participants from each context in the current research believed that effective coaches must develop an appropriate culture at their club. This is because the team culture provides a
common framework of expectations for player behaviour both on and off the field that helps bind the team together. Furthermore, establishing a team culture presents a specific direction for achieving team goals while encouraging players to train hard and work together to improve their individual and team performances. According to Ricardo (union player), an effective team culture is one where everyone is “... moving off the same song sheet”. In expanding on this description, Ricardo (union player) suggested:

... I’ll go back to the analogy of the scrum, if everyone always pushes in the right direction at the same time then you are a whole lot more effective than if you have eight super humans all pushing at different times ...

Embedded within the team’s culture is a “strong work ethic” (Cyrus, cricket coach) that is player-driven and the development of respectful relationships between players and coaching staff. While participants believed that working as a cohesive unit is integral to an effective team environment, opinions differed regarding the extent to which players need to get along and the way in which an effective team culture is developed. This is explained in the Team Cohesion property (pp. 290-297).

Whether creating the team environment after taking on a new role at a club or making modifications to an existing culture, the six coaches highlighted how one of their most important roles was to influence the psyche of each player by building an appropriate framework for the players to achieve success. Analysis of the data reveals that for the coaches interviewed, the culture that evolved is highly reflective of their personal philosophy of coaching. This was described in the Coach Philosophy section (pp. 160-166), where each of the coaches suggested their primary aim was to develop the player and the person. For the players, sharing common goals, training hard and having respect for one
another are key features identified as crucial to developing team cohesion. Table 23 indicates the key properties that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the Team Culture category.

Table 23: Tags and Properties in the Team Culture Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Culture Category</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop guidelines for how the team operates</td>
<td>Direction for the Team: Everyone on the Same Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a trademark or team vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a strategy for team play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop collective team goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior players lead by example</td>
<td>The Player-driven Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a strong work ethic and commitment to the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor team performance and discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bond amongst teammates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing team cohesion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5.2 Direction for the Team: Everyone on the Same Page

Although each team in the current research developed their team culture in different ways, players and coaches in the current research unanimously agreed that effective coaches set up a team culture that united all those involved with the team to ‘work off the same page’. For example, Curtis (cricket player) said “... if you’ve all got that same goal and you’re all willing to work towards that goal then I think that sort of environment creates itself ...”, while Ronnie (union coach) explained the importance of “going on the same page” as:

> If I’ve got a philosophy about the game and I ask them to be a part of that ... we’re all going on the same page ... With that process we should develop a common world to live in and to talk from and how our dialogue should be from there. Now, from there, each of us must have a way that we say, stay on track with that and align everything with that.
This suggests that the coach is at least initially responsible for ensuring that everyone is working together, whether it is a result of a common goal or agreed performance strategies that unite the players and coaches. Perhaps the most important aspect is that the coach and player perspectives must align for an appropriate and harmonious team culture to develop. Further details regarding this scenario are explained below (see pp. 278-297).

The findings from the present study support previous research within the team sports context (Bloom, 1996a) but differ from research with the individual sport context (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). In the Bloom (1996a) research with expert Canadian team sport coaches, coaches spent a great deal of time guiding all the players to move in the same direction, a feature not prevalent in research with the individual sports coaches (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). Perhaps the greater focus on team cohesion and striving to achieve common goals in team sports provides the point of difference because individual athletes primarily focus on achieving goals for themselves rather than the team. While an effective team coach helps players achieve team and individual goals, the players and coaches in the current research indicated that if individual goals supersede the collective team goals, the ability of the team to achieve success would diminish. Connor (cricket player) emphasised this point:

I think selfishness is a big thing ... In terms of training, blokes would spend more time looking after themselves more than anyone else and even in a game, they wouldn’t be willing to put their body on the line for the side when it counted and those kind of things. They take away from what the team’s trying to achieve.

In this situation, Connor then indicated it was the coach’s responsibility to deal with the situation:
So I think selfishness is a big, big problem ... and that’s ... where the coach ... has gotta see that, address it and if it can’t be addressed, the push em along.

This links with what each of the head coaches indicated when describing his strategy for dealing with players who do not fit into their ideals of being a good player and person (i.e. their philosophy) or as part of the team culture. Leopold (league coach) explains this in the following quote:

I’m not saying that everybody is a carbon copy of the perfect person but you tend to soon find out and weed out the bloke who’s not prepared to put in at training and give you that intensity that I talked about ...

The findings from the current research highlight the importance of having a goal, vision or direction for the team and organisation or club, in order to guide each individual and the team in a positive manner. For example, Ricardo (union player) suggested that:

... having like a goal, a direction for the team to work is good. Just as simple as right we’ve gotta do stuff to win the Super 14 or ... we wanna be perceived as this or that. So taking [that] direction with everything.

The results from the current research suggest that the team’s culture is initially based on the head coach’s personal philosophy. This is then combined with the beliefs of the assistant coach, support staff and players to create a direction and strategy for the team both on and off the field. In the rugby league context, the head coach drives the team culture. By contrast in rugby union and cricket, after the head coach’s initial input, the players are primarily responsible for creating and maintaining the facets of the team’s culture with the head coach monitoring the team dynamics and commitment to the boundaries set by the team.
In the cricket and rugby union settings, the process of developing a team culture was formalised into a coach-driven, player-centred document. For example, Rex (union coach) said, “... we have a trademark that drives the direction we want to go, and that’s a player-driven, player created trademark, I just have to make sure we stick to it”. In the current study, the rugby and cricket team’s cultural framework was conceptualised into a team ‘vision’ (cricket) or ‘trademark’ (rugby union). It is notable that while the rugby league team emphasised the need for “team spirit” (Leopold, league coach) and a strong team culture, they did not formalise this process in writing like their cricket and rugby union counterparts. The formalisation of this process was dependent on the coach philosophy. In the cricket and rugby union contexts, the head coaches believed it was important to write up the values of the team into a document while the rugby league coach felt this was not necessary. The reasons for this are explained below.

The trademark or vision described by participants in this project was similar to what previous researchers described as the mission (Bloom, 1996a; Desjardins, 1996) and vision (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). For Bloom (1996a) and Desjardins (1996), the mission outlined the steps necessary for a team to achieve success throughout a season while Vallée and Bloom (2005) claimed the vision included the goals and directions for the team program. However, the current results are unique as participants from the cricket and rugby union contexts suggest that their vision or trademark is more like a code of conduct, which includes goals as well as behavioural guidelines to achieve the proposed outcomes. This is how Connor (cricket player) described the importance of creating a team vision:

The vision where ... we’ve got set guidelines and rules ... If we all aim towards that then, then we’re hopefully doing the right thing ... [Having] that goal and ... people ... pointing in the same direction ... I think that it’s quite important.
This vision therefore influenced the expectations for appropriate behaviour off the field, roles for the players (on and off the field), training intensity (e.g. punctuality, work ethic) and appearance. While Leopold (league coach) indicated that he would consult players and listen to their ideas, he felt it was his role to lead the team and make the significant decisions on how the team operated. Leopold (league coach) believed that his team was fully aware of his expectations which are outlined below:

*We like to switch on in three areas that the players understand. If you ask them the three areas that you gotta switch on they’ll tell you in here in the meeting room, in the gymnasium when they step in there, and when they’re out on the field. In between areas, it’s down time and I don’t want them thinking football in between those areas ...*

This demonstrates the more highly coach-driven culture that is part of the rugby league context. Given that the majority of players involved with the present research stressed the importance of having their voice heard for the coach to earn the respect of players and be considered effective, it is surprising that the rugby league coaches did not include the players in the process of establishing the abovementioned expectations.

The results from the current study reveal that the development of a team vision or trademark in the cricket and rugby union contexts (respectively) involves an amalgamation of the coach’s philosophy with the ideals and beliefs of other personnel involved with the team (i.e. assistant coaches, support staff and players). For example, during an informal conversation during cricket observation session two, Cyrus (cricket coach) reported that at the beginning of the current season several senior players, members of the coaching staff and administrative staff (board members) met to develop a collective vision for the club. In this context, they were lead by a facilitator from a private company who helped moderate
discussion regarding how the team wanted to be perceived and what behaviours were required to achieve this. This involved setting up appropriate values, expectations and boundaries for all personnel, which were then compiled into a readable document to guide the performance of the club. In this sense, it became a shared vision to which players were more likely to commit because they were part of its development. The head coach then requested players stick the team vision on the inside of their individual locker doors (in the team change room) in order for players to remind themselves constantly of the values, beliefs and goals of the team.

Cyrus’ example supports the comments made by a former New Zealand International rugby union player (Daryl Gibson) in Kidman’s (2001) work. Below is Daryl’s description of the framework that the New Zealand rugby union team established that guided the team culture:

... At the start of the year, ... we establish our culture which is the values that we share and believe in and that is a team process. We develop a whole list, we brainstorm the things we value, and we put them up on a board. We then rationalise them, cut them down ... We select the ones that [we] look upon as valuable ... The values are always in your mind and being reinforced ... (Kidman, 2001, p. 103).

If player views are not considered, this may result in a lack of commitment to team goals because they have not been involved in the development process. A future consideration for coaches is that while it is important for head coaches to communicate their values, beliefs and attitudes to the team, it would be wise to include other people’s ideas and opinions when finalising the type of culture desired at the club. A situation where coaches ignore players’ ideas altogether instigates an ineffective coaching context. Under these circumstances, the players and coaches may end up not working together to achieve the
team’s goals. Therefore, the effective coach is confident enough to share his own ideas yet consults others to form a suitable direction for how the team operates both on and off the field.

Overall, the participants suggested that effective coaches are able to establish a team culture through the activities, boundaries and vocabulary that define how the team operates. The cricket players explained in the clearest terms how specific guidelines should be established for “making sure you’re all in the same dress code and ... you’re starting training at a certain time” (Cooper) and that “the training expectations is that of absolute world class standard” (Cain). These results support previous research (Lynch, 2001; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2004) that suggests establishing limits and expectations for behaviour within the framework of well-defined boundaries, enables players to develop to reach their potential.

6.5.3 The Player-driven Culture

All the participants in the present research recommended that effective coaches develop a culture whereby the more experienced players teach and share views with the less experienced players. Richard (union player) advocated strong leadership within the team where it is expected that the “older guys set the example for the younger players” while Robert (union player) suggested that team leaders “look at video footage” and ensure that everyone in the team is “working hard all the time ... where everyone is on time and [training] is done properly”. As Cecil (cricket player) claimed, there are additional responsibilities for the senior players to:

… Set boundaries ... guidelines where you know if we’re going to be playing our best cricket ... how we should be preparing ... making sure that we’re giving everyone the best possible chance of succeeding.
Furthermore, Lee (league player) noted that for “... all those young blokes, that if they have any questions or if they want to know anything that the senior players are approachable”.

From a coach’s perspective, player leaders emerge naturally where the senior players traditionally “lead by example” (Leopold, league coach) and do the right thing all the time. While participants from each context felt that some senior players become leaders as part of the natural progression from junior to senior player, Cyrus (cricket coach) indicated that he purposefully requests senior players to assist others in their development:

... hopefully if you’ve created the certain environment, others will drag some on and that’s what I do to some blokes, I’ll talk to some blokes and say ‘look mate you’ve been fantastic, but there’s a couple of other fellas ... how about dragging them with you? How about taking him under their wing?’

By taking this position, Cyrus recognises the valuable knowledge players possess and actively encourages players within the team to learn and develop together. Overall, the players and coaches from each context recognised the value and varied roles that senior players can perform within the team sport context.

Over time, research has consistently indicated the benefits of a player-driven culture. Similar to a 1991 study (Widemeyer & Williams, 1991) on group cohesion with college athletes, the current results show that coaches should aim for group leaders to demonstrate the desired behaviours to the rest of the team. The current research also supports Kellett’s (1999) findings, where 16 professional AFL coaches suggested that a player-driven culture promoted learning and improved performance where players develop themselves and each other in a collaborative manner. Moreover, Kidman (2001) claimed that an athlete-centred approach – where athletes gain and take ownership of knowledge,
development and decision-making – helps maximise athlete performance by promoting a sense of belonging and a shared approach to learning. This demonstrates that coaches and players from college to professional contexts recognise the benefits of promoting a player-driven team culture.

Recall that in the Leadership section (pp. 172-187), coaches delegated responsibility to the players based on playing expertise, positional roles, and seniority, and in the case of rugby union, players who were voted by their teammates into a leadership group. In the current study, it was clear that the coaches’ aim was to assign players with key roles and create a strong work ethic as part of a team’s culture, by empowering players to monitor their own performance levels and disciplinary issues. Giving players responsibility develops a self-motivating, player-driven culture that enables players to direct each other’s effort at training and commitment to the team. For example, Ronnie (union coach) claimed that:

... a leadership group should be developed in terms of making sure that you achieve a common ground to work on, everyone sings off the same sheet ... the players’ world is playing and performing and making sure that they’re doing what they have to do.

In Truman’s (2003) study, athlete directed techniques such as establishing a “unity council” are shown to increase feelings of cohesion amongst teammates. The current results partially support Truman’s findings in that leaders from each team are expected to monitor the performance of the team, boost team morale and provide advice to younger players. It is only the rugby union team however, that developed a similar formal leadership group.

While it is clear that effective coaches assign key roles and responsibilities to players, the results indicate that this process does not necessarily need to be formalised into a leadership group by coaching staff. In addition, limited descriptions exist with regards to the
specific tasks that should be delegated to players. Further research into the types of roles, tasks and responsibilities delegated to senior players is required in order to build a deeper understanding of how coaches create a player-driven context to work effectively.

One common element that emerged from each team’s discussion of the term culture is the concept of developing a strong work ethic that underpins how the team trains and competes. This is marked by “concentration and maximum effort … between the staff and players” according to Leopold (league coach) and the notion that “if you’re going to play, you’ve got to work hard” (Laurie, league player). Robert (union player) also suggested that:

... the culture we’ve got at the moment ... you’ve got to ... be really working hard all the time ... so if we can create that culture early then at the end of the day it makes the coach’s job easier, ’cause he doesn’t have to worry about all those little things and therefore he can do more work on analysing, putting things in place.

As a result, the development of a culture based on these principles links to the underlying discipline of the team, including setting appropriate standards for training such as punctuality, appearance and being “switched on” (Larry, league player) at the right time.

This is again similar to how Kidman describes players as “empowered individuals” (2001, pp. 16-17) who become more self aware, contribute to their own learning, and are highly committed to achieving levels of excellence in order to achieve team goals. According to Kidman (2001), the advantage of this scenario is that athletes are more motivated to learn and that coaches facilitate but do not control athlete learning. The findings from the current research show support for creating a collective hard work ethic amongst the player group within each context to achieve excellence. Effective coaches are responsible for leading by example in working hard themselves and instilling this work ethic within the player group.
The analysis of observation and interview data revealed that the cricket and rugby union participants work in highly player-driven environments but this was less prevalent in the rugby league context. With the appropriate facilitation by the coach, developing a player-driven culture encourages players to take on responsibilities, be accountable for their behaviours and performance, and assists in the learning process. Caution should be taken with a fully player-driven approach however, as some players are not fully equipped with the appropriate communication and organisational skills to manage such an environment and fellow players in an effective manner. For example, Kidman (2001) claims that coaches should not give full responsibility to athletes but rather guide athletes toward decision-making. Furthermore, Jones and Standage (2006) argue that many questions continue to exist regarding how coaches can realistically share their leadership function with athletes as well as which aspects should be shared and under what circumstances.

It would be unwise to assume that every senior player is adept at teaching others or that they perpetually set the best example for the rest of the team. It could be said that effective coaches therefore decide the extent to which the player-driven environment exists within their team based on their own philosophy of coaching and the type and volume of responsibilities delegated to players. This again highlights the important role of the effective coach in facilitating player development, delegating responsibilities to players, and making decisions regarding broad team issues.

6.5.4 Team Cohesion

While developing relationships within the playing group and amongst coaches and players forms a crucial part of the coach’s people management role, developing a bond amongst teammates was widely recognised as an integral feature of each club’s team
Cortez (cricket coach) highlighted the importance of team cohesion to the team’s success:

*The one thing, having played in sides that have been unsuccessful and very, very successful, the one thing that is really, really important as far as I’m concerned, is a genuine happiness for other players success, teammate success ... I’ve got a photograph of Conrad and Cooper walking off after Cooper took five wickets and just the look on both their faces tell me that there’s a really strong bond there and this bloke was really, really pleased for Cooper and when that sort of environment is happening, what you’ll find is blokes will walk through bloody razor hoops for each other.*

Similar to the features of effective relationships described throughout the People Management section (see pp. 222-243), honesty and respect for coaching staff and teammates is essential to achieving the team’s desired goals and developing a bond amongst teammates. In addition, the current research supports the benefits of team cohesion outlined by Kidman and Hanrahan (2004) where a commitment to the team increases player satisfaction, trust and overall performance. Alternatively, participants warned of the eminent dangers of dishonest, selfish or unapproachable players and cliques forming within the player group. For example, Callum (cricket player) suggested that “If you’ve got certain players not being honest, talking negatively behind people’s backs, little things like that can ... create a division within the team”, while Leonardo (league coach) mentioned that:

*... you’ll find that at some clubs it breaks into your senior players, players that might be getting on a bit that start worrying about their future that get into groups ... You can develop another group which might be your high paid players that might get together that think they’re you know and you might, then you sorta get this group that’s sorta somewhere in between all that, then you get a younger group. If you start getting different groups like that, I think your side falls apart.*
The establishment of relationships means that teams are less likely to break down into cliques that negatively influence both the team and the coach’s ability to perform effectively. As explained in the Managing Team Dynamics property (pp. 232-234), effective coaches work perpetually on managing player needs to ensure that everyone remains focused on working towards the same outcomes.

The participants in the current study therefore support previous research which notes that teams often fail to perform because of a lack of team cohesion (Bloom, 1996a; Truman, 2003). While the expert team coaches in the Bloom (1996a) study indicate that being consistent when enforcing rules plays a significant role in maintaining team cohesiveness, the results from the current research show that the nature of the relationships between the players themselves affect team cohesion the most. Perhaps the difference exists because the Bloom (1996a) study did not include players in the sample. This is significant because many of the players in the current study highlighted that it was in fact primarily their role, rather than any action from the coach, that is most important to ensure that the team bonds and works together.

Interestingly, the results from the current research display ambiguity in relation to how effective coaches establish team cohesion. Players and coaches from the cricket team place a high priority on socialisation and getting along well with teammates as important aspects of developing a strong bond amongst teammates. The rugby union participants believed that socialisation with teammates is a low priority compared to achieving cohesion by getting through tough training sessions together. Alternatively, the league participants acknowledged that a balance of socialisation and experiencing challenging training sessions is integral for bring players in the team closer together. These ideas are expanded on below.
For the cricket and rugby league teams, the development of a club culture instils mateship between players and a “family atmosphere” (Leopold, league coach) that enhances player commitment to the team. Being open and welcoming to new players, socialising outside of training (e.g. attend dinners, go to the movies, play golf with teammates) and training at a high intensity promotes a bond between the playing group and a framework for success. The following examples demonstrate these perspectives:

... it’s important to be open ... When a new bloke comes to the club, you need to make them feel welcome ... (Lee, league player).

... obviously stuff doesn’t happen overnight you know, that mateship, but it helps if you are new in the environment that everyone welcomes you with open arms ... it sorta comes from rubbing shoulders together on and off the field you know, and working at it and over time. Eventually you get that environment where it’s a good environment to be in. (Lloyd, league player).

I could go and do anything with any one of these guys that I play with, anything really outside of cricket as well – golf, going for tea or coffee ... I just get along with all of them so well ... And you get to know each other a lot better...when you’re away on tour ... So you get to know them like family ... I can safely say there’s 20 guys in the squad and there’s no one that you don’t want to hang out with or don’t want to do anything with. It’s a good feeling around with everyone and doing things with everyone as well. (Cade, cricket player).

The rugby league head coach outlined what he believed to be an effective strategy for instilling the requisite team spirit and cohesion at his club:

... another factor on your club spirit ... is ... making sure that everyone in the club from the senior management right down are aware of each other, know each other, socialise a bit together, ’cause your club spirit comes from your training and socialising. They’re the two areas. If you train hard and bleed hard together then that breeds mateship. You go out and you do things together that breeds mateship and it breeds also you know the fact that um, you only get to know one another, they get to know each other’s families, the girls get to know each other, so it breeds a family atmosphere ... (Leopold, league coach)
Leopold suggests that a combination of socialisation and training hard is required to develop team cohesion, which supports previous research in college settings (Desjardins, 1996; Mack & Gammage, 1998). Previous studies on group cohesion suggest that possessing similar aspirations and spending time together off the field doing study or engaging in social activities like seeing movies, helps develop relationships amongst the team and heightens team cohesion (Desjardins, 1996; Mack & Gammage, 1998; Truman, 2003).

The rugby league and cricket participants believed that part of the coach’s role is to initiate the team culture. They achieve this by encouraging players to socialise together or providing opportunities for off-field gatherings, while also creating challenging training sessions to establish a hard work ethic. According to the cricket and league players, being mates off the field, getting on well as well as being able to share jokes means that with the enormity of time spent together, players feel more supported and a greater camaraderie resulted. Conrad (cricket player) highlighted this point as well:

> When you travel for two weeks at a time or you go on your long trips you could be away for a month or whatever with the same people. If you’re not mates then it’s just going to be terrible. I think it’s just doing whatever like golf, you go out and have a drink ... whenever you’ve got the time.

The cricket and league players felt that a positive environment and good off-field relationships means they enjoyed each other’s company more, work harder for each other on the field, and this brings the team closer together. For example, Cain (cricket) and Lachlan (league player) suggested the following about team cohesion:

> I think it comes from the fact that ... we’re all a bunch of guys around the same age, spend a lot of time together not just at training but outside cricket as well. [We’re] very good mates, ... and um, we all want to ... achieve good things ... I think togetherness brings about a particular culture and we all have an understanding of how we all operate. (Cain)
... we usually get together for dinner or chill out on the weekends, ... so I wouldn’t say that we’re just footy mates, you know. A lot of people will be mates off the field as well so we are a tight bunch. (Lachlan)

This supports findings from research with collegiate coaches, where Truman (2003) acknowledges that spending time together off the field doing study, going to the movies, having picnics and living together, increases feelings of unity amongst team members. Further to this, Lenny (league player) explains that experiencing tough sessions and witnessing teammates training with intensity increased respect and bonded the team together:

*I think you kind of get that mateship when you see other guys having a dig in front of you. I think ... you kind of earn that respect of your teammates when they see you pulling your weight out there.*

This demonstrates that effective coaches need to inspire their players to work hard yet ultimately, a hard work ethic displayed by players at training also enhances mateship. During training sessions, the effective coach is able to balance the need to work hard with enjoyment, so that everyone works in harmony. When a coach is unable to achieve this balance, the potential for players to not work hard enough for the coach or play well as a team increases.

While the union coaches acknowledged the importance of everyone getting along within a team, six of the seven rugby union players interviewed did not agree with the cricket and league players’ perspectives regarding the nature of intra-team relationships. They indicated that if the team has “common outcomes” (Ricardo, union player), and there is “respect for each other’s ability” (Rafael, union player), there is no need to socialise
outside of training with teammates to promote the team culture. Riaan’s (union player) perception was more expansive:

... not everyone’s going to get on, so don’t try and change that. If you don’t get on, sort it out and just try and do your thing at training. It’s good to play well together [but] ... don’t try and force people to get on ...

This may suggest that a greater level of professionalism exists in the rugby union context whereby the players view training more as an occupation than opportunity to socialise with friends. For example, Robert (union player) indicated that working hard and experiencing a “punishing” session did more to promote team culture than going out and “getting on the booze”. In contrast to the league and cricket players who favoured mateship, these participants suggested that spending too much time together (particularly off the field) was counterproductive because “… you get sick of each other” (Ryan, union player). In support of these perceptions, it was noted in the rugby union context that there was less interaction between players before, during and after training throughout the observation sessions.

In 2004, Kidman and Hanrahan described two types of cohesion. Social cohesion refers to how much team members like each other and enjoy each other’s company and Task cohesion relates to how well the members work together towards achieving goals. While the cricket and league teams exhibit social and tasks cohesion, the majority of rugby union perspectives show that only task cohesion is necessary for a team to perform effectively. Initially, I thought the length of time spent with teammates during competition and training would influence the different perceptions of team cohesion in each context. However, this was discounted because each team spends a relatively similar amount of time together when combining the length of time spent training and travelling to away fixtures (see Appendix C).
What can be surmised from the current findings is that the nature of the bond formed depends primarily on the attitude of the players and coaches and the types of bonding activities undertaken. This means that while all participants acknowledge that effective coaches must develop the team’s culture, the manner in which the players bond remains a point of difference. This again demonstrates that there can be various ways for coaches to develop what the players and coaches described as effective team cohesion.

Overall, the current results suggest that activities for players both on and off the field have a significant influence on team cohesion. Coaching staff must not attempt to contrive team cohesion, as some players do not respond to the social component. As Truman (2003) stated, it is important to establish a level of cohesion that builds a climate for team success because the team’s cohesion affects individual behaviour. This reiterates the point that the level of team cohesion has a positive or negative impact on team performance.

6.6 Summary of Team Culture

Although each team in the current research develops their team culture in different ways, the participants believe that effective coaches initiate a team culture where everyone involved with the team ‘works off the same page’. The process of developing a team culture might be formalised into a coach-driven, player-centred document but this is dependent on the philosophy of the coach. Regardless, the development of a team culture helps provide direction for players by including team goals and expectations for player behaviour on and off the field.

A strong work ethic and an element of team cohesion are embedded within this culture yet how effective coaches create these contexts and the extent to which players get
along varies. While the head coach initiates these aspects of the team environment, ultimately effective coaches aims to develop a culture primarily driven by the players within the team. Developing a self-motivating, player-driven culture enables players to direct each other’s effort at training and maintain commitment to achieving the team goals.

6.7 Summary of The Environment

If the main purpose of effective coaching is to develop player potential, one of the most important factors in this process is the environment in which players and coaches interact. The current results suggest that the type of environment created at a club and specifically within the team, is crucial for player development, satisfaction and long-term commitment to the team. In the current study, the type of environment created reflects the coach’s philosophy or direction for the team. Furthermore, the coach’s leadership, player-management, communication and planning skills ultimately influence the ongoing management of the team culture, training sessions, and player performance both on and off the field.

The environment is a place in which players and coaches spend the majority of their time in training, reviewing performances, planning and actively engaging in the process of developing the potential of the individual and team. Effective coaches create a positive, supportive and enjoyable environment for players to develop both professional and personal skills. Within this environment, effective coaches create a culture where everyone works together and mutual respect is commonplace. At these three clubs, they established a team culture to provide direction, common outcomes and boundaries for player behaviour both on and off the field. This was considered essential for teams to achieve success.
Effective coaches initiate an appropriate team culture through a consultative process with players, other coaching and support staff. The aim was to create a player-driven environment in which players challenge each other to work hard. In each context, the participants believed that effective coaches encourage senior players to lead by example with the aim of enhancing all players’ commitment to the collective goals and ideals of the team.

The current results highlight the importance that professional coaches and players place on the team environment and the type of culture that exists within the club. The participants in the present study noted that effective coaches establish a framework for the team which is simple and familiar to the players. This is designed to boost player confidence and create a comfortable situation for players to train and interact with coaching and other staff as well as each other. Effective coaches monitor the team environment continuously to ensure that everyone within the team is working together, which helps optimise individual and team performance. Overall, the team environment forms a crucial aspect of the current role of professional coaches, with the type of environment created being linked to the coach’s perceived effectiveness.

The next chapter summarises the key findings from the current research and explains the main concepts of the proposed Effective Coaching model in relation to previous research.
CHAPTER 7 - THE EFFECTIVE COACHING MODEL

This chapter outlines the main elements of the results and discussion and brings them together into a conceptual model of ‘effective’ coaching. It discusses how the major concepts and categories of the model relate to findings from previous research and concludes by examining the effective coaching model in relation to key research projects (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2004; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and other coaching models (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995; Chelladurai & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai, 1990; Smoll & Smith, 1989). Overall, the findings from the current study demonstrate how the effective coach undertakes multiple roles as a psychologist (e.g. maintain player confidence), leader (e.g. decision maker), counsellor (e.g. cares for and forms relationships with players), manager (e.g. deals with individual and group needs) and educator (e.g. organises, plans, teaches and reviews performance).

7.1 Model Overview

The model in Figure 6 represents the conceptual elements that professional coaches and players from rugby union, rugby league and cricket teams in Australia perceive to be vital for effective coaching.
The three major concepts that encompass the categories, properties and tags are The Coach, Coaching Skills and The Environment. Each concept interacts continuously to produce effective coaching in which players learn and develop. Embedded within these concepts are eight higher-order categories. It is imperative to note that while the eight categories of effective coaching are split into three main concepts, all the features identified are contingent on each other. For instance, the coach’s ability to communicate in an open and honest manner is an essential coach quality (The Coach) that effective coaches use to
manage the team dynamic (Coaching Skills) and form the basis for the team ‘working off the same page’ (Team Environment).

The players and coaches in the present study specified distinct qualities, characteristics and skills of effective coaches. They also noted that if a coach exhibits characteristics, qualities and skills contrary to these concepts, they are perceived as ineffective. What the participants in the current research did not specifically identify was the extent to which coaches are considered effective or ineffective if they possess only some of the qualities, characteristics and skills, but are lacking in others. For example, if a coach possesses a deep knowledge of the rules, techniques and strategies of their respective sport but their organisational skills may be lacking in that their training sessions generally run over the planned time, it is unclear whether they are likely to be considered effective. Therefore, there may be varying levels of competency within the concept of perceived effectiveness as explained below.

Two coaches may possess all the desirable qualities, characteristics and skills as defined by the current research, yet one coach may be perceived as more effective. This situation arises if one of the coaches is more proficient in a particular area when compared to the other coach. For example, both coaches may be equally perceptive when it comes to reviewing team performance, yet one coach is able to communicate the relevant strengths and weaknesses more clearly and concisely. This does not mean the other coach is ineffective because they do not demonstrate as exemplary communication skills, it merely points out that some coaches may be more capable in the perceived areas identified as effective in the current project.
It is important to note that coaches can develop the qualities, characteristics and skills outlined in the current study. This means that if a coach is less proficient in one area (e.g. knowledge of defensive strategy) and they take steps to rectify or improve in this area, there is a high likelihood that they will then be considered effective. Alternatively, many coaches in the professional sport context have the luxury of being able to hire assistant, specialist, and other support staff to balance their weaknesses yet still maintain an optimal environment for player development.

7.2 The Coach

There are two categories (Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge, and Coach Philosophy) in the concept referred to as The Coach. These emphasise the personal coach qualities, knowledge and approach to coaching which dictate how a coach directs their team. The coach’s personal characteristics, knowledge and philosophy provide a background to their beliefs and form the basis of the coach’s leadership, communication, player-management and planning skills. The ultimate aim of developing players both on and off the field also has an impact on the type of team environment established at the club. In this respect, the team culture provides the framework for training and expectations for player behaviour on and off the field. The coach’s personal characteristics, knowledge and philosophy have a significant impact on the coach’s perceived effectiveness because if the coach’s beliefs and personal make-up do not resonate with the players’ preferences, the players are likely to lose respect for the coach and render him ineffective.

7.2.1 Personal Coach Characteristics and Knowledge

In relation to effective coaching, the coaches and players in the current study outlined various personal qualities, knowledge, characteristics and skills related to the
coaching process, the coach’s role and coach as a person. The current findings identify many qualities and skills of effective coaches that are widely recognised in previous research with individual and team sport participants, across geographic localities and with coaches and athletes from youth to Olympic sport arenas (Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Rockwell, 1994). As a result, qualities such as knowledge, empathy, approachability, honesty and respect as well as superior communication, people management and planning skills are recognised as essential to effective coaching.

7.2.2 Coach Philosophy

When describing the aims of effective coaching, the players, and more specifically coaches, suggested their ultimate goal is to educate players so that they develop both on and off the field as people and players. This concurs with previous research across a variety of team (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Kellett, 1999) and individual sport contexts (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). More recently, however, coaches have acknowledged the vital role they play in developing the total person (Kellett, 1999, Jones et al., 2004; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) rather than merely developing player performance. This is significant because in many professional sport environments, the coach’s win-loss record generally supersedes these more holistic aims. This also demonstrates the growing trend toward Humanistic goals in professional sport, which contests Lyle’s (2002) assertion that Humanistic ideals are beyond the realms of performance-based sport. Consequently, the results from the current research demonstrate that effective coaches possess a personal approach to coaching with the ultimate goal of developing exceptional sport participants and people who are able to contribute to society.
7.3 Coaching Skills

The Coaching Skills concept consists of four categories known as Leadership, Communication, People Management, and Planning. Effective leadership is determined by the coach’s own unique leadership approach. This includes the ability to empower players, coaching and other staff while possessing the ability to make significant decisions where necessary. Leadership also influences the way coaches communicate, plan for training and manage the team. The coach’s perceived effectiveness in communication is dependent on their ability to be honest, consistent and fair while opening up communication channels between players, coaches and support staff. Furthermore, the time and place in which the coach communicates are also important given the individual differences amongst players within a team.

The coach’s people management strategies reflect their communication and leadership skills. This relates to how they deal with team issues, communicate to the team, accommodate for individual differences and balance the team dynamic. Effective planning includes the ability to create challenging, enjoyable training sessions. These sessions focus on match specific tactical practice within a framework that is flexible to individual player needs where necessary. Furthermore, the way in which effective coaches plan training sessions depends on the coach’s leadership approach, management of the team and use of communication skills. They use these skills to organise team meetings for coaches and players to decide on tactical and technical areas of focus for the upcoming training and competition fixtures.
7.3.1 Leadership

The coach’s personal characteristics, qualities and skills also have an impact on their coaching philosophy and approach to leading the team. One significant contribution of these findings reflects the notion that although certain personal characteristics appear consistent across the varying contexts studied, there is not a unique philosophy or approach that provides the only recipe effective coaching. This shows some support for Chelladurai and colleagues Multidimensional Model of Leadership (1978, 1980, 1990) where the coach’s leadership behaviour is dependent on the situation, the coach and the group members. Each of the coaches in the present research applied various leadership strategies to develop effective team environments that they felt were best suited to the needs of their players. Therefore, various leadership approaches can be employed for a coach to be considered effective and experience success.

The category of leadership also relates to how much coaches empower assistant coaches, support staff and players with on- and off-field responsibilities such as planning for training, the organisation of training sessions, and on field or match day responsibilities. Empowerment is a formative concept that also evolved from research with college basketball and volleyball (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) as well as professional AFL coaches (Kellett, 1999) where the head coach’s role is to oversee the entire coaching process and facilitate player development. This type of approach has become increasingly prominent with the advent of professionalism and the rising number of assistant coaching and support staff associated with the coaching process. Effective coaches are able to adequately delegate clear roles and responsibilities and the ability to make significant decisions based on the team’s on- and off-field requirements.
Importantly, the coach’s leadership approach must align with the players’ preferred leadership style for the coach to be considered effective. In the modern professional sports context in Australia, the days of autocratic, coach-centred, top-down coaching methods have declined in popularity and perceived effectiveness. The current results confirm that the above methods have been superseded by a more facilitative and empowering approach. This contests early research in leadership effectiveness (Terry & Howe, 1984) but confirms the more recent findings from studies with elite team and individual sports coaches (Jones et al., 2004; Kellett, 1999).

7.3.2 Communication

The qualitative-phenomenological research design meant that whatever was most relevant to participants regarding the topic effective coaching emerged. This is particularly significant for the concepts of communication and people management. While much of the previous research on coaching effectiveness focused on the systematic observation of coaches’ instructional behaviours, the current study employed semi-structured observations and interviews to discover more detail on effective communication. Using this research approach enabled meanings embodied within the concept of effective coaching to emerge.

Effective communication surfaced as the most crucial concept outlined by both the players and coaches. As with previous research that investigated effective coaching (Douge & Hastie, 1993; Kahan, 1999), coaches provided tactical instructions and feedback to players during meetings and training sessions more frequently than any other form of communication. The current research extends previous findings by outlining how effective coaching is reliant on honest, open communication to develop and maintain trust and respect between players and coaching staff.
The results from the current study concur with previous research that identified effective communication as a key interactive, negotiation and teaching skill in coaching (Anshel, 1997; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Dorfman, 2003; Kellett, 1999). Further to this, effective coaches behave in a consistent manner that in turn, instils confidence in the players during the highs and lows of their sporting experiences. The current results also reveal that effective coaches consider individual player differences in age, experience, and learning style when communicating specific information. This is primarily because each individual responds differently to feedback or instructions provided in a public or private environment. This is crucial for identifying areas for players to improve as well as maintaining their confidence levels on a personal and team level.

The participants in the current research placed such an importance on communication that it became a stand-alone category. This is a unique finding of the current research and differs from previous coaching models. Communication appeared as part of the Coaches’ Attributes in Vallée & Bloom’s (2005) research with expert college coaches; in the Teach Skills Effectively category of Côté & Sedgwick’s expert rowing coach study (2004); as the coach’s instructional style in the Training component of the Coaching Model (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995) yet did not feature in the early leadership models (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Chelladurai, 1990; Smoll et al., 1978). Overall, the findings from the current research demonstrate that communication ties together all aspects of coaching. This therefore signifies the value of communication to effective coaching.

7.3.3 People Management

Coaches and players in the current research revealed that effective coaches possess people management skills that enable them to develop and maintain relationships with
players and other staff involved with the team. Under the auspice of people management, effective coaches are also capable of identifying and catering for the individual needs of each player in the team. This is crucial for managing the team dynamic and building player confidence.

Players and coaches in the current study provided different opinions about the extent to which the relationship should exist beyond the nature of the training environment. The inconclusive findings in the current research align with previous research which suggests that interpersonal relationships are likely to differ across varying competition levels (Vergeer, 2000). Similar to the notion of the coach’s philosophy, the findings from the current research highlight the unique social and contextual nature of the coaching process whereby different types of relationships exist between sport contexts yet are considered equally effective by various players and coaches.

Effective coaches manage the team dynamics by ensuring the team environment works harmoniously and that players are treated as individuals. Identifying individual needs emerged as a significant category in the current research and in previous studies on expert coaching (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Vallée & Bloom, 2005) which is understandable given that coaches are required to frequently adapt to different player behaviours across a variety of situations. The individual differences between players influence how coaches communicate and plan for training. Furthermore, understanding the individual circumstances is critical to dealing with discipline issues and external circumstances affecting player confidence and performance levels. Hence, the ability of the coach to understand and cater for individual differences in these contexts is vital to the coaches’ perceived effectiveness.
7.3.4 Planning

Crucial to the development and ongoing maintenance of a positive environment are the coaches planning skills. The component of planning was not included in previous models of leadership (Chelladurai, & Carron, 1978; Chelladurai, & Saleh, 1980; Smith et al., 1977; Smoll et al., 1978) yet emerged in recent qualitative work that explored coaching roles (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995), developing successful programs (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) and perceptions of coach effectiveness (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). In the current research, the participants suggested that effective coaches plan sessions that are enjoyable and challenging. Further to this, effective coaches plan training sessions so that players can practise game specific skills while also providing the opportunity for players to review their own performance and create strategies for their team, prior to competition.

7.4 Team Environment

The Team Environment is characterised by the categories called Developing a Positive Team Environment and Team Culture. These categories represent the physical areas in which the team trains (e.g. facilities) and the psychological dynamics that provide direction for the team (e.g. team culture, trademark or vision). A positive team environment relates to the enjoyment and support players receive from coaching staff and each other. The findings from the current research indicate that the coach’s ability to create such an environment is strongly related to perceptions of effectiveness. Embedded within the environment is a team culture that reflects the team’s goals as well as parameters for on- and off-field behaviour. The coach’s ability to ensure that everyone associated with the team (including players, support, coaching and administrative staff) works together determines their effectiveness.
7.4.1 Develop a Positive Team Environment

The team environment is a fundamental base from which the effective coach works and the players learn and develop. The type of environment established directly relates to the coach’s personal characteristics and values, as well as the manner in which they lead, communicate and manage the team. The current results demonstrate that when players feel comfortable and happy in their team environment and are challenged to improve through various game related training activities, they are more likely to commit to the team and be motivated to perform. These results are similar to previous qualitative research that claim it is essential for coaches to provide a supportive (Kellett, 1999) or positive (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) environment for players to learn and develop.

7.4.2 Team Culture

Effective coaches establish a team culture and appropriate framework for training that underpins the team environment to ensure everyone involved with the team ‘sings off the same song sheet’. The six coaches in the current study suggested that one of their most important roles is to influence the psyche of the players and build an appropriate framework for the players to achieve success. This was the case whether they were required to create the team culture after taking on a new role at a club or make changes to an existing club culture. These findings reflect previous studies with team sport participants who described the mission or vision as a key organisational task of the head coach (Bloom, 1996a; Desjardins, 1996; Ravizza, 2002; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In the current research, developing the team culture required the coaches to draw upon their players and assistant coaches to provide an initial framework for both the on- and off- field practices of the
teams. In this sense, effective coaches develop a common direction for the team where everyone involved with the teamwork works together to achieve the team’s goals.

7.5 Examining the Effective Coaching Model

The Effective Coaching Model (ECM) (pp. 300) represents the perceptions of professional coaches and players from Australia about the concept of effective coaching. The categories and relationships of the ECM are similar to certain aspects of the Coaching Model (CM, Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995), the Multidimensional Mode of Leadership (MML, Chelladurai 1990), and the Mediational Model of Sport Leadership (MM, Smoll & Smith, 1989). Furthermore, the general framework of the ECM shows support for aspects of effective coaching behaviour (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) and how coaches develop successful university programs (Vallée & Bloom, 2005).

The ECM is a broad model that encompasses more than one component of the coaching process. In this sense, it provides similar scope to the CM (Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995), however, the ECM offers two outcomes from the coaching process (i.e. developing the player and the person) as compared to the singular focus of the CM (i.e. developing the player). This is indicative of a more contemporary professional team sports environment whereas Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al. (1995) based their model on research with amateur gymnastic coaches nearly 15 years ago. In fact, when attempting to validate the coaching model within the team sport context (ice hockey), Gilbert and Trudel (2000) surmised that difference exists when comparing coaching in team and individual sports.

Similar to the CM, the ECM confirms that players’ personal characteristics influence the way in which the coach plans for, and interacts with, players during training. Other research projects based on the CM framework confirms these results and suggests that
catering for individual needs is critical for effective coaching in rowing (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003) and developing a successful university sport program (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In the current research, getting to know individual players based on formal and informal interactions is crucial when planning for and carrying out effective training sessions. Understanding individual personalities also influences the manner in which coaches communicate with players and cater for their various learning styles.

In some respects, being able to adapt coaching styles to suit the needs of each individual is similar to the main assumption of the MM (Smoll & Smith, 1989). The MM outlined how coach behaviours and player perceptions were influenced by situational factors and the individual characteristics of both the coach and athlete. Similarly, the ECM indicated that while each of the coaches based their leadership approach on their own personal philosophy of coaching, they were able to adapt their coaching techniques to suit the individual learning preferences of each member in the team. This created a situation where players were more likely to respect and work hard for the coach, which accounts for the player perceptions of coach behaviour outlined in the MM.

There are further similarities between the ECM and the categories of effective coaching behaviours in rowing (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). For example, both models focus on the need to plan proactively and develop rapport with players in order to teach skills effectively while also highlighting the need to create a positive learning environment for player learning and development. In each case, the coach’s interpersonal and communication skills are crucial to their perceived effectiveness. In the ECM, communicating openly and honestly enhances coach-player relationships, respect between them, and is considered essential for player development.
The ECM confirms the assertion from the MML (Chelladurai, 1990) that coach and player preferences for leadership need to align for effective coaching to take place, and for players to compete at an optimum level. The current research emphasises the rising influence of empowerment on contemporary leadership practices, rather than the autocratic or democratic leadership styles that feature prominently in research using the MML's framework. This may be due to the recent increase in the number of professional sport teams in Australia. With players required to spend more time training and more staff involved in the coaching process, the role of the coach and player has changed. Coaches now delegate more responsibilities to players and other staff rather than controlling the entire coaching process.

The need for coaches to ensure that all players, coaching and administrative staff work together to achieve the team and club goals formed a significant part of the ECM yet failed to generate the same relevance in previous models. This has only been confirmed in more recent qualitative research with international team and individual sports (see Jones and colleagues, 2004). Perhaps the different aims and contexts of previous research account for these differences given the MML focused on leadership styles, the MM was based on research in youth sport, and the CM was established from a sample of individual sport coaches.

It is worth reiterating that the current research model reflects only the perceptions and the strategies employed by professional coaches and players in Australia. Due to the contextual nature of the coaching process and the methodology employed in the current research, generalisations beyond the current sample should be limited. Ultimately, the current study aims to provide a contribution to the existing database of effective coaching.
The topic of effective coaching therefore warrants further research to build on the existing knowledge base available to coaches, researchers and educators in the field of sport coaching.

7.6 Summary of the Effective Coaching Model

Effective coaches possess specific personal characteristics, qualities and skills as well as a general philosophy or direction for the team. They establish a positive environment and team culture to ensure that everyone works together to achieve the team goals. The creation and maintenance of this environment is dependent on the coach's leadership style as well as the communication, people management and planning skills. Ultimately, it is the interaction of all these features that leads to player development, improved performance by the individual and team and the primary goal of professional sport in winning matches. Each of the major categories and themes derived from the analytic process are interrelated and are not mutually exclusive representations of the concept.

The next chapter draws together the mains themes and issues in relation to research questions while also including implications from the current research and providing recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSION

The current project employed a qualitative methodological approach to explore the perceptions and applications of effective coaching by professional sports coaches and players in Australia. The study did not explore specific theories or assess the effectiveness of the coaches and teams involved. The aim was to provide a holistic investigation of effective coaching by scrutinising ‘what’ effective coaches do and ‘why’ and ‘how’ these behaviours are perceived as effective. The objective of this chapter is to answer the research focus areas described in Chapter 1 clearly and concisely. First, the major conclusions are revisited. The remaining parts of this section address the practical implications of the findings for coaching, the research limitations, and areas for future research.

8.1 Review of Research Aims and Main Findings

This section outlines the main findings and conclusions in relation to the central research question and the five focus areas. It was important to consider the perceptions of different people involved with the coaching process in order to gain a holistic insight into the topic of effective coaching. Using head and assistant coaches as well as players with a variety of experience enabled me to gather broad perspectives of effective coaching from those involved with professional sport in Australia. In addition, carrying out research in three different sport contexts allowed me to discover whether some perceptions and actions were sport specific or common across multiple settings. The use of observations provided supplementary information to the data generated from interviews and enhanced my understanding of how the professional sports context operates as well as providing a
visual depiction of the roles carried out by the players and coaching and support staff involved with each team. I developed one broad research question to achieve this aim:

*What are the strategies and behaviours considered effective by professional coaches and players from Australian team sports?*

This question formed a starting point for the project in order to find out what professional coaches do (including how they behave), and why players and coaches perceive certain coaching strategies and behaviours to be effective. Explained below are the findings in relation to the five focus areas that underpin the main research.

**8.1.1 Focus Area 1: How do professional coaches and players define effective coaching?**

Effective coaches possess an array of personal characteristics, qualities and skills and provide initial direction for the team they coach. A key finding in this research is that the humanistic ideals of developing the player and the person – once thought to be incompatible with principles of performance sport (see Lyle, 2002) – now form a prominent part of the professional sport landscape and effective coaching. Similarly, the trend towards empowerment and facilitative coaching suggests that the autocratic, one-size-fits-all approach has declined in these modern professional sports contexts. It is important for coaches to employ their own unique approach to leadership, as there appears to be no single recipe for success and effectiveness in sport coaching. Here, the coach’s personal approach to coaching needs to align with the players’ preferred coaching style for the coach to be considered effective.
8.1.2 Focus Area 2: How do effective coaches interact with their players, assistant coaches and support staff?

Communication is a key skill for effective coaches in both formal and informal contexts. In conjunction with Humanistic ideals (Lyle, 2002) and the facilitative approach to leadership, coaches now recognise the benefit of consulting players about their communication preferences and adapting their communication style to suit their individual learning needs. For example, one of the main findings in this regard revolves around the need for more frequent and positive communication techniques for less experienced players.

Previously, players had few opportunities to communicate because the exchange of ideas between coach and player often reflected one-way dialogue from coach to player. The current research demonstrates how open, honest, two-way communication is essential for respectful working relationships and how not listening to players harms the environment in which the players and coaches work. This also exhibits the greater voice players want and have in the current professional coaching environment. These key conclusions highlight the changing perceptions of effective coaching, as this is a significant shift from the once popular ‘top-down’, coach-driven communication approach.

8.1.3 Focus Area 3: How do effective coaches establish and maintain effective environments for player development?

Developing a team environment where everyone feels comfortable, happy and able to work together is crucial to effective coaching. Again, findings in this section support the holistic and Humanistic ideals for effective coaching based on the principle that if the player is happy off the field, they are more likely to be happy and perform well on the field. In this
sense, effective coaches are able to establish a positive, supportive learning environment where respectful relationships exist between players and coaches.

A lack of care and interest in the players impairs coach-player relationships, the team atmosphere and overall team performance. Furthermore, the team culture is fundamental to generating unity amongst the team. In this respect, effective coaches ensure that players, coaches and associated staff work together towards common outcomes based on shared ideals. In the current professional environment, coaches delegate appropriate responsibilities to players for both on and off field tasks. The aim is to encourage a player-driven culture where the senior players educate the junior players and players become more accountable for their actions. This again highlights the emerging trend towards facilitative leadership within the professional sports context where there are an increasing number of roles delegated to players on top of their performance requirements.

8.1.4 Focus Area 4: What are the types of organisational tasks considered effective and how do effective coaches carry out these actions?

Planning is a crucial organisational skill used before, during and after training. Effective coaches plan in a flexible manner that caters for the individual needs of each player within the team. The current results show that planning is a consultative process and therefore the coach requires good communication, management and organisational skills. These key findings highlight the changing roles of coaches and suggest that while the head coach makes the final decision, players, assistant coaches, and medical staff are involved in the planning process. Planning has traditionally been solely part of the coaches’ domain, yet certain aspects of planning in the professional environment, such as reviewing performance and developing team strategy, now involve a broader spectrum of team personnel.
8.1.5 Focus Area 5: What type of interpersonal relationships do effective coaches develop with players and support staff? How are these relationships developed and why are relationships important for effective coaching?

The participants in the current research noted that people management has become an incredibly important task for the modern day coach. Both players and coaches in the current study placed great emphasis on the off-field management of individual player needs and the development of relationships with each other. The implication here is that players and coaches need to be approachable in order to increase feelings of trust, respect, and unity amongst the team.

Effective coaches at the professional level monitor the team dynamic to ensure that all players support each other and work toward the same goals, for the sole purpose of the team. Further to this, effective coaches make a purposive effort to understand each individual player in order to appropriately plan for and manage training sessions. The reason for this is that each person learns and responds differently to various contexts based on their age, experience and personality.

Effective coaches were also noted to develop an understanding of each player’s personal context (e.g. family situation, off-field interests and behaviour) as this is important when making selections and in dealing with disciplinary issues. As a result, these findings highlight that the ability of the coach to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships with other personnel involved with the team has a significant impact on perceptions of the coach’s overall effectiveness.
8.2 Summary of Main Findings

The results from the present study indicate that professional rugby league, rugby union and cricket players and coaches from Australia believe that effective coaches possess specific personal characteristics and qualities, as well as a personal philosophy which are used to provide direction for the team. The analysis from the current research reveals that effective coaches also utilise leadership, communication, people management and planning skills to help establish a positive team culture within the club environment. It is critical to view these findings as integrated rather than unrelated actions.

The participants in the present research recognised that if a coach shows qualities, characteristics and skills that conflicted with concepts of effective coaching, they were perceived as ineffective. What the players and coaches in the current study did not explain was the point at which coaches were considered effective or ineffective if they have some of the qualities, characteristics and skills listed, but were inadequate in others. Therefore, it was unclear as to whether a coach would be perceived as effective or ineffective if they were capable of creating team strategies for the upcoming game for example, but not clear in assigning roles to players in various training and competitions situations.

If coaches possess all the perceived qualities, characteristics and skills yet demonstrate weakness in one area of coaching, there is still potential for coaches to develop the required skills over time. Alternatively, coaches may already have, or be able to hire specialist staff to accommodate for their weaknesses and still generate an effective coaching regime, particularly in the professional sport environment. Overall, the current study did not intend to evaluate the level of effectiveness amongst the participant coaches.
The aim was to generate data regarding the perceptions of effective coaches and effective coaching based on a professional sport sample from Australia.

8.3 Implications

This section highlights the implications and recommendations based on the research questions and major findings from this thesis. The results from the present study have a variety of implications for coaching practice, the professional coaching role, coach education and evaluating effective coaching which are addressed below.

8.3.1 Implications for Coaching Practice

One common perception across the three teams studied in the current research was the focus on the Humanistic elements of effective coaching at the professional level. This holistic approach to coaching reflects the coach’s attempt to develop the player as well as the person. This is marked by the coach’s ability to ensure that players are happy and comfortable in the team environment and genuine interest in the off-field needs of the players under their care. Thus, professional coaches now have an increasing ‘off-field’ role in helping develop the individual, team and club culture. This reflects a shift from merely developing the players’ competitive skills, to the total development of the person.

These perceptions expand on the more traditional notions of effective coaching outlined by systematic observation of coach behaviour, which concluded that frequent instructional comments and high levels of praise are the key signifiers of effective coaching during practice sessions (Douge & Hastie, 1993). Furthermore, the personnel involved in the current study did not maintain the popular view that a coach’s effectiveness directly correlates to their win-loss record. Emerging from the current findings is the belief held by players and coaches, that the Humanistic or social elements of coaching (e.g.
communication and people management) have become more significant than merely winning matches and having the ability to display tactical prowess and a deep knowledge of the game. Therefore, coaches must spend considerable time on developing good communication skills, relationships with players and coaching staff as well as developing a positive learning environment for optimal player development. This supports recent research that calls for holistic approaches to coaching as this stance recognises the social nature of coaching and the need to ensure the rounded development of athletes (Jones, 2006).

The findings from the current research suggest that a coach’s philosophy guides effective coaching practice. This philosophy strongly influences the team culture, the roles for both players and coaches and the nature of relationships formed. Coaches utilise their personal characteristics, skills and behaviours to imbue their philosophy throughout the organisation and coaching program. The current research demonstrates that regardless of the head coach’s philosophy or initial direction for the team, their principles have to align with the preferences of the assistant coaches and players for the coach to be considered effective. In this case, it is the head coach’s responsibility to assemble the beliefs and practices of all participants involved within the team however, there needs to be a compromise from both players and coaches to develop a team culture where everyone works together.

The implication here is that if players and support staff are satisfied with the approach of the coach (e.g. tactical beliefs, structure of training, coaching methods, leadership approach), they are more likely to respect, form relationships with, and work hard for their coach. If player perceptions of effectiveness are different to that of the coach
however, this may lead to a decreased incentive to perform or reduction in overall performance from the players. This means that the coach must be flexible in their approach, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all method in their coaching program.

Based on the results from the current research, effective coaching is highly dependent on quality communication. Perhaps the most significant message to emerge from the data analysis is the unequivocal importance placed on the coach’s ability to communicate honestly and effectively. If coaches are honest, consistent and approachable, this creates an open environment that encourages two-way dialogue between players and coaches. Both coaches and players expected each other to reciprocate honestly when communicating. This type of open, two-way communication helps establish respectful working relationships that enhance player motivation to work with the coach’s plans. Providing players with an honest assessment of recent performances helps direct players with ways in which to improve performance and ensures that all issues are dealt with in a consistently open manner. For the participants in the present research, honesty forms a building block for effective communication, leadership, relationship development and the team environment.

Considerable evidence from the current findings indicates that player management is an essential skill for effective coaching. The present results highlight that the coach’s ability to develop relationships with and between players and coaching staff, and the identification of individual personality types and preferences for learning are significant markers of effective coaching. Understanding individual needs helps coaches develop appropriate strategies to cater for each player’s age, experience and personal background. For example, the younger players indicated a preference for frequent feedback and
instruction while the senior players indicated a preference for less. This type of information also allows specific planning for training sessions, maintenance of interpersonal relationships, and the overall development of the player.

It is therefore important that coaches develop personalised knowledge of each player in order to better relate to the players in their team as well as teach and effectively manage their on-and-off-field needs. Coaches can garner information about players through informal conversations before and after training, or while on tour to away competition venues. By observing how players interact with each other, how they react during difficult training sessions and in the face of adversity, coaches can also learn a great deal about individual player characteristics that will assist in communication with them and managing their individual needs.

### 8.3.2 Implications for the Coaching Role and Expectations of Professional Coaches

The expansion of professional sport in Australia during the past 20 years, along with the advent of technology, has lead to increased scrutiny of professional sport teams by administrative staff, the public and media agencies. In addition, the funding involved in professional sport has increased over time. This has allowed head coaches (or their clubs) greater opportunities to hire assistant and specialist coaches, which has resulted in a higher number of personnel involved with each team. This means that head coaches now have an enormous responsibility to manage the dynamics of assistant coaches, players, support staff and administrative staff, whilst also responding to external agencies such as the media, past players, national team coaches. Effective coaching in this regard is partially judged by how well these differing demands are managed.
As there are far more staff involved in the professional sport context than at a community or amateur club level, the head coach must consult with and manage a vast array of people throughout the coaching process. Although head coaches oversee the planning and management of training sessions, many of their key roles in the current professional context seem to be primarily social in nature (e.g. attending to individual needs, managing team dynamics, establishing and maintaining rapport with players and empowering individuals). This implies that the head coach’s role has shifted from the traditional aspects of tactical and technical development of players to managing the whole team environment, including the interpersonal relationships and individual player needs both on and off the training field. Instead, more assistant and specialist coaches are now employed at the professional level to deliver areas of expertise related to the technical and tactical aspects of their particular sport.

In the current research, responsibilities are delegated to assistant coaches who are empowered to carry out and manage more roles within the training context. Their input, as well as the players’, is increasingly used as a source for ideas before planning training sessions – features that would have been the sole responsibility of a head coach in previous years. Empowerment is necessary to increase accountability amongst the player group and coaching staff. This aims to enhance their commitment to the coaching program and deepen their understanding of the sport in which they are involved.

Intertwined with this is the need for head coaches to identify specific roles for players, assistant coaches and support staff in order to develop a coaching program with the right balance of staff. For example, if a cricket head coach has particular expertise in bowling, it would be wise to hire assistant coaches with expertise in batting and fielding.
Overall, the results from the current study demonstrate highlights the dynamic nature of
the coaching environment and the importance now placed on people management skills.
The findings in this research therefore have implications for effective coaching and the
future role of coaches in professional settings.

**8.3.3 Implications for Coach Education**

In 1989, Smoll and Smith demonstrated that youth coaches who were trained in
cognitive-behavioural strategies are appraised more positively by their players and had
higher levels of team cohesion. This means that coach educators have the ability to teach
aspiring coaches to develop the qualities, characteristics and skills of effective coaches.
Recently, Crust and Lawrence (2006) indicate that more new and innovative ‘manager’
training courses are required to develop professional coach skills in a variety of areas. They
highlight one current and unique initiative in Britain where football managers receive
training in marketing, media relations, sports psychology, branding, and influencing skills as
part of a certificate in Applied Management at Warwick Business School (Russell, 2005, cited
in Crust & Lawrence, 2006). As the principles and practices of effective coaching at the
professional level become more established, coach educators can tailor their education
programs to reflect this.

One recurring pattern in professional sport is to hire the services of former
professional players to take on coaching roles. Many professional players possess excellent
tactical and technical knowledge of their respective sports yet their ability to transfer this
knowledge effectively may be limited. One change that the current research confirmed is
the importance of the social elements of effective coaching. Coach educators can reflect this
shift by developing modules that focus on communication and people management skills as
well as responsibility delegation to players and coaches. Communication training could involve teaching coaches about the different learning styles of individuals within a team including knowing how and when to communicate to each player. Developing people management skills could include educating coaches to understand how to cater for individual player needs in on-and-off-field settings. Education in this area could include player welfare, developing appropriate working relationships, and understanding how they as coaches can contribute to preparing players with career transition from professional athletes to life after sport.

Coach education has traditionally focused on planning and delivering training sessions with a limited focus on creating the optimum culture and learning environment. Effective coaching involves the creation of a complex environment that focuses on the physical, psychological and social aspects of player development within the framework of a team culture. A significant part of the contemporary head coach’s role is to create and manage this environment yet there is limited information available regarding how this is achieved. This is another aspect of coaching that could be addressed in future modules of coach education. In this respect, coach educators could focus on teaching future high-performance coaches how to create a positive team culture through open and honest communication, developing relationships with other players and coaches, and creating specific roles and expectations for all the players, coaches and administrators.

8.3.4 Implications for Evaluating Effective Coaching

Teams regularly carry out evaluations of player performances yet rarely are coaches subject to the same sort of scrutiny either by fellow coaches, board members or independent review committees. While the aim of the present research is to provide
perceptions of effectiveness rather than evaluate the effectiveness of coaches, there is potential to utilise some of the findings as a basis for evaluating coach performance and as key criteria for job descriptions in professional sport. The current research provides broad areas in which to provide performance evaluation for coach communication, organisation and management skills. Many of these underlying factors could be suitable key performance indicators when professional clubs advertise for coaching positions or as part of the criteria for contract negotiations.

One example could be that administrators encourage head-coaches to establish a positive team culture with appropriate on- and off-field boundaries and expectations for both players and coaches. The implementation and management of this could be measured by asking coaches and players questions such as these: Is there an appropriate ‘code of conduct’ in place for players and coaching staff? Are the coaches managing areas of concern within the code in a fair and consistent manner? Are the coaches being honest and approachable about all aspects of on- and off-field performance?

Evaluation of coach performance needs to move away from winning percentages and statistical improvements in player performance to include the interpersonal skills of the coach and elements of the wider team environment. This is particularly significant given the importance placed on team culture, coach communication, and people management skills in the current project.

8.5 Limitations

Professional sport is a highly competitive industry firmly placed in the public eye. The demands placed on both athletes and coaches by the club, sponsors, media and the public are extremely high. This frequently makes those involved time poor. As a result, making
contact with head coaches of professional sport teams proved to be an arduous task.

Initially, I generated a list of prospective teams based on locality, accessibility, and potential connections with the chief supervisor. Occasionally, I encountered difficulty in requesting permission from professional coaches to conduct research with their teams because some coaches were hesitant to open up their training sessions for academic purposes. Perhaps coaches felt their ideas would be disseminated to other teams, which might result in them losing their competitive advantage over their competition. The majority of coaches (or clubs) approached did not respond to initial email contact and more often than not, a follow-up call was required within a week to gauge the coach’s interest in participation even if I personally spoke with the coach.

One of the concerns with case study research is that the method lacks rigorous methodological instructions (Yin, 1994, 2003). In addition, Yin (1994, 2003) claims that some academics have criticised the case study methodology for its minimal emphasis on generalisation, the time-consuming nature and resultant mass of documents. The present study attempted to address these issues by combining methodological techniques and by creating individual and cross-case files stored in NVivo7, a sophisticated computer software program.

Other parameters that influenced the outcome of this research include the small sample size and the varied time of year in which I collected data. Although I gathered a large and detailed amount of data, the limited number of teams included in the current research restricted the breadth of views to just three of the professional sports codes in Australia. Ultimately, the number of participating teams was limited due to the difficulty in gaining access to a sample of professional teams and the amount of time permitted by each
organisation. The inherent time constraints associated with my candidature in the Doctoral program and the limited amount of time spent with each team made it difficult to engage all players and coaches from the participating teams in the observation and interview process.

There may have been some discrepancies in the type of training sessions carried out, how teams were coached, and the opinions of participants because of the time of season in which data collection took place. For example, two of the teams were in their competition season whilst one team was in its pre-season phase. This, along with whether or not the team was winning or losing, may have influenced the involvement of the coach, the focus of training, the modes of communication and participant views regarding the concept of effective coaching. Being involved with a team or several teams during away fixtures or over an entire season would provide a more detailed insight into the varied coaching techniques of coaches across discrete contextual conditions. These are issues that deserve further research with a larger budget.

I was the only person involved in conducting observations and interviews. Although this provided the opportunity to become more familiar with the observation techniques and created greater consistency in interview strategies, the nature of such research may lead to subjective bias. I attempted to address this situation through peer debriefing (with supervisors who possessed expertise in methodological rigour) as well as having regular meetings with peers who reviewed the methodological procedures outlined earlier in Chapter 3. These reflective processes enabled me to become more familiar and confident in obtaining data in a consistent, ethical manner throughout the project’s entirety.

Finally, the amount of observational data provided were limited because much of the interview data reflected factors that were not visible during the observational phase.
For example, it was difficult to provide accurate observations of factors such as informal communication or relationships between players and coaches because many of these characteristics were not common during training (e.g. players and coaches mentioned that during lunch or travel periods on flights was a good time to converse informally).

Further to this, the notions of team culture or atmosphere at training and people management skills of the coaches were difficult to describe given that I primarily spent time observing players and coaches during training. If observations extended beyond the training environment to include whole days with the team (including breaks between training sessions), team camps or tours for away fixtures, there would be more time to observe the off-field interactions with and between coaches and players in relation to the team culture and management of any disciplinary issues. This aspect was beyond the scope of the current study however, future studies might consider carrying out ethnographic research to achieve this goal.

### 8.6 Future directions

The current research identified several pertinent issues related to effective coaching. There are numerous avenues for future research including the extension of aspects from the current study. The following section explains new directions to explore within the framework of research on effective coaching.

#### 8.6.1 Using a Sample of Female Professional Coaches

The current project was one of limited number of studies worldwide to use a sample drawn from professional sport. Hence, another comprehensive analysis of professional coaching behaviour across a variety of different team and individual sports would enable a deeper understanding of effective coaching at this level. There is a need to continue to
examine the perceptions of coaches of World and Olympic champions as well as participants from professional leagues because much can be elicited from these contexts. As Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) point out, perceptions from such high-level coaches and athletes may also be valuable for developing the activities of coaches, administrators, policy makers and aspiring athletes.

The present research adds to existing literature in the world of male professional team sports however, there is a dearth of research on elite or professional female players and coaches. A project with similar aims to the current research that involves participants from a professional female sport context would provide a valuable comparison to the effective coaching behaviours identified in this thesis. Alternatively, a future research project could use a sample of both male and female professional or elite athletes and coaches to compare the influence of gender on opinions about effective coaching. There is now a greater opportunity to carry out research using a professional female sample in Australia with the recent introduction of a professional netball competition. Future research could also involve a female sample from Europe or North America where professional football (soccer), basketball and other professional leagues exist.

8.6.2 Concepts of People Management and the Environment

The best way to develop and maintain team cohesion has been the subject of many investigations in previous research however, there has been limited research on how to maintain these dynamics throughout a league-type competition season at the professional level. More research with a sample of professional sports in this area would assist coaches in not only developing an appropriate team culture during the initial stages of the year, but
also in how to manage team dynamics during challenging and successful times throughout a season.

Research in this area could also focus primarily on the team trademarks, visions and code of conducts being implemented more frequently by professional sport teams. Players and coaches could be asked – To what extent do you employ these team trademarks? What are the benefits or weaknesses associated with the development of these codes? Who is responsible for creating and then managing the aspects developed within the code? This may provide additional parameters for effective management of relationships between players, between players and coaching staff and as a result, enhance the people management responsibilities of the coach.

8.6.3 Communication

Despite the significance of communication skills identified in the present research, it is surprising that so few studies have directly focused on the communication skills of coaches outside the systematic observation of coach behaviour. Further research is needed to develop an understanding of the importance of this skill, particularly concerning what works and what does not. Team meetings are a prominent site for coach-player communication so research which focuses on the nature, structure and content of these meetings may build on current knowledge in this area. Given the frequency with which the professional teams in the current study meet to discuss important team strategies, team and individual performance as well as upcoming training sessions, there is clear opportunity for future research to explore communication and the value of team meetings as a site for player development.
8.6.5 Coaching Roles

With professional sport ever-present in today’s society and the rising number of personnel involved in the coaching process, a more specific examination of the particularities and details of each person’s role within the professional coaching environment is warranted. For example, a study that focuses on how head coaches delineate specific roles to assistant coaches and support staff would be valuable. This may lead to questions such as: What are the current roles associated with being a head or assistant coach in a professional team? What has influenced the way in which professional coaches coach? Are they becoming more like managers of a business rather than coaches of a team through their leadership and coaching style? Is a managerial approach necessary as head coaches become responsible for the directions and efforts of more and more support staff?

These questions may also be of use in a research project that investigates the notion of empowerment within the professional sport context. Research that focuses on coach and player perceptions of leadership groups may provide some insight into what extent coaches release power to players. Further to this, how much power or responsibility should be released to the players and in what contexts? What is too much or too little power? Involving ideas from research with expert, professional and elite coaches and players would provide contextually based information regarding these concepts.

8.6.6 Longitudinal Research

Given the limitations of this project regarding the use of observation and interview data, future research could consider carrying out studies utilising a more long-term, ethnographic approach. For example, it would be advantageous for a researcher to spend
time with teams at the beginning of the preseason, competition season and post-
competition period. Further to this, if researchers could observe a whole day at a time,
more information could be garnered regarding the humanistic elements of coaching such as
managing the team dynamic, interpersonal relationships and how the coach attends to the
individual player needs within the team. Multiple interviews throughout the year or
stimulated recall interview sessions, where participants are shown footage of certain
coaching behaviours and asked to explain why they behave as they do at specific times, may
provide more detailed information regarding the nuances of professional coaches.

**8.7 Concluding Comments**

The present study on effective coaching elicited much information from various
psychological, educational and sociological perspectives. In order to understand the
perceptions of professional coaches and players from these diverse perspectives, it was
necessary to examine subjective experiences of professional coaches and players. Studying
these perceptions provided insight into how and why the participants created their
definitions of effective coaching.

Rather than rely on systematic observation that count behaviours or survey research
that provides answers rated by participants, the current project employed interviews and
semi-structured observations to explore the intricacies of professional coaching and the
perceptions of coaches and players. This investigation required a broader understanding of
effective coaching in a professional context than could be achieved with questions in the
form of a questionnaire. As a result, a more open, multi-dimensional qualitative perspective
was implemented with observation and interview techniques providing more detailed
information about their daily practices.
The central tenet of the current study was to gain a holistic understanding of the coaching process at the professional level in an Australian sports context. Consideration of the perceptions of both coaches and players, along with the supplementary data gathered during observations, aided this process. Participants from the three sport teams (cricket, rugby union and rugby league) suggested that effective coaches focus on communication, people management, developing a team environment and providing direction for the team. They placed less focus on the technical and tactical elements of coaching in comparison to the emphasis placed on the need for professional coaches to be good at working with people. As in recent qualitative studies, the Humanistic elements are at the forefront of the current research, where the overall goal of professional coaches is to develop the player and the person. Hence, professional coaches in today’s world of coaching require more than just sport-specific knowledge and an ability to effectively instruct or lead a team.

It is plausible that one centrally agreed upon definition or model of ‘effective coaching’ may never exist, however, the current investigation offered an additional perspective on effective coaching – one that includes the perspectives of professional coaches and players from an Australian sports context. Acquiring the characteristics, qualities and skills outlined in this research involves a long-term process that draws on personal experiences in sport as a player, coach and member of society. While applying the present findings outside the contexts examined should be approached with caution, the results aim to benefit aspiring professional coaches, administrative staff in professional organisations and coach educators who wish build on the existing knowledge of coaching in professional environments.
Coaching at any level is a challenging task. At the professional level, this is particularly so, as there are many competing variables that must be managed. The complexity of the professional coaching role gives credence to the well-documented belief that coaching involves more than merely instructing a team during training and competition. While the current research confirmed various aspects of previous research and broached several unique findings, there is great opportunity to further our knowledge and understanding of the personal coaching praxis of Australian professional sport coaches. It would be beneficial to connect researchers from a range of disciplines (i.e. psychology, sociology, pedagogy and business), to create a holistic perspective of the coaching process and build on the current evidence within professional and other sport contexts. As Webster proclaimed in 1938, this is because “coaching of the future ... will be something vastly different from that of the past” (p.8).
REFERENCES


http://www.athleticinsight.com/Vol8Iss4/FootballManager.htm


