

# Talent development in sports

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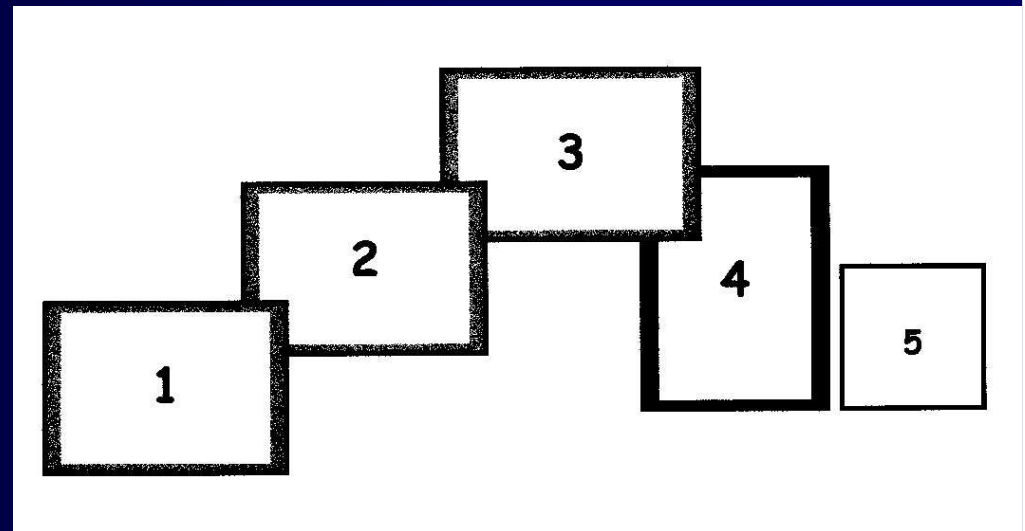


## Overview of presentation

- The talented athlete (Part 1)
  - phases / practice
  - characteristics
- Longitudinal study (Part 2)
  - achievement motivation
- Implications for coaches (Part 3)
  - motivational climate
  - 'Coaches who never lose'

## Part 1 - The athletic career

- 1 = early years  
initiation / orientation
- 2 = middle years  
development / commitment
- 3 = later years  
mastery / perfection
- 4 = retirement / drop out
- 5 = return in other role  
(coach, manager, referee,  
official, volunteer, ...)



# Career phases and age

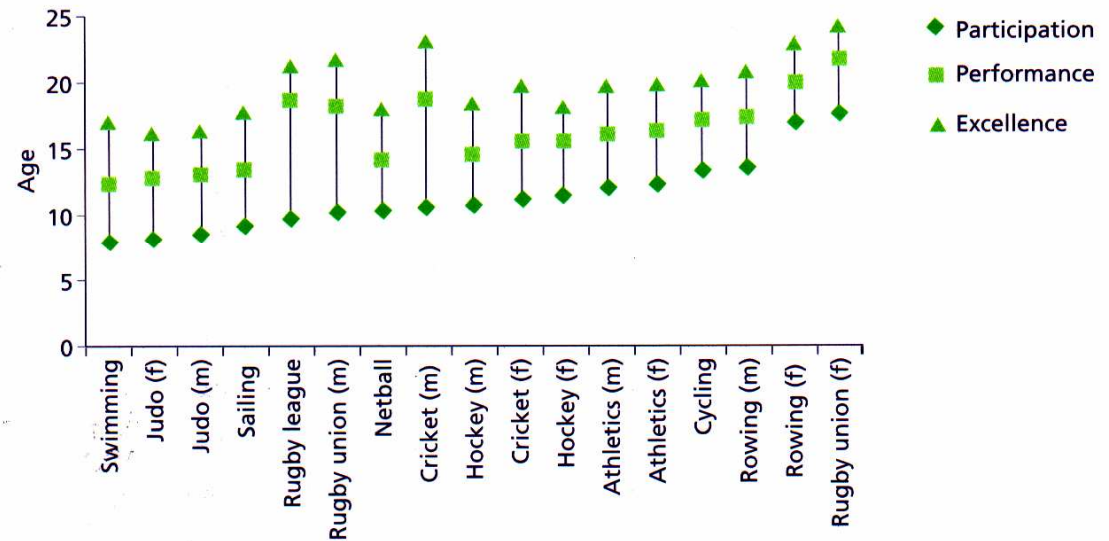
Elite and pre-elite  
sportsmen & women  
(n=924)  
age: 23 years, 5 months

elite = senior national  
squads

pre-elite: England under 21  
or A squads

12 branches of sport:  
athletics, cricket,  
cycling, gymnastics,  
hockey, judo, netball,  
rowing, rugby league,  
rugby union, sailing,  
swimming

Figure 6: Average age for each level of performance



English Sports Council (1998), *The development of sporting talent 1997: An examination of the current practices for talent development in English sport.*

## A classic study: Bloom (1985)

120 talented persons

- science:

20 mathematicians

20 neurologists

- performing arts:

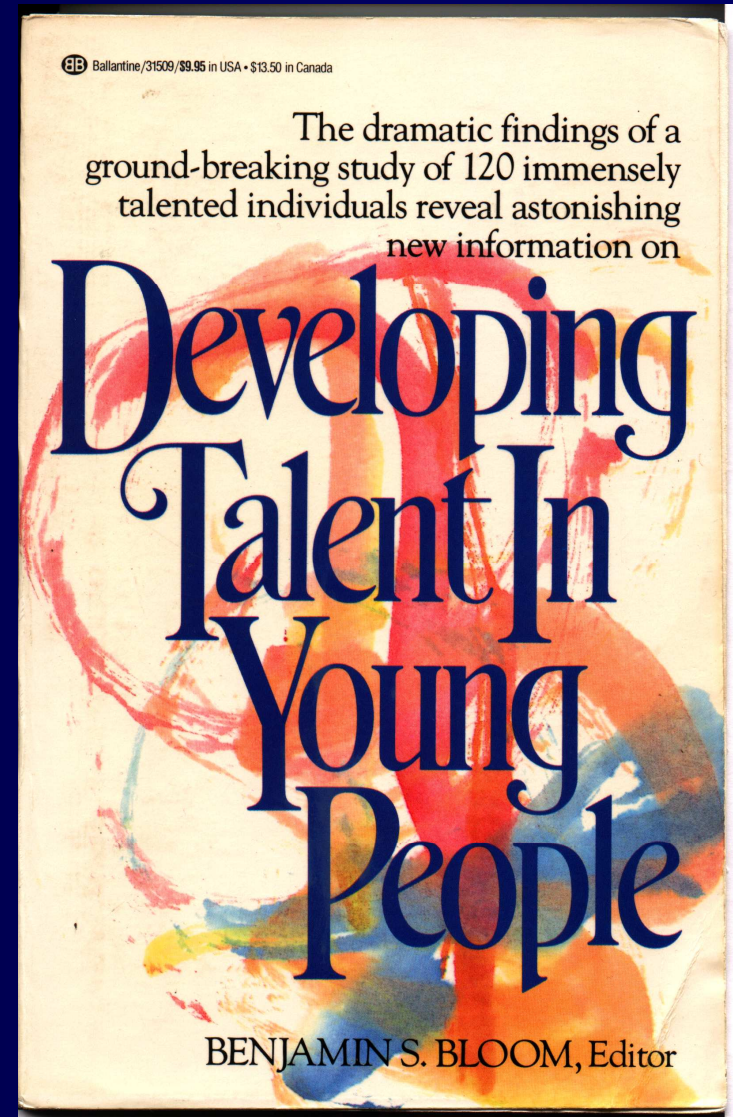
21 concert pianists

20 sculptors

- sport:

21 swimmers (Olympians)

18 tennis players (world-level)



## Career phases according to Bloom (1985)

### Athlete

1st phase:

joyful, playful, excited, 'special'

2nd phase:

'hooked', committed

3rd phase:

obsessed, responsible

### Coach

1st phase:

kind, cheerful, caring,  
process-centered

2nd phase:

strong, respecting, skilled,  
demanding, emotionally  
bonded

3rd phase:

successful, respected,  
feared

## Characteristics of athletic talent

- Someone is 'talented' - how do you see that?  
List the three most important qualities (scouting-form)
  - anatomical-physical quality
  - (exercise) physiological quality
  - mental-psychological quality
  - tactical quality
  - 'technique' (motor skills)
  - [home environment]
  - [athletic environment]
- Are the qualities changeable / trainable ?
- Are the qualities necessary conditions ?
- At which age (career phase) is scouting worthwhile ?

# Characteristics of elite athletes: the 100 points list

distribute 100 points among the various factors

rate the importance of each factor for a successful athlete

that is: more important in your view, more points...

## 1. Physical fitness

(exercise) physiological capacities such as strength, endurance, flexibility, speed

## 2. Social recognition

receiving cognition and appraisal at school, at work, in the athletic environment; i.e., how the athlete is recognized by society

## 3. Social guidance

support in educational affairs (school, college, job training; arranging things; financial and/or material support; i.e., what help the athlete receives regarding schooling, career planning, etc).

## 4. Mental fitness

psychological characteristics such as competitiveness, concentration, persistence, self-confidence

## 5. Natural endowment

innate physical, motor and/or mental qualities

## 6. Motor skill

the repertoire of sport-motor skills for the specific sport; i.e., the motor-technical aspect ('technique')

## 7. Tactical ability

ability 'to read the game'; changing strategy during a game; choosing the right move during play, or finding appropriate solution to a game problem

## 8. Practice: quantity and intensity

the number of hours spent to maintain and improve physical, motor and/or mental skills

## 9. Contact with coaching staff

social relationships with the members of the coaching staff

## 10. Contact with team members

social relationships with other members in the team or the squad

## 11. .... (add, fill in yourself)

.....



# 'General factors' 100-points list

## some findings with Dutch coaches

195 NL coaches (van Rossum, 2004)

- 16.4 1. Physical fitness
- 2. Social recognition
- 3. Social guidance
- 17.1 4. Mental fitness
- 17.0 5. Natural endowment
- 11.4 6. Motor skills
- 9.2 7. Tactical ability
- 11.6 8. Practice
- 9. Contact with coaching staff
- 10. Contact with team members
  
- 11. (food)

82.7 (sum over 6 factors)

15 NL badminton coaches of highest competition league teams (van Dijke & van Wanrooij, 1995)

- 18.5 1. Physical fitness
- 5.3 2. Social recognition
- 6.0 3. Social guidance
- 17.0 4. Mental fitness
- 10.8 5. Natural endowment
- 13.1 6. Motor skills
- 12.7 7. Tactical ability
- 7.5 8. Practice
- 4.1 9. Contact coaching staff
- 4.5 10. Contact team members

79.6 (sum over 6 factors)

## Characteristics of top level performers

- Willingness to put in the **great amounts of time and effort** needed to reach very high levels of achievement
- Strong interest and emotional **commitment**
- Desire to reach a high level of attainment (**high ambition**)
- **Precocity** (earlier & more rapid progress)
- An insistence on marching to their own drummer (they **teach themselves**)
- A rage to master (**intrinsically motivated**; an intense and obsessive interest)

B. Bloom (1985): *Developing talent in young people*

E. Winner (1996): *Gifted children: Myths and realities*

## Or: Single-mindedness ?

" The ability to focus on a goal and to work with great persistence to achieve it. " (J. Rich Harris, 1998, *The nurture assumption*)

" The results of all pertinent research clearly show that there is no such thing as one exclusive predictor of outstanding achievement. " (G. Trost, 2000, Prediction of excellence in school, higher education and work; in: *Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition)

" Aside from ability variables, a high and task-oriented motivation is probably the most powerful predictor of excellence. (...) Aspects of it are the willingness to work hard and persistently on things that are of particular interest to the individual, perseverance in the face of obstacles, a high level of aspiration, competitiveness, and ambition. " (G. Trost, 2000)

## English Sports Council (1998)

" Most NGBs were concerned about the transition from junior to senior levels because many potentially talented individuals failed to negotiate the change due to a lack of support structures. Typically this transition took three to four years and occurred sometime between 16 and 24 years of age. "

" The path to sporting excellence does not consist of a smooth progression from promising junior to Olympic champion. This study has demonstrated that a key transition period occurs when junior competitors move into the ranks of senior sport. This is often a jarring and demotivating experience for the individual who one minute is at the 'top of the pyramid' and next is an 'also ran'. "

*English Sports Council (1998), The development of sporting talent 1997: An examination of the current practices for talent development in English sport.*

## Part 2 - A Dutch longitudinal study

Covering a period of 8 year (1996-2004)

6 measurements

5 successive years

2 years break (no measurement)

6th and final measurement

- Athletics (track-and-field) - Volleyball
- Boys & girls
- Talented athletes & competitive athletes
- Mean age: M-1: 15 years M-6: 22 years
- Who's successful, who drops out?

## NL longitudinal study: questionnaires

- **Athletic background**  
practice, competitive level, schooling, Webb-index, 50-points question, attributions
- **'Birth of a talent'**  
questions about the very start of the athletic participation
- **Past season**  
relationship with other athletes, with club/association and with coach
- **Career phases**  
assessment of characteristics of practice & of coach

### Psychological tests:

- Sport achievement motivation
- Sport commitment
- Intrinsic & extrinsic motivation
- Big Five

### Advantages and disadvantages of sport participation

=====

**Plus:** a separate questionnaire for the athlete who dropped out of athletics or volleyball

## Some figures ...

1st measurement 352 athletes:

178 talented (22), 174 competitive (1)

5th measurement:

105 still-active, 55 dropped out

6th measurement (n=216):

142 still athletics or volleyball

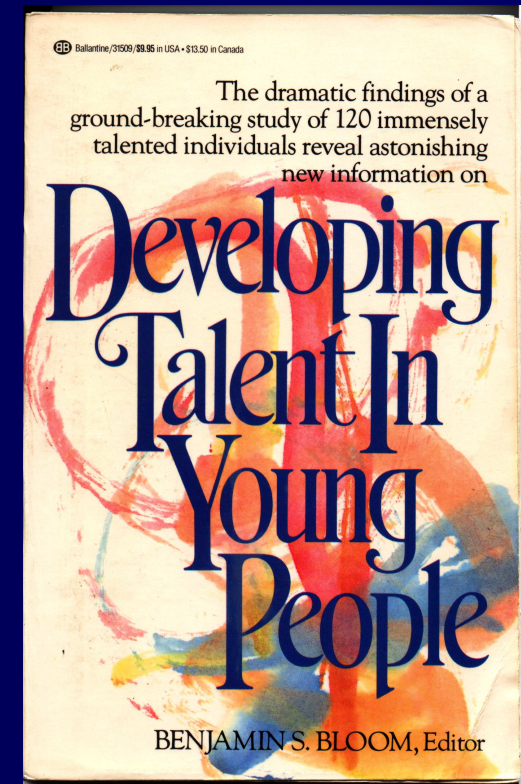
38 transfer dropout (other sport)

36 sport dropout (left sport altogether)

Benjamin Bloom (1985)

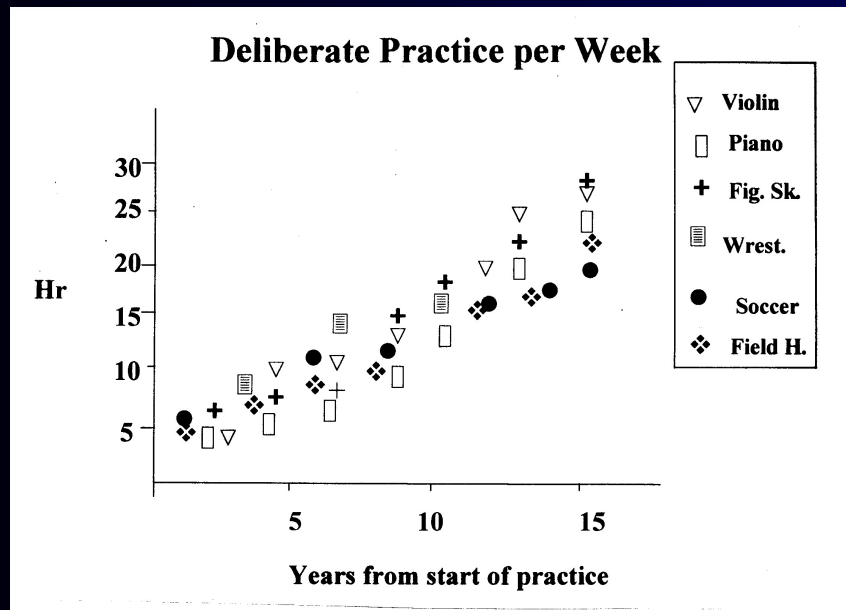
Developing talent in young people

"The study has provided strong evidence that no matter what the initial characteristics (or gifts) of the individuals, unless there is a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education and training, the individuals will not attain extreme levels of capability in these particular fields." (p. 3)





# Practice, practice, practice...



(M-1)

**Talented athletes** train more hours and have more sessions per week than **Control athletes**

(M-1)

**successful talented athletes** train more hours and have more sessions than **not-successful talented athletes**

(M-1)

**later dropouts** train less hours and have less sessions per week than **still active athletes**

**SOQ** (Gill & Deeter, 1988): Sport Orientation Questionnaire

**SPMV** (Van Rossum, 2003): Sport Prestatie Motivatie Vragenlijst

*Competitiveness* (progression orientation; task orientation)

" A desire to enter sport achievement situations, to strive for success, to work hard, to master skills, and an eagerness to meet competitive challenges. "

(Gill & Deeter, 1988, p. 195)

" An enjoyment of competition and a desire to enter and strive for success in competitive sport achievement settings. "

(Gill, 1993, p. 318)

*Win orientation* (superiority orientation; ego orientation)

" The desire to win in interpersonal competition in sport. "

(Gill & Deeter, 1988, p. 195)

" A focus on interpersonal comparison and winning in competition. "

(Gill, 1993, p. 318)

(M-1) talented athletes and  
competitive (control) athletes

SPMV progression / competitiveness / task

- Talented athletes score higher than Control athletes
- Later successful talented athletes score higher than later not-successful athletes

[later dropouts have a lower score than those athletes who are still active after 5 years]

(M-1) talented athletes and  
competitive (control) athletes

SPMV win orientation / superiority / ego

- Talented athletes score equal to Control athletes
- Later successful talented athletes score higher than later not-successful athletes

[later dropouts have a lower score than those athletes who are still active after 5 years]

## Two types of athletes

C. Harwood (2005) *Goals: More than just the score*. In: *The Sport Psych Handbook*

### Ego-involved athletes...

...view their ability as stable and fixed, thereby limiting the effect that high levels of effort could have on their performance. Their priority is to show ability, often at the expense of effort. Naturally, they judge themselves relative to others and have to demonstrate superior ability in order to gain a positive perception of themselves.

### Task-involved athletes...

...are concerned with the development of their competence and uses levels of effort and task completion to assess their competence in a self-reflective manner. They view ability as something that is improvable; therefore, they are satisfied if they perform at a level that extracts the best of their current ability by mastering a particular technique, increasing tactical awareness, or making personal improvements in a given skill.

# October, 27, 2005 - front page news: "Dutch athlete lacks urge to win"


# de Volkskrant

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Ypenburg ziel  
> Binnenland 2



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**Kirsten Dunst**  
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## Velen krijgen Nederlandse sporter ontbeert winnaarsdrang

Donderdag

### onterecht huurtoelage

Zeker 80 miljoen euro per jaar te veel betaald

Van onze verslaggevers  
**Douwe Douwes**  
**Ferry Haas**  
HEERLEN

Raim 4 procent van de huishoudens die huursubsidie ontvangen, krijgt die steun ten onrechte. Bij de overgang van de administratie

naar voren. Hierbij gaat het om gevallen van misbruik, maar bijvoorbeeld ook om mensen die overleden zijn.

De Belastingdienst is niet alleen doende met de voorbereiding van de uitbetaling van huursubsidie, maar ook met die van de nieuwe zorgtoeslag en de kindertoeslag.

Van onze verslaggevers  
**Poul Annema**  
**John Volkers**  
AMSTERDAM

Winnen komt niet op de eerste plaats voor Nederlandse sporters. De nationale jeugd streeft topprestaties na, wil uitgedaagd worden om zichzelf voortdurend te verbeteren, maar acht sportieve ontplooiing belangrijker dan het verslaan van tegenstanders.

Tot deze conclusie komt Jacques van Rossum, die als onderzoekspsycholoog is verbonden aan de faculteit bewegingswetenschappen van de Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam.

Van Rossum: 'Winnen staat in het algemeen erg laag op de ranglijst van redenen om met sport bezig te zijn.' De Amsterdamse wetenschapper deed de afgelopen tien jaar onderzoek bij een gemiddelde groep van getalenteerde

en wedstrijdporters in de leeftijd van 15 tot 22 jaar. Driekwart van de 352 jonge sporters behoren inmiddels tot de nationale top, een flink aantal (55 na de eerste vijf jaar) haakte voortijdig af. Volgens Van Rossum vooral doordat te veel nadruk op het winnen van de wedstrijd werd gelegd.

Zijn door NOC\*NSF en het ministerie van VWS gefinancierd onderzoek is uniek. Volgens hem is alleen in de voormalige DDR op

vergelijkbare wijze onderzoek verricht. De resultaten daarvan zijn nooit naar buiten gekomen.

Winnaarsdrang, waarvan topcoaches bij grote kampioenen graag spreken, uit zich volgens Van Rossum vooral in de zucht van de talenten hun eigen grenzen te verleggen. 'Dan kom ik uiteindelijk toch wel bij de besten in hun redering. En dat geldt in dezelfde mate voor jongens en meisjes als voor team- en individuele sporters.'

Die conclusie betekent volgens hem dat trainers en coaches hun aanpak meer moeten afstemmen op de route naar succes dan op het succes zelf. 'De druk van het moeten winnen zet iedereen op scherp en veroorzaakt zo veel hindernissen voor de gemiddelde sporters dat de meesten eraan onderdoen.'

> Pagina 16: 'Te resultaatgericht sporten, gaat vaak fout'

> EEN NIEUWE VREDESMISSIE naar Afghanistan heeft geleid tot tweespalt tussen de ministeries van Defensie en Buitenlandse Zaken. Minister Kamp van Defensie wil snel vertrekken, zijn collega Bot acht de tijd niet rijp. Pagina 3

> DE KAMER wil opheldering over de hoge beloning die directeur Smits van het Rotterdams Havenbedrijf als consultant kreeg voor de adviezen aan een onderzoeksinstituut van Rijkswaterstaat. Pagina 3

> EEN VN-RAPPORT over Syrië is milder van toon dan werd verwacht. Er wordt positief geoordeeld over de terugtrekking van Syrische troepen uit Libanon in april van dit jaar. Pagina 5

> INSTITIE in Amsterdam bekijkt of het onderzoek naar de bom aanslag op de bus naar Pak Sabal

Vervolg  
belangrijkste  
adviseur Bush  
lijkt ophanden



# Continued on sports page: "Too often too much focus on game/match result"

de Volkskrant Donderdag 27 oktober 2005

## 'Er wordt vaak te snel resultaatgericht gedacht'

Interview | Wetenschapper Van Rossum vindt dat bij de weg naar succes het winnen niet centraal mag staan

Tien jaar volgde wetenschapper Jacques van Rossum (VU Amsterdam) een groep sporttalenten. Zijn conclusie: 'Ze weten ook dat wanneer ze zich blijven verbeteren, winnen bijna vanzelfsprekend is.'

Van onze verslaggever  
Paul Annema  
John Volkens  
AMSTERDAM

Op zijn bureau ligt naast zijn net voltooide onderzoeksrapport ('Volhouden of afhaken') de uitgewerkte tekst van een in 2000 in Sydney gehouden radio-interview met Anky van Grunsven. Dat blijkt geen toeval: de olympische dressuurkampioene onderschrijft vanuit de praktijk de bevindingen van de wetenschapper.

Van Grunsven destijds: 'Mijn be-

geleiders zeiden: ga nou lekker voor je gevoel rijden. Gewoon niet proberen iemand anders te verslaan, want daar gaat het helemaal niet om; het gaat erom dat je zelf een goede prestatie levert. Ik heb ook absoluut niet aan anderen gedacht, ik heb alleen geprobeerd Bonfire zo goed mogelijk in die ring voor te stellen.'

'Het is een manier van denken waarmee de Nederlandse sport zijn voordeel kan doen', zegt Van Rossum. 'Het is niet de manier om winnen uit te sluiten, wel de beste weg naar de overwinning. Dat begint door het winnen niet centraal te stellen.'

'Door puur van het resultaat uit te gaan, wordt iedereen op scherp gezet en zijn ongelukken onvermijdelijk. Ik zou zeggen: doe er alles aan jezelf te presenteren. Je hebt vaak jaren getraind om op het beslissende moment het beste van jezelf te kunnen laten zien.'

Gestarkt voelt hij zich door de ervaring van een bij hem werkza-

me zwemtrainer. 'Ik heb hem gezegd: probeer je zwemmers eens van het resultaat af te halen. Zwemmers duiken ook in training het water in met een tijd in hun hoofd. Na een periode van hard werken stelde hij voor niet de tijd, maar het aantal slagen te tellen.'

'Opeens waren ze gedwongen meer na te denken over het proces dan over het resultaat, en ze zwommen nog persoonlijke records ook. Maar toen ze zich bij het Nederlands kampioenschap weer op de klok gingen richten, bleven ze ver van hun records.'

Vanaf 1995 volgde Van Rossum een groep jonge talenten en wedstrijdporters (15 tot 22 jaar) in atletiek en volleybal. Bij de eerste meting vond 85 procent van de atleten (topsportgericht) dat 'laten zien wat je waard bent' belangrijker is dan 'de tegenstand verslaan'. Bij volleybal lag dat percentage op 63 procent. Bij wedstrijdporters op 84 en procent.

'In aanleg zeiden de meesten dat



Jacques van Rossum FOTO RICK SMEETS

persoonlijke ontwikkeling vóór het wedstrijdresultaat gaat. Ze spraken zich uit voor het proces waarin eigen groei bijna automatisch zou leiden tot een positie onder de besten. Naarmate ze ouder werden, nam de druk toe om het resultaat voorop te zetten.

'Dat is de rol van coaches, ou-

ders en ook van sponsors, die waar voor hun geld eisen. Dan wordt er dus niet meer aan het proces zelf, maar aan het effect van sport gedacht. Dat mag, het hoort erbij, maar dat moet niet centraal komen te staan. In zo'n resultaatgerichte training krijg je mensen die denken honden af te richten.'

'Natuurlijk is er in de sterk op resultaat gerichte samenleving ook in sport sprake van verharding, maar Van Rossum weet zeker dat de tevredenheid van de sporter schuilt in wat hij kan bereiken.'

'Door de commercialisering waarden we sport anders dan zou moeten. Het succes van de coach is afhankelijk van de behaalde punten. Waarom zou je niet kijken of de spelers beter zijn geworden? Daar zijn ook methoden voor.'

De benadering van het individu moet anders, vindt Van Rossum op grond van zijn studie. 'Een leerklimaat gericht op winnen, zet mensen op het verkeerde been. Als ze

even niet winnen, gaan ze zich afvragen waarom het niet lukt.'

'Krajicek had alles gewonnen en opeens ging het niet meer. Dan moet er een coach opstaan die hem doet geloven in zijn mogelijkheden. Complimenten zijn niet voldoende; het gaat om de sportieve benadering waarmee de sporter verder kan. De context creëren waarin mensen het gevoel hebben dat zij beter kunnen worden.'

'Mijn onderzoek wijst uit dat jongeren weten wat ze doen: ze sporten omdat ze er lol in hebben en omdat ze beter willen worden. Ze weten ook dat wanneer ze zich blijven verbeteren, winnen bijna vanzelfsprekend is. Zo moeten ook coaches opgeleid worden.'

'Als je je als atleet wilt verbeteren, dan heb je een goede trainer, een mooie accommodatie en rust in je hoofd nodig. Ik weet zeker dat er veel fout gaat, omdat er vaak te snel resultaatgericht wordt gedacht. Een resultaatgericht is dan denken in poen en aanzien.'

'Ik was een talent. Ik werd op voorspraak van bondscoach Michiel Schaepers destijds een half jaar bij Nick Bollettieri in Florida ondergebracht. IMG, het sportmanagementbureau uit de VS, en de KNLTB, de tennisbond, betaalden mijn opleiding daar. Op mijn achttiende haalde ik al een paar ATP-punten. Vervolgens werd

Sander van Grunsven,  
tennisser  
21 jaar  
uit Nuland  
Business Studies  
Tilburg, eerstejaars  
Nummer 70 van  
Nederland

ik nog eens drie jaar begeleid door Henk van Hulst. Ik was dagelijks op zijn tennischool in Valkenswaard.'

'Maar ik kreeg al snel een schouderprobleem. Ik heb nogal een losse schouder, kan een bal daardoor veel vaart en effect geven. Na drie jaar blessureleed ben ik november vorig jaar aan de linkerschouder operatoerd. Die had het begeven.'

'Ik kon op mijn vijftiende al 200 kilometer in het uur serveren. Dat heb ik daarna nooit meer gehaald. Na de operatie, de vele onderzoeken en twee injecties in de elleboog leek ik op de weg terug. Ik ben dit jaar weer begonnen, maar

## The findings of the longitudinal study suggest:

It is not the lack of focus on winning

but the *lost* focus on one's own continuing  
attempts at increased mastery of the athletic task

progression - orientation

task - orientation

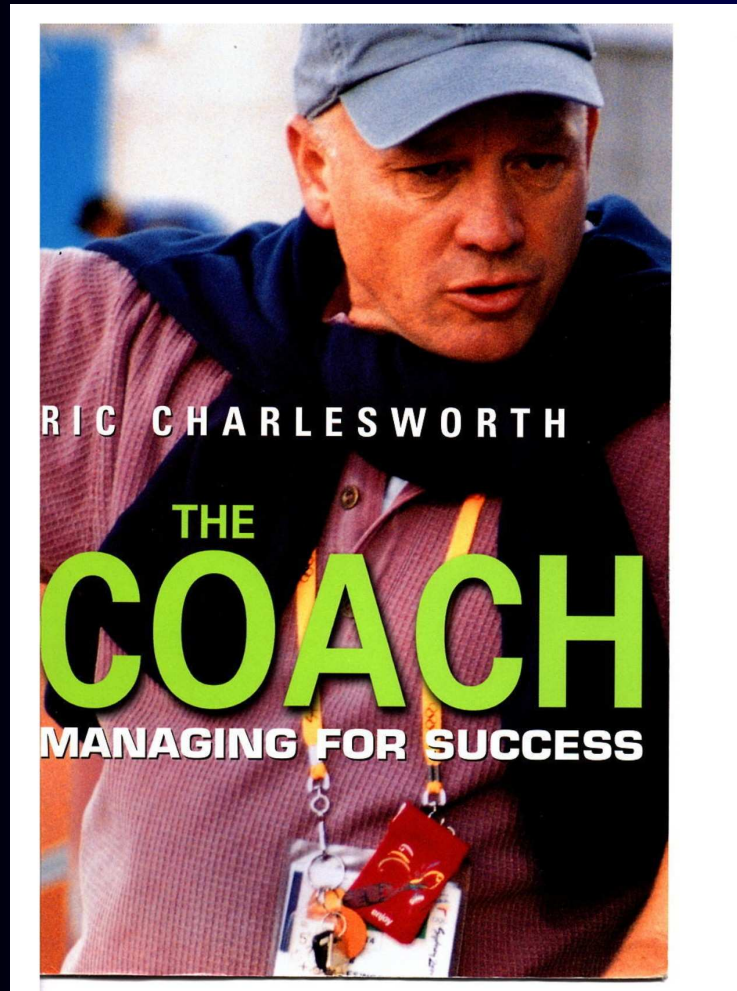


## Part 3 - Implications



- an Australian head coach
- behavior of coaches
- 'Coaches who never lose'

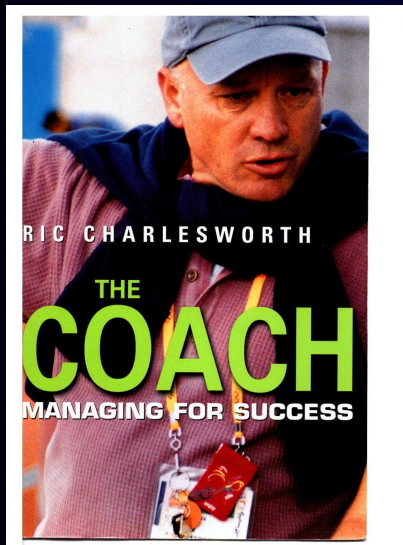
## Ric Charlesworth: an Australian field hockey coach



- Head coach for 8 years: 1993 through 2000
- Champions of the World: 1994, 1998
- Gold at Olympic Games: 1996, 2000
- Winner of the 'Champions Trophy': 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999

# The coach - Managing for success (2001)

## Chapter 7: *Never defend a lead*



" Leading can be as difficult as being behind. The error that competitors make in both of these situations is to think about the outcome rather than paying attention to what they must do for the rest of the game to secure the desired result. Attention to outcome over process can be fatal. This is a message that any novice student in sports psychology will learn at their first lecture. Yet many participants continually make this mistake to their detriment."

(p. 85)

# Characteristics of the ideal coach

## Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS, Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980)

- 5 scales:
  - training & instruction
  - positive feedback
  - social support
  - democratic behavior
  - autocratic behavior
- 3 versions:
  - The ideal coach (athlete)
  - My coach (athlete)
  - As coach (coach)

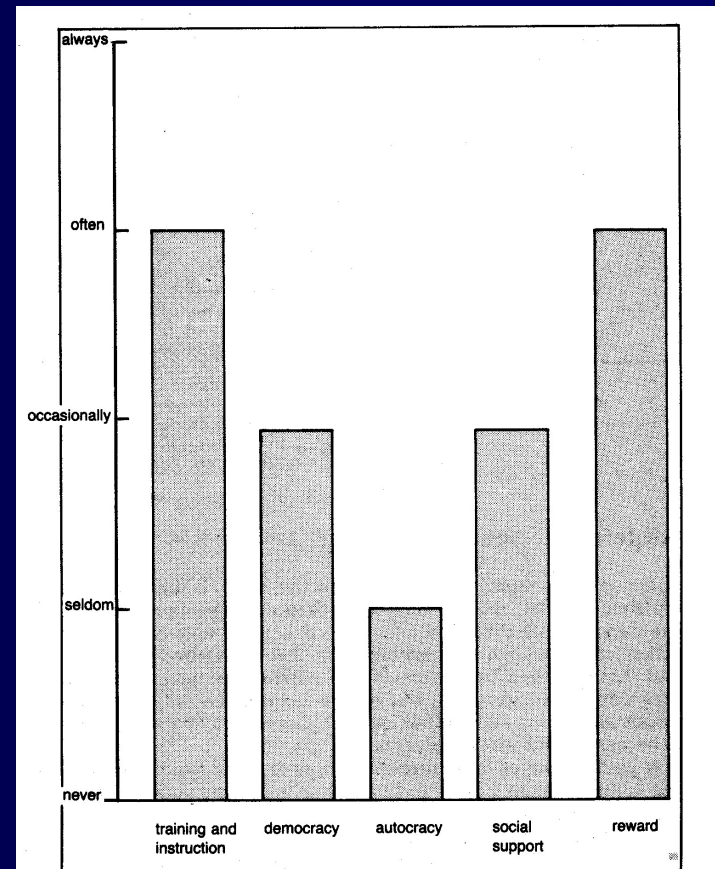


Fig 34 General pattern of athlete preferences.

## A coach controls the motivational climate

### Superiority (ego)

#### output-oriented

- Focus on winning
- The end result, the product is what counts
- Beat the opponent
- Gold, 1st prize, Champion
- Errors or mistakes are punished
- Recognition only for the most successful athletes
- Rivalry amongst athletes

### Progression (task)

#### process-oriented

- Focus on individual progression
- Being involved in the task, the process is what counts
- Defeating yourself
- Personal best
- One can learn from errors or mistakes
- Every athlete is part of the team / practice group
- Cooperation is promoted

## Learning climate and athletic success...

### Superiority

ego-oriented

success =

- defeating others, being better than the opponent
- optimal / maximal achievement with minimal effort

### Progression

task-oriented

success =

- aiming for personal improvement (defeating yourself)
- doing the best you can - always maximal effort

## Casual comment by coach

- Pre-match

" He is not as highly ranked as you - you should have no problem beating him. "

" Work hard for every point, and concentrate on finding a bit more depth on your backhand like you have practised well all week. "

- After the match

" How come you lost to him? He's not that well ranked."

or:

" Of course you won - he's not that well ranked. "

" You played a tight match. Your backhand was OK - you did just as we practised last week. There are some things we should analyse and find ways to improve. "

# Coaching Behavioral Assessment System (1977)

## Reactive

### Responses to desirable performance

1. Reinforcement (positive, rewarding feedback)
2. Non reinforcement (failure to respond)

### Responses to mistakes

3. Mistake contingent encouragement (encouragement given to athlete)
4. Mistake contingent technical instruction (offering information to correct)
5. Punishment (negative reaction)
6. Punitive technical instruction (instruction in punitive or hostile manner)
7. Ignoring mistakes (failure to respond)

### Response to misbehavior

8. Keeping control (reaction to restore or maintain order among team members)

## Spontaneous behaviors

### Game - Related

9. General technical instruction (spontaneous instruction)
10. General encouragement (spontaneous)
11. Organization (administrative behavior (e.g., assigning duties, positions))

### Game - Irrelevant

12. General Communication (interactions with athletes)



## CBAS: US versus Dutch coaches

US: n=51 (57,213 observations) NL: n=6 (7,795 observations)

### Reactive behaviors

1. Reinforcement
2. Non-reinforcement
3. Mistake-contingent encouragement
4. Mistake-contingent technical instruction
5. Punishment
6. Punitive technical instruction
7. Ignoring mistakes
8. Keeping control

### Spontaneous behavior

9. General technical instruction
10. General encouragement
11. Organization
12. General communication

Percentages

US	NL
17.1	18.1
4.2	3.4
3.1	10.3
4.2	21.4
1.8	3.2
1.0	3.5
3.7	4.6
1.7	0.7
<b>36.8%</b>	<b>65.3%</b>
27.3	7.3
21.4	13.1
8.4	12.5
6.1	1.9
<b>63.2%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>

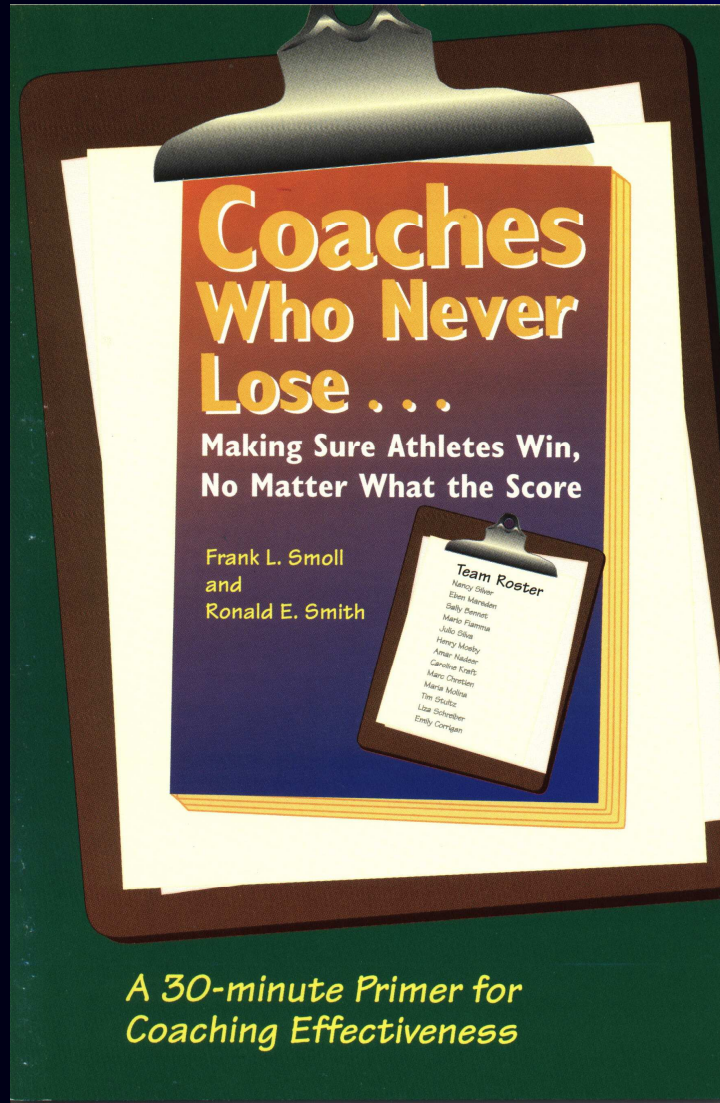
## CET - Coach Effectiveness Training renamed: Mastery Approach to Coaching

Research by: Ronald Smith & Frank Smoll  
(University of Washington, Seattle, U.S.A.)

Empirical effects of CET/MAC:

- Athletes' self-esteem is increased
- Athletes' (competitive) anxiety is decreased
- Less 'drop out' after athletic season
- Higher group cohesion during athletic season
- Coach is valued more by athletes
- Coaches did not become more popular with parents
- No change in won - lost ratio

## Coaches who never lose (1997)



Dutch translation:

"Coaches die nooit verliezen..."

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## Two fundamental considerations...

- Coaches should present solid & reliable feedback related to the goals of the athlete - feedback should be as specific as possible
- Coaches should ensure an effective motivational climate in relationship to the athletic task at hand - the coach should know about the motivational orientation of the athlete(s)

## For a coach who never loses...

- ...Winning isn't everything, nor is it the only thing
- ...Failure is not the same thing as losing
- ...Success is not equivalent to winning
- ...Athletes should be taught that success is found in striving for victory, and is related to commitment and effort

Thus: task - orientation should be the basic strategy of coaches in dealing with and preparing their athletes, even at top level athletics.

Charlesworth:  
"innovative coaching philosophies"

" Athletes learn most by doing, and with good coaching their experience becomes one of continuous learning and growth. This, too, is the essence of an ever-growing organisation that remains at the cutting edge of innovation and improvement.

Such organisations know that learning and training never end. They find that the outcomes look after themselves if they focus on the practices and processes of being the best they can be. "

(p. 5)

Ric Charlesworth (2002), *Staying at the top*

## In conclusion: where to start & where to go

- Talented athletes have intriguing qualities - they are 'different'.
- Invest in those who are highly motivated to improve:  
"The importance of a high and task-oriented motivation has been confirmed in practically all studies searching for the determinants of outstanding achievement." (Trost, 2000)
- NGB's should invest in portfolio's of their talented athletes (measurement of skills & qualities)
- NGB's should invest in the coaching staff and should adopt a task-oriented approach to talent development and talent guidance

C. Harwood (2005, p. 23) *Goals: More than just the score.*

In: *The Sport Psych Handbook*

" Goal orientations are believed to be relatively stable and enduring characteristics that are largely formed by mid- to late adolescence. "

And, about learning or achievement climate:

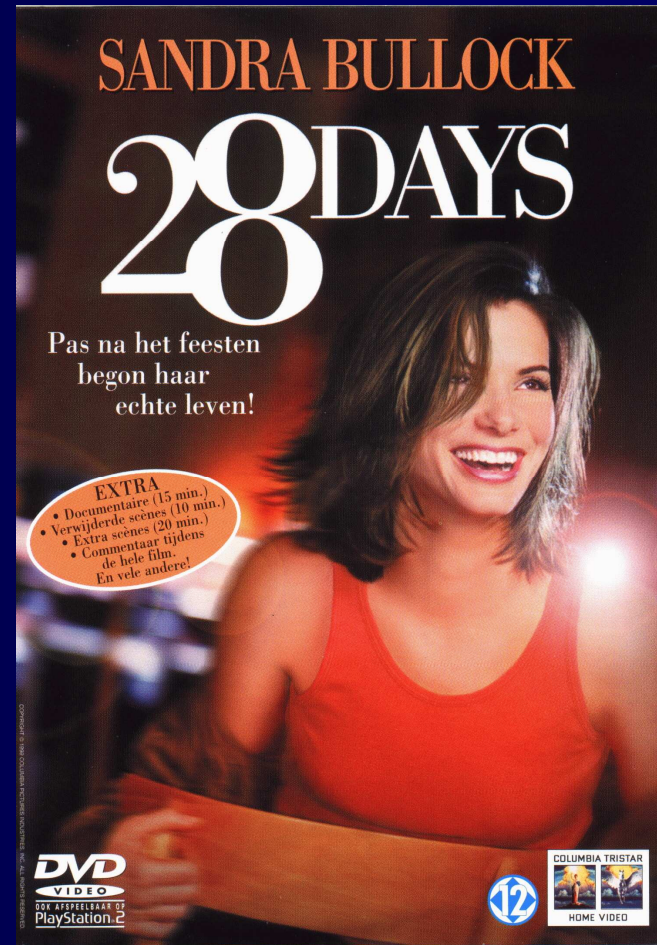
" The key message here is that the availability of task-involving cues in sports that are naturally ego involving allows the athlete to develop a more task-involved approach to competition. "

(cf. Smoll & Smith: "a healthy philosophy of winning")



## A scene from a movie...

- **Scene 21:**
  - woman (Sandra Bullock) meets man (Viggo Mortensen) in the forest of a rehab clinic
  - scene speaks for itself (2min, 50s)
  - please note the facial expression of the woman



## Overview of presentation

- The talented athlete
  - phases / practice
  - characteristics
- Longitudinal study
  - achievement motivation: task orientation
- Implications for coaches
  - motivational climate
  - 'Coaches who never lose'

The end...



## Addendum

Details of CET and the brochure

## CET & brochure - 1

### Coaches who never lose...

- ... learn their athletes how to set themselves realistic, challenging goals
- ... give their athletes relevant feedback which helps them to improve themselves
- ... do not equalize losing a game with failure
- ... do not evaluate and interpret everything from the perspective of the outcome of the game

## CET & brochure - 2

Two key elements in "CET" :

- reward instead of punishment  
(but do not carry it too far...)
- most effective is a combination of:  
    technical (skill) instruction  
    & positive feedback

Research findings are translated in brochure (© 1997)

including: **key-principles** & **do-s** and **don't-s**

## CET & brochure - 3

### Contents of brochure

#### 1. Reacting to athlete behaviors and game situations

- A. Good plays and athlete's effort
- B. Mistakes
- C. Maintaining order and discipline

#### 2. Creating a positive learning atmosphere

## *2. Creating a positive learning atmosphere*

- **DO:** Give technical instruction. Establish your role as a caring and competent coach. Try to structure participation as a learning experience in which you are going to help the athlete become the best they can be. Always give instruction in a positive fashion. Satisfy your athletes' desire to improve their skills. Give instruction in a clear, concise manner and, if possible, demonstrate how to do skills correctly.
- **DO:** Give encouragement. Encourage effort, don't demand results. Use it selectively so that it is meaningful. Be supportive without acting like a cheerleader.
- **DO:** Concentrate on the activity. Be 'in the game' with the athletes. Set a good example for team unity.

To be continued



## *2. Creating a positive learning atmosphere*

- **DON'T:** Give instruction or encouragement in a sarcastic or degrading manner. Make a point, then leave it. Don't let 'encouragement' become irritating to athletes.

Note: this material was excerpted from:

*Coaches who never lose*

(Frank L. Smoll & Ronald E. Smith)

Warde Publishers, Inc. (2006)

[www.wardepub.com](http://www.wardepub.com)

