

Lived experiences within a longstanding coach-athlete relationship. The case of one paralympic athlete

Experiencias vividas en una prolongada relación entrenador-atleta. El caso de un atleta paralímpico

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Abstract. The purpose of the present study was to explore the lived experiences of one male Paralympic athlete who maintained a longstanding relationship with his coach. This case provides insight into how a coach can serve as a key supportive agent in enabling an athlete to thrive both in sport and in life. The athlete was interviewed on two separate occasions and an interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted. The athlete discussed the consequences of an acute bout of meningitis experienced at four years of age that left him impaired. During adolescence and adulthood, the athlete experienced the death of his mother and sister as well as the challenges associated with him assuming his homosexuality. Throughout these ordeals, his coach acted as a constant support figure. The athlete attributed much weight to his coach's trust, respect, and empathy in explaining the significant success he attained on the international stage. The recommendations offered focus on how coaches can support athletes when athletes are navigating tough challenges.

Keywords: Communication; trust; Paraspport; support.

Resumen. El propósito del presente estudio fue explorar las experiencias vividas por un atleta paralímpico varón que mantuvo una prolongada relación con el mismo entrenador. Este caso permite considerar el modo en que un entrenador puede convertirse en un decisivo agente de apoyo para que sus atletas puedan prosperar tanto en el deporte como en la vida. El atleta fue entrevistado en dos ocasiones y se realizó un análisis fenomenológico interpretativo de dichas entrevistas. Se debatieron con él las consecuencias del agudo ataque de meningitis que sufrió cuando tenía cuatro años. Las muertes de su madre y de su hermana, que tuvieron lugar durante su adolescencia y edad adulta, fueron también objeto de debate; al igual que los desafíos asociados al proceso de asunción de su homosexualidad. En estas adversidades, el entrenador desempeñó un papel de apoyo constante. En este sentido, al explicar su éxito en el escenario internacional, el atleta atribuye un importante papel a la confianza, respeto y empatía de su entrenador. Por ello, se concluye dando algunas recomendaciones sobre el modo en que los entrenadores pueden apoyar a sus atletas cuando éstos pasan por momento difíciles.

Palabras clave. Comunicación; confianza; Paraspport; apoyo.

INTRODUCTION

Sport participation has been linked to several positive outcomes such as increases in confidence, self-esteem, and personal and social responsibility development (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009; Wright, Dyson, & Moten, 2012; Wright, Whitley, & Sabolboro, 2012). However, sport has also been linked to negative outcomes such as antisocial behaviors (Rutten et al., 2011) and moral disengagement (Potgieter, 2013). To increase the likelihood of sport being a context conducive to desirable outcomes, coaches play a crucial role in facilitating positive experiences through the establishment of nurturing coach-athlete relationships (Holt et al., 2017; Pierce, Gould, & Camiré, 2017). Through these nurturing relationships, coaches can facilitate a broad range of developmental and performance-related outcomes (Santos, Côté-Real, Regueiras, Dias, & Fonseca, 2016). Several studies (e.g., Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009; MacDonald, Côté, & Deakin, 2010) have examined how coaches' behaviors (e.g., coaching strategies, objectives, activities) influence athletes' developmental experiences in sport. For instance, Gould and Carson (2011) conducted a study examining 297 young athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviors and their own developmental experiences. Findings showed that the act of coaching was a significant predictor of youth's positive experiences in sport. Coach-athlete relationships have been considered key in explaining athletes' experiences in sport as several researchers (Jowett, 2017; Rhind & Jowett, 2010) have investigated the features of coach-athlete dyads. In

fact, quality coach-athlete relationships have been considered paramount for changes in athlete's performance and personal development (Jowett, 2017).

Coach-athlete relationships reflect the nature of the interactions between coaches and athletes over time (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Coach-athlete relationships may last for decades and facilitate success in and outside sport. Several studies (Davis, Appleby, Davis, Wetherell, & Gustafsson, 2018; Jowett & Nezelek, 2012; Rhind & Jowett, 2010) on the coach-athlete relationship have focused on performance and developmental outcomes (i.e., life skills) derived from successful partnerships. Life skills represent a range of skills (e.g., perseverance, goal-setting, leadership) learned within the sport environment that can be also applied in other life domains (Gould & Carson, 2008). Jowett and Cockerill (2003) conducted a study with twelve Olympic medalists to analyze the nature and significance of the coach-athlete relationship based on three overarching concepts: closeness, commitment and complementarity. Findings suggested that coach-athlete relationships may play an important role in athletes' development in sport and other life domains. Olympiou, Jowett, and Duda (2008) conducted a study with 591 athletes examining the motivational significance of the coach-athlete relationship in team sports. Findings suggested that environments in which cooperation and improvement are considered paramount were perceived to lead to higher levels of closeness, commitment, and complementarity. Norman and French (2013) investigated how 16 high performance female athletes experienced the coach-athlete relationship and highlighted how coaches play a crucial role in athletes' lives in and outside sport.

Although research on coach-athlete relationships has provided valuable insight and further increased our understanding of their intricacies, less research has examined coach-athlete relationships specifically within parasport (Fairhurst, Bloom, & Harvey, 2016). More research is needed to understand how parasport coaches might provide solid grounds for high performance athletes to succeed both in sport and in life. In particular, studies exploring prolonged coach-athlete relationships could help us better understand the developmental path of high performance athletes in parasport since childhood (i.e., beginning of their sports career) to adulthood (i.e., end of their sports career). To date, few studies have focused on prolonged coach-athlete relationships that

subsist throughout the developmental spectrum and continue into adulthood (e.g., Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to explore the lived experiences of one male Paralympic athlete who maintained a longstanding relationship with his coach. More precisely, the study examined how prolonged and unconditionally supportive coach-athlete interactions were perceived by the athlete to have positively influenced his development as an athlete and as a person.

1. METHOD

Context

At the time of the study, the athlete maintained a privileged status in Portugal and when approached by the main researcher, he felt compelled to use his public profile to tell his life story in the hopes of inspiring future generations of Paralympic athletes to follow their dreams and aspirations. The main researcher and the athlete's manager had known each other for eight years and were both PhD students at the time of the study. Through ongoing discussions on disability youth sport, both believed that it could prove worthwhile to inquire if the athlete would be open to sharing his life story. Thus, the manager approached the athlete and explained how a study focused on his life story could yield important insights for athletes, coaches, and researchers.

The participant

The participant was a Portuguese male athlete competing in athletics. At four years of age, he suffered an acute bout of meningitis, which led to difficulties with reading and writing, struggles with speaking and walking, and memory impairment. However, many of these impairments have subsided over time. During his career, the athlete has competed primarily in jumping events, which includes athletes with limited intellectual functions and adaptive behavior diagnosed before the age of 18.

As a child, to deal with the effects of his condition, his family motivated him to participate in sport. As a promising sport participant, the athlete met his coach who subsequently trained him for International Paralympic events (i.e., 18-year relationship). The athlete's (a)

longstanding relationship with his coach, (b) high level of success on the international stage, and (c) challenges experienced throughout his life provided unique conditions to examine how a coach can serve as a supportive agent in enabling an athlete to thrive both in sport and in life.

Procedure

Upon receiving the athlete's consent to take part in the present study, the main researcher conducted two in-depth interviews (i.e., November 2016 and December 2016) to develop a comprehensive portrait of the athlete's lived experiences, particularly as they related to his longstanding relationship with his coach. To maximize convenience and comfort, the athlete requested that both interviews occur in Portuguese near his place of residence.

Interviews

The phenomenological approach employed in the present study was based on the work of Camiré (2016), who conducted two interviews examining leadership development with the captain of a National Hockey League team. As discussed by Camiré (2016), high performance athletes are in high demand and their time is strictly planned, making it challenging for researchers to persuade them to dedicate extended amounts of time to research. In the present case, the athlete was open to sharing his life story with the main researcher but his busy international travel schedule prevented him from taking part in more than two in-person interviews. Thus, the two-interview approach used by Camiré (2016) was replicated with the emphasis placed on getting the athlete to share the meaning he attributed to his developmental experiences over the course of his career. Throughout the research process, the main researcher embraced a humanistic approach (Rennie, 2012), which guided the decisions he made pre-interview (e.g., framing interview questions in a non-judgmental manner), during interview (e.g., genuinely empathizing with the athlete as he cried for a moment while vividly remembering the death of his mother), and post-interview (researcher and athlete jointly reflecting on the researchers' interpretations). Using the humanistic approach (Rennie, 2012), the main researcher was able to develop strong rapport with the athlete who felt comfortable expressing his opinions and emotions related to the successes (e.g., winning

numerous medals on the international stage) and challenges (e.g., incurring an injury just prior to the Paralympic Games) he experienced over his lifetime.

The first interview was broad in scope and aimed to capture the essence of the athlete's lived experiences throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (e.g., Can you name and describe the people in your life you believe had the greatest impact in enabling you to become a world-level athlete?, What lessons from sport do you believe have transferred and have proven most useful in your everyday life?). Prior to creating the first interview guide, background research on the athlete was performed by the main researcher (a) through discussions with the manager and (b) by accessing publicly available information on the athlete (e.g., newspaper articles). The first interview guide was reviewed and edited by the two study co-authors.

Upon conducting (i.e., interview time 70 minutes) and transcribing the first interview, the second interview guide was built based on the researchers' interpretation of the athlete's experiences with his coach. Careful attention was placed on ensuring the questions focused on attaining a greater depth of understanding as it pertained to the nature of the longstanding coach-athlete relationship over time (e.g., Could you expand on this notion you discussed in the first interview, when you said your coach helped you feel included?). Prior to the second interview, the study co-authors reviewed and revised the second interview guide to ensure it addressed the study's purpose and allowed for further uncovering of the athlete's experiences with his coach. The second interview lasted approximately 73 minutes.

Data analysis

The data were transcribed by the main researcher and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) procedures were employed (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015; Smith, 2004). An IPA approach (Smith & Osborne, 2015) was privileged to access the athlete's experiences in the hopes of interpreting his psychological and social world. Guided by Smith (2016), each transcript was read and annotated over several iterations. Specifically, transcripts were printed and notes were taken in margin using a pen and highlighter to develop deep familiarity with the content. These initial notes were revisited and subsequently organized into experiential themes. For example, the athlete discussed his

experiences dealing with several traumatic events and how he dealt with them. During analysis, the researcher sought to attain a balance between documenting these events (i.e., description) and explaining what they mean (i.e., abstraction) in order to deliver a balanced interpretative commentary. Themes (e.g., death in the family, injuries) were subsequently clustered into superordinate themes and given names (e.g., challenges). Due to the iterative nature of IPA, the parts (i.e., themes) were revisited in light of the whole, thus enabling the researcher to engage in the hermeneutic circle to strengthen his interpretations. The final step of analysis consisted of writing the report, a process enacted by attaching illustrative quotes to the researcher's interpretative commentary to deliver an unfolding chronological account of the athlete's relational experiences with his coach.

Study quality

In this study, a relativist approach was favored and study quality procedures that best aligned with the nature of the study were selected (Smith & McGannon, 2017; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). First, the researcher invested a significant amount of time developing and refining the interview guides, which allowed for quality data to be captured during the two interviews. Considerable efforts were placed on ensuring the second interview guide questions were based on the analysis of the first interview, thereby allowing for a more thorough examination of salient interview one passages. Second, throughout data collection and analysis, the second and third authors kept in close contact with the main researcher, serving as critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2017) by taking part in several Skype meetings to discuss the themes identified. Third, once a full version of the manuscript was written, the main researcher and athlete engaged in member reflections (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Specifically, the main researcher organized an in-person meeting with the athlete to verbally share and explain the key study findings. An in-person meeting was privileged instead of simply sending the manuscript by email given that the athlete has a very limited understanding of English. Finally, the researchers focused on providing rich descriptions and interpretations for the study to resonate with the reader's own personal engagement and experiences, thereby enhancing the potential for 'naturalistic' generalizability (Smith, 2018).

2. RESULTS

The findings were organized chronologically to describe the athlete's lived experiences in sport during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In the childhood stage, the athlete's initial experiences in sport are described. Integrated within the adolescence and adulthood stages are key themes discussed in relation to how the athlete experienced his relationship with his coach as a support structure in surmounting challenges. The fourth theme presents the athlete's retrospective look on his career as well as his thoughts on his future plans. After reflecting on a long and prolific career, the athlete discusses how his longstanding relationship with his coach has culminated in him creating a sports academy and delivering coach education courses on how to work with special needs children.

Childhood

The athlete discussed at length how during childhood, school was not experienced as a psychologically safe environment. In fact, he elaborated on how he was often bullied by other children. The athlete discussed how his introduction to sport was a life-altering moment and he praised his mother for giving him this chance: "The most defining moment was when my mother gave me the opportunity to play sports at age seven. I needed this setting to relate to other children and further develop motor, personal, and social skills". Parental support was a key factor in the athlete's early successes in sport as his mother played a decisive role in motivating him and registering him in a sports club. This unconditional support was considered by the athlete as a crucial factor that made him feel confident enough to play sports and work towards improving his performance.

In contrast to the negative climate experienced at school, sport was perceived as a supportive environment: "I recall in the fifth grade just waiting for 17:30 to go play sports. That's where I liked to be and felt enjoyment. I didn't feel discriminated and it was my escape. It is still today. It was freedom". The opportunity to participate in sport outside school hours was deemed by the athlete to be especially important since he had limited access to recreational time during school hours due to his need to engage in extra classes to overcome his learning disabilities. These supplementary classes represented large time commitments but

helped ensure the athlete performed in school, despite his limitations. However, once he reached the seventh grade, he no longer had access to supplementary classes, which led to him quitting school a year later: "In the eighth grade, I left school. I have to admit, I just didn't give the effort necessary to continue to the following grades. When I lost the opportunity to have supplementary classes, that was it for me".

Adolescence

In the two years following his dropout from school, the athlete worked odd jobs while trying to maintain his sport participation. While attending a competition at age 15, he met his current coach who immediately saw great potential in him. However, during their initial encounters, the athlete was not too receptive to the coach because, as he outlined:

During our initial conversations, he asked me if I was available to do some exams to see if I could be integrated in the mental disability category. I said no! I didn't like the expression "mental disability" and I refused on the spot... Nevertheless, he still invited me to watch a [Parasport] competitive event with him. During the event, I realized the athletes were kids just like me and that I wanted to be part of that.

The athlete repeatedly stated how throughout his adolescence, his coach was a positive role model that helped him become a successful athlete and person. He stressed how his coach's best attribute was his willingness and ability to provide unwavering and unconditional support and guidance, for both sport matters and life matters. For example, the athlete explained how his coach made him realize the importance of education and supported him in his journey to pursue his schooling while pursuing a career in sport:

My coach understood my decision to leave school [in the eight grade] but made me aware of the consequences. He supported me constantly and helped me reach my first Paralympic games in Sydney. Further, I followed his advice and I continued my education through an alternative education program.

Adulthood

During his adult years, the athlete faced several traumatic and challenging life events that could have derailed his competitive athletics career. However, he adamantly described how his coach was always supportive and enabled him to persevere through some of the most difficult periods of his life. For example, he discussed how the death of his mother and his sister were psychologically devastating but that he was able to hold his life together through the support and guidance of his coach:

My sister passed away in 2010 and my mother passed away in 2015. Afterwards, I needed to stop [competing] for two months. I didn't do as well for a long time. I worked hard for it because my coach is almost a family member to me. He cares not just about the medals but also about my life outside sport.

As the athlete decided to take a break from competitive sport for two months following the passing away of his mother, the coach supported his decision and gave him the time he needed to recover emotionally. With respect to his mother's death, the athlete described how his coach's actions went beyond those normally associated with coaching and reflected the behaviours of a person who truly cared for his well-being in and beyond sport:

My coach has been there for me for 18 years now. I'm a second son to him so he's concerned about my life outside sport. For instance, when my mother passed, he called me every day and helped me to never quit. I didn't want to go to practice and he helped me. I suffered a lot but his support during this life event, it gave me strength to work hard in every practice and competition.

In addition to confronting the passing of his sister and mother, the athlete long struggled with accepting his homosexuality. For many years, he only revealed his sexual orientation to his coach, mother, and sister. Since the passing of his mother and sister, his coach became an indispensable source of support as he progressively made his homosexuality publicly known. His trusting relationship with his coach was particularly significant when he needed support related to his

homosexuality, given that he never personally disclosed the details of his sexual orientation to his father:

My coach has known my sexual orientation for a long time and he has never judged me. My mother and sister did the same. However, my father still does not really know. I come from a conservative environment and my father is suffering a lot from the death of my sister and mother so I don't want to cause him any more pain.

In having gone through several existential challenges during his adult years, the athlete reported that his coach was instrumental in instilling in him a "never quit" mentality by focusing specifically on skills such as (a) resilience, (b) effort, (c) communication, and (d) goal-setting. The athlete discussed how he applied this mentality in and beyond sport. Although the development of resilience and other life skills was deemed crucial, the athlete clearly stated how his coach always prioritized pleasure and enjoying being together. The athlete indicated how he was very fortunate to have always benefited from having his coach at his side during competitions and realized how close he felt to his coach when he could not be with him at an event:

Feeling good and having fun are more important than any medal. If I don't enjoy performing, I will fail. The first time my coach wasn't with me in a big competition, I didn't enjoy it as much as I would've with him. I didn't win any medal.

The athlete stated how during the Rio Paralympic Games in 2016, he was once again put in a situation where his coach could not travel to Brazil and be at his side. This was a particularly difficult situation for him considering that just prior to Games, he incurred a significant injury that jeopardized his ability to compete. Despite these setbacks, he discussed how his coach communicated with him frequently and was particularly skillful at tapping into his potential and giving him the strength to perform at a level where he even surpassed his own expectations of what he could possibly achieve. He was particularly satisfied with his performance, given that these were his last Paralympic Games.

I missed him in Rio, but he called and sent me text messages frequently saying “How are you doing? Is everything alright? You can do it, be strong”. He knows me completely. Even if he wasn’t there physically, it was like I had him with me psychologically, you know? It’s an 18-year relationship! No distance can affect us!

Looking Back... and Looking Forward

Taking a retrospective lens on his illustrious career, the athlete discussed how his involvement in sport and his relationship with his coach have shaped the person he is today and the person he aspires to be in the future.

Through sport, I’ve learned everything. Who I am today as a person is influenced by the life skills I learned from my coach. I’m able to transfer these skills, to be the face of Paralympic sport in my country and inspire others to learn the same life skills. I know if I want something in life, I’ll get it through hard work.

Being at the tail end of his athletics career, the athlete discussed how he wanted to stay closely involved in sport and use his high profile as a positive influence in the lives of Portuguese youth. To do so, he has created a sports academy, which works with local schools to initiate youth to sport and promotes coach education initiatives. Acting as the leader of a sports academy has required the athlete to start seeing himself more as a coach and a mentor for the next generation: “We are trying to get athletes from different age groups to join the academy. It’s a work in progress but I’m starting to become a coach/mentor for these kids with all my experience”.

Although the athlete is transitioning from athlete to coach/mentor, he remained very close to his coach and envisioned them maintaining their relationship for many years to come:

There is a huge complicity between us, he knows what’s best for me and for him and that’s why it [relationship] works very well! He’s always going to be my coach and I can’t imagine a future without him. We may part ways, but honestly I can’t imagine it as I’m about to end my [athletics] career.

3. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of one male Paralympic athlete who maintained a longstanding relationship with his coach. The present study highlights how longstanding coach-athlete relationships can represent powerful support structures that enable athletes to successfully meet the demands of sport and life. Coaches should represent positive role models that provide learning opportunities for athletes as well as unconditional support. Several researchers (e.g., Holt et al., 2017) have argued the need for coaches to explicitly foster personal and social skills within a positive caring climate.

The athlete demonstrated an ability to overcome all the personal (i.e., dealing with his impairment) and social (i.e., being discriminated in school) challenges that came with an acute bout of meningitis. On this notion, his coach used a strength-based approach, creating an environment that prioritized enjoyment, inclusion, competition, and fun, which was critical to allow the athlete to overcome the challenges experienced in school. From the beginning, the athlete discussed how he considered his relationship with his coach as highly supportive, given that his coach created an environment that prioritized enjoyment and inclusion, which nurtured solid grounds for closeness and commitment (Jowett, 2007). Jowett (2017) and other researchers (e.g., Fairhurst et al., 2016) have discussed the need for coaches to place emphasis on enjoyment and inclusion in order to create solid and prolonged coach-athlete relationships that lead to positive developmental experiences. Coaches could focus on enjoyment and inclusion, factors of especially high importance in youth Parasport, by reinforcing realistic and attainable objectives and by promoting task-oriented climates focused on athletes' abilities and expectations (MacDonald, Côté, Eys, & Deakin, 2011). In addition, the athlete discussed how his coach focused on several life skills through his coaching that helped him overcome several challenges in sport and life: (a) effort; (b) communication; (c) self-confidence; (d) goal setting. Researchers have argued how an explicit approach towards life skills development and transfer may be more effective than an implicit approach (Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, & Danish, 2006; Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014). All the challenges faced by the athlete were used as learning opportunities to promote life skills. Sport was experienced as an inclusive and positive climate in which the athlete consistently received support from his coach. Such

support heavily influenced the athlete's decision to persevere during his athletics career, despite the significant challenges he faced, because he knew his coach would always be there for him no matter the circumstances. Holt et al. (2017) have stated how quality relationships are instrumental for sport participants to thrive and develop positively during their sport participation. Because life outside of sport matters, and actually influences success in the sport domain, coaches should understand the importance of: (a) getting to know their athletes as people who face challenges outside of sport; (b) valuing and reinforcing their athletes' personal achievements that extend beyond the sport domain; (c) and, when possible, creating a wide net of effective support that extends to other significant agents (e.g., teachers, parents) in their athletes' lives. The athlete's coach also played a critical role in helping him deal with his homosexuality and did not place any judgment. Despite initiatives dedicated to reducing homophobia in sport (see, for example, <http://www.youcanplayproject.org>), homosexuality in high performance sport remains a sensitive issue. Coaches, as locker room leaders, must, as shown in the current case, act in inclusive and non-judgemental manners, a feat that is easier said than done. When athletes, including Paraspport athletes, receive unconditional support from their coaches, trust emerges and becomes the fundamental pillar towards the establishment of longstanding coach-athlete relationships that are mutually beneficial (Fairhurst et al., 2016).

Although high performance athletes are judged based on their ability to win, coaches must not focus solely on performance objectives and outcomes. As shown in the present case study, the athlete highly valued how his coach genuinely prioritized enjoyment and life skills development as key foci of his approach to coaching. Keeping in mind that the athlete interviewed is the most medaled athlete of all-time in international Paraspport competitions, such foci should be seen as indispensable for optimal performance, even at the highest levels. Although researchers have primarily studied enjoyment and life skills development in youth populations (e.g., Strachan, Côté, and Deakin, 2011), high performance coaches need to be aware of the need to prioritize these elements if their goal is to have their athletes attain desired performance outcomes. As Strachan, Côté, and Deakin (2011) have stated, "(...) this awareness will lead to not only the development of talented athletes, but also the emergence of strong, independent and responsible young people." (p. 209).

All the athlete's aforementioned positive experiences with his coach played an important part in attaining Paralympic success and transferring life skills to other life domains. In addition, these experiences influenced him to become a coach focused on positive youth development and life skills development. As the athlete moved towards the end of his Paralympic career, he valued the closeness and commitment he received from his coach and aimed to help youth athletes, teachers, and coaches use sport as an opportunity to highlighting their strengths, become in control of their own path, and flourish. Coaches are influential role models (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005) that should provide the necessary guidance for athletes to learn personal and social skills that are useful in other life domains (Morley, Morgan, McKenna, & Nicholls, 2014; Whitley, Bean, & Gould, 2011). Despite facing several challenges throughout his life, the athlete mentioned how he wanted to follow his coach's example, foster resilience, use a strength-based approach, and prioritize life skills development. The present study reinforces the importance coaches can have on their athletes' beliefs, self-confidence and future paths (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012).

4. CONCLUSION

The present study serves as a vivid example for coaches that athletes will inevitably face many challenges during their careers, both in sport and in life. They must not only pay lip service to concepts of inclusion but must concretely enact them on a constant basis by avoiding prejudice and rejecting intolerance as it relates to gender identity and sexual orientation. It is important to consider that in the present study only one athlete was studied and only one type of data collection instrument was used. Future studies may consider using multiple sources and multiple instruments to more comprehensively understand how longstanding coach-athlete relationships can play a role in fostering athlete development in sport and in life.

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