Athlete Motivation: How Can Coaches Motivate Athletes to Perform their Best?

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Sports are an integral part of American culture. The vast majority of Americans have participated in organized sports at some time in their lives. In 2011, 75 percent of boys and 69 percent of girls from ages 8-17 took part in organized sports within the previous year (Kelley & Carchia, year). Also, for many individuals it is not just about participating in sports, but possibly playing at the collegiate or even professional level. Athletes are all hoping to become the best, and coaches are trying to figure out how to produce the best players. Therefore, coaches and athletes are dependent on one another for success. Coaches, specifically, have a lot of power in a coaching situation. Coaches can play roles such as friends, teachers, parents, and mentors, and could help athletes to achieve their goals. They can also lead athletes to be discouraged and confused, and can even cause athletes to quit the sport as a whole. Coaches have a significant amount of power in any situation. This power can be used for positive or negative results. Therefore, it is vital that coaches take their jobs seriously. They have an opportunity to mold players to be the best they are capable of becoming. They have the opportunity to change athletes' lives, and every coach must do their best to teach each athlete they have in the best way possible. More specifically, coaches must find a way to motivate their players to perform their best. Although every player is different and every coaching situation is different, the following research will seek to determine some ways that coaches can motivate their athletes to perform their best.

It is important to understand how athletes and coaches relate in order to understand how a coach can best motivate his or her athletes. It is specifically important to understand how the athlete views his or her relationship with his or her coach. Jowett and Cockerill (2003) studied the significance of the coach-athlete relationship within the interpersonal constructs of the three C's: closeness, complementarity, and co-orientation. The research was done with 12 Olympic

medalists that had competed in an Olympic Games at least once during the years 1968 to1988.

First, the construct of closeness was broken down into two categories: *personal feelings*

(intimacy, trust, and liking) and *generic feelings* (respect, belief, and commitment). "From the

participants' responses to the five questions, a total of 66 (34.3%) raw data units

were identified and ascribed to the Closeness component of the participants' relationship with

their coach. Of the 66 statements obtained, 61 (32.3%) were positively framed and five (2.6%)

were negatively framed" (p. 319). Out of the 32.3 % positive responses, the categories of

personal feelings (15.6 %) and generic feelings (16.7 %) were distributed. While both personal

and generic feelings are important, it seems that athletes believe they are related to two different

outcomes. *Generic feelings* such as the level of coach-athlete respect, belief, and commitment are

perceived as being important for success (as reflected by one medalist's comment), "Coach

dedicated time and effort to get to know the athlete and explore our abilities" (p. 319).

Conversely, *personal feelings* such as intimacy, trust, and liking lead to a relationship that can be

described as a close friendship, parental relationship, or mentorship, as seen in one athlete's

comment, "I still get together with my dearest coach" (p. 319). Though personal feelings are

important, it appears that athletes perceive them as not having an impact on the 'working' coach-

athlete relationship (i.e., their ability to work well together and win a medal). Jowett and

Cockerill's construct of complementarity was categorized into *reciprocal behavior* (roles and

tasks) and *helping transactions* (support). Of the 31.8% raw data units that were identified with

complementarity, 24.9% of those statements were positively framed. The research reflected that

all 12 participants thought that "hard work" on the part of both the players and coaches was vital,

as well as, "cooperation and responsiveness" by both parties. "Complementary roles, and a sense

that both coach and athlete worked equally hard in achieving improved performance, were the

most frequently cited themes" (p. 323). Finally, for the construct of co-orientation, "only a small portion of the overall data was identified with the construct of Co-orientation. Thirty-three raw data units (17.4%) from eight participants were classified under the construct of Co-orientation. More specifically, of the 33 statements, 29 were positively framed (15.3%) and four (2.1%) were negatively framed" (p. 322). The positively framed results were divided into the categories of *shared knowledge* (information exchange) and *shared understanding* (common goals and influence). There was a difference in how males and females viewed co-orientation. One female explained the shared understanding between her coach and her as: "I used to spend a lot of time in the company of my coach and teammates. I remember we used to eat, travel, train and sometimes study together…. My coach knew me even better at that time than my family and close friends…. One of her [coach] many qualities was that she made us feel that she understood us, and she must have done, because she knew all of us like an open book" (p. 322). A male describes an exchange with his coach that reflects their shared knowledge co-orientation that led to a shared understanding by saying, "…the positive points of our partnership were that we negotiated and communicated effectively and in that way we set joint goals. We knew exactly what we wanted to achieve and what we needed to do in order to achieve these goals" (p. 323). Overall, closeness, co-orientation, and complementarity were important for a majority of the athletes. "Indeed, there is an accumulation of evidence that suggests that coaches and athletes develop athletic relationships that are athlete-centered… More specifically, such relationships are underlined by mutual respect, trust, care, concern, support, open communication, shared knowledge and understanding, as well as clear, corresponding roles and tasks" (p. 327).

The previous study was concerned with the coach-athlete relationship as a whole, but Rhind, Jowett, and Yang (2012) looked further into how the coach athlete-relationship impacts

team sport athletes versus individual sport athletes. The researchers were interested in seeing if there are differences in how an athlete relates to his or her coach depending on whether the athlete participates in a team or individual sport. Rhind et al. also looked at a different group of three C's: closeness, commitment, and complementarity. Based on perceptions of athletes it was established that individual sport athletes reported being more committed to their coach than a team sport athlete. In team and individual sport athletes there were no differences found in complementarity. All of the athletes were friendly in their relationship and ready to do their best in practice or games. "Athletes who participated in individual sports believed that their coach felt more trust, respect, and appreciation for them than what athletes in team sports believed for their coaches. These differences between team and individual sports may have been found as a result of athletes (and their coaches) of individual sports spending more time together or through interacting more frequently on a one-on-one basis" (p. 444). Therefore, athletes in team sports may not view the coach-athlete relationship as highly interdependent as a coach and an individual sport athlete would. A team sport athlete would probably feel interdependence toward their team more than toward their coach. Thus, it is important for coaches in team sports to make an effort to develop strong relationships with players individually through quality interactions when a one-on-one conversation is available or short conversations before or after training sessions (Rhind et al.).

One particular way that coaches can influence athletes' motivation is in regard to team cohesion. Coaches can increase or decrease their athletes' motivation toward a greater level of cohesion, dependent on how they coach. Turman (2003) studied motivational techniques used by coaches, and focused specifically on which techniques motivate or demotivate players toward high levels of cohesion. Turman was interested in what makes groups work hard, seem happier,

put a teammate first, and be able to interact on a higher level with their teammates. His study

involved surveying 15 male and 15 female collegiate athletes. This was an open- ended survey

that asked the athletes to identify behaviors that motivated or demotivated them. He then did an

in-depth interview with 12 Division I Football players from one team with varying abilities, ages,

and ability levels. After organizing the data, Turman found that issues of perceived inequity, the

use of ridicule, and embarrassment deterred cohesion. On the other hand, coaching behaviors that

promoted cohesion included: teasing, bragging about other players, using motivational speeches,

praying with the team, and showing dedication to the team.

Team cohesion is a necessary factor in reference to players' success. If a team works well

together the athletes will most likely be motivated to perform well; if they are not a cohesive

group, then the opposite could occur. Coaches, in how they lead their teams, can play an

important role in team cohesion. The Leadership Scale for Sport, created by Chelladurai and

Saleh (1980), was developed to measure leadership behaviors of a coach. This information was

based on athletes' preferences in how they were coached as well as their perceptions of their

coach. The questionnaire was administered to 102 (45 males, 57 females) physical education

students and 223 varsity male athletes from Canadian universities. Chelladurai and Saleh looked

at five dimensions of sport in their leadership scale: training and instruction, democratic

behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback. The dimensions that pertain

specifically to motivation and performance are training and instruction, social support, and

positive feedback. Results of the LSS have established that coaches who had high scores in

training and instruction were better at helping their athletes improve their performance according

to the way the participants answered questions in this specific category based on their

preferences and perceptions. "The coach trains and instructs the athletes to help them reach their

maximum physical potential. He or she is also expected to instruct them in how to acquire the

necessary skills and to teach them the techniques and the tactics of the sports" (p. 41). Coaches

who score high in training and instruction emphasize and facilitate rigorous training and

coordination of team activities. Next, in reference to motivational tendencies, social support and

positive feedback are important. Coaches who score highly in social support are concerned about

the welfare of their athletes and attempt to build relationships with them. These actions are

usually independent of athletic performance and extend beyond the sport itself. Lastly, positive

feedback is the fifth dimension of the LSS. In every game there is a winner and a loser; therefore,

it is vital that a coach is able to give 'positive feedback' even when a team loses (In a win it

should be given that players are complimented for making good plays and executing well).

Complementing the specific contributions of an athlete or section of the team or the effort given

by the players are a few ways that a coach can make sure to be positive even in a negative

situation. Overall, information established by the LSS is very pertinent to the current research. It

seeks out how coaches can best lead their athletes. However, research still needs to be done on

what specific actions coaches can take to motivate their players.

One factor that coaches should consider in motivating their athletes is the athletes'

gender. Anson Dorrance (Dorrance & Averbuch, 2002) has written about the differences he has

seen in coaching men and women soccer players at the NCAA Division I and professional levels.

It is important to not only know the perceptions of an athlete's view of his or her coach, but it is

important to gain a perspective from a successful coach. Dorrance describes what he has learned

about how to coach women in a different style from men. He says that to effectively coach

women you must be able to relate with them on some level. Men don't necessarily want a

relationship with their coach, but with women each one needs a different relationship with her

coach. It is vital for the coach to figure out how each athlete wants to be coached: some players want a lot of feedback, some want very little, some athletes want you to know them as a person beyond the sport, and some do not care how well you know them as long as you help them win. Further, Dorrance believes that you don't lead women by intimidation, but by gaining their respect and being sensitive to their strengths and weaknesses. It is important to know how to praise or criticize athletes. Women find the tone of what a coach is saying much more important than what is actually being said.

While Anson Dorrance has plenty of experience in determining how to coach males versus females, it is important to see if research supports what he describes. Bryan and Sims (2014) observed coaching practices in gyms, pools, and fields throughout the United States that were and were not appropriate when working with female athletes. The authors suggested that is it important to encourage young people to have positive experiences exercising. Specifically, they state, "… all coaches should be encouraged to be up to date on current practices and to apply those current practices in their coaching. Professional growth and development are critical for coaches, as are information and knowledge about training, physiology, and conditioning change rapidly" (p. 18). It is vital for coaches to be aware of the best way to coach female athletes. It is important to make it fun, and to provide a place where the athlete feels comfortable being herself. Similar to what Anson Dorrance has said, it is vital for coaches to be sensitive to each individual athlete, and to coach in such a manner that encourages them to play their best.

Further research should be done in order to investigate ways to motivate individual players. Studies have been done on appropriate ways to coach females, methods to develop team cohesion, and ways to encourage a better coach-athlete relationship. However, there is less research on individual motivational factors. Due to the fact that the researcher wants to coach

women's college basketball, it is important to her to figure out how to best motivate individual female athletes. It is vital to be able to determine what will help individual players perform their best. The researcher is assuming that the better each individual athlete can perform, the better the whole team is.

The pilot study was done with female college athletes due to the researcher's specific coaching interest. Therefore, the results were only generalizable to female athletes. It is very possible that some of the motivational factors overlap both genders, but this study only highlighted the motivational factors that are found in female athletes. These results crossed the lines of multiple different sports. The second phase of the study was initiated with only female college basketball players. This is due to the fact that the researcher wants to coach women's college basketball as a career, and wants to focus on studying athletes similar to who she will be working with in future years. This study would only truly represent women's college basketball players, and therefore, be useful to collegiate women's basketball coaches. The researcher believes that many of the results could still be useful to coaches of both genders at any age. A single solution will most likely not be established regarding how to motivate every single player that ever participates in sport, or even women's basketball, but ideally the study will shed light on a few common themes throughout the sample surveyed.

Method

Participants

The sample of the pilot study was female athletes from Milligan College. Coaches from each women's sport at the college were approached to ask for their permission to survey the athletes on their respective teams. Surveying women from multiple different sports teams allowed for the establishment of a variety of motivational themes. The researcher chose to survey

only female athletes because she assumed that male and female motivational factors would be different, and she is mostly concerned with how female athletes can be motivated. The pilot study was done at Milligan College, a Christian liberal arts college that participates in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), which is an organizing body for athletic programs at smaller institutions. Milligan College is where the researcher is currently a student. The research in the second half of the study will only be done with female college basketball players. The sample will consist of collegiate female basketball players from various types of institutions (junior college, NAIA, National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I or Division II, etc.). This will be a convenience sample based on the researcher's ability to contact coaches throughout the United States. The researcher will ask the coaches to forward the survey on to their players; therefore, coaches will have given permission for their athletes to participate. The results from the study should be representative of the collegiate women's basketball population.

Materials and Procedure

This study required investigating athletes' personal opinions about how coaches motivate individuals. Therefore, subjective answers were sought, especially in the pilot study, and four open-ended questions were asked in order to establish specific themes regarding how players can be motivated (What sport do you play? How can a coach motivate you to perform your best? How can a coach demotivate you to perform your best? "Think about your favorite coach, past or present. What qualities did that coach possess to make him or her your favorite?) In the pilot study, Milligan College female athletes, from six different sports (basketball, dance, volleyball, soccer, swimming, and softball), were surveyed in order to establish different motivational themes. These athletes were given the survey, and then those answers were accumulated and

condensed into a smaller number of factors for each question. These factors (encouragement, constructive criticism, dedication, goal achievement, etc.) were used to create a more objective, quantitative questionnaire which was distributed to the athletes for the second phase of the study. Using information from the pilot and a portion of the Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport (CBS-S; Cote, Yardley, Hay, Sedgwick, & Baker, 1980) an online survey was sent out to several women's collegiate basketball programs. A link to the online survey was sent to coaches, who emailed the link to their players.

Results

For the pilot study the researcher distributed and accumulated questionnaires. The researcher contacted Milligan College coaches via meeting face-to-face, text, or email to ask for their permission to give their team the survey. Some coaches did not respond to the contact and, therefore some teams' athletes were not surveyed. The surveys were distributed before or after practices with the permission of the coach for each sport. Each survey was given under the supervision of the researcher and athletes were asked to not talk about their answers while taking the survey. The survey had open-ended questions and allowed the participants to answer in as many or as few words as possible. The questions included:

1. "What sport do you participate in?"
2. "How can a coach motivate you to perform your best?"
3. "What are some specific practices of coaches that are de-motivating factors to your performance?"
4. "Think about your favorite coach, past or present. What qualities did that coach possess to make him or her your favorite?"

The questionnaire was distributed to 60 different female athletes from Milligan College: 17 basketball players, 11 dancers, 10 volleyball players, 9 swimmers, 7 softball players, and 6 soccer players.

Table 1

Sport in which Athletes Participated

	Basketball	Dance	Volleyball	Swim	Softball	Soccer
Number of Participants	17	11	10	9	7	6
Percentage of the Sample	28.33%	18.33%	16.67%	15.00%	11.67%	10.00%

For questions two, three, and four, the researcher gathered all of the information and question by question divided up the answers into different categories. This made it possible to represent each person and each factor that was represented in every question's answer. Some individuals had multiple answers per question and all of their answers were included in the totals.

Out of all the answers that were given, there were about 30 different categories for question two. There were six different categories whose answers were given by at least 10 percent of the sample. Also, players were allowed to list as many motivational factors as they wanted to. For example, one player answered this way, "encouragement." Another player chose to answer this way, "by being encouraging, using constructive criticism, and praise when we do something good." Both answers would be acceptable, and the athletes were allowed to answer on their terms. It was vital to the researcher to not limit the participants' answers in any way. Results indicated that athletes believed they were motivated to perform their best when their coaches: encouraged them, gave them constructive criticism on a specific task or skill, challenged them to do their best in drills, practices, and games, set goals for individuals and the team, instilled confidence in them, and provided a positive practice environment.

Table 2

Ways in which Players were Motivated to Perform their Best

Motivational Factor	Operational Definition for Each Motivational Factor	Number of Athletes whose answer was included in the following category	Percentage of athletes whose answer was included in the following category
Encouragement	Encouragement, Positive Affirmation, or Positive Reinforcement	**31**	**51.67%**
Constructive Criticism	Feedback and Constructive Criticism	**20**	**33.33%**
Challenged	Players felt like they were challenged to do their best by their coach and the practice plan he/she created. The coach worked with players individually.	**8**	**13.33%**
Goal Setting	Players felt like the coach had high expectations for the team, and/or he/she helped the individual athlete to achieve her personal goals.	**7**	**11.67%**
Instilled Confidence	Players felt like their coach believed in their abilities and instilled confidence in them.	**7**	**11.67%**
Positive Practice Environment	Players felt like their coach provided a positive practice environment and/or "stayed positive".	**6**	**10.00%**

Answers from questions three and four were gathered and distributed in the same fashion. It was established that playing favorites, poor practice plans, and a clear lack of investment or focus were viewed as common demotivating practices of coaches. The majority of players said that negative communication was a major demotivator for them; this included coaches doing the

following behaviors: verbally "putting down" athletes, yelling at them or embarrassing them in public, communicating poorly, lying, cursing, arguing, or talking badly about individual players. Because the researcher wanted the second part of the survey to be focused on motivation (in a positive light), and also wanted to include some questions from the CBS-S, it was decided that it would be better not to use the results from question three for the second part of the study. The researcher wanted to get quantitative data results for what a coach should do, not what he or she should not do. Asking about the demotivating factors could potentially make the survey too long and decrease the number of athletes who participate in the whole survey.

Table 3

Ways in which Players were Demotivated to Perform well

Demotivational Factor	Operational Definition for Each Demotivational Factor	Number of Athletes whose answer was included in the following category	Percentage of athletes whose answer was included in the following category
Negative Communication	Players felt that getting yelled at, being called out in public, being put down or belittled, not communicating at all, lying, cussing, arguing, or talking badly about a certain player were demotivating.	**33**	**55.00%**
Favoritism	Players felt that having their coaches play athletes based on factors other than merit and talent were demotivating to them. Also, it was demotivating to athletes for their coaches to put more effort into only teaching certain players.	**15**	**25.00%**
Poor Preparation	Players said that they were demotivated when coaches showed that they were not fully invested,	**13**	**21.67%**

	showed up late, were not focused, or lacked intensity.		

Question four established that the following characteristics represented what athletes described as attributes of their favorite coach. These attributes included showing concern for the player's life beyond the sport, being encouraging, helping the athlete to achieve her goals, being passionate about the sport, having faith in the team as a whole, and using constructive criticism. These categories were not a reflection of everything that was said, but each one of these categories was used by at least 10% of the participants.

Table 4

Qualities of Athletes' Favorite Coaches

Favorite Coach Characteristics	Operational Definition of Each Characteristic	Number of Athletes whose answer was included in the following category	Percentage of athletes whose answer was included in the following category
Care Beyond Sport	Players said that their favorite coach exhibited concern for them beyond their sport. He or she was considered as a friend, as a role model, or was relatable.	26	43.33%
Encouraging	Players said their favorite coach was encouraging.	17	28.33%
Goal Achievement	Players stated that their favorite coach help them to achieve their personal goals.	17	28.33%
Dedicated	Players stated that their favorite coach was dedicated to his or her work, and he or she was passionate about the sport.	12	20.00%

Faith	Players state that their favorite coach showed that he or she trusted the team, had faith in their abilities as a team and as individuals.	11	18.33%
Constructive Criticism	Players stated that their favorite coach provided them with feedback in a positive and productive manner.	9	15.00%

After grouping all the results into the tables listed above a survey was created to send out to women's collegiate basketball programs throughout the country. The survey included 31 questions based on the pilot study, as well as sections of the CBS-S. Portions of questions of the CBS-S questions were in relation to the athlete's coach most responsible for her technical skills, the coach most responsible for her goal setting, and then a section of questions about her head coach. The rest of the questions were based on questions 2 and 4 from the pilot. The survey was sent out to multiple schools, but there was not a large enough response to have a valid sample size. Therefore, there are no results for the second portion of the research.

Discussion

The pilot study retrieved answers from athletes from six different sports on Milligan College's campus (basketball, dance, volleyball, swimming, softball, and soccer). Also, all but the nine swimmers were team sport athletes, which is useful because the researcher is more interested in team sports than individual sports.

In question number two athletes were asked, "How can a coach motivate you to perform your best?" Athletes were allowed to write their answers in an open-ended fashion. Overall, there were about 30 different categories of answers, but it was decided to only use answers that at least ten percent of the group endorsed. This established that encouragement (51.67 %), constructive

criticism (33.33 %), being challenged (13.33 %), goal setting (11.67 %), instilling confidence (11.67%), and a positive practice environment (10 %) were important to the athletes (percentages represent the percent of athletes who answered with that motivational factor). In forming these groups inter-rater reliability was observed. For instance, with goal setting, one athlete said "setting goals for the team," another athlete mentioned, "understanding my goals," and another athlete stated, "setting high expectations." These statements are all different, but can be categorized into a coach helping her athletes, as a team or individually, to set and achieve goals. Additionally, in the category of encouragement (51.67% of participants, 31 of 60), twenty-four of those athletes used the terms "encouragement" or "be encouraging." This makes it very clear that athletes want to be encouraged. For coaches it is important to look at each of these factors, especially the ones deemed important by a large proportion of athletes, and make sure they are finding a way to do those things.

Question 3 stated, "What are some specific practices of coaches that are demotivating to your performance?" Inter-rater reliability was, once again, used for these questions, and the answers were able to be categorized into three broad groups: negative communication, favoritism, and poor preparation. For the overall goal of the research this category, demotivation, did not need to be explored much further because the researcher wanted to know what to do, not what not to do. It is important to recognize that the negative communication was mentioned by more athletes than the positive (encouragement). This shows that, even though the researcher wants to focus more on the positive results, it is important to consider the negative also. If more participants referenced that negative talk is a demotivator then it is very possible that negative talk could be more impactful than positive talk (encouragement). It is vital that coaches be aware of the power that they have in the way they speak.

Lastly, question four is not necessarily directly linked to the question of motivation, but it is important to the researcher, because knowing what athletes want is important. Any person who has been someone's "favorite" coach has been able to impact them for the best. Characteristics for favorite coaches included: care beyond sport (43.33 %), encouragement (28.33 %), goal achievement (28.33%), dedication (20 %), faith (18.33 %), and constructive criticism (15 %). "Care beyond sport" is very similar to "social support" mentioned in the LSS, and it makes sense that it is the most common characteristics of favorite coaches. Any athlete can dedicate herself to a program when she knows that the coach cares more for her as a person, student or daughter before her athletic abilities. Encouragement, goals, and constructive criticism are all repeats from question two on motivation. In question two, the category is "goal setting," and in this question it is categorized as "goal achievement." It could be said that a good motivator helps his or her athletes to set goals, but a coach that becomes an athlete's "favorite" helps to make sure they achieve those goals. Next there are two categories that have yet to be covered: dedication and faith. It was important to athletes that their coaches be dedicated to the sport. Athletes want a coach who is passionate about what they are doing. Lastly, eleven of the sixty athletes claimed that their favorite coach had faith in them. As a coach it is vital to create a relationship with athletes, and to make sure that with instruction comes a great deal of encouragement.

After accumulating these answers from the pilot, the researcher was able to create a survey. It was a combination of questions based on data from the pilot study, as well as parts of the Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport. The survey started by asking what college or university the basketball player attends. Then the athlete was asked to rate how she is motivated to perform her best according to the answers that were given in the pilot study. For example, "I am motivated to perform my best when my head coach gives me constructive criticism on a specific

skill or task." To answer, the athletes were given a rating scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Unsure, Agree, and Strongly Agree. These questions were about constructive criticism, being challenged, goal setting, instilling confidence, encouragement and a positive practice environment. The next portion of the survey included a portion of the Coaching Behaviour Scale for Sport (CBS-S). This part had questions about the coaches' impact on the development of technical skills, goal setting, and practices of the head coach specifically. Lastly, the researcher was interested in the athletes' view on their favorite coach. The athletes were asked, in the same way as in the pilot study, "Think about your favorite coach, past or present. What qualities did that coach possess to make him or her your favorite?" The researcher was seeking if the athletes in the second part of the survey would have similar answers to the participants in the pilot study. Then, in order to gain some quantitative data, the athletes were asked to check all that applied in reference to characteristics of their favorite coach: care beyond sport, encouraging, goal achievement, passionate, faith, and constructive criticism.

Overall, the goal of the second survey was to take the information received in the pilot study, and attempt to turn it into more quantitative data. The pilot study was a small scale convenience sample of Milligan College athletes, and therefore did not represent all college athletes in the most ideal way. The survey contained subjective and qualitative data. It would have been ideal to have measured the quality of athletes' performance, but due to resources (the researcher did not have access to technology that would measure performance ability) it was only possible to gain information on their preferences and perceptions. An online survey was the best means for distributing the survey, but online surveys have one of the lowest response rates. Also, it was difficult to get the survey to players who would be willing to respond because the survey had to be distributed through coaches instead of directly from the researcher to the athlete. Next,

the timing of the survey became a large problem, due to the fact that college basketball players were in their crucial post season play. The surveys were distributed at the end of February and beginning of March, the busiest time in the life of a basketball player or coach. This factor greatly decreased the response rate. Overall, the survey was sent to about a dozen schools and the researcher did not receive a large enough sample to formulate any significant data. It would be beneficial to attempt to send the survey out during a time when athletes would be more willing and available to answer questions.

To conclude, the researcher was able to gain a great deal of helpful information for her coaching career despite the lack of results from the second part of the survey. It was established that players are motivated by coaches who encourage, provide challenging practices, give constructive criticism, instill confidence, and provide a positive practice environment. Also, factors that are demotivating to athletes include: negative communication, showing favoritism, and lack of preparation. The most important aspects of the motivational portion of the survey include the category of communication. Encouragement was the main form of positive communication, but technically constructive criticism could also fall into that category (it represented 20% of the surveyors so clearly it needed its own group). No matter how they are defined, in each question over half of the participants put an emphasis on how their coach talks to them (encouraging, cussing, arguing, put downs, constructive criticism). Words are impactful. As a coach it is imperative to use words well, and to build up players. Players who feel supported by their coach are going to perform better than those who do not. Next, the attributes that make a coach a player's favorite revolve around investment. The most important is an investment in the player, and showing there is care and concern beyond the sport itself. The coach should be invested, dedicated, and passionate about the sport itself in order to be more effective. Also, a

"favorite" coach is able to impact athletes because he or she has instilled faith in the player and

helped her to achieve goals. Overall, motivating players comes down to much more than the

sport. It is about making an investment in athletes.

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