Will coaching eventually become more data management than man management?

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The Guardian recently [published an interesting article about technological advancements in football](#). It cited the Women's World Cup Final as a landmark moment for the sport. Not because it was the most watched match in US history. But because it was the first major international match which allowed players to wear small performance tracking devices during the game.

While performance tracking technology in football is nothing new, using it to learn about players' performances during the ninety minutes is, and many believe it will be given the green light for the Premier League before too long.

So, if this goes ahead, what could it mean for coaches? As the article states, data systems are getting more and more sophisticated, meaning analysis can go beyond simple measures such as passes, shots and tackles and look at more complex information like positional play or players' ability to make themselves available for passes and block opposing players passing options.

If they are receiving this data during the game, coaches could potentially use it at half-time to make tactical changes or substitutions based on what they have learnt. And, if players know their every move during a match is tracked and the likelihood of them maintaining their place in the team is more down to the strength of their data, perhaps their attitudes and approach will change, which could require coaches to develop a whole new style of coaching them.

Technology changing players is something researchers from the [University of Bath identified when investigating the technologies used in professional rugby union](#). They warned against Big Brother style data regimes which, if over reliant on technology, could stifle players' creativity, undermine team trust and promote 'machine mentalities.' They also found the surveillance technologies used dampened players' enthusiasm for the game, which in time could lead to negative effects on their health and well-being.

It all suggests something of a balancing act for coaches. Advancements in data technologies offer them the chance to learn much more about their players' performance, however the impact of the technology on the individual could also require them to adapt their coaching to manage the situation.

At the moment this is all hypothetical of course, and the changes, initially at least, will only have an impact at the very top of the game. But given how quickly technology reaches the masses these days, who knows how long it will be before the Sunday League coaches are checking the data on their smartphones, while the oranges (or energy bars) are being handed out at half time.

What do you think? Will coaching eventually become more data management than man management? All comments welcome