

Why do some coaches reach stardom, while others don't quite make it?

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Guest blog from Dr Sophia Jowett, Reader in Psychology at Loughborough University

Why do some coaches reach stardom, while others don't quite make it? 'Relational coaching' is the answer.

There are so many examples of exceptionally effective and successful coaches in both individual sports (eg Toni Minichiello) and team sports (eg Alex Ferguson, Jose Mourinho). What these extraordinary coaches have in common is their desire and capacity to unlock their athletes' *hidden* potential in order to maximise their chances to achieve success. Coaches who believe that their athletes possess more future potential than they presently demonstrate, are more likely to get the best out of their athletes, and help them succeed.

How can an athlete's hidden potential be realised? When coaches and athletes start to form a *genuine* working relationship, and where trust, respect, belief, commitment and cooperation form central aspects of this partnership.

To be a technically good coach is one thing, but what gives the coach the *edge* (ie the extra effectiveness) in the unforgiving and relentless competitive sport environment, is the connection developed between the coach and his/her athlete. It is this connection that makes a difference to technical coaching because it supplies coaches with the key to open the door to athletes' capabilities, capacities and potential.

The best athletes in the world (following success on the European, world, Olympic or Paralympic stage) often state that their coaches have been instrumental to their success. This is neither random nor coincidental. This unique partnership or relationship developed between a coach and an athlete is called relational coaching.

Relational coaching emphasises that at the heart of sport coaching lies the relationship formed between a coach and every single athlete/member in the squad or the team. Each relationship provides a unique vehicle that allows coaches to transform their players by openly communicating about a host of issues (eg strengths, weaknesses, goals, dreams, likes, dislikes).

The bond or connection that is formed allows each athlete/player to be copiously receptive and responsive in the knowledge that their coaches have their best interests at heart.

Next Steps

For practical information about coach-athlete relationships and communication, visit [Tandem Performance](#).

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