

# Coaching Culture.....What Do We Value In Sport?

Published 19/11/15 by [Hollie Bees](#)

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I've spent quite a lot of time over the past couple of weeks discussing the topic of women in sport and the challenges of sports coaching as a career choice for women. A lot of questions are in the air at the moment; why don't we have more female coaches, particularly at elite level? What can be done to change this? How are we going to present the 'case for change' so that NGBs are compelled to do something about the gender imbalances in the coaching workforce?

I think we need to come at these questions from a slightly different angle, we need to ask ourselves what values we are promoting in sport and in coaching, what sort of people, male or female, do our coach education systems and methodology attract and validate?

Advances in the field of Neuroscience exploring what makes us perform at our best and what makes us most productive have seen the business world making major changes to traditional models of management and leadership; moving away from didactic styles to a more empathetic and cooperative approach. Sports coaching has a lot to learn from this model, we need more listeners and questioners, and less shouters and tellers!

Andy Murray made a compelling case for skills traditionally undervalued in sport when describing his choice of coach Amelie Mauresmo. Paul Hayward quoted Murray's thoughts in an article for The Telegraph "The reason why I started working with her was that when I sat down and spoke with her, I found her very calming," [.....] "She listened to everything I said. It wasn't like I started talking and then she immediately just started talking over me. Everything she said about my game from what she had watched, I agreed with."

You don't have to be a woman to possess the skills Andy is talking about finding so helpful in a coach, but equally unless we create a coach education structure across all sports that recognises and values these qualities we risk never attracting more women into the profession.

If sport and coaching are to avoid getting left behind as guardians of outdated modes of instruction and leadership we need to make some changes! We need to develop coach education and assessment that trains and tests the 'all round' qualities needed for excellent coaching, the interpersonal and mentoring skills as well as the planning and technical side. If NGBs commit to this then we will see a more diverse coaching workforce, filled with not only a better gender balance but a better mix of personalities and skillsets too!

**What do you think about our sports coach education systems in the UK?**

**What skills do you value in the coaches you work with?**

**How well do you feel your coach education qualifications prepared you for your coaching career?**

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