

EXCEPTIONAL ADAPTABILITY IN COLLEGIATE COACHING

by

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(Under the Direction of Bryan McCullick)

ABSTRACT

Elite sport coaches are often compared to corporate executives in how they lead a team. Research on successful coaching has focused on task-oriented behaviors (planning, scheduling), relations-oriented behaviors (attitude, relationship building), and external leadership (communication, networking). Not surprisingly, these are also the foci of research on successful business leaders. One trait of effective leadership in business not explored in coaching is change-oriented behaviors, or “adaptability” (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). Adaptable leaders seek new ways to solve problems, master new skills, embrace new challenges, and thrive in volatile contexts such as coaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the exceptional adaptability of collegiate sport coaches. This study employed instrumental and collective case study to gain an insider’s view through various sources of information. Collegiate coaches (N=11) exhibiting exceptionally adaptable traits were interviewed. Criteria for participation included a winning record at

more than one institution and two of the following accomplishments: (a) recognition as coach of the year, (b) multiple conference or national championships, and (c) induction into the Hall of Fame. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed inductively. Three themes emerged from the data that helped explain these coaches exceptional adaptability. These coaches: (a) possessed a non-sport related knowledge base, (b) had formative encounters related to their profession, and (c) found it essential to work like a corporate executive. While exceptionally adaptable coaches do have a firm knowledge of their sport, they also possess different types of knowledge which aid them in facilitating their plan. Additionally, these coaches have experiences throughout their lives, not just their coaching careers, from which they are able to draw to implement their approaches to coaching. Finally, exceptionally adaptable coaches conduct themselves as corporate executives by surrounding themselves with the best possible personnel and being transparent with their plan. Exceptionally adaptable coaches utilize specific knowledge, experience, and behaviors allowing them to succeed across a variety of contexts. It is these examples which set them apart from an average coach at the collegiate level.

INDEX WORDS: adaptability, coaching, coach behavior, coach expertise

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the people who inspired me to become who I am today but are no longer with us to see the fruits of my labor.

To my MawMaw and PawPaw, thank you for everything. Though I ended up in school far longer than you ever thought I would be, I wouldn't have been able to complete my first steps in higher education without help from you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The 21st century workplace can be filled with strife, upheaval, and turnover. Such a volatile environment calls for those in leadership positions to be ready to take on new challenges as the context of one's work never remains the same. In other words, a necessary quality for an effective leader appears to be exceptional adaptability to deal with the ever-changing environments.

One such example of a leader with exceptional adaptability can be seen in the career of Lee Iacocca (1984). As the very successful president of *Ford Motor Company* he had helped *Ford* reach unprecedented levels of success. Despite this accomplishment, he was let go as president of the company in 1978; although *Ford* earned close to \$2 billion profit that year. Shortly after losing his job with *Ford*, Iacocca became the president of *Chrysler Motors*. *Chrysler* was consistently behind *Ford* and *General Motors (GMC)* as an automotive leader in America. Immediately upon taking the reins as president, Iacocca implemented the same hierarchal system in place under his leadership at *Ford*. He hired former *Ford* executives to be his closest advisors. However, he soon realized that while *Chrysler* and *Ford* were both American car producers, they were two different companies that could not operate in exactly the same manner and not every job could be done the same way. In essence, Iacocca had to adapt.

Ultimately, for Iacocca, this meant going out on a limb and doing something he would never have dreamed of doing as president of *Ford*, he asked the federal government for a bailout. Despite much criticism, this plan, though out of his comfortzone, proved worthy. It righted a sinking ship and, ultimately, the debt was repaid

a full seven years earlier than originally promised. Additionally, *Chrysler* was able to purchase the flailing *American Motor Company* in 1987. Not only had the ship been righted, but Iacocca's exceptional adaptability had put *Chrysler* in a better position than he found it. While he had his detractors, few would argue that Iacocca was not an effective leader.

The business world is not the only place where leaders face a constant need to adapt. The job of an athletic coach in today's world appears to be eerily similar to that of a corporate leader. Referring to business organizations, Yukl (2012) wrote "The essence of leadership in organizations is influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 66). This seems as if it would also ring true for athletic coaches as well. In fact, a number of high profile coaches, including Lou Holtz, Bill Parcells, and Mike Shanahan, have written that the principles of success in business are transferable to the coaching world (Weinberg & McDermott, 2002). After all, they are leaders of an organization who try to influence and manage their assistant coaches and players to develop their skills in order to win games.

The pursuit of athletic or organizational success is not the only commonality between business leaders and coaches. The actions necessary in this pursuit are likewise similar. Coaches often delegate responsibility to their assistant coaches just as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) do with their subordinates. The list does not stop there as both coaches and CEOs often have to be evaluators of skill, motivators, clear communicators, problem solvers, and decision makers. They do all of these things with the knowledge base they have built, typically through years of experience in their fields. They are ultimately judged on their capabilities by the success of their athletes or employees. In

coaching, it is referred to as “athletic competence” (Cote & Gilbert, 2009, p. 312), which can be measured by winning percentage, championships, and the development of athletes. In the business world, it is measured by the profit margins a company is able to maintain.

While there appears to be a logical similarity between the jobs of coaches and business leaders the scholarship regarding the essentials for effective leadership in both areas is quite one-sided. The business Leadership literature abounds with scholarship regarding the constitution of effective leadership behaviors (Yukl, 2012). However, the research base on coaching is bereft of empirical data on the topic. Therefore, because there is no empirical evidence regarding adaptability from a coaching standpoint, it seems logical to begin any research on this by borrowing from the business literature.

Identifying Effective Leadership Behaviors

One of the most referenced frameworks regarding effective business leadership is Yukl’s (2012) taxonomy. Not surprisingly, this framework fits nicely if applied to leadership in coaching. Reviewing the literature from over 50 years’ worth of research in the field of effective leadership behavior, Yukl posited an archetype of effective leadership. The framework includes four meta-categories of behaviors: (a) Task-Oriented, (b) Relations-Oriented, (c) External Leadership, and (d) Change-Oriented. Each of these meta-categories includes sub-categories of behaviors that further identify what it is that effective leaders do.

Task-Oriented behaviors ensure the daily operations of a company are conducted smoothly. Planning behaviors may include decision-making, as well as being organized. Additionally, planning entails delegating responsibilities to subordinates. Scheduling is also considered a planning behavior. Clarifying behaviors are simply used to make sure

subordinates know what to do and how to do it, while monitoring assesses whether or not people are doing what they are supposed to. The final component of *Task-Oriented behaviors* is problem solving. As Yukl (2012) explained “effective leaders try to quickly identify the cause of a problem, and they provide firm, confident direction to their team or work unit as they cope with the problem” (p. 70).

The second meta-component in the framework is *Relations-Oriented behaviors*, which is used for skill enhancement, rapport building, and ensuring a commitment to the team mission. Yukl (2012) describes supporting as showing a positive attitude, building relationships, and providing help in dealing with stressful situations. Recognizing behaviors are those that show appreciation for superior performance. Developing behaviors are those that increase the skills and confidence of workers to further their career such as giving career advice, informing employees about training opportunities, or providing developmental coaching when needed. Finally, empowering is giving subordinates a sense of autonomy and the power to make some decisions about what they do and may be seen in using employee ideas and suggestions when involved in decision making or giving a group authority to make decisions which were formerly made by the leader.

A third grouping of the framework is *External Leadership behaviors*. These behaviors aid in communication, seeking additional revenue or resources, and promotion of the company. Networking is establishing and preserving relationships with anyone, either inside or outside the company, who can provide information, resources and political support. Additionally, business executives are also often asked to “lobby for resources, promote and defend the reputation of an organization, negotiate activities, and

coordinate related activities” (Yukl, 2012, p. 75). This sub-category is referred to as representing. The final sub-category for external leadership is external monitoring. External monitoring behaviors include evaluating the overall job climate and diagnosing any potential threats and opportunities for yourself as well as the organization.

The final meta-component in Yukl’s (2012) framework is cited as *Change-oriented behaviors*, which are those that not only prepare employees for change, but also aid them in being a proponent for it. Advocating change is explaining why change is important. Yukl explains that sometimes changes occur gradually, often without the realization of what may be happening. Leaders ensure threats are recognized and hatch new ideas to aid in the progression of their business in order to keep the changes from becoming major problems and keeping competitors from exploiting any weaknesses.

Encouraging innovation is something often demonstrated by effective leaders. An excellent example of this kind of leadership is *Google’s “20% time”* (Page & Brin, 2004) initiative passed down by the founders enabling employees to spend one day out of their workweek on their own projects. Rather than toil away on what the company said they had to do, employees were able to explore their own ideas. It was through this program that the ubiquitous email program, *G-mail*, was launched. The ability to encourage others to examine issues from varying perspectives, to ‘think outside of the box,’ or to experiment with new ideas best exhibits this practice.

Finally, leaders facilitate collective learning. This could include improvements of current strategies or the discovery of new ones. However, the actions that are more likely Yukl (2012) sums up best by stating that effective leaders can help their subordinates “to

better recognize failures, analyze their causes, and identify remedies to avoid a future recurrence” (p. 74).

Effective leaders are able to utilize all of these behaviors to make their companies successful. If one accepts the close comparison between coaching and being a business leader, then it would stand to reason that the literature on coaching would indicate that coaches also employ many of the leadership behaviors found in Yukl’s (2012) taxonomy. Fortunately, a review of the literature in coaching is rife with examples of almost every meta- and sub- category Yukl (2012) discusses. Yet, there is one major behavior yet to be investigated by researchers; the research of Change-Oriented behaviors and their role in a leader’s adaptability.

Connecting Effective Leadership Behaviors with Effective Coaching Behaviors

Apart from the near absence of adaptability, Yukl’s (2012) taxonomy of leadership behaviors seems to flourish in the coaching literature. Ball (1975) listed three specific similarities between being a coach and a business leader as each has a: (a) roster of members occupying specific positions, (b) planned program of activity, and (c) division of labor designed to achieve specific goals. Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) were also among the first to suggest coaches utilize many of the same tenets used in the business world. Others have taken this stance that coaching can be compared to business leadership and it seems easy to identify situations in which coaches engage in many of the behaviors described in Yukl’s taxonomy. Coaches certainly employ *Task-Oriented* behaviors such as planning, clarifying, monitoring and problem solving. They must also utilize relationship-building behaviors such as supporting, developing, recognizing, and empowering categorized as *Relations-Oriented*. It also seems easy to believe that coaches

must be prepared for and able to initiate change as their sport evolves in much the same way as business leaders utilize *Change-Oriented* behaviors.

Perhaps it is *Task-Oriented* behaviors that are most easily seen in the job of a coach and the research literature in coaching. In their study of expert coaches, Abraham and colleagues (2006) found planning was a key part of the schematic of coaching. Priorities are set through short term to long term goals and said to be typical actions of coaches. Nash and colleagues (2011) had similar findings in their study of elite coaches. Planning appears to be an integral part of what effective coaches do as does the next sub-category of task-oriented behaviors, clarifying.

In their development of the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS), Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) referred to training and instruction as a coach helping an athlete reach their maximum potential by instructing them in how to acquire the necessary skills needed to compete and teach them the techniques and tactics of the sport. This seems to match the guidelines noted as clarifying by making sure the athlete knows what to do and when to do it. Coaches do this continually, ensuring their players are doing what they are supposed to do. The final aspect of *Task-Oriented* behaviors is problem solving. This appears to form a major part of coaches' job descriptions. So much so, the Sport Information Resource Centre (2009) for coaches in Canada have published common problem solving methods for coaches at all levels. It appears coaches must engage in all of these behaviors to be effective.

However, just as in business, in coaching there are more than merely *Task-Oriented* behaviors that help to make an effective leader. Yukl's (2012) framework suggests supporting, developing, recognizing and empowering those who work under

them are important behaviors for an effective leader. In the coaching literature, the idea of 'holistic coaching' (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000) proposes coaches are not merely responsible for the instruction of their athletes, but also their social and psychological well-being. Jones and Turner (2006) suggest coaches must be prepared to deal with "the whole person" (p. 183) including the "emotional, political, social, spiritual and cultural aspects, in addition to mental and physical ones." This speaks to the idea that coaches, like effective business leaders, must be as concerned about their personnel as much as they are about the bottom line or wins and losses.

Yukl's (2012) idea of *External Leadership* also seems to translate well to the coaching world. Coaches must work with their staff, administration, boosters, parents, and other coaches to successfully do their job. This is the ability to network at its finest. Cote and Gilbert (2009) list interpersonal skills as an imperative to the knowledge a coach should possess for this very reason. Coaches are also often asked to represent their teams through team camps, fundraisers, as well as being asked to utilize the media to promote their teams and defend them in case of trouble.

Finally, as with the business world, coaching can be a turbulent field with high pressure to succeed. Lackey (1986) reported 81% of school Principals felt there was moderate to great pressure to win at their schools. In the past 30 years, the pressure has only become more substantial to win - even more so at the upper echelons of competition. There is little doubt coaches are well aware of the climate surrounding their job. Just as in the business world, coaches are constantly looking for the next opportunity to move ahead. This behavior is referred to as external monitoring by Yukl (2012) and it certainly should be present in most coaches as turnover, especially at the highest levels of

competition, is high - yet another reason adaptability may be a key component of successful coaching.

Perhaps the one category of Yukl's (2012) framework that has the least amount of representation in the effective coaching literature is that of *Change-Oriented* behaviors. These actions include advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation, and facilitating collective learning. Coaches consistently have to deal with 'keeping up with the Jones'. Pressure to win at a high level necessitates constantly looking for the next big thing. However, access by competitors to information including tactics and strategy through film make utilizing the same strategy almost impossible in the coaching world. Coaches must not only be advocates for change in strategy, but also in envisioning what is best possible solution for their team at that time. An example would be the rise of the 'Wildcat' offense in football throughout the 2000's or the "Dribble Drive" offense currently popular in basketball. Today's world of sport is fluid and coaches must be adaptable in order to adjust to the ever-changing world in which they work. While there are examples of research findings in coaching that align well with an overwhelming majority of Yukl's (2012) taxonomy of effective leadership behaviors, Gauthier and colleagues (2006) proposal that geographic contexts dictate the use of or acquiring of specific skills applicable to the region occupied seems to be the sole piece of research on any form of adaptability in coaches. Thus, there appears to be a paucity of research on coaches' Change-Oriented behaviors, specifically, adaptability.

Adaptability

Success as a leader or a coach does not always mean stability. Specifically, Hall and Chandler (2005) suggest that given the turbulent environments of business,

individuals must maneuver through more career transitions, be competent learners, and, most importantly, be adaptable. Heslin (2005) concurs with these findings as he writes “[g]iven the turbulent and uncertain nature of the 21st century economy, unintended career disruptions and transitions are increasingly common, making adaptability a key ingredient for enduring career success” (p. 383) of business leaders. This can also be true when an employee experiences *career plateauing* or reaching the highest point they can attain in their given job. This leads to looking for the ‘next big thing,’ an idea certainly not new to the world of coaching. Hall and Chandler (2005) summed this notion nicely when they wrote

In a world characterized by frequent career transitions for the individual and by careers as mini-stages, individuals are thrown into more unfamiliar situations and are expected to be resilient and successful. Only those who are capable of responding to these types of circumstances can thrive in today’s protean career context (p. 164).

Yukl (2012) does not specifically mention adaptability as a behavior in his framework, but there are vibrant allusions to it, specifically when he refers to Change-Oriented behaviors. Advocating change, initiating change, and encouraging innovation seem to translate well to adaptability. Perhaps it is because adaptability is not merely a behavior but rather a personal quality consisting of multiple behaviors. Pearlman and Barney (2000) described adaptability as a personal quality important in handling ambiguity, coping with uncertainty and stress, and in working outside traditional temporal and geographic boundaries. Others have posited it may be an innate part of one’s personality (O’Connell, McNeely, & Hall, 2008). Regardless, leaders who are

adaptable seek new ways to solve problems, master new skills, and embrace new challenges (Kantor, Kram, & Sala, 2008). Additionally, adaptable people have the capacity to be proactive goal setters, initiate effort, and achieve psychological success (Hall and Chandler, 2005).

Though, if adaptability is a quality, whether innate or learned, as Pearlman and Barney (2000) suggested, it has to manifest itself. Toward this end, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) theorized there were six behaviors of adaptability based on a research of the literature. Their work concluded that one's adaptability is identified by the following behaviors: (a) solving problems creatively, (b) confronting uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (c) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (d) demonstrating fluid interpersonal skills, (e) demonstrating cultural versatility, and (f) demonstrating ability to cope with environmental change. After performing a critical task study, they were able to confirm the existence of these six behaviors, as well as add two more: (a) handling emergencies or crisis situations and (b) handling work stress.

As Yukl (2012) established, effective leaders are good problem solvers. Not surprisingly, acute problem solving ability also seems key in adaptability (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). This also seems to be true in the coaching literature as Hagemann and colleagues (2007) concluded achievement in sport coaching could be tied to competence in problem solving skills. It also stands to reason that a change in workplace environment may necessitate new ways of dealing with problems. Perhaps coaches who possess exceptional adaptability quickly understand what worked at a previous position may not be directly as applicable elsewhere. 'Outside the box thinking'

may be required of coaches who move from one job to another to solve these potentially complex issues.

Apart from having the ability to problem solve creatively, the demeanor in which uncertain or unpredictable work situations are faced is also important (Pulakos et al., 2000). Nothing can be more unpredictable than a completely new environment. Coaches who move from one working context to another must be able to adapt to a new set of guidelines put in place by a new set of administrators. The ease with which coaches adjust to and cope with these new situations such as different program priorities, a change in available resources, or a new organizational structure could be an important component of adaptability for coaches.

A third aspect of adaptability includes learning new work tasks, technologies, and procedures (Pulakos et al., 2000). Like business leaders, coaches must be prepared for new ideas and technologies to evolve. Stagnancy is generally not rewarded in coaching. It is important that in a new job environment coaches understand new procedures and tasks that may not have been required previously. For example, coaches moving from a smaller college to a major university may be required to spend more time on the road speaking with booster clubs in order to increase season ticket sales. This may not have been as important at their previous position. Additionally, much like every other field, technology has greatly influenced what coaches are able to do to analyze their athletes. Social media has also allowed unprecedented access to coaches and players alike. In their literature review, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) discovered “effective performers in today’s organizations are those who anticipate future needs and adapt to changing job requirements by learning new tasks, technologies, procedures, and roles” (p. 614). When

applied to the coaching profession, exceptional adaptability would require that a coach understand these evolutions and be able anticipate ways to approach them.

Pulakos and colleagues (2000) list demonstrating flexible interpersonal skills as the fourth important aspect of adaptability in the workplace. As stated earlier, there is little doubt of the importance of this facet in coaching. A new coaching job means potentially new assistant coaches to work with, as well as new players, new administrators, new boosters, and new local media to learn and come to know. All of these people are important to the success of a coach and an inability to reach out to any of them leaves a coach operating without the full support of his constituency. It is imperative coaches be approachable to all of these people to be as successful as possible.

Additionally, leaders who possess the quality of adaptability demonstrate dexterous cultural versatility (Pulakos et al., 2000). Not every job takes place in the same environment. Some jobs require autocratic leaders while others are better suited for democratic leaders. Coaching is no different. Every team is a unique set of individuals and their culture is distinctly different from other teams. Pulakos and colleagues (2000) stressed the ability to adapt in these scenarios “involves successfully integrating into a new culture or environment by fully understanding and willingly behaving in accordance with the accepted customs, values, rules and structures of operating within it” (p. 614). Coaches cannot expect the same approach to work with every team.

The final indicator of a leader’s adaptability is demonstrating ability to endure physically-oriented change. Perhaps Pulakos and colleagues (2000) do the best job of summing this category by defining it as:

Adjusting to challenging environmental states such as extreme heat, humidity, cold, or dirtiness: frequently pushing self physically to complete strenuous or demanding tasks: adjusting weight or muscular strength or becoming proficient in performing physical tasks as necessary for the job (p.617).

Coaches have to deal with extreme climates. For instance, a coach from the Southeast would likely have to deal with humidity as an issue whereas this is less likely to be problematic for a coach located in the Northwest. Additionally, there have been coaches come under fire for their physical stature. They were questioned as how they could keep up with the demanding lifestyle usually lived by a coach if they were not in the best of shape. Therefore, it may seem as if this behavior seems out of place for coaches, it is actually quite pertinent.

Apart from these six aspects uncovered from their literature review, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) suggest two additional dimensions to adaptive performance: handling work stress and handling emergencies or crisis situations. Being able to effectively handle work stress included remaining calm under pressure, not overreacting, managing frustration, and being a calming or settling influence on others. Like leaders in the business world, coaches are looked up to and their players are often said to take on the demeanor of their coach in stressful situations. A coach that is able to stay cool in the face of adversity may be able to operate successfully in any environment. This adaptive behavior may be an important aspect in coaches moving from job to job successfully. It seems to reason if one were able to assume a calm demeanor in the face of stress, they would also be able to effectively manage crises or emergencies.

Summary

The literature in business leadership and coaching appears to support the notion that effective coaching behaviors have much in common with those of effective business leaders. The relationship between the two may even be termed extraordinary as demonstrated by the number of behaviors represented in Yukl's (2012) framework of leadership that are clearly represented in the research on coaching. The lone exception to this assertion, however, is those behaviors categorized as Change-Oriented or one's ability to adapt. Unlike the literature on business leadership, little to no research exists on the adaptability of effective coaches and, more importantly the behaviors that exemplify it.

Scholars in business have noted the 'turbulent environment' of the business world (Pulakos et al., 2000; Hall & Chandler, 2005; O'Connell, McNeely, & Hall, 2008) and the popular press abounds with examples of individuals who have navigated the environment with aplomb. Examples from the sports world clearly illustrate that the coaching environment could be as turbulent, if not more so, than the business world, and at all levels. Therefore, if adaptability is essential for successful business leadership and the job of a coach is quite similar to that of a business leader it would seem reasonable that effective coaches also must possess exceptional adaptability. At this time, however, the coaching research base is nearly bereft of any investigations into this, apparently, essential element of job performance.

Purpose

Adaptability appears to be essential for superior performance in leadership roles regardless of setting but especially in the business world. The job of a coach,

furthermore, is remarkably similar to that of a leader in a large corporation or multi-layered outfit. Yet, the literature in coaching science and coach development provides little to no information regarding the manifestation of successful coaches' adaptability. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the exceptional adaptability of successful collegiate coaches. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What knowledge, experiences, and behaviors are essential for successful collegiate coaches identified as possessing exceptional adaptability?
- 2) What commonalities exist in the knowledge, experiences, and behaviors of successful collegiate coaches that lead to possessing exceptional adaptability?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

When asked what he wanted to be remembered for, Four-time Super Bowl Champion coach, Chuck Noll, responded “A person who could adapt to a world of constant change. A person who could adapt to the situation. But most of all a teacher. Put down that I was a teacher” (Layden, 2014, p. 46). While there appears to be abundant research on coaches as teachers, the notion of a coach’s adaptability has yet to be fully explored. Adaptability still seems to be a term that stems from the business world. Despite Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) claim that coaching is very much relatable to the business world, there is little to no research connecting adaptability in the two fields. This review of literature aims to shed light on this gap just as this study seeks to fill the hole in the literature.

The purpose of this study is to analyze successful collegiate coaches’ adaptability. To best understand this phenomenon, it will be important to review the literature on coaching as a profession, as well as its growth as a field of scholarly pursuit. Additionally, it will be imperative to examine the scholarship on leadership as it relates both to the business world and how it is transferable to the coaching world. Finally, to better grasp how adaptability manifests in the business world, a review of the literature on this topic is also important and will help frame the notion of adaptability in the coaching world. The exhaustive review of the literature on these topics will reveal a gap in the existing literature on adaptability in the coaching realm and further justify the need for research in the field.

Coaching as a Profession

The idea of what constitutes a profession has been a subject of researchers since the middle of the 20th century. Most agree there are certain characteristics which embody an occupation as a profession (Williams, 1998). Typically, these components of a profession translate between disciplines. For instance, accounting, education, engineering, law, and medicine list similar requirements for professionalism. Bennett (2006), through an exhaustive literature review on the “decisive elements of a profession” (p. 241), identified 11 characteristics for any profession. These include: (a) identifiable and distinct skills, (b) education and training required to acquire proficiency, (c) recognition outside the community as a profession, (d) developed, monitored, and enforced code of ethics by a governing body making the profession a self-disciplined group, (e) public service that is motivated by altruistic service rather than financial gain, (f) formalized organization, (g) evaluation of merit and self-regulating, encouraging diversity of thought, evaluation, and practice, (h) established community of practitioners, (i) status or state of recognition associated with membership in the profession, (j) public recognition from outside the practicing community that the profession is distinct and actually in existence, and (k) practice founded in theoretical and factual research and knowledge. Ultimately, there are a number of lists, similar to the one put forth by Bennett, compiled as to what constitutes a profession with each varying slightly. Thus, there may be no real consensus on what exactly constitutes a profession.

However, there are other points of view that exist which do not rely on a list of traits. Khunara (2010) explains that profession is the “process of an interacting network of institutions and people, not a checklist of attributes” (para. 3). Professions evolve over

time and many neophyte professions, such as coaching, do not meet every requirement laid out in lists such as the one Bennett (2006) suggests. Some professions grow out of others; such as coaching has evolved out of physical education. This leads to what the research terms rationalization, re-stratification, or re-professionalization (Pickard, 2009). While Khunara's idea of a process is certainly true, the vast majority of researchers approach professionalization of a discipline through a set of criteria such as the checklist format (Duffy et al, 2011).

Perhaps, while only the notion of coaching professionally is relatively new, coaches have been a fixture in sporting events for some time. Homer's *Iliad* mentions the notion of coaching during funeral games of Patroclus (Dickie, 1984). In this instance, Antilochus volunteers to participate in the games. The first event is the chariot race where many feel as if Antilochus and his squad of horses are the fourth best squad. Nestor, his father, takes the opportunity to give Antilochus some advice. He tells his son that even though his team is not the strongest, he can still win by employing solid strategy during the turn. Nestor explains that if Antilochus can make the tightest turn then his opponents would have little chance to catch him in the backstretch. Nestor is coaching his son, and though his son fails to listen to his father's advice, this dynamic is typical of early coaching.

It turns out Nestor himself was once a great athlete, and proved himself to be during the funeral games of Amaryngceus (Dickie, 1984). This dyad of retired athlete and current participant seemed to be commonplace in the days of Ancient Greece. The word *gymnastes* came to mean a trainer of nude activities (Miller, 2006), or a coach. Originally the word referred to the athletes themselves as it was custom they participated in these

activities without clothes. Later the word referred to the trainers rather than the athletes. These *gymnastes* imparted their wisdom they gained through their own athletic performance to up and coming athletes (Yalouris, 2003).

Homer's tale of Antilochus and Nestor is typically traced to Ninth Century, B.C. However, the role *gymnastes* continues through to the Fifth Century, B.C. and the early Olympic Games (Semotiuk, 1982). While the writings for athletic competition in the time are sparse, coaches are often depicted in works of art alongside their athletes training. The coach is typically, "fully clothed in a loose fitting robe, with rod or switch in his hand" (p. 22). Semiotuk (1982) concludes the coach must be an important figure in this time to be included with the athlete on such works of art.

Despite this perceived importance in ancient times, it seems the formula for providing quality coaching has only been truly studied within the past 150 years. In the United Kingdom, up until medieval times, organized sport was often based in military or economic activities (MacLean & Pritchard, 2008). It was not until the 17th century when the British aristocracy had renewed interest in sport as a leisure activity that it was deemed important. Because of the prevalence for gambling on these events, sport organizers were willing to pay for both instructors and athletes. However, both participant and coach were viewed as second-class citizens – a rung below on the social ladder. Specifically, coaching was viewed as something of a semi-skilled profession.

Later, the development of clubs such as the London and New York Athletic Clubs come to signify the implementation of sports system whereby athletes engage in sports with coaches to contribute with athletic development (Heineman, 1999). Competition in the popular sports of the day, such as rowing, cricket, golf, and boxing, required formal

coaching because of the technical prowess involved in participation (Jones, Hughes, & Kingston, 2007). Between participation in these sports through athletic clubs and the rise of gymnastics clubs, the foundations of modern sport around the world were laid (Kioslogous, 2013). These places became the centers for future athletes, teachers, coaches, and sporting leaders.

Consider also the sheer number of events happening in the latter half of the 19th century spilling over into the early 20th century (Rader, 1994). During this time, the first professional baseball club was formed in 1869. Basketball was invented by James Naismith in 1891. The modern Olympics were revived in 1896. American football debuted its first club in 1898. Baseball staged the first World Series in 1903. The first Tour de France was raced in 1905. Finally, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (now known as the National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA) was also formed in 1905. It's no wonder the idea of coaching as a full-fledged profession was something now possible.

Sport was no longer simply leisure across the world. During the 1912 Olympic Games, the Swedish hosts were desperate to win (Kruger, 2002). They had a new stadium to show off and their king, Gustav V, was regularly in attendance. To insure a strong showing they created the first known state sponsored sporting system. They took advantage of the rules stating that members of the armed services were not considered professional athletes and recruited the best athletes from their military. These athletes were trained and ultimately bested favorites, the United Kingdom and the United States. The training methods utilized by the Swedes though were not shared. Sharing ideas about

training was uncommon during this time period (Bourne, 2008). This was due to the fact there were no universally accepted standards for best practices across sports.

Gaining a competitive advantage was the driving force behind the professionalization of coaching in the United States. While in the United Kingdom, there was a divide in how amateurs and professionals approached their sport, this was not the case in America (Lyle, 2002). MacLean and Pritchard (2008) point out two factors that “increased the need for a team to have some comparative advantage over its rivals” (p.55). In collegiate activities there was a financial advantage to being superior athletically through an enhancing of the university’s public profile, which resulted in attracting more students and increasing income (both from sport patrons and alumni contributions). Additionally, the only way for an owner to ensure the profitability of their team was to be successful. Ultimately, this led to the teams aping one another. Any time one sought some sort of competitive advantage, the others would typically follow suit. One competitive advantage sought by these professional owners (as well as collegiate presidents) was to hire professional coaches.

Coaches in the early days of the 20th century had very little, if any, developmental training (Lyle, 2002). Often, this meant coaches continued the tradition started in Ancient Greece and were former athletes themselves. When money was an issue, teaching skills to players was typically taken up by the senior members of a squad (MacLean & Pritchard, 2008). This ploy was a holdover from a time when amateur club teams were all that existed in terms of sport. The idea of a ‘player-coach’ was common in multiple sports. It seemed logical for experienced athletes to indoctrinate newer players to the rigors of professional sport. Player-coaches were prominent in British Association

Football, as well as in the United States. Jimmy Conzelman, an American football player-coach in the 1920's, became a *National Football League Hall of Fame* coach. All-time basketball great, Bill Russell, served as the player-coach for the Boston Celtics from 1966-69. Major League Baseball has employed the most recent player-coach when Pete Rose served as both manager and in-fielder for the Cincinnati Reds during the 1986 season.

Over the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, coaching on multiple levels has become more specialized. This trend of sport being a financial boon both professionally and in the amateur ranks has placed a premium on sound coaching knowledge and behaviors. This expectation has trickled down to participatory sporting experiences as well. Coaches and their expertise are sought for every imaginable level of sport, from youth recreational leagues to the upper echelon of professional leagues. Now over 200,000 Americans list their occupation as coach and the outlook for growth in the field continues to be positive (Department of Labor, 2013).

Research in the Field of Coaching

Like any profession, excellence in coaching is fueled by the implementation of new training programs and innovations in practice (Gilbert, 2002). As coaching has become more professionalized, research on the topic has increased dramatically. Of course, the need for research on coaching knowledge to develop new programs and design new innovations has also grown as there are more participants in sport than ever before. These participants are in need of coaching at all levels. Information available to them should be grounded in coaching knowledge (Lyle, 2002). This has become widely available through a variety of coach education programs across the globe. However,

coach education programs are still being refined and informal learning through experience and engaging is still the prevailing method through which coaches learn (Cushion, et al., 2010).

The growth of coach education platforms has needed an influx of knowledge to be the basis for these programs. Researchers in the field of coaching have responded. In a 31-year period from 1970-2001, over 600 articles related to coaching were published (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). The number of articles on a yearly basis grew from an average of 1.8 per year in the early 1970's to over 32 a year at the turn of the century. These articles appeared in over 160 different journals. Initially, these articles were tied to other areas of research such as physical education, sport psychology, motivation, and leadership. However, there are now several journals which tie these topics together solely based on the fact they are related to coaching.

Starting well before this surge, the first research on coaching is typically credited to Coleman Griffith. He and his students were the major contributors to the field of sport psychology from 1920-1940 (Gould and Pick, 1995). While there were others who dabbled in coaching, Griffith was among the first to develop a line of inquiry on the subject. In 1925, Griffith was elected to direct the new Research in Athletics Laboratory at the University of Illinois, though he credited the head of the physical welfare department, George Huff with the idea. It was also during 1925 that Griffith published his landmark paper *Psychology and Its Relation to Athletic Competition*. In it, he proposed his research focused on the following:

1. Teach young and inexperienced coaches what psychological principles were used effectively by more experienced, highly successful coaches. In essence,

the sport psychologist was to observe the best coaches of the day and record the principles that they consciously or unconsciously followed in developing an athletic team. 2. Adapt the information already gained in the field of psychology to sport. Thus, the sport psychologist should apply what is known in general psychology on such topics as perception, memory, emotion, and personality to the athletic context. 3. Use the scientific method and experimental laboratory to discover new facts and principles that would aid the practitioner in the field. By conducting both basic and applied research, sport psychologists should systematically and carefully identify the principles that are used in competition that is not of muscles only but of alert minds as well (p. 55).

The psychology of a coach's actions is still a highly researched topic in the coaching literature. Griffith's work, however, has evolved into a veritable landslide of research on the topic of coaching.

While Griffith's work was rooted in the psychology of coaching, much of the research over the past 45 years has focused on the behavior of coaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). In the span from 1970-2001, this topic accounted for over 50% of the works published. This is such an encompassing topic that there is little wonder why it is a focus of coaching research. Lyle and Cushion (2010) reason, "[a] coach's behavior impacts athletes' behavior, cognitions and affective responses, and coaches can influence whether athletes learn and achieve at a high level, enjoy their experience, demonstrate effort and persistence, and develop a sense of confidence and a self-determined motivational

orientation” (p. 43). Apart from these positive outcomes, coaches’ behavior delivered inappropriately can lead to negative outcomes as well (Amorose, 2007). These outcomes can include poor performance, low self-esteem, player anxiety, and athlete burnout. It is apparent there is a great deal that can be learned from studying coaches’ behavior, which is why it remains a popular topic in research.

Initially, this research employed the use of descriptive analytical instruments used at the time to research outstanding physical education teaching behavior (Lyle & Cushion, 2010). The hope was to aid in the legitimization of the profession as well. Of course, utilizing such instruments also supported the reliability of the research as well. Perhaps the most utilized feature of this approach was to study coach/player interactions, especially through practice. The best known of these studies was Tharpe and Gallimore’s (1976) landmark work with legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden.

Building on work similar to that on Coach Wooden, there is a line of research in coaching focused on the experts in the coaching world. These studies seek to recognize the characteristics, skill, and knowledge that separate the exceptional from the average in the coaching world (Schempp & McCullick, 2010). However, as in other aspects of coaching, experience plays a pivotal role in shaping an expert. Research indicates a minimum of 10 years in the majority of fields to be able to reach the status of expert (Ericsson, 2014). However, contradictory research contends this experience appears to be unique to each coach and there is no set path in becoming an expert in this field (Lyoka & Xoxo, 2014). This may very well be due to the fact coaches are typically influenced by biological, psychological, and sociological constraints (Rocha & Clemente, 2012).

An element of coaching expertise which has received a lot of attention in the research is the decision-making process of a coach. Coaches make decisions under two different contexts: deliberative and non-deliberative (Lyle & Cushion, 2010). In a deliberative situation, the coach has time to take into account any number of variables to make a decision. This may take place in or leading up to practice, whereas in the non-deliberative process, the coach has little to no time to make a decision. This style of decision-making would most likely occur during competition. A number of theories about how coaches go about making decisions during these times have been proposed (Giske, Benestad, Haraldstad, & Høigaard, 2013). Research continues to be conducted on coaches' decision-making process, as many feel it is an imperative part of what makes an expert coach.

The hope is that these topics, as well as a host of others, influence coach education programs for the dissemination of information to coaches around the world. However, Trudel and Gilbert (2006) point out this has not been the case. They surmise this could be for two reasons. First, scholarly research is published in academic journals where developers of coaching education programs have a hard time finding the knowledge and how to effectively disseminate it. Also, the topics researched by scholars may not be ones participants in these programs are interested in. Experience seems to be the preferred method by which coaches acquire knowledge despite the fact that research seems to indicate that formal coaching education programs seem to improve a coach's knowledge and skill base (NASPE, 2008; McCullick, Schempp, Mason, Foo, Vickers, & Connolly, 2009).

However, there are some appropriate critiques of many coaching education programs. Cushion and colleagues (2010) point out external evaluation of these programs has been sparse but there are issues. Programs have been accused of covering only minimum requirements of what might be considered needed to be an effective coach. This leads to coaches already employing much of what is taught making them feel as if the curriculum is worthless. When this is not the case, programs may try to include more information than necessary into a short period of time to complete the work. Additionally, some material is more theoretical and does not have a part in every day application for coaches in the class. Ultimately more experienced coaches, feel as if the information garnered in a lot of these coaching education programs is contradictory to the experiences they have on the job.

As coaching continues to grow as a profession, finding a way to integrate the solid research of coaching education is a must. McCullick and colleagues (2009) found that despite a growing demand for well implemented coaching education programs, little is known about programs which currently exist. More research on what institutes a well-designed and carried out program seems to be essential to a field that continues to grow. Apart from this, Cushion and colleagues (2010) contend understanding these seemingly preferred experiential episodes would aid in the development of more meaningful curriculum in coach education programs as well. Regardless, much is still unknown in this area of research in the field.

Coaching today takes place in various disciplines, including business, entertainment, psychology and sociology. However, it is still most recognized in the field of sport and athletics (Lyle, 2002). Expert coaches cannot necessarily pass their

knowledge directly on to novice coaches as the very definition of expert includes having years of experience (Hinds, Patterson, & Pfeffer, 2001). Because this knowledge cannot be transmitted simply through inheritance, it is important for research on coaching to continue. Coleman Griffith recognized early on the importance of psychology as it pertains to coaching and the ideas set forth in that field continue to evolve. Additionally, having a better grasp of coaching behavior, experiences, expectations, interactions, knowledge, and education will aid in developing stronger and more effective coaches in the future. This is a prospect that is also the hope of the current study.

Leadership

Just as coaching has become more associated with sport, the term leader is bandied about in more than just one field. Leadership certainly plays a role in sport, but it is also a key component in other fields such as military operations, politics, and business. A great deal of interest has been shown towards leadership from the latter half of the 20th century through today. Yukl (2012) postulates that thousands of articles have been written on the subject.

Despite this profusion of research on the topic, it seems there are as many definitions as there are researchers on the topic (Bass & Stogdwill, 1990). For the purposes of this review, Yukl's (1989) definition of leadership, "influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization" (p. 253) will be used.

Leadership behaviors. In the 1950's research began to emerge that focused on the behavior of leaders. These studies typically utilized behavior questionnaires to

explain how leaders were able to influence both the attitudes and performance of the people in their employ (Yukl, 2012). Perhaps the most widely utilized instrument was the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Research (Hemphill & Coons, 1957). This instrument was extremely popular and variations of it are still used for research today.

Prior to the development of these types of instruments, research on leadership was more hypothetical; that is, discussing the traits a leader should possess rather than identify what traits they actually did possess (Fleishman, 1953). Very little research was conducted on the behaviors a leader actually instituted. Additionally, it was at this time when the idea that leadership was situationally evolved. Up to this point, it was thought leaders could thrive using the same strategies in any given context. This point is crucial to the current study, as coaches would have no need to be exceptionally adaptable if one approach was successful regardless of the context. There are a number of examples, especially in athletics, of leaders not being able to succeed in a variety of contexts.

This early research in trying to better understand leadership behavior had many similar findings. However, there was no universal terminology for these actions so they were all called something else. Behaviors which were later classified as task-oriented and relation-oriented were called a plethora of other things, despite being very similar in nature (Yukl, 2012). Behaviors which were eventually dubbed task-oriented ensured the daily operations of a company were conducted smoothly. These types of behaviors included: (a) planning, (b) scheduling, (c) clarifying, and (d) problem solving. Relation-oriented behaviors, on the other hand, were used for skill enhancement, rapport building, and ensuring a commitment to the team mission. These behaviors included: (a) supporting, (b) developing, (c) recognizing, and (d) empowering. For the better part of

three decades (1950-1980), these behaviors were the main focus of the work on leadership.

The vast majority of the research at this time focused on behaviors directed by the leader towards any subordinates. There was little to no research on how a leader behaved towards people in lateral positions or even people in positions of higher power (Kaplan, 1984). These horizontal and vertical paths that make up important relationships to a leader was dubbed a network. To this point, research of a network had only taken a top-down approach. In other words, the research done to this point had only taken into account a leader's position on power and how they behaved towards employees under their direction. However, it was now apparent their behavior towards bosses, peers, and others impacted their leadership (Yukl, 2012). These types of behaviors include networking, external monitoring, and representing and are dubbed external leadership behaviors.

Change-oriented behaviors are still very much new to the literature on leadership. Initially, this was thought to be a category only relevant to leaders in the upper stratosphere of corporations and was not as important to middle of the road managers (Yukl, 2012). However, research does indicate behaviors such as advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation, and facilitating collective learning does have an influence on the effectiveness of a leader (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). One researcher credited this type of behavior as to what Lee Iacocca possessed that others did not (Bass, 1985). Despite more research being directed at these types of behavior, there is still much more to learn.

Leadership styles. Behavior has been one area of intense focus in the leadership literature, though not the only one. Leadership style has also been a greatly discussed topic. However, despite this ongoing discussion, there appears to be agreement on the two most utilized styles of leadership, regardless of context. Transactional and transformative leadership were initially presented as a way for politicians to lead (Burns, 1978). However, these constructs were later applied to business as well (Bass, 1985). They have since been applied elsewhere, including the field of coaching (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001).

These two styles approach leadership from two completely different ends of the spectrum. Transactional leadership takes into account what is needed by the company and then, in turn what is needed by the subordinate. Bass (1985) explains the concept succinctly by saying transactional leaders:

Recognize what actions subordinates must take to achieve outcomes.

Transactional leaders clarify these roles and task requirements for their subordinates so that they are confident in exerting necessary efforts. Transactional leaders also recognize subordinates' needs and wants and clarify how they will be satisfied if necessary efforts are made (p. 28).

Transactional leadership is like an exchange for services, very much like a contract. If you are able to quickly and effectively complete the task assigned to you then you will be rewarded.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on getting the subordinate to go past what they have to do to get the job done and go further. The focus is not

merely on one simple outcome but rather the betterment of the company. Bass (1985) explains this can be done in three different ways:

1. Raising our level of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching those outcomes.
 2. Getting us to transcend our own self-interests for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity.
 3. Raising our need level on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy from, say, the need for security to the need for recognition, or expanding our portfolio of needs by, for example, adding the need for self-actualization to the need for recognition.
- (p. 31)

Thus, transformational leadership is getting the subordinate to buy in for the betterment of the organization and not merely the betterment of themselves.

The utilization of these two contrasting styles has been dissected by researchers for the better part of the last 40 years. These two styles operate on opposite ends of a leadership spectrum. Thus, Bass and colleagues (1987) developed the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ) to measure a leader's use of the two styles. The MLQ was divided into five valid and reliable scales which measured the two constructs. Three of the scales measured transformational leadership: (a) charisma, (b) individualized consideration, and (c) intellectual stimulation. To show charisma the leader instills pride, faith and respect. Additionally, the leader can separate what is meaningful to an organization and what is not. There is also an effectively articulated idea of how to complete the task at hand successfully and efficiently. A leader exhibits individualized consideration by competently delegating tasks to not only to complete the task but to promote learning. The leader also acts as a teacher and coach to his or her subordinates

and treats them with respect. Finally, to initiate intellectual stimulation, the leader challenges the employees to think in new ways and use their problem solving skills and reason prior to making any decision.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lies transactional leadership. The MLQ utilized two subdivided scales to measure this construct: contingent reward and management by exception. Leaders exhibited behaviors of contingent reward by rewarding their subordinates when they complete a contractually agreed upon task or a compulsory amount of work. Leaders also manage by exception when they cease giving directions because workers without it meet the minimum requirements.

Despite the fact the MLQ has been in use for close to 30 years, the desire to measure transformational leadership, especially, is still in need. This applies to a number of fields and not just business. Recent studies applied the MLQ to better understand leadership styles in hotel managers, teachers, nurses, and coaches (Quintana, Park, & Cabrera, 2015; Ali & Waqar, 2015; Hendel, Fish, & Galon, 2015; Lee, Kim, & Kang, 2013). Additionally, the MLQ has been adapted in a number of instances to better fit the field measuring transformational leadership. Coaching is no exception. The *Transformational Leadership Inventory for Sport* (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2012) is a recent example of such an adaptation. Then again, it seems sport has always been a good fit for ideas conceptualized in the business literature.

Connecting business leadership to coaching. Following Yukl's (1989) definition of a business leader, it seems a coach could also easily play that role. He defined leadership as, "influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing

group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization” (p. 253). Part of a coach’s job is influencing task objectives and strategies. The task at hand would be to win competitions and the strategies would be game plans in order to achieve that goal. Also, a coach must influence commitment through motivating an athlete or team to comply with the game plan and their objectives. Coaches influence personnel through roster management. Finally, a coach is probably the major influence on the culture of an organization. It seems, at the very least, coaching parallels the principles of leadership included in Yukl’s definition.

The idea that business principles can be applied in a coaching context is nothing new. This comparison was first documented some 40 years ago when Ball (1975) noted the resemblance of sport teams to formal organizations. He noted both team and organization possessed a unique identity. There was also a roster for each detailing a player or employee’s position. Additionally, there was a plan to achieve specific goals. These plans were put into place through a hierarchy. There was a group of people who taught the plan and a group of people who carried out the plan. Finally, there was a method for replacing anyone who left or to transfer members from one position to another if the need arose.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) continued this comparison but cautioned that the effectiveness of the coaching behavior greatly depends on the preferences of the athletes involved, as well. Additionally, there are a number of differences between coaching and business that must be taken into account. First, the amount of training time for sport is disproportionate to the amount of time spent in direct competition. This is not the case in business where time spent training is significantly less. Athletes and teams spend a very

large amount of time in training prior to being tested during competition, which is not afforded in a business setting. Additionally, there is only one winner in sports. This is not necessarily the case in business. Organizational members of a business team can be rewarded as they are not always in direct competition with a competitor. Athletes do not have that luxury. Every time there is a competition, only one person or team will walk away victorious. Finally, athletic teams are only assembled for a brief period of time, depending on the length of the season. This three to six month period is not nearly as much time as a business has. Organizational members of businesses have the luxury of time to achieve their goals. The same cannot be said of athletes in a sporting context. These differences can also dictate the effectiveness of the coaching behavior.

To better understand leadership behavior in sport, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS). They included five factors important to the leadership behavior of a coach: (a) training and instruction, (b) democratic behavior, (c) autocratic behavior, (d) social support, and (e) positive feedback. Training and instruction is the heart and soul to the job of a coach. The ultimate goal is to maximize the performance of the athletes. Training and instruction are imperative in accomplishing this goal. Democratic behavior is how much a coach allows athletes to have a say in the decision making process. A coach who exhibits a larger amount of democratic behavior allows the athletes more of a say in the decision making process. On the other hand, autocratic behavior is just the opposite. The coach makes more unilateral decisions without the input of the athletes and then expects the athletes to comply with the decision made. Social support is the lengths that the coach will go to ensure the satisfaction of the interpersonal needs of athletes. This may be done directly or by fostering an atmosphere

where the athletes feel comfortable to accomplish these tasks themselves. Finally, positive feedback is when the coach expresses appreciation and compliments the athletes for their performance either during or outside of competition.

The LSS has been a mainstay in research on coaching behavior. It has gone through a number of revisions and can be used in conjunction with other instruments as well. There have been some questions of the validity and reliability of the autocratic subscale (Zhang, Jensen, & Mann, 1997). Despite this, the LSS is still widely used. However, most of the research with the LSS has been in the training context (Côté, 1998). Other instruments have been designed to measure coaching behavior in other contexts.

Perhaps the most utilized one of these is the Coaching Behavior Scale for Sport (CBS-S) (Côté, Yardley, Hay, Sedgwick, & Baker, 1999). This instrument is based on the groundbreaking work done to create the Coaching Model (CM) (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). In the CM, coaches develop a set of models which they draw upon to inform their behavior in competition, organization, and training. These models are informed by a coach's own experiences, their athletes, and the context in which the coaching occurs. The CBS-S focuses on these three aspects of a coach's job and not merely training outcomes.

The development of instruments such as the LSS and CBS-S have allowed researchers in the field of coaching to examine the behaviors of coaches in depth. Through the results of these tests, we can compare how a coach behaves in comparison with leaders in the business world. Charbonneau, Barling and Kelloway (2001) went so far as applying the idea of transformational leadership to coaching and found that

increases in this style of leadership led to increased intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, led to increased athlete performance. As indicated previously, the findings in many of these studies also correlate with Yukl's (2012) Taxonomy of Business Leadership. In other words, research on coaching points to the idea that coaches do act very similarly to business leaders in many aspects of their job. However, as change-oriented behaviors have only been recently added to the Taxonomy, there still seems to be much to learn about one specific aspect this meta-category as it pertains to coaching.

Adaptability

Today's world has become a tumultuous place for employment regardless of trade. Hall and Chandler (2005) postulate today's work force will go through more career transitions than ever before. In order to navigate this ever-changing landscape, it is important to possess multiple meta-competencies, or knowledge that facilitates the achievement of new competencies or skills (Briscoe and Hall, 1999). An example given of a meta-competency would be the ability to read. Once an individual has learned to read, new information and skills are available for them to learn. The two meta-competencies suggested by Hall and Chandler (2005) are self-awareness and adaptability. Self-awareness is the ability to gather information to form an accurate self-perception. Adaptability is the ability to change. This includes the knowledge necessary to change as well as the drive to do so. In a world where change has become inevitable, adaptability has become an extremely important construct and will be the focus of the following section.

Like many of the concepts discussed in this review of literature, the idea of adaptability is not new. The term was first used by Super and Knasel (1979) as it

pertained to the balance adults seek to achieve between their work and personal environments. It was initially devised as a replacement for ‘vocational maturity’ as the authors felt it dealt with decisions employees had to make as they grew in their work context. These decisions increasingly seemed to have less to do with maturity than previously considered. Initially, adaptability involved the process through which adolescents became full time members of the work force.

It was not long until this definition was refined to include changing contexts and not merely the adjustment to one (Goodman, 1994). This led to the idea that the acquiring of transferable skills was the key to unlocking adaptability in the work force. In other words, being able to perform a variety of tasks if called upon to do so increased your adaptability. However, if motivation to change is a key part of possessing adaptability, this definition still seems to be lacking. Merely having the tools necessary to accomplish more than one job does not mean an individual would take the steps necessary to change if they were not motivated to do so.

The idea of adaptability as it related to the work place continued to evolve. Adaptability became thought of as something occurring midcareer when an employee began to wonder how they could maintain a level of success in what they were doing or how they might be able to change what they were doing as they were not satisfied (Hall, 1986). Often, this occurred as the employee became more interested in their own path than in the path of their employer. They had reached a point in their career that their happiness mattered more than the company’s they worked for. Adaptability was forged because of changes in the organization or society (e.g. the advent of new technology), in the work role (e.g. a promotion to a new position), and in the person (e.g. dissatisfaction

with current job). These increase motivation for change and under the right circumstances lead to it. While these ideas were new, they could still be related back to Super and Knasel's (1979) original idea of adaptability including a maturity component.

Still, adaptability was a construct on the fringe of business literature. A performance model developed for organizations included eight major competencies including: (a) job-specific task proficiency, (b) non-job-specific-task proficiency, (c) written and oral communication, (d) demonstrating effort, (e) maintaining personal discipline, (f) maintaining peer and team performance, (g) supervision/leadership, and (h) management/administration (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). Nowhere in this catalogue is the term adaptability mentioned, though other researchers questioned the exclusion of a number of competencies from this list. Campbell (1999) responded by stating each suggested addition to the taxonomy could easily be included to form a hierarchal description of performance in an organization. However, Campbell went on to say that one component which could be added to the original classification was the ability of individuals to adapt to changing conditions or new occupational requirements.

Perhaps it was because adaptability was not a popular term through this point in time. While there was research being done on the subject, there was no universally accepted term or definition (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, Plamondon, 2000). Adaptability was referred to as adaptive performance and role flexibility, among other things. Additionally, there was still debate as to when adaptability was applied in the work setting. Hall's (1986) idea that adaptability was initiated midcareer had expanded, and was being applied to a multitude of work tasks (e.g. new technology, new positions, changing workplace culture). Campbell and colleagues (1993) only included well defined

competencies in their initial catalogue. Therefore, adaptability was still somewhat in limbo as it related to the workplace.

Building upon Campbell and colleagues work (1993), especially after the admission adaptive behavior belonged in an updated list of performance competencies, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) developed their own taxonomy of adaptive behaviors. This work enabled adaptability to be more clearly defined as a construct. Eight dimensions of adaptability were identified: (a) creative problem solving, (b) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (c) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (d) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, (e) demonstrating cultural adaptability, (f) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability, (g) handling emergencies or crisis situations, and (h) handling work stress. This work represents the first time potential dimensions of adaptive performance were identified systematically.

Despite this new empirical evidence of what components make up adaptability, questions still lingered. Uncovering how adaptability manifested itself in the workplace became an important topic. Drawing on concepts from previous work, O'Connell and colleagues (2008) hypothesized there were three factors influencing personal adaptability: (a) individual characteristics, (b) human capital factors, and (c) work environment. Evidence showed the only individual characteristic which was significantly related to adaptability was gender. It seems females are pointedly more adaptable than males. There was no significant relationship to age or race. Human capital is the fundamental value of an employee's knowledge and skill. Factors which were significantly related to adaptability from this group were perceived employability and education level. In other words, people who exude confidence and seem more hireable are

typically more adaptable. Additionally, people with both more formal education and experience are more adaptable, as well. Occupational status, tenure, and contractual experience had no influence on adaptability. Finally, employees who receive more managerial support tend to be more adaptable than those who do not. This item fell under the work environment dimension of the model. Work demand, personal control, and communication had no effect on adaptability.

Adaptability continues to appear in leadership behavior and performance research (Yan, Waldman, Yu-Lan, & Xiao-Bei, 2015, Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Additionally, interest in the topic has led to the development of measurement instruments. Pulakos and colleagues (2000) developed the Job Adaptability Inventory. This instrument was designed to measure the presence of the eight dimensions of adaptability for any given line of work. More recently, work has been to develop the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS measure the presence of four resources used for self-regulation, a key-component of adaptability. These four resources are concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. An individual shows concern about the future when they take the time to look ahead and prepare for inevitable change. Individuals exhibit control when they take responsibility and prepare for change by using self-discipline, effort, and persistence. Curiosity is shown when a person begins to think about himself or herself being involved in alternative scenarios where they take on different roles and responsibilities. Engaging in these other resources builds confidence in their ability to accept and deal with change as it occurs. Through measuring these resources, the CAAS will enable career development researchers to continue to

understand adaptability and how it can be taught or learned by individuals in the work place.

While adaptability continues to be a topic of interest, especially in the business literature, it seems to be the one area of leadership behavior that has been ignored in the sport coaching literature. There appears to be only a handful of published work dealing with adaptability. Gauthier and colleagues (2006) studied how elite coaches in an isolated part of Canada were able to adapt to coaching in an isolated area. They found elite coaches used (a) cooperation, (b) positive reframing, and (c) coping with their limitations as tools in learning to be adaptable. However, this study merely examines a small slice of what adaptability has come to mean in the business literature. Previous research has concluded there are far more factors than geographic location which have an impact on adaptability. One other study examines the cultural adaptability of players and coaches as they relocated from one country to another (Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013). Again, this study only incorporates a part of what makes coaches adaptable.

While a number of leadership behaviors have been explored in the sport coaching literature (planning, relationship building, networking), one construct has remained absent. As coaching has become more specialized and an emphasis has been placed on success, it has become as turbulent a career field as any. Coaches are expected to win and if they are unsuccessful in this job then schools, colleges, and professional teams are not hesitant to find someone else whom they feel can achieve success. Additionally, as coaches become more self-aware with their own happiness, they consistently look for jobs they feel they can be happy in. Despite this mentality, coaches who can claim success at more than one job are few and far between. However, those who have

demonstrated success on multiple platforms may have the key to help unlock knowledge about adaptability which has not been known before, especially in the field of coaching. This study hopes to better understand what knowledge, experience, and behaviors are displayed by coaches who have shown exceptional adaptability at the collegiate level. It is the hope of the researcher the knowledge ascertained from these coaches will help understand the change-oriented behaviors prevalent in the sport coaching world.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to analyze the exceptional adaptability of successful collegiate coaches. Framing this study was Pulakos and colleagues' (2000) Taxonomy of adaptability. Specifically, the following research questions guided the design and conduct of this study:

- 1) What knowledge, experiences, and behaviors are essential for successful collegiate coaches identified as possessing exceptional adaptability?
- 2) What commonalities exist in the knowledge, experiences, and behaviors of successful collegiate coaches that lead to possessing exceptional adaptability?

This chapter describes the methods that used to conduct the investigation. This chapter presents sub-sections detailing the following areas: (a) study design, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) theoretical framework, (d) participant selection, (e) procedures, (f) data trustworthiness, and (g) transferability.

Study Design

The research questions leading this study dictated a research design involving qualitative methods to best yield rich data that can enable a deeper understanding of those coaches identified as possessing exceptional adaptability. The use of qualitative methods helped to ensure depth and detail in the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of exceptional adaptability in coaching (Patton, 2002). Additionally, this approach allowed fieldwork to be completed without the constraint of predetermined categories of analysis. Noted

scholars, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) may offer the best rationale for the use of qualitative research methods when they wrote:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world (pp. 4-5).

Specifically, *instrumental* and *collective* case study (Stake, 2005) approach was employed. An *instrumental case study* allows researchers to gain an insider's view of an issue or concern. Laframboise and Shea (2009) provide an example of this through their work on developing an understanding of why preservice teachers were resistant to utilizing research-based pedagogy. This helped to shed light on difficulties with previous instructional strategies and led to new instructional strategies for the preservice teachers to utilize in their field experiences.

The case study was *collective* in that it permitted detailed, extensive data collection through varying sources of information (Stake, 2005). This collective included eleven participants (N = 11). In this instance, semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis were the data collection methods. Ramirez's (2013) work on school bullying is an example of a *collective case study*, where five victims of bullying were observed, interviewed, and had their school records analyzed to gain a better understanding on school bullying from the victim's standpoint. The sample size of five in the Ramirez study is similar to the number of participants sought for this study and

though direct observation was not used as a data collection method, interviews and document analysis were.

Research questions were initially developed and cases selected based on these questions. This ensured the cases best suited the types of questions asked and the most pertinent data could be extracted on collegiate coaches possessing exceptional adaptability. Additionally, it seemed advantageous in this case to study more than one instance of exceptional adaptability in order to better understand what coaches possessing exceptional adaptability have in common that allows them to be successful. One drawback to this approach according to Stake (2005) is that information drawn from these limited cases may not translate to the rest of the coaching world.

Instrumental case study allowed for a more profound understanding of exceptional adaptability in successful collegiate coaches who possess exceptional adaptability by helping to reveal the uniqueness and complex knowledge of coaches' routines, rituals, functions, actions, and experiences (Stake, 2005). Specifically, instrumental case study aided in the understanding of what these coaches know, do, and have experienced in order to possess exceptional adaptability. Additionally, it assisted in better comprehending the knowledge each of these coaches possess and how that knowledge translates into their own adaptability.

Role of Researcher

Unlike many quantitative designs that may view subjectivity as a contaminant, qualitative research utilizes the researcher as the instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). While this approach does offer the opportunity for detailed data, it also brings the possibility of bias. Maso (2003) reminded scholars that,

"Researchers bring with them, their own emotions, intuitions, experiences, meanings, values, commitments, presuppositions, prejudices, and personal agendas, their position as researchers and their spontaneous, reactions to subjects and events in the field" (p. 40). Part of reflexive research is being self-consciously aware of these *subjectivities* in relation to the participants and topic being researched (Roulston, 2010) and acknowledging them. Understanding the source of potential bias is a hallmark of qualitative research. Janesick (2000) explains, "By identifying one's biases, one can see easily where the questions that guide the study are crafted. The researcher owns up to his or her perspective on the study and may even track its evolution" (p. 385). Toward this end, this section provides the reader with this information to better understand any inclinations the researcher may possess prior to undertaking this study that may influence it in any way.

Subjectivity statement. After being away from the coaching life for a few years, I have reflected on the number of different environments and contexts where I coached. No two jobs were alike. The students came from different backgrounds. I coached both boys' and girls' team, sometimes simultaneously. The parents and administrators had different expectations depending on the school. Some sports were viewed as "less" than other sports. It seemed obvious to me that in order to succeed in the possibly nomadic life of coaching, one has to be flexible, at the very least.

My career began as a volunteer coach while I was still in high school for a 5th and 6th grade girls' basketball team. The school was the same one I attended for middle school and my role was that of assistant coach. While I learned a great deal from my first job, I was still a virtual novice in the coaching profession. My next position was as co-

head coach of an 8th grade girls' basketball team in a suburban private school. At the same school, I also ended up coaching middle school football and 7th grade boys' basketball the following year. Apart from the different types of students, different expectations from their parents, and little interest from the school administration, there was the added aspect of being a co-head coach. This was, yet, another context that can occur in the coaching realm that many do not realize.

After graduating college, I continued to coach in a volunteer capacity at a rural school in West Virginia. Again, the contexts were completely different than anything I had experienced in my previous jobs. The other settings had been suburban and though the demographics of the girls I coached in West Virginia were similar, this was my first time working in a public school environment. This alone made for a unique experience when compared to my other opportunities.

After finishing graduate school, I was able to secure my first solo head coaching job. It was at a small, independent, private school in a very rural setting. When I had athletes' parents writing excuses for being absent so that their child could work harvesting in late summer, I realized how rural it actually was. The school was so small I had to coach both boys and girls basketball as well as the varsity and JV teams. Whereas in the past, the administration cared very little about the outcome of my teams, here there was much more pressure. The parents were also more involved than I had previously encountered, occasionally to the detriment of their son or daughter.

However, it was at my final coaching job where I really began to reflect about the different contexts I had experienced in a decade of coaching. It was a suburban rival of the rural school I previously worked for, but still very small and also private. The

students and parents were from a drastically different background than my last experience and this brought a different dimension to my job with new challenges. It was only after I came back to school to work on my doctoral degree did I really understand the drastic differences in each coaching job I held.

It was through this realization that the idea for this study began to grow. However, rather than looking through my own lens, or that of someone like me, I thought it may be beneficial to learn from coaches who perform at the highest levels. While there is a multitude of coaches involved in collegiate athletics, the list of coaches who are successful at multiple locales is quite short. Coaches have a tendency to move a lot and the coaches represented in this sample are a few of the best at finding successes in their current location, despite potentially large differences in each of the jobs they have held.

Implications for my role in this study. While coaching has been a large part of my life and was also part of my livelihood, this study certainly holds a special place in my heart. Additionally, the coaches contacted for the study are all well-known names in collegiate athletics and would be known to any fan. In fact, because I was familiar with these coaches as a fan it was imperative that I put aside any preconceived notions I had of them so that I could objectively review the data I received from them. Many of the coaches chosen to participate in the study could also be identified as having reached celebrity status. Merely gaining access to them was, at times, difficult and soliciting information from them was occasionally problematic. It was crucial to put them at ease and rapidly build a rapport in order to have a chance at gaining the best data possible for the study.

Theoretical Framework

As discussed in Chapter One, there are many parallels between sport coaches and business leaders. Both groups exhibit leadership by influencing and facilitating their subordinates to achieve a shared goal. In business, that goal is success of the company, usually through maximizing profits. In coaching, that goal is most often winning games. Research in the field of coaching echoes this sentiment as Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) posited that coaches employ many of the same principles as managers in the business world. Additionally, when one cross-references the leadership behaviors described by Yukl (2012) for the business world with research being done on coaching, there appears to be much that overlaps. Effective leadership behaviors in business are comparable to those seen in effective coaches. One of those important behaviors is adaptability. Unfortunately, mention or study of this construct in coaches seems to be glaringly omitted in the coaching research literature.

For the purpose of analyzing successful collegiate sport coaches who possess exceptional adaptability, the Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance guided the researcher in providing a framework for the study (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). Adaptability is identified in the taxonomy as the following behaviors: (a) solving problems creatively, (b) confronting uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (c) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (d) demonstrating fluid interpersonal skills, (e) demonstrating cultural versatility, (f) demonstrating ability to cope with environmental change, (g) handling emergencies or crisis situations, and (h) handling work stress. Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) linked coaches to managers in the business world. If this assumption is true, then coaches with exceptional adaptability would likely

exhibit some of these behaviors. Therefore, this research has been utilized to frame the research questions and was used throughout the study to guide all facets of data collection and analysis.

The development of the Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance sprang from previous work on a similar taxonomy proposed for job performance by Campbell and colleagues (1993). This initial work did not mention adaptability as a construct for job performance. However, over time multiple authors called for more research on the idea of adaptability as many work performance models failed to include the topic (Campbell, 1999; Hesketh & Neal, 1999). The response was the evolution of the Taxonomy of Adaptive performance and the development of the Job Adaptability Inventory (JAI), to further assess the taxonomy. The need for this and difficulty associated with it is summed up by Pulakos (2000) and her team when they wrote that business leaders:

... need to be increasingly adaptable, versatile, and tolerant of uncertainty to operate effectively in these changing and varied environments. Yet adaptability, flexibility, and versatility are elusive concepts that have not been well defined in the psychological literature and are therefore difficult to measure, predict, and teach effectively (p. 612).

Through a comprehensive literature review, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) identified six behaviors as important to adaptive performance in the workplace. These behaviors include: (a) solving problems creatively, (b) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (c) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (d) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, and (e) demonstrating cultural adaptability. Despite these findings, there still was no empirical evidence these six behaviors existed

or, for that matter, if there were additional behaviors not mentioned explicitly in previous literature. In order to remedy this, a critical incident study was done to identify the reality of these adaptable behaviors and the possibility of the existence of others. Through this study, two additional behaviors were identified. These behaviors are: (a) handling work stress and (b) handling emergencies or crisis situations. Additionally, the other six behaviors discovered by Pulakos and colleagues (2000) were officially recognized as indispensable to adaptive behavior. It was also determined that these behaviors are most often associated with leadership or managerial positions in the business community. Therefore, one could assume that these behaviors may also be present in coaches.

The taxonomy of adaptive behaviors is important to this study as it provided a context in which coaches may display adaptability. Pulakos and colleagues (2000) theorize certain jobs may require greater amounts of adaptive behavior than others. Inherently, some of these behaviors may be more important in some jobs than in others. Having this taxonomy as a frame of reference helped to identify which behaviors are most commonly displayed in highly adaptive coaches and how often these behaviors might be used. This was done through using the framework as a template to assist in forming the semi-structured interview guide. Each of the eight behaviors listed in the taxonomy translated to questions for the coaches and secondary sources to help identify which behaviors are most essential for coaches to have exceptional adaptability.

The final step in Pulakos and her collaborators' (2000) work on the Adaptive Performance Model was the development of the JAI to assess the adaptability behaviors recognized in part one of the study. The JAI was given to a total of 3,422 participants from the military, non-managerial employees of a large telecommunication firm, and

research scientists from a personnel research firm. Results found that jobs with higher adaptive performance requirements were often higher level professional or supervisory jobs. This would be a category in which coaching could easily fit. Additionally, the JAI confirmed that adaptive performance consists of multidimensional behaviors and different types of adaptive performance are needed for different types of jobs.

Though the idea of adaptability is not new, it has only been since this landmark study that the business world has been better able to understand what behaviors constitute adaptability. Furthermore, the JAI has led to a way to identify a job's adaptive performance requirements so that people best suited for the job can be recognized and trained. However, none of this work has yet to be done in a field ripe with potential to need highly adaptable personnel – successful coaches.

The use of Pulakos and colleagues (2000) taxonomy was also used in the analysis of successful coaches and their knowledge, behaviors, and experiences that lead to the development of exceptional adaptability. The Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance provided a working definition of adaptability from which to begin this study. In addition, by examining in detail those exceptionally adaptable behaviors that are linked to success in the business world, a working knowledge base for those traits that are apparent in successful collegiate coaching can be built as well. Knowing this information will allow a better understanding of adaptability as a whole. Additionally, adaptability in the business and coaching worlds can also be compared and contrasted.

Participant Selection

Determining the best participants for this study began long before the design of the study was completed, as it was imperative to define “exceptional adaptability.” Then

it was necessary to determine what “exceptional adaptability” would look like in the job of a collegiate sport coach and determine if there were any coaches at all who fit the description of coaches who possess exceptional adaptability.

Using Pulakos’ taxonomy and the literature on successful sport coaching, it was determined that “exceptional adaptability” in successful collegiate sport coaches would be defined as success at more than one collegiate athletic program. Past studies on expert coaches, who by all accounts are successful, define success through a number of ways (Schempp, Webster, McCullick, Busch, & Mason, 2007; Hansen, Gilbert & Hamel, 2003). However, for the purposes of this study, success will be defined as: (a) a winning percentage greater than .500, (b) recognition of accomplishments by members of the coaching industry, and (c) appearances in post-season. Specifically, the criteria for selecting coaches consisted of: (a) an overall winning record at more than one intercollegiate program, (b) coach of the year honors given whether nationally or by conferences at more than one intercollegiate program, and (c) post-season appearances at more than one institution. Then, using popular websites (i.e. *Wikipedia*, *Sports-Reference*) and media guides, a list was compiled of coaches who had experienced success at multiple (no less than two) institutions. The more schools a coach was able to obtain these accolades at, the more adaptable the coach was deemed.

One consideration in studying public figures is accessibility. Also ranked was the perceived accessibility of each coach. This was done via three benchmarks. The first was whether or not the coach was active or retired. Active coaches typically have a very busy schedule, especially in season. Retired coaches have been deemed more accessible as they were less likely to keep the hectic schedule active coaches usually keep.

Additionally, coaches who have prior accessibility or who has what Roulston (2010) calls potential personal networks were given a higher accessibility grade than those that were unknown to have participated in previous research or who had no known personal connections to the researcher. Personal networks are merely people that may be known to friends, family, or colleagues who may fit the criteria and are perhaps willing to participate in the research. The final criterion for accessibility was proximity to the researcher. Coaches who were within reasonable driving distance from the researcher have been given higher accessibility scores than those who were situated farther away.

This sampling technique is what Patton (2002) referred to as "purposeful sampling" (p. 230). This is an approach typically used in qualitative research maximizing the chance that participants in the study have the desired knowledge and experience to best illustrate the research questions at hand. Purposeful sampling was in this case because it was thought that coaches who possess exceptional adaptability can shed more light on how and why exceptional adaptability manifests in athletic coaches and perhaps inform coaches and coach educators on what it takes for other coaches to improve their own levels of adaptability. Patton dubs this scenario an "extreme case" (p. 230). In this case, adaptable behaviors are hardly commonplace in the coaching world, which provides great opportunity from a research standpoint. Situations like these are typically able to provide the most robust data because of their uniqueness. Selection of the participants should not be confused with the selection of the case which is discussed further below.

Ultimately over 60 coaches who fit the criteria of an exceptionally adaptable coach were asked to participate in this study. There were 11 willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. These coaches came from a variety of different sports

including baseball (2), football (3), golf, (2), gymnastics (1), softball (1), and tennis (2). None had been coaching for less than a decade and the most experienced had spent close to 50 years as a coach. All had experienced success in their respective post seasons, won at least multiple conference championships, and held a winning record at multiple collegiate institutions. Six of the eleven won at least one national championship. Three have been inducted into the Hall of Fame for their respective sports. These coaches eschew adaptability through their ability to succeed at a high level in multiple contexts. Short biographies of each can be found in Appendix C.

Procedures

The data collection techniques used in this instrumental and collective case study were: (a) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both primary sources, and (b) document analysis of items such as media guides, newspaper articles, and other documents that may have been distributed to players or assistant coaches (i.e. practice plans, coaches' handbook). Any biographies written on participating coaches, as well as pertinent books authored by the participants were used. The use of case study best afforded the opportunity to answer the above research questions and collect robust data to help understand the manifestation of exceptional adaptability in collegiate sport coaches.

Interviews provided the bulk of the data collected. It was essential to build rapport with the participants in an abbreviated time frame. This was a problem that presented itself only after obtaining access to these coaches, which is in itself another problem. The coaches pursued for these interviews could be classified as 'elites,' meaning access to them for interviews was, at times, a difficult barrier to overcome (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). One possible reason that the coaches who agreed to participate were wary of the

interview setting could be that interviewing and media relations are a large portion of their work day. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that, rather than treat this as a research interview, they viewed me more as a member of the media, which could have become an obstacle to the thick, rich data being sought after for the purposes of this study. It was important for me to convey to them this research was not a memo to opposing coaches, but rather information for those wishing to better understand adaptability and its role in successful coaching from a theoretical and practical standpoint. Based on the coaches' responses and the data generated from interviews, the coaches appear to have been forthright with their answers. There was never an instance where a coach hesitated to give an answer or expressed concern about competitive advantage.

Coaches were initially invited to participate in the study via a brief email explaining the nature of the study, why they had been selected, and what commitment participating in the study entailed (Appendix A). In many cases, a direct email for the coach was found. However, in some cases there was a different contact point who was trusted to forward the information along to the coach. Most participants were reached in this manner, although a physical letter was mailed to each of the coaches in addition in case an email did not reach them. At least one participant responded due to this letter. Additionally, as mentioned previously, these coaches could be difficult to contact because of their position. There were instances where mutual acquaintances served as the gatekeeper to some coaches. Once the gatekeeper made initial contact, the coach was contacted via email with the same recruitment letter.

Data Collection

The best possible way to understand exceptional adaptability in successful collegiate sports coaches was to go to the source. It was imperative to actually hear from the those coaches possessing exceptional adaptability to better understand their thoughts, understanding, and experiences in utilizing their exceptional adaptability to be successful across different contexts. Unfortunately, research was done on a phenomenon that had already occurred. Direct observation of this was not possible as their exceptional adaptability had already manifested itself.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews conducted for this study were of the *semi-structured* variety, meaning, there was an interview guide for each of the participants with a list of predetermined topics and questions, however, in addition to these questions the researcher continued with probes to gather further detail and description about previous answers (Roulston, 2010). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the openness regarding the purpose of the interview can either be disclosed to participants or not. In this case, it was important the participants know the topic of the interview prior to the appointed time and place for multiple reasons. First and foremost, the participants knew the topic so they could collect their thoughts and be prepared to fully discuss adaptability in their careers. Secondly, because these participants may be deemed elite, it was important to give them full disclosure so that they could be as open as possible in order to obtain the richest data possible. If this was not the case, then the informants may have been hesitant to share as much information as humanly possible with the researcher.

Interviews were conducted mainly via telephone. However, there were two instances where the participant and researcher were able to meet face to face. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. The average time of the interviews was just less than an hour. This resulted in transcripts which ranged between 10 and 18 pages. As the analysis of this project was ongoing, it was important to follow up with any of the participants as new questions arose or specific information needed to be clarified. At the conclusion of each individual interview, permission was asked for follow-up interviews that may take place in person, over the phone, or even by email to ensure the best possible analysis and to best understand the participants' words. This instance arose with regard to a question about how the coaches navigated the stress of coaching. Seven of the 11 coaches responded to the follow-up. Six did so via email, however, one coach took the time to call and explain his answer via telephone.

There was no guarantee a qualitative study could produce the rich data sought for this study. Therefore, to ensure not only rich data, but also clarity, the interview guides were piloted with two coaches who exhibit exceptional adaptability. One was a local high school football coach who exhibited exceptional adaptability at four different schools, winning state championship at two. The other was a collegiate volleyball coach who had experienced success at the high school, club, and collegiate level, winning multiple state championships and then working his way to his current position. The interview guide was used to determine if the questions elicited the intended responses and in great detail. This assisted in determining the clarity of the questions. Any changes needed were made to the interview guide prior to the launch of the full scale study.

Document analysis. Patton (2002) noted that records, documents, and archives yield particularly robust data. Apart from interviews, the researcher relied on documents from the time immediately before and after the transition of the Adaptable coach into their new position. These documents included media guides and newspaper articles. Comparisons between these documents and data derived from interview sessions helped in making light of adaptability these coaches have shown throughout their careers.

Derrida (1978) stated that meaning can be found in documents through reading them in a different light. That is, these documents may have once had a different meaning to their readers, but they will be looked upon now with the idea there is some knowledge of adaptability to be gained by this different gaze. This does not mean the documents will give a "better" understanding of adaptability, but they may give a different meaning than other forms of data collection (Hodder, 2003). This different meaning could also serve as a catalyst for new lines of questioning not previously thought of by the researcher (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

Formal interviews and obtained documents were analyzed inductively. Inductive analysis seeks to discover patterns, themes, and commonalities throughout the data (Patton, 2002). This process starts with specific observations gleaned from initial interactions with participants and the historical documents used in the research. Specifically, data analysis followed the four steps set forth by Miles and Huberman (1994) to guide the data analysis process.

The first stage of data analysis occurred during the collection of data and initial analysis. Analysis should not wait until the end of data collection to begin as it takes

away from the opportunity to collect new data to fill gaps, depresses the thought of any rival hypotheses, and can become too overwhelming for the researcher to do all at once. This process began with the formulation of the list of adaptable coaches and a search of their records and accolades. Simply comparing these records helps to draw commonalities and identify differences even during the early stages of the research. This analysis continued with prompt transcription of every formal interview with hopes of identifying new directions and ideas for the study.

The second step of analysis, data reduction, consists of identifying, simplifying and transforming data from documents and transcripts into codes and themes which best represent the expression set forth by the initial data. This step is what Ryan and Bernard (2003) refer to as “the heart and soul of whole text analysis” (p.274). Again, this process began early in the process by deriving initial themes through a literature review and more themes and subthemes presented themselves as data continues to be collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The next stage in the process described by Miles and Huberman (1994) is ‘data display.’ This consists of developing a more organized body of information that aids in developing conclusions. After the reduction of interview transcripts and documents utilized for research, data was compiled with the researcher’s own thoughts on their significance and potential connections. The new codes were separated into themes. These themes were then recoded looking for specific knowledge, behaviors, and experiences regarding adaptability emerging from the data. These new displays that emerged included extended texts, memos, various matrices, graphs, or charts.

The final step in analysis was attempting to make meaning of the data based on the information retrieved from the coaches and documents regarding adaptability in coaches. The data was referenced in accordance with Pulakos and colleagues (2000) Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance as a way to better understand Adaptability in the coaching world as it relates to successful instances of adaptability in the business world. This connection has already demonstrated by comparing Yukl's (2012) tenets of successful leadership in the business literature to similar research on successful coaches. Transcripts were read and reread to develop codes and themes which were compared directly to the behaviors which make up Pulakos and colleagues' taxonomy. This led to the final analysis of how adaptability is successfully manifested in the realm of collegiate coaching.

Data Trustworthiness

As mentioned previously, subjectivity is a hallmark of qualitative research and something to be mindful of when conducting such a study. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) explain that we assume others experience the world in the same way we do and through this idea we feel as if we can understand the same way others do. This subjectivity we take for granted. Though it is impossible to be completely objective in a study such as this, there are specific strategies that can be utilized to ensure the data is, in fact, trustworthy. The methods to ensure trustworthiness in this data were: (a) deliberate case selection, (b) data triangulation, (c) utilization of a peer debriefer, and (d) member checks.

Deliberate case selection. The idea of a "successful coach" could be an ambiguous one to define. Additionally, it has been imperative to clearly define what

constitutes adaptability in these successful coaches. This is especially true as scholars have recognized the proper selection of cases is of the utmost importance in establishing trustworthiness and credibility. Because of this, coaches who were eligible for the study were selected carefully with deliberate criteria employed to narrow the field as described above. Through this selection process, the researcher hoped to maximize the quality of the data collected through interview methods.

Data triangulation. Rather than merely relying on one data source, multiple methods and sources were employed in order to triangulate the data. Triangulation is merely the use of multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources (Denzin, 1989). Through this “researchers can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single-theory studies” (p. 307). In order to pursue as many different perspectives as possible, this study utilized interviewing multiple subjects on the same topic and analyzing documents from the period of time in question (Patton, 2002). Additionally, there was a continuous search for opposing or negative cases to boost the credibility of the findings. The presence of negative cases furthers our understanding of the patterns and trends regarding adaptability discovered during the research (Patton, 2002).

Peer debriefer. As a novice researcher, I could not pretend to think I was able to navigate the demanding world of qualitative research without some sort of guidance from an experienced researcher and advisor. Merriam (1988) suggests the use of a peer debriefer with whom to continually work with to discuss emerging findings and observations. This technique aids to ensure trustworthiness and help to establish the

researcher's interpretations of the data. I worked closely with my advisor, Dr. Bryan McCullick in this capacity.

Member checks. Researchers regularly utilize the process of member checking transcriptions and interpretations with participants to ensure they possess an adequate knowledge of the phenomenon being researched to draw a suitable conclusion (Roulston, 2010). This is a practice that was also employed in this study. Coaches were given the opportunity to review transcripts to ensure their thoughts and ideas were accurately portrayed. Additionally, as the researcher confirmed trends, commonalities, and themes, the participants were also afforded the opportunity to confirm or clarify these ideas. This also gave the participants an additional chance to expound on their own thoughts and ideas.

Once transcripts were completed, each coach was sent a copy of their interview to look over and identify remarks which may have been taken out of context or could be misinterpreted. Only one coach took the opportunity to respond. He returned the transcript via email with clarifying remarks inserted into the manuscript. These remarks were taken into account as data analysis continued and are reflected in the final product.

Transferability

Also deemed external validity, transferability is the ability to use information gained from research in a different situation (Scotland, 2012). This is important as it gives the findings more depth in their assertions. Practical applications for this study can be found for coaches of all levels who are trying to successfully move from context to context. While the coaches who participated in this study work at some of the highest levels in the field, their experiences should lend themselves to coaches of all levels in

varying circumstances. Meanwhile, from a theoretical point of view, this study sought to fill a void in the coaching literature. Though the generalizations drawn from only studying a handful of coaches could be limited, there is little doubt the knowledge possessed by these coaches could help to better understand why certain coaches have better rates of success than others. Regardless of what gaze the reader has when perusing this research, they will be able to draw their own conclusions and perceptions about the phenomenon of adaptability.

Additionally, Crotty (1998) suggests through a constructionist perspective, knowledge is socially constructed. This theory suggests knowledge is built through interaction within a community. The idea of adaptability in coaching would be meaningless if not for the recognition of its existence by these exceptionally adaptable coaches. In turn, these exceptionally adaptable coaches are sharing their own versions of knowledge with which others can build knowledge of their own. Thus, the information presented here will contribute to the reader's construction of knowledge.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the exceptional adaptability of successful collegiate coaches. Specifically, the following research questions framed by the Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000) were used to guide the study:

- 1) What knowledge, experiences, and behaviors are essential for successful collegiate coaches identified as possessing exceptional adaptability?
- 2) What commonalities exist in the knowledge, experiences, and behaviors of successful collegiate coaches that lead to possessing exceptional adaptability?

In order to gain a detailed and in-depth perspective of coaches' knowledge, behavior, and experiences of adaptability, qualitative research methods were used. Given this, findings and interpretations represent the coach's perceptions of adaptability and strategies they have used to maintain high levels of success over their careers. To gain a greater insight into the phenomenon of adaptability an instrumental, collective case study (Stake, 2005) was utilized using both (a) formal semi-structured interviews with coaches and (b) document analysis as qualitative data collection techniques. These methods were chosen for their ability to provoke robust data to ensure a complete attempt to answer the research questions. The data was analyzed inductively through the lens of the Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance. The use of multiple methods, triangulation, a peer debriefer, and member checks create both data trustworthiness and credibility within the study.

Chapter 4

A Non-Sport Related Knowledge Base

Prior to this study, the topic of adaptability in coaching has received little to no attention. The small amount of work accomplished was focused on a specific property of adaptability (Gauthier, Schinke, & Pickard, 2006; Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013). Despite this, adaptable is a term often bandied about when describing effective coaches. The results of this study fill this gap in the existing literature by identifying how adaptability is represented in the world of collegiate coaching through knowledge, experiences, and behaviors. The following chapters will discuss the individual findings of: (a) a non-sport related knowledge base, (b) formative encounters related to the profession, (c) comporting oneself as a corporate executive. This will be followed by a discussion of each of these findings and their implications moving forward in the coaching realm.

All coaches must have a certain knowledge base that allows them to be successful. It reasons that anyone who has reached the elevated level of collegiate coach, at the very least, possesses substantial knowledge of the sport they coach. Research suggests a coach's knowledge base should include: (a) knowledge of the sport, (b) knowledge of the people in the sport (e.g. athletes, coaches), and (c) scientific knowledge relating to the sport (e.g. technique, methodology, physiology, psychology) (Blumenstein, Orbach, Bar-Eli, Dreshman & Weinstein, 2012). While the participants in this study discussed sport-related knowledge as being important on some level, there

appeared to be something separating these coaches who exhibit exceptional adaptability from those who have achieved the title of collegiate sport coach.

The coaches in this study were chosen to participate because they possess attributes that indicate their exceptional adaptability. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these coaches credited their adaptability to having and developing different types of knowledge not related to their sport. Many of the coaches in this sample worked their way up from the lower tiers of collegiate athletics to become head coaches at Division I universities. It appears evident that to be mobile in the world of collegiate coaching and maintain a high level of success, these different knowledge bases they discussed are of the utmost importance. Remarkably, the different types of knowledge discussed by these exceptionally adaptable coaches all pertained to off-the-field (court/course) matters. Thus, it seems exceptionally adaptable coaches develop a knowledge base that is non-sport related and this knowledge base is imperative to their ability to exhibit exceptional adaptability.

Categories of knowledge deemed essential to their exceptional adaptability by these coaches include knowledge of: (a) personnel (e.g. athletes, assistant coaching staff, and support staff), (b) self, and (c) how to develop trust-filled relationships. The following sections will identify and discuss these knowledge bases and why these coaches placed felt they were important to the everyday actions of an exceptionally adaptable coach.

Knowledge of Personnel

The data revealed that exceptionally adaptable coaches have a keen understanding of the people who are essential for reaching their stated goals. This knowledge seems to

mirror that suggested in previous research (Blumenstein, Orbach, Bar-Eli, Dreshman & Weinstein, 2012). For these exceptionally adaptable coaches, they are aware of not only the athletes that play for them, but also the coaches who aid them, and the surrounding support staff who provide day-to-day assistance for their teams. A dearth of this knowledge makes it nearly impossible to implement a blueprint for success. Each of these personnel groupings brings important elements to the success or failure of any coach. Having an in-depth knowledge allows a coach, especially in a new environment, to successfully devise and execute their plan. Analysis of the interview data indicated that “Knowledge of Personnel” can be broken into three categories of personnel: (a) players, (b) assistant coaches, and (c) support staff.

Players. Perhaps first and foremost, coaches indicated they had to have knowledge of their athletes. In the collegiate world, this means an influx of new athletes every year. Yet, almost unanimously, these coaches consistently identified the importance of truly understanding their athletes both in and outside of the realm of competition. This category of knowledge can be split into two categories: (a) knowledge of athletes’ competitive strengths and weaknesses and (b) knowledge of athletes’ personalities.

Knowledge of an athlete’s strengths and weaknesses from a physical, mental, and emotional standpoint can help the coach to set team and individual goals and expectations. Possession of this knowledge also can have an influence on strategic decisions. Jay Miller (Softball) suggested that connecting with the student athletes would be the first thing he would do at a new job and he would use that information to help set team goals and expectations. Similarly, Willie Fritz (Football) consistently stated it was important to know what your players were capable of and use that knowledge to devise a

game plan. He revealed this was a critical factor for success at each of his stops as a head coach. Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) added spending one on one time with his athletes allows him to understand them on a deeper level, which then aided him approaching his athletes with suggestions about strategy. As contexts change, coaches must be willing to acquire an in-depth knowledge about their athletes in order to maintain a high level of success (Lyle, 2002).

Additionally, these coaches strongly believed that to be adaptable, a coach must understand how their athletes operate during competition. This knowledge allows them to develop a strategy enabling their team to be as successful as possible in competition. Miller (Softball) relayed the story of how there was one pitcher in his career who had transferred from a junior college. She was effective most games until the fourth inning, but every time she reached that point of a game she had trouble with control, would give up walks or hits and have to be removed. He asked the pitcher what she thought the problem was and she said the fourth inning had been an issue in her days at junior college as well. In her next start, she pitched well in the first three innings and when the fourth inning came Miller pulled her from the game, however after the inning was over, he reinserted her into the game and she continued to pitch well. Eventually, this enabled the pitcher to see that it was merely a mental block and the fourth inning really had nothing to do with her performance.

Other coaches mentioned understanding the strengths of the players as the key to success. Fritz (Football) gave the example of having a quarterback who is known to be a better runner than a passer and understanding that you would not want to throw the ball 50 times a game. Other coaches mentioned situational strengths of their players and how

it was important to understand who operated the best in specific roles. Knowledge of how to match athletes to roles can be vital to the success of a coach. As athletes turn over from year to year, especially in a collegiate setting, an exceptionally adaptable coach is one who must do this on a regular basis. These coaches have been able to not only do this from year to year at one school, but also in a number of different locations, on a number of different levels of competition, and over a lengthy span of time as athletes have evolved.

This knowledge is not always as apparent as Fritz highlighted. While physical attributes are certainly impactful on the roles played by today's athletes, there are other characteristics to consider when assigning roles. How a player fits into an overall team concept is also an important aspect to consider. These coaches drew upon traits such as an athlete's knowledge of the game, leadership skills, demeanor, and how they may respond in certain scenarios to successfully match athlete to roles. Of course, knowledge such as this is not as easy to ascertain as easily visible physical attributes.

Andy Lopez (Baseball) spoke about his 2012 national title winning baseball team at Arizona and how he had no idea who was going to fill some of the roles on the team as they were close to the start of the season:

I still didn't know who our Sunday starter was to be. I still didn't know who our second baseman was going to be. I still didn't know who our catcher was going to be. I still didn't know who our closer was going to be. And I still didn't know who we were going to bring out of the pen from the left side of the mound.

There was a trial and error process, which carried into the season to see who best filled these roles, some for more specific situations than others. However, as pre-season

practice and even the start of the season played out, Lopez was able to apply his growing knowledge of personnel and assign the best possible athlete to each role. The results of a national championship for the 2012 are hard to argue.

For these exceptionally adaptable coaches, sometimes the decisions about a player's role are easy but often, they are not. What appears to make these coaches better able to make these decisions is their knowledge of their athletes. While physical attributes can stand out, other important characteristics about an athlete are more difficult to determine. These exceptionally adaptable coaches seek to learn as much as they can about their athlete as more than a physical specimen. They also pursue information about the athlete as a person and how this person thinks, feels, and reacts to different scenarios. The knowledge to know how to best utilize your athletes is crucial to the adaptability of these coaches as it allowed them to strategize for any given situation no matter the context.

Multiple coaches extensively discussed understanding their athletes on more than just a competitive level and many of them illustrated how they felt that was more important with today's athletes than ever before. Exceptionally adaptable coaches take the time to obtain personal knowledge about their athletes and use this knowledge to employ the best possible coaching strategies on an individual level. Mic Potter (Women's Golf) spoke to the idea that this knowledge existed on a day-to-day basis and was not just a general knowledge of athletes, such as where they were from or what their background was. In other words, a player's attitude on a given day could ultimately affect their performance. He specifically explained how this was important:

...when the girls come out there from class, find out where they're at. Find out how they're doing. And no matter the content of your team and no matter what generation it is, I think it is important to sort of at that point let them know you care. Let them know you understand that things aren't always easy in class. And they have tests and they have families and they have boyfriends. All that factors in to how effective they are going to be that day.

Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) echoed this sentiment sharing the story of how one of his players came to him wanting to know if he could sign up for a class that would cause him to miss the last half hour of team practice one day a week. The coach declined and said he had to be at practice. After 45 minutes of practice the next day, it was evident there was something amiss with the athlete. When approached, he simply indicated he was disappointed to not be able to take the class. Duvenhage said he then realized that *"happy people are productive people and if he's unhappy, then he probably isn't going to do very well for me on the tennis court either. I've got to let him be who he is and I have to let him be happy."* Understanding an athlete has a life outside of sport can benefit both a coach and their athletes on the court.

These are merely a handful of examples of coaches employing knowledge of an athlete to construct a strategy to maximize team success, but this is an important point. As contexts change, there are some constants. Coaching success is tied to athletes and though the identities of the players change from year to year, understanding individual strengths and weaknesses are paramount to a coach's success. The data appear to indicate that exceptionally adaptable coaches make it a point to understand the athletes playing for

them, both on and off the field, in order to get the best out of them and this knowledge is available to them at any school they coach.

Assistant coaching staff. Also important to these coaches' success is the ability of his or her assistant coaches to fulfill the duties assigned to them. The coaches in this study recognized the fact they are often only as good as their assistant coaches and that understanding your assistant coach's strengths and weakness is also of the utmost importance. Mic Potter (Women's Golf) stated that he wants his assistant to help ensure he is able to focus on the sole goal of improving his athlete's ability, whereas a team sport coach, such as Lou Holtz (Football), works through his assistant coaches to get his athletes to achieve. This difference could simply be due to the fact that the sports of golf and football are so drastically different. However, there was one commonality echoed by many of the coaches: good assistants were important to the overall success of a program. If good assistants are important to the overall success of a program, then a keen knowledge of them is essential in delegating responsibility and devising strategy.

Just as the job of a head coach is tumultuous and filled with turnover, so too is the job of assistant coach. Much like when they match players to specific roles on their teams, these exceptionally adaptable head coaches must employ a knowledge of matching new potential assistant coaches to their program when the opportunity arises. It is just as important for the assistant coaches to match the roles envisioned for them by head coaches as it is for players to fit their role on the team. Coaches must have an understanding of how to match new hires as assistants to their program. Much like the knowledge of matching players to their roles, this is not always an easy knowledge base to acquire. These exceptionally adaptable coaches all have a blueprint for success and

seek out assistant coaches who fit into this plan. It seems as though they developed their idea of what constitutes the right match, through their experience both as a head coach and their time as an assistant.

Some coaches try their best to maintain continuity in their staff. KJ Kindler (Gymnastics) carried much of her staff from Iowa State to Oklahoma when she changed position. However, this is not always possible because of a multitude of reasons. Assistant coaches are occasionally relieved of their duties, do not follow a head coach to a new position, are hired away by other teams, or seek their own head coaching opportunities. Jim Donnan (Football) said that when these things happened there must be a plan in place to fill the vacant position. His approach was to use his strategic philosophy to bring in a new coach who was familiar with what he wanted to accomplish. Mic Potter (Women's golf) utilized a similar approach when hiring his assistant upon a move from Furman to Alabama. He understood what he wanted his role as head coach to be and hired an assistant who enabled him to achieve that goal. Whatever the case, these exceptionally adaptable coaches are able to utilize their knowledge of assistant coaches to surround themselves with the best fit for the situation. This knowledge then enabled these coaches to employ their assistants in roles which facilitated success of the program.

One way for coaches to apply their knowledge of assistant coaches is to delegate responsibility. However, understanding how to do this effectively was something many of the coaches had to acquire. This was especially true of coaches who were involved in individual sports moving from a smaller level to Division I, but not exclusively. Jay Seawell (Men's Golf), Mic Potter (Women's Golf), and Ron Polk (Baseball) all made

specific mention of the absence of an assistant coach when they first started. It was not uncommon for coaches to mention the need to do ‘everything’ as part of their job as they were the only people there to do the job. In high levels of competition, no coach is able to do a job all by themselves. Delegating responsibility is important and to do this successfully, head coaches must have a firm grasp of what their assistant coaches’ strengths and weaknesses are. When Mic Potter was offered the position at Alabama he quickly met with their current assistant coach to gauge her fit in his system. Once he heard she enjoyed helping to run tournaments and doing paper work, she was quickly retained as the assistant. She is able to fill her role in the organization efficiently because she was hired to perform tasks she was strong in. The relationship works because the work she does allows him to focus on coaching.

However, golf operates with a smaller team which allows Potter to spend a great deal of time individually with his athletes. That is not the case in every sport. Willie Fritz (Football) routinely lists over 100 players on his Georgia Southern roster, while Potter has seven full time players on his. This necessitates a different use of assistant coaches. Whereas Potter delegates off the field duties to his assistant, Fritz must utilize his coaches to help install the plan as there is no way for him to communicate directly with each of his players. This has led him to needing to know five things about an assistant coach:

...it’s such a relationship profession that you got to find guys that are good role models to your student athletes. Care about them besides what they do on the football field. They can hold conversations with them about their family. Different things like that. You want to have kids comfortable enough to come in your office and tell you that their mom has cancer rather than you their behavior change and

figure it out later... You got have a guy that's a good staff guy. I've had some guys that were a handful. Had big egos. They thought that it was all about them and not about the student athlete. It wasn't about the team, it was about them. But good staff guys, that's important. At the collegiate level, you got to have good recruiters... You got to have guys that are good schematically. And then you have to have guys that are good X and O coaches...to me that's the 5 prongs of hiring a good assistant coach. If you got a guy that's good at all five of those, you got a winner. Not very many that are good at all five.

While there is an ideal combination of strengths, Fritz understands that not every coach possesses all five of his criteria. Therefore, he must be able to delegate based the strengths and weaknesses of these assistants. Knowing they are capable or not capable of will help him place the correct responsibilities on his coaches.

While coaches strongly believed that knowledge of assistant coaches was imperative to their adaptability, not all coaches employed the same approach as Fritz. Jim Donnan (Football) recalled receiving some advice from one of his mentors, former Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer. He recommended that Donnan fill his staff with younger, hungrier coaches and then teach them what he ultimately wanted. Donnan took that to heart and provided his new assistants with the knowledge he wanted in place. Still, all of these coaches had their own strengths and weakness and as Donnan trained them, he was able to better understand what coach best possessed the attributes required for a given role. Ultimately, he was proud that a number of the coaches he first hired at Marshall University went on one day to become head coaches of their own team.

While different coaches utilized their assistant coaches in different manners, many of them realized their success was tied to these people. Understanding their competencies and deficiencies allows them to get the absolute most out of these assistants. Again, having this knowledge can be a constant in ever changing scenarios. Knowing what roles the assistants can and cannot play can be the difference between winning and losing. Exceptionally adaptable coaches possess this knowledge and attribute it to their ability to adapt

Support staff. While players and assistants are often the most heralded personnel tied to a coach's success, these exceptionally adaptable coaches spoke of another group vital to their success - support staff. This group of people includes just about everyone that is not a player or assistant coach working for a team. They might include secretaries, nutritionists, academic advisors, tutors, and any number of people who work directly with the athletes and coaches on a daily basis. Willie Fritz (Football) specifically mentioned the sheer volume of people who are part of the team leading to his success:

...now I got a grounds crew. I got a video crew. I've got an athletic training staff. I've got a strength and conditioning staff. I've got a football operations staff. A support staff. Recruiting coaches. Student assistants. Graduate assistants. Full time assistants and the 120 something players. So now, all of a sudden I'm in charge of over 200 people.

Support staff are not players or assistant coaches, but knowledge of what these people do and what resources they can provide are critical for a coach to succeed.

Today's collegiate athletic teams have an abundance of resources at their disposal to insure success and a team's support staff are the ones that can typically provide these resources to a coach. These coaches felt strongly that a coach must be aware of these resources and how to access them to help the athletes be as focused as possible on the field of play. These resources include meal plans, housing, personal tutoring, counseling, sport psychologists, nutritionists, athletic training staffs, as well as strength and conditioning specialists. In a world where an athlete's disposition can be the difference between success and failure, exceptionally adaptable coaches must possess knowledge of the resources available to their athletes and how best to take advantage of them.

Perhaps the most oft mentioned member of the support staff for these coaches was the strength and conditioning staff. Many of the long time coaches in the sample mentioned the difference between today's strength and conditioning programs and those from the past. Jay Miller (Softball) said his team used to perform what basically amounted to the same workout as the football team when he was a young coach. Nowadays, strength and conditioning is much more specialized and these coaches were keenly aware of its importance. While many were not experts themselves, they worked closely with the strength and conditioning coaches at their school to develop their team's plans. Some, such as Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) went so far as to attend workouts with his team to experience the same things they do.

A team's support staff is made up of individuals who possess a knowledge base that other members of the personnel, including the head coach, do not possess. Coaches spoke about how, in the past, they would typically have to wear hats they were not always comfortable wearing. Head coaches must work closely with the support staff on

day-to-day operations. Understanding their abilities may afford exceptionally adaptable coaches a luxury other coaches are not aware they possess.

Knowledge of Self

Apart from knowledge of the people surrounding you, the coaches who took part in this study indicated that part of their exceptional adaptability was a result of an acute knowledge of themselves. Multiple coaches mentioned the ability to step outside of their sport and reflect on exactly why some decisions were being made. This seemed to be a common practice of all coaches regarding strategy. Some coaches realized early on that holding themselves accountable was key to staying innovative and not becoming complacent. However, sometimes a life event occurred forcing the coach to rethink their approach as well. These incidents included the birth of their own children, a health issue, a horrific injury occurring at practice, or a team tragedy such as the death of an athlete. Almost all of the coaches made some reference to remembering why they wanted to start coaching in the first place and overwhelmingly, that was to have an impact on young people's lives. In fact, more than one marveled at how far that singular purpose has taken them. In any case, it seems as if coaches must be aware of themselves, how they operate, why they do the things they do, and when they need to make a change.

Coaches spoke at length about introspection and the ability to take a look at themselves as well as their team from within. This was not always easy for coaches who were used to doing things 'their way.' Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) recalled one incident when a frustrated player asked to meet with him after losing a match. As the athlete made his point and suggested some changes, the coach recalled getting angry initially before thinking more about what the athlete was telling him.

I could feel myself sort of recoil. Like I'm going to say, 'We're not changing anything. I know what I'm doing.' And I had this feeling that I got to keep my mouth shut and listen. And the longer I listened to him, the more I calmed down and the more I realized he had an excellent point.

Duvenhage was able to listen to himself and ultimately come to a decision that lead his team and ultimately himself to more success.

Unlike the above scenario, sometimes athletes are willing to accept whatever their coaches do without question. This means coaches must come to some decisions without prompts. A few coaches in the study experienced early failures and this caused them to ask themselves what they were doing ineffectively so the pattern was not repeated. Andy Lopez (Baseball) recalled his second season as head coach at a junior college. He remembered feeling this odd sense of “*déjà vu*” every day when he showed up for work. It was not long before he realized his second season had become a mirror image of his first, a lackluster campaign that finished with a subpar record. He immediately began taking copious notes on what the team was doing poorly and began focusing on the team's shortcomings. Before long, there was an obvious improvement, not only in the team's skill, but also their success level. He still utilizes this note taking strategy to this day.

There are other events that can also change how a coach views themselves and their team. These coaches use life events as a gauge to be more introspective. Sometimes these events are merely realizing a difference in athletes from one generation to the next. Other times, something life changing occurs that does not leave the coach the same. KJ Kindler

(Women's Gymnastics) recognized a change in her approach after the birth of her children:

... in the way I look at the fact that I am working with other people's children. I don't think you look at it that way when you don't have children. You don't necessarily understand how a parent might feel. And I feel – I understand now how a parent feels when their child is successful and how their parent feels when their child is not and how I would want to be dealt with or how I would want someone to deal with [my daughter] if she were in those situations.

This new perspective alters the way coaches go about their job. Kindler also told a story about how a horrific injury changed the attitude of the players so that the coaching staff was forced to change their approach. Andy Lopez (Baseball) recalled the death of an athlete which caused him to soften his approach with his team. Jim Donnan (Football) also spoke of making changes after the death of one of his players.

Coaches work in an ever-changing world. Their place in that world has an effect on the level of success they experience. These coaches who possess exceptional adaptability credit their ability to reflect as a large part of their success in whatever context they coach. Additionally, they are able to change themselves if the context requires them to do so. This ability is one component of achieving exceptional adaptability and possibly success in a variety of different contexts.

Knowledge of How to Develop Trust-Filled Relationships

In order to ascertain the knowledge of athletes, assistant coaches, and support staff, these coaches felt that they must also have a keen knowledge of interpersonal

relationships and how to cultivate them. The ability to interact with people is crucial to the success of a coach and thus the knowledge of how to develop trust is an important one. Without this development of trust, every day, yet important, tasks such as relaying essential information to the players, hearing an assistant coach present new ideas, or even persuading a booster to give more money to the program could possibly be made more difficult. In order to possess exceptional adaptability, coaches must have a knowledge of how to build trust very quickly with a variety of new faces every year so tasks such as these can be accomplished. These coaches have turnover of players, coaches, and personnel on a yearly basis, whether there is a change of school or not. The knowledge of how to cultivate a trusting relationship in a short amount of time is imperative when there is turnover in multiple positions. Almost every coach interviewed in this study brought up the idea of accountability; not only for the team, but for themselves to prove to people they can be trusted. When asked about how this might be accomplished, exceptionally adaptable coaches spoke of the importance of the development of trust.

Exceptionally adaptable coaches understand actions are often more important than words when trying to develop trust. Showing others how committed they are to the job and how they are willing to work just as hard as they expect others to work for them was important. Andy Lopez (Baseball) spoke of showing his athletes how serious he was about being an upper-tier program when he went out and got the wood donated for a real outfield fence, then painted it with the help of his assistants. He realized seeing these actions would elicit a response from his team. Hopefully, it would relay to them that nobody on staff was above working for the program to get better.

While utilizing actions to build trust is a behavior, it is the knowledge of how to build trust that causes these coaches to engage in such a behavior. Other strategies they have found successful in building trust was being consistently available to players, staff, and personnel about all team matters and simply possessing a certain amount of credibility based on previous success. Exceptionally adaptable coaches are always looking to expand their knowledge base, and understanding how to build trust with people in a short amount of time is a powerful knowledge base to possess.

Perhaps the simplest way to build trust with people is simply being friendly and interacting with them. More than one cited it as a strength. Treating people the right way was embedded in more than one coach's philosophy:

I just think treating people good. Treating them good. Treating them with respect. I'm involved with everybody in our program. I don't think it hurts me to know what the freshman manager's name is or a walk-on who will never play for me. I think it also helps your team spirit. The unity of your team. The head coach and hopefully his assistants treat everybody good, not just the studs. (WF, Football)

Exceptionally adaptable coaches seem to understand the importance of being relatable to people. One coach went so far as to attribute their success to being an understandable person who related pretty well not only to players, but their parents as well and that his reputation as a nice guy helped him as a coach.

Coaches are often viewed as unapproachable but this cannot be the case for them to truly understand interpersonal relationships. Head coaches may in fact have to be the most approachable person on a staff. They have to possess a strong knowledge on how to accomplish building trust with people they not only work with, but also rely on, to be

successful. Perhaps, the best example of this was Andy Lopez (Baseball). During our interview, he was speaking on his cell phone and began walking towards his car for an appointment. Our conversation stopped multiple times so he could merely say hello to the people he passed on the way outside. Coaches cannot afford to embody the stoic image many of them are perceived as. They have to be friendly, inviting, outgoing at times, and respectful. Without the knowledge of how to do this, they could never achieve exceptional adaptability.

Summary

It seems coaches who have reached a high level possess a strong knowledge of their own sport and strategies needed to be successful. However, this knowledge is not the only one useful to coaches who operate across more than one context. Exceptionally adaptable coaches also acquire and cultivate a knowledge base of: (a) personnel, (b) self, and (c) how to develop trust-filled relationships. The data analysis revealed that one key to exceptional adaptability in coaches could be attributed to the possession and development of these types of knowledge which enable a coach to be exceptionally adaptable and maintain a high level of success across different contexts.

Chapter 5

Formative Encounters Related to the Profession

Previous research indicates coaches have a strong possession of fundamental knowledge of the sports they coach (Grant, McCullick, Schempp, & Grant, 2012). However, this knowledge and the knowledge bases presented in the previous chapter, alone, were not the only thing needed for these coaches to become exceptionally adaptable. Coaches in this study were influenced by their own experiences as coaches, both as head coach and assistant and credited these experiences as an integral part of their exceptional adaptability. Strikingly, these exceptionally adaptable coaches consistently spoke of encounters from which they draw upon as coaches that had occurred throughout their lives, not just during their coaching career.

It seems these exceptionally adaptable coaches are able to delve deeper into their background and learn from a group of formative experiences that may or may not have occurred as coaches. These experiences may have transpired as far back as childhood. Regardless, these exceptionally adaptable coaches do not limit themselves to information learned merely as coaches. They have formative experiences across their life span which strongly influence their job performance as a head coach. The prevailing themes that described these exceptionally adaptable coaches' formative experiences were that they included: (a) immersion into the profession, (b) circumstances of limited restraint, (c) coaching an ever-changing athlete, and (d) having accessible role models. Through these experiences, these coaches were able to develop into experts in their own sport and devise new strategies to maintain high levels of success.

Immersion into the Profession

One aspect of how these coaches' experiences help to construct their knowledge became apparent the more I was able to talk with them. Almost all of them can recall a time when they were fully immersed into the sport they coached. By full immersion, there was a time in their lives when they spent an inordinate amount of time learning the nuance of the sport they coached or eventually coached. They learned details about the dedication it takes to succeed in a sport. For many of these coaches, this immersive time may have occurred prior to their career as a coach. For others, it was during their formative coaching years. Regardless, many of these coaches look back on some time in their lives where their involvement in their sport taught them not only a great deal about the sport, but helped to form their exceptional adaptability in coaching the sport.

For a few coaches this immersion occurred prior to their coaching career, perhaps during their adolescence. Mark Guilbeau (Women's Tennis) spoke of a time when he was a teenager assisting at a small club that housed four clay tennis courts. When Mark was around 15, the club professional had a stroke and could no longer manage the day-to-day operations of the club. It was at this point that Mark filled in as club pro before and after school. His morning hours were spent caring for the courts and his afternoons were spent giving lessons on them. Outside of his schoolwork, Mark was learning everything he needed to know about maintaining and operating a club. He taught children his age, as well as adults who were twice his age. He looks back on that experience as, not only a great time in his life, but also aided in his development as a coach:

...that's something a lot of people maybe look at it as a non-opportunity...I loved it. I loved it. What it opened up for me to do was be an expert with clay courts,

number one. I learned everything you could about clay courts, maintenance, and running that club. I'd go there at 6:00 in the morning and roll those courts and get the algae off and make sure they were properly watered and all that good stuff and this teaching. Teaching adults when I'm 15 years old and watching them light up to some new ideas about tennis. It was purely awesome is the best way I can describe it. While it was extremely hard work, you're young and you're loving it. And I remember riding my bike home at 11:00 at night and my mom would leave a plate of food in the microwave for me and it was just like, it's 11:15 and this is the greatest day ever.

Guilbeau may have had that opportunity to learn a great deal about clay courts, but he was also able to see the results of hard work, something he values in his coaching today.

Additionally, he was able to hone his skills as a teacher at quite a young age working with a variety of age groups. He fondly recalled a group of girls he would charge \$2 a lesson. After the lesson he would take the four of them to Dairy Queen and spend \$10 on ice cream for them, losing money in the end. But, it was not about the money; it was about the experience for Mark. In the end, three of those four girls went on to play collegiate tennis. Mark was able to become an effective coach at an early age and then apply those skills throughout his career.

Other coaches shared immersive experiences occurring prior to even thinking about coaching professionally, but which helped shaped their careers and has seemingly contributed to their exceptional adaptability. Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) explained that the time he spent with his dad, a golf pro, helped him and his brothers prepare for a career in golf. He joked that his time picking up the range, taking care of carts, and running

tournaments made he and his brothers ‘glorified golf assistants at 12 years old.’ KJ Kindler (Women’s Gymnastics) credited her time as a gym rat growing up on the campus of Hamline University in St. Paul, MN gave her a love for the sport of gymnastics. These coaches spoke of a love of the sport that evolved without knowledge they would make it their career. Additionally, they were able to see first-hand the time and energy it takes to become a coach by observing the professional coaches they were around. This knowledge helped to prepare them for their own careers.

While some coaches spoke of their immersion occurring before their careers, others experienced immersion into their sport during their career infancy. Ron Polk (Baseball) recalled his first head coaching job at Georgia Southern and how the requirements of that position forced him to be responsible for just about every duty a coach could think of:

I could see very quickly why other coaches had turned the job down. They were NAIA but they were just coming next year to be NCAA (Division) I. They (Georgia Southern) had a losing record. The facility was the worst baseball facility I’ve seen, including high school...they had a horse show on the field the night before and it was a rainy night so it was just a bunch of mud. The bleachers were nothing. No batting lanes that I could really feel good about. Slats in the outfield fence were all over the place. [We had] No warning track. [I also] Had to teach five classes. No assistant coach...I had to take care of the baseball field. I mean, I had to order the equipment. I had to do everything.

Despite these seemingly abhorrent conditions, Polk was able to be successful at Georgia Southern in a very short amount of time. He credits his success over the years to learning

so much by coaching in those conditions saying, “*if I hadn’t have done that, I wouldn’t be where I am at today.*” In a situation like this, you can see why an experience such as the one Polk shared could quickly help develop the knowledge needed in the profession.

Other coaches shared similar experiences of a remarkable workload from early in their coaching careers, but perhaps the best example of this came from Jim Donnan (Football). He explained that when he first took the job with Marshall University, his family opted to stay behind in Oklahoma, where he had been a successful offensive coordinator with the University of Oklahoma. His son was a senior in high school and chose to finish school there along with his wife, Mary. Donnan lived in a hotel for two years upon his move to Huntington, WV. That, coupled with the fact the Marshall program was working towards building a new stadium and had its eye on making move to FBS football, Donnan said he received a crash course on the multitude of skills needed to be a head coach. It was during this time that he was able to gain knowledge a head coach needs other than sport-specific content knowledge.

Mic Potter (Women’s Golf) had a slightly different viewpoint than other coaches who had these immersive experiences. Potter did enjoy being an amateur golfer prior to his coaching career, especially when he first discovered the game in college. However, rather than worry about outside influences on the game such as course maintenance or tournament organization, his sole focus has been on improving performance. This idea of continued improvement is still evident in his coaching style. Today he says the only thing he ever immerses himself in as a coach is player performance and how to advance it saying, ‘I do immerse myself in anything I can find out on improving performance, conditioning, and technical game improvement.’ He did not point to a time in his career

or before where he felt completely immersed in the sport as a whole. However, the goal of getting his athletes to perform to the best of their abilities day in and day out is no different than any of the other coaches in the sample.

Today's collegiate head coach has much more on their plate than simply strategy. They are the figurehead of an organization and must have a variety of knowledge bases to be successful. These exceptionally adaptable coaches seemed to have an immersive experience in their sport that, not only aids their knowledge of the sport itself, but also provides necessary knowledge specific to the job of being a head coach. This immersive experience may happen prior to, in the infancy, or occurs throughout their coaching career. Ultimately, they are able to apply the knowledge acquired in these experiences across contexts to develop a love for their sport, establish core values, and understand the inner workings of what it takes to be a coach. In other words, for exceptionally adaptable coaches, the knowledge they draw upon for their profession occurs across a lifetime and may not start when they are first hired as a coach.

Circumstances of Limited Restraint

A great deal of collegiate coaches today are under scrutiny for every decision made. Stress for coaches comes from a number of different sources (Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, & Hays, 2010). It is no secret this pressure to perform exists in today's collegiate competition. Despite this, almost every one of these exceptionally adaptable coaches spoke to an experience early in their careers whereby they were able to operate with little interference. The term limited restraint describes a situation whereby administration, boosters, fans, coaches, and athletes allowed them to perform their job and have less penal consequences for mistakes made. Additionally, it enabled them to

learn from mistakes they made along the way. Coaches were able to try new things without fear of their job being held over their head.

The source of this independence differed depending on the coach. Some coaches spoke to the fact they helmed a non-revenue sport. Thus, it was easier for them to remain somewhat anonymous compared to big time money makers for the university and athletic association, such as football and basketball. Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) did say expectations became higher for him as he moved from junior college to Division I athletics and after he had experienced success, but even still he realized he was still pretty "*obscure*" in the realm of collegiate athletics.

Andy Lopez (Baseball) spoke to the idea that a school's success, or lack thereof, prior to his arrival played a role in his 'freedom.' Coaches often move to new positions because whoever preceded them had not maintained a high enough level of success. Often, this gives the coach more autonomy to do what they want as the fan base and administration are hungry to see accomplishment. Prior lack of success combined with an incoming coach's reputation as a winner can loosen the reins of administration. Winning buys time in the world of collegiate athletics and if a coach is perceived as a winner, then they are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt.

Typically, these coaches were able to take advantage of this limited restraint early in careers. They used this time to hone their approach. This enabled them to make an acute plan more easily implementable as they recruited new players and if they were to move to a new position in the volatile world of coaching. Lopez (Baseball) was able to find his way when he coached with what he called "guppies" at the Division II level before he started "swimming with sharks" once he took a job at the University of Florida.

Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) was able to coach the way he wanted both at Anderson College and Augusta State in lower profile jobs before he took a position at the University of Alabama. Willie Fritz (Football) started as a head coach in junior college before moving through Division II and the Football Championship Subdivision before landing a job at Georgia Southern in the Football Bowl Subdivision. Opportunities at smaller schools allowed these coaches more freedom to develop their approach before taking more pressure-filled jobs.

Coaches also were able to learn the ins and outs of coaching before they became head coaches. KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) imparted the idea that even all the way back to her playing days her head coach groomed her for a coaching career. Then, as an assistant, she was able to make mistakes and learn from them prior to taking her own head coaching job. Learning as an assistant was typical for these coaches. Mark Guilbeau (Women's Tennis) said he would not be the successful coach he is today without his time serving as an assistant. He was able to better understand how practices should be run and what knowledge should be passed along to the players without the severe consequences of mistakes. Jim Donnan (Football) spoke highly of all of his opportunities as an assistant saying that he tried to learn as much as possible during that time so that one day he could be an effective head coach.

It seems that one factor contributing to the exceptional adaptability of these coaches was that they were given ample opportunity to succeed with limited restraint from administration, boosters, or a rabid fan base. These coaches were then afforded the necessary time to implement a plan for their programs. Additionally, they have likely spent meaningful time as an assistant and take the opportunity to learn while in these

positions. All of this allows the coach to learn from any mistakes they make along the way without the repercussions many of their colleagues may face. Reputation, higher expectations, and visibility of the sport may also be determining factors in autonomy given to these coaches.

Coaching the ‘Ever-Changing Athlete’

Expert coaches possess a fundamental knowledge of the sports they coach (Grant, McCullick, Schempp, & Grant, 2012). This knowledge is ever-changing as new strategies are developed and implemented. Developing new strategies on the court/field is part of the job description of a sport coach. Despite their awareness of emerging trends in their various sports, when discussing obstacles to success that required that they be exceptionally adaptable, these coaches focused more on the athlete than strategy. At least in these exceptionally adaptable coaches’ eyes, the sport and its changes are a constant, yet the athletes and how to manage them are ever changing. These coaches listed a number of obstacles they were currently facing which, to them, illustrated the ‘ever-changing athlete.’ These included: (a) athlete’s newfound sense of entitlement, (b) the rise of social media, and (c) bigger, faster, stronger, smarter athletes. While these examples were current trends in the evolution of athletes, the data from these exceptionally adaptable coaches indicated that an adaptable, thus successful, coach must be prepared for a variety of changes and alter their knowledge bases as these obstacles present themselves.

All of the coaches involved in this study have been involved in their specific sport for a number of years. The coach with the shortest tenure as a head coach was Oklahoma women’s gymnastics coach, KJ Kindler, who became a head coach in 2001. This

experience has allowed many of these coaches to work across generations of student-athletes. One change in their players that was all but unanimously discussed by these head coaches was a newfound sense of entitlement in today's athletes. Many of the coaches used the word 'soft' to describe the mental mindset of their athletes.

While athletes have become bigger, faster, and stronger, they are often coddled and rarely criticized prior to arriving on a college campus. Here, they are no longer the 'big fish in a small pond,' and have to earn playing time against other superior athletes. This is difficult for many of them to handle as it is the first time in their life they have not necessarily been the best at this particular skill. Even in the recruiting process these athletes are told how great they are. When they first set foot on the practice field and are criticized, it comes as a bit of a shock to them.

Coaches almost unanimously agreed this was something which used not to be the case with their athletes. They also agreed the best way to overcome it was to be as up front and honest with the athletes as possible. This behavior is very much tied into the knowledge of personnel discussed earlier. Willie Fritz (Football) explained, "*The day of telling a guy to run through a door for you, that's gone. You got to explain why you got to run through the door. You got to help open the door.*" These exceptionally adaptable coaches do not hide things from their athletes. They are transparent in exactly what they want them to do and usually provide an explanation as to why they want things done a certain way. This is how they are able to overcome the obstacle of entitlement.

One trend every coach discussed was the newfound prevalence of social media. Mic Potter (Women's Golf) explained, "*There's a lot more tools at their disposal technology-wise. The ability to connect anytime, anyplace is not always the best thing in*

the world for them. It just makes them a different animal than what I started out with.”

Today’s athlete is used to having technology on their fingertips. Through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a host of other social media outlets, today’s athlete can be a direct channel to a team’s fan base, administration, or even opposition. Long time coaches are learning the role this technology can play for both the positive and the negative.

Many coaches discussed the advantages social media gives them in recruiting. Exceptionally adaptable coaches understand they have to meet today’s social media driven athlete halfway. Though, there were a few who do so reluctantly. Fritz (Football) put it this way:

...you got to do this Twitter stuff. I just don’t find myself [Twitter] that interesting. But, hey, I’m doing it because of recruiting. It’s the only reason I do it. If I didn’t have recruits that were in it, I wouldn’t be doing it. Believe me. Tell everybody what I’m doing? What does that mean? I think it’s stupid, but it’s the world we live in.

For these coaches, it does not matter if they feel it is ‘stupid’ or not. They grasp the fact that in today’s technology driven world, social media is a fact of life.

Perhaps one reason these coaches are reluctant to get on the social media bandwagon is some of the negative experiences they have encountered because of this new platform. One coach told a story of how an athlete lashed out to the coaches using a social media platform because they were not playing a bigger role during competition. This public questioning of coaching decisions had to be dealt with through disciplinary measures. It reached a mass audience and could have been more trouble had the coach not reacted swiftly. Not discussed was how another team might take advantage of such a

mistake or how another team could use comments on social media as ‘bulletin board material’ to motivate themselves for an upcoming competition. While there are positives to utilizing social media, there are also pitfalls.

Coaches realize their athletes must be monitored on social media. They also recognize they had to be example setters for what their athletes made available through social media. In the end, these are new things with which a coach must deal adding to an already large laundry list of job duties a coach possesses. However, exceptionally adaptable coaches face social media and new technology head on. They accept it has become part of their job to engage in it as well as keep their athletes from using it negatively.

While many coaches commented on the increased sense of entitlement in today’s athlete, many also mentioned the fact that many of their athletes are more ready to compete at the collegiate level immediately. They are certainly bigger, faster, and stronger because of better nutrition, as well as increased knowledge of strength and conditioning. But athletes are also more honed to compete in their specific sport thanks to the rise of specificity. Athletes begin to focus on one sport much earlier in their careers. This has changed how coaches both run their practices and strategize for competition, as athletes are ready for more information earlier in their careers than ever before. These exceptionally adaptable coaches were able to recognize the need for change in how they operate at practice and were then able to successfully install this new plan.

Sport specificity seemed to be something most coaches dealt with regardless of the sport. Jay Miller (Softball) spoke of his athletes playing softball year round. While this did lead to some exceptionally knowledgeable athletes, there were also negatives. He

mentioned the higher prevalence of over-use injuries since girls were not taking time off to rest their arms after throwing for a full season. Additionally, he mentioned the robotic nature of today's players. They no longer seemed to possess the instinct of players in the past. Therefore practice changed so coaches were more hands off. He let players make decisions and then discuss whether the correct decision was made and then why or why not.

Both Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) and Mic Potter (Women's Golf) said they no longer worked as much on fundamentals of the game, though golf was a little different as the head collegiate coach was not the only coach involved with the athlete. Often these athletes incorporate a private swing coach for different aspects of the game, sport psychologist, and even nutritionist. This leaves the college coaches working more on professional development, course management, and emotional control.

Athletes recognize at a young age what a business sport can be. Perhaps they are pushed this way early in their playing career or they recognize it themselves as they approach stronger competition. Regardless, collegiate athletes are more ready to play immediately than ever before. Their skill set is more refined and this means coaches must recognize new ways for them to improve as an athlete. Exceptionally adaptable coaches identify this and change their approach subsequently. This enables them to stay ahead of the curve as athletes become more athletic and knowledgeable about their specific sport.

Coaches must be aware of innovations and advances in their sport and part of their job is to learn them or learn to counteract them. In addition to understanding strategic changes which occur in their sport, these exceptionally adaptable coaches were focused on the ever changing athlete who they rely on to be successful. Maintaining a

strong and trusting relationship with their athletes supersedes any innovative scheme or ideas for these coaches. For them, these are the obstacles that must be overcome for a coach to maintain a high level of success. As time goes by, these barriers to strong relationships change and exceptionally adaptable coaches are able to recognize new hurdles they must overcome. Today, these exceptionally adaptable coaches feel (a) athletes' newfound sense of entitlement, (b) the rise of social media, and (c) bigger, faster, stronger, smarter athletes are the key to success. These problems will eventually give way to new ones, but coaches who possess exceptional adaptability will devise actions to overcome them in order to continue operating at a high level.

Accessible Role Models

Evidence from other studies indicates that coaches pull from one or more mentors in their developing years (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998). These mentors may serve in an institutionalized setting but it is more probable coaches observe and mentoring is 'just happening' (Cushion, 2015, pp. 155). Cushion speaks of mentors in this capacity as head coaches who are acting as role models to assistant coaches. However, for exceptionally adaptable coaches, role models were accessible and emerged from a variety of places and may or may not have actually served as mentors. For the purposes of this dissertation, role models will be defined as "someone who another person admires and tries to be like" (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

The exceptionally adaptable coaches in this study spoke freely about their role models and how they were able to influence them as coaches. Numerous coaches discussed the importance of having a set of core values that they wanted to instill in their athletes. Perhaps it comes as little surprise then, that the most cited role model for these

coaches was their family. Almost all of them specifically mentioned their parents who instilled work ethic or a sense of accountability in them at an early age. Ron Polk (Baseball) spoke about his dad's job as a mailman in Phoenix and how he watched him lug around his mailbag in the summertime. Jim Donnan (Football) invoked numerous sayings he had heard from his dad during our chat, showing just how much his father still influenced him. Andy Lopez (Baseball) spoke of his father's immigration from Mexico and how he watched his father work hard and not complain, all the while, barely able to read English. Mark Guilbeau (Women's Tennis) spoke of both his mother and father's willingness to spend time with him and his brother despite their limited athletic knowledge. It was apparent that family played a very large role in these coaches' careers by instilling important values.

Apart from family, coaches mentioned their idols. Though these people may or may not have actually been a part of the coach's life, they still managed to impart knowledge. Unsurprisingly, more than one named famous UCLA men's basketball coach, John Wooden as someone they respected. Andy Lopez (Baseball) based the idea of his practice plans off of Wooden's when a friend of his on the UCLA basketball team told him everything was written down on a 3x5 card. To this day, Coach Lopez continues that ritual saying he had one in his pocket at the time of our phone conversation. Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) also spoke about Wooden and how he voraciously read anything he could get his hands on by the coaching great. KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) spoke of a gymnast on the Hamline University gymnastics team she idolized when she was a child. Kindler credits her with instilling a love for choreography which continues today. Exceptionally adaptable coaches are always looking for new information

to give them an edge. For many of them, this started long before their coaching careers by watching and emulating coaches they admired.

For many of the coaches, this included others they crossed paths with in the coaching field. Perhaps they were coaches from their playing days or someone they coached under as an assistant. Jim Donnan (Football) often credited former Oklahoma head coach, Barry Switzer, for the advice he received while he was an assistant and after he moved on to become head coach. Jay Miller (Softball) cited the first head coach he worked under at Missouri, Joyce Compton. Additionally, he spoke of opposing coaches. He liked the way they operated or a certain style they had. Even as competitors, adaptable coaches are able to see the good in other coaches' programs.

Everyone has role models they look up to. However, exceptionally adaptable coaches seem to go above and beyond to access their role models. Their list included people they had never met, had not spoken to in years, or might have been long dead. Yet, these coaches were still able to find ways to learn and emulate them. Perhaps, it was through reading a book, learning second-hand through someone who knew them personally, or recalling a memory from their childhood. Whether it was their parents, a sibling, an idol, or another coach, these role models influence these coaches and help them establish values, teach them how to overcome obstacles, or even help them understand new strategies or techniques. Exceptionally adaptable coaches are able to take the best of what these role models have to offer and incorporate it into their own coaching ability.

Summary

Coaches possess a strong knowledge base on the fundamentals of the sport they coach. However, this knowledge is not all they utilize to prepare a successful team. As these data indicate, it appears that certain experiences appear to be significant contributors to the development of a coach with exceptional adaptability. Often, these experiences bring a coach's focus back to his or her specific sport and how their current team can succeed in the grand scheme of things. Exceptionally adaptable coaches recognize there are a few experiences that are more meaningful to their knowledge base than others: (a) immersion into profession, (b) encounters of limited restraint, (c) coaching the ever-changing athlete, and (d) accessible role models. These experiences give an exceptionally adaptable coach a wealth of knowledge to draw from and apply to their current scenario in order to produce a winner.

Chapter 6

Comporting Oneself as a Corporate Executive

The idea that coaching in sport is very similar to managing a business is relatively new. Although as early as 1980, Chelladurai and Saleh suggested coaches utilize many of the same strategies used in the business world, the acceptance of this comparison is only a couple of decades old. The growth of athletics as a business has caused many to reevaluate the idea that coaches act as corporate executives. Some coaches are on record as making the comparison themselves. High profile coaches such as Rick Pitino (1998; 2000), Mike Krzyzewski (2001), and John Wooden (2005) have all written books about how to lead in business and be successful in life. These coaches share their keys to being successful in the business world because it is so closely related to what they have to do as coaches. In an interview with the Savannah Morning News (Heath, 2014), Willie Fritz, also made the comparison when hired as the head football coach at Georgia Southern in 2014:

That's the biggest difference in head coaching these days. You learn to change. You're the CEO of a company. Players, coaches, managers, trainers, student managers — you're talking about 200 people, and you have to make sure everyone is on the same page.

An illustration of the similarities of coaching and business can be seen in the fact that there is a 'bottom line' that must be attained for success (Scott, 1997). For intercollegiate athletics, this outcome includes winning competitions, attracting spectators, gaining publicity for the university, and raising money. Coaches are the ones who set the tone for

achieving these goals through the culture they develop in their organization.

Organizational culture has been defined as the “deep-rooted beliefs, values, and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioral norms for the group” (Wallace & Weese, 1995, p. 183). Coaches take on the role of corporate executive for their team and are the ones who set the tone in the organization of a collegiate sport team.

Coaches go through a process (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995) by which they “establish optimal conditions for training and competition by structuring and coordinating the tasks involved in reaching the goal” (p. 9) in order to establish their organizational culture. The exceptionally adaptable coaches in this study seemed to have some specific behaviors they utilize when going through these procedures. These behaviors are akin to that of a corporate Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This chapter presents the findings regarding the Corporate Executive-like behaviors that appear to enable these coaches to possess exceptional adaptability. Specifically, these coaches indicated that techniques such as: (a) surrounding themselves with talented personnel, (b) a blueprint for success, and (c) cultivating interpersonal relationships.

Surrounding Themselves with Talented Personnel

Chapter Four described how exceptionally adaptable coaches had knowledge in multiple areas related to being a successful coach, yet not necessarily sport related. This means the coach is most likely not an expert in all, if any, of these specific knowledge bases. Coaching in sport has become incredibly specialized. Even Mic Potter (Women’s Golf) in his interview discussed the sheer number of coaches his athletes already work with prior to coming to college. His athletes employ as many as three or four other

coaches prior to playing for him. This specialization has forced these exceptionally adaptable coaches to surround themselves with personnel who possess the most appropriate knowledge base so they can be in charge of precise areas of a team. These coaches have a hand in every facet of their program but they let people who are experts do their job and only interfere when needed. Perhaps Fritz (Football) summarizes these behaviors best:

...you can't micromanage. You've got to hire good people and let them do their job. [If] they're not going to it the way want them to do it, then tell them how you want it changed. I just think you have to have your thumb on every facet of your program but you can't have your whole fist on there. You got to know what's going on. I don't have time to do everybody's job, nor do I want to. When there are issues and we're struggling in one of those different areas, you got to get more involved in it and try to help find solutions.

NCAA coaches have a monumental task in trying to keep up with every aspect of their team. It would be almost impossible for one person to have the wherewithal to do every job with the necessary quality needed to be successful at the collegiate level. Therefore, it is imperative for coaches to hire the best possible workforce to run the day-to-day operations of the team and delegate responsibility so the burden does not lie solely on them.

However, delegation of responsibility is a meaningless task for coaches if the people they put in charge are not competent enough to carry out their jobs. Many coaches spoke to the importance of surrounding themselves with the best possible staffs, most notably assistant coaches, to alleviate the pressure on themselves. This was a theme which carried

over from individual to team sports. The role of an assistant may have been different depending on the sport, but the need for high quality employees was a must for these coaches.

Some coaches looked at assistant coaches as extensions of themselves, taking the opportunity to teach them exactly what they wanted taught to their athletes. Jim Donnan's (Football) approach at both of his head coaching positions was "*articulate the model, train them to fit that role, and let them do their job.*" This method rang true for his players as well as assistant coaches. He wanted his assistants to train the players in a manner that fit his style and he taught those schemes to his coaches. It was something he learned from one of his mentors, Barry Switzer, who told him to hire young coaches when he started and train them to do the job so he knew what was being taught to his players. Additionally, younger coaches were not as apt to move so it permitted the staff to build a continuity, which enables the opportunity to build on success.

Rather than teach their assistants exactly what they wanted, other coaches had a plan in mind when hiring coaches for their staff. Willie Fritz (Football) spoke of five traits he looked for in assistants: (a) role model to student athletes, (b) able to fit in with the current staff, (c) good recruiters, (d) schematically sound, and (e) knowledgeable about the game. There was a caveat to his five pronged approach though and that was that the likelihood of finding an assistant who fit all of these categories was unlikely. Therefore a coach would have to pick and choose which of these traits was most important at the time. Lou Holtz (Football) narrowed his focus to one trait. He wanted his assistants to be good teachers. He felt that a good teacher was a good communicator and that enabled the assistant to succeed in other facets of the job, especially recruiting.

Almost unanimously, the coaches in this study agreed that every assistant on their staff had an assigned role. They knew exactly what their job was and were free to do that job as long as they were successful. For example, Mic Potter (Women's Golf) knew he wanted an assistant to take care of the administrative details so that he was able to focus on player performance. Other coaches utilize their assistants as an additional set of eyes. Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) spoke of his assistant working with the athletes and bringing a different perspective to problem solving.

Above all, assistant coaches are part of the team. Coaches were quick to speak of their importance in a program's success. KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) spoke in the plural possessive when speaking to her success using words such as 'our.' Exceptionally adaptable coaches are very good at the job they do. However, part of that job is surrounding themselves with talented individuals to share the burden of coaching with. Finding these competent assistants is a key component in coach adaptability.

Blueprint for Success

In Tharp and Gallimore's (1976) seminal work that examined Coach John Wooden's basketball practices, we learned the amount of planning that went into every single practice. There was a goal and the practice worked toward that goal. It is hard to argue with the success of who many think is the greatest coach of all time regardless of sport. Coaches today emulate this idea and the coaches in this sample are no different. Practice has plans and those plans built towards an overarching goal for the team. Exceptionally adaptable coaches all approach each team, from year to year, with a plan. Many view the plan as a large part of their success.

The first participant interviewed in this study was Ron Polk (Baseball) and he made it very clear a coach's plan is a key element to their success. Nearly every other participant in the study echoed his sentiment. Polk mentioned the need for a plan in the early part of the interview and it was something we discussed in great depth as the interview progressed. Lou Holtz (Football) said that as long as he stuck to the plan, it never failed him. That begged the question what exactly constituted the 'plan.' It seems that no two coaches' plans are exactly the same, however there are some principles agreed upon by these coaches. Exceptionally adaptable coaches: (a) plan based on achievable expectations for their teams, (b) are not averse to changing their plan, (c) are transparent in the implementation of their plans, and (d) plan for success in all aspects of their program.

Just as in the business world, an athletic team has goals set to achieve. The coach sets team goals and the player or a combination of a player and a coach may set individual goals. Often, expectations of great coaches are extremely high (Becker, 2009). Exceptionally adaptable coaches are no different and have high expectations for their teams. However, while some coaches are influenced by outside anticipations, these coaches do not let high expectations keep them from setting realistic goals for their team.

All coaches want their teams to be the most successful and walk away with championships every year. However, many coaches in this study relayed the fact that they would not have been hired at many of their former positions if the previous coach had been as successful as humanly possible. Thus, when they first take over a job, the idea that they can compete for a national title immediately is somewhat far-fetched. KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) said as much when she first took over her position at

Oklahoma. She did not feel as if the facilities were at a high enough caliber and she realized there was a very big need to change not only the culture but the perceptions of her athletes. At the time, their goal was to reach the NCAA Super Six, something the team had never done. It was not until they were able to reach that goal that those expectations changed, not just for the staff but for the athletes as well. The knowledge they could compete on the highest stage helped change their own expectations of success. Though it took a little while, the Oklahoma women's gymnastics team was finally rewarded with a national championship in 2014.

Andy Lopez (Baseball) agreed that high expectations are a must but goals must be achievable for a team to further those expectations. One essential aspect of his blueprint is to compare his current team to the best teams in their competitive conference. He calls these "*bullies*" and the goal is to be able to play on a similar level to these "*bullies*." Once this is accomplished the team can turn its attention to the more lofty goals of competing nationally. This was a strategy taken by other coaches as well. Jim Donnan (Football) consistently compared his teams to those who perennially competed for national championships. Then focused on what his team's perceived shortcomings were during the recruiting process.

Regardless of what the goals are, they need to be realistic in a sense that the team can achieve them. Fans, boosters, and administration may attach higher expectations than can be achieved on a team. These exceptionally adaptable coaches were able to look past these outside expectations and set attainable goals for their team from year to year. Progressively the team is able to work towards more lofty goals. This is another trait that sets them apart from coaches with less adaptability.

Once these achievable goals are set, these coaches were able to develop and implement a plan. However, one thing these coaches are willing to do as a component of their exceptional adaptability is alter the plan if needed. Changes may occur for a variety of reasons. Perhaps, the coach underestimated the team's or an athlete's progression and must challenge them at a higher level. Many of the coaches though shared a time when they felt the plan needed changing because they were not accomplishing what they had hoped. KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) recalled her first meet as head coach and how unprepared she felt the team was based on her leadership. She realized the plan, to that point, was not what it needed to be and went back to the drawing board.

Kindler's example illustrates how some of these coaches were able to come up with their plans. Through their experiences of autonomy through various administrations, these coaches were able to try things and see how they worked out. Ron Polk (Baseball) was able to develop his plan through trial and error at both Georgia Southern and Mississippi State before baseball became as popular in college as it is today. Jay Miller (Softball) had the luxury of being able to make mistakes as a club softball coach before his first collegiate job at Oklahoma City. KJ Kindler tinkers with her plan on a year-to-year basis. Sometimes ideas are a success and stick. Other times they were a failure and do not. Occasionally, they work out but are scrapped for various reasons. This was even the case the year after her team was able to win a national championship.

These coaches' plans also changed with input from trusted members of their team, be it player or assistant coach. However, for this to happen, it seems the new idea must be well thought out and reasoned. These coaches will not change merely on suggestion. This is not always easy for coaches to do. Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) recalled an incident

where a player questioned his approach. While his first instinct was to dismiss the player, he instead listened to the critique. The more he listened, the more he realized the athlete was right and had good ideas. Being able to put his ego aside allowed him to change his plan for the better. Of course, these coaches do not take every suggestion given by a player or assistant but do appreciate the ideas. Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) felt suggestions from team members could be great source as it shows athletes are truly engaged in the plan. After all, they are the ones directly competing.

One way to assist the athletes in engaging in the plan is transparency. Coaches are up front about the plan. They share the plan with their coaches and players so everyone is on the same page. Ron Polk (Baseball) made sure this information was written and disseminated to his athletes so they were aware of what was expected of them. Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) said that when he takes a new job, sharing the plan was one of the first things he always planned on doing so the athletes were knowledgeable about his expectations. Lou Holtz (Football) echoed these sentiments and even credited this with helping build trust.

Holtz felt this transparency of the plan was key as it led to accountability. Multiple coaches spoke to the idea that everyone who was a member of the team (player, coach, manager, etc.) was held accountable for their actions. If someone failed to embody the expectations laid out in the plan, then there were consequences. It may have been a player being disciplined for their actions or a coach being reprimanded for a decision. Transparency of the plan leads to accountability and this trait is important to exceptionally adaptable coaches.

These exceptionally adaptable coaches built their plans around more than simply an offensive or defensive strategy. Plans were built around all aspects of the program. Perhaps the most discussed of these plans was recruiting. Almost unanimously, these coaches spoke of their recruiting plan and how important it was to maintaining a high level of success. Many listed recruiting as one of the first three things they would focus on when beginning a new position. Teams made up of the most talented athletes, who are also compatible to the team's dynamic, have the best chance to succeed. These coaches recognize that and put a premium on their recruiting plan.

Additionally, these coaches talked about exceeding in every aspect of life, not just between the lines during competition. They implemented plans to foster this attitude. Willie Fritz (Football) runs a program at Georgia Southern called Eagle Elite where the team competes in a number of facets of life both on and off the field. A number of other coaches mentioned the fact they were more than coaches for a sport. Their plans include shaping their teams into outstanding people as well as outstanding athletes. In other words, these exceptionally adaptable coaches recognized the reason they started coaching, which was to make an impact on young people's lives.

In coaching, a plan seems to be more than a strategy to succeed on the field. For exceptionally adaptable coaches, this plan is created around achievable expectations. However, neither the expectations nor the plan is set in stone. It is open to interpretation and can change through trial and error or through suggestion from a trusted source. These coaches ensure the plan is transparent. When this transparency is achieved, the plan can act as a bridge to build trust with their personnel, both athletes and assistants. The plan also goes beyond the strategy of a sport. It is multifaceted and includes other issues such

as recruiting and character building. Ultimately, the plan and the relationship developed from the trust found in accountability leads to success both on and off the field. For these reasons, it seems coaches who are exceptionally adaptable have plans that focus on more than winning on the field of play.

Cultivating Interpersonal Relationships

Collegiate coaches fall into a unique category. While they are not coaching professional athletes, they are working with those who perform at an extremely high level. However, in many instances, they act not only as a coach but also as a mentor, friend, or confidant. Collegiate athletes need to be treated with mutual respect, trust, and honesty in a similar manner Bennie and O'Connor (2012) found professional athletes want to be treated. As head of a team, exceptionally adaptable coaches take a page from successful business leaders and manage interpersonal relationships in a constructive manner (Xavier, 2005). This means they are merely not just friendly with their athletes but understand them on a level that allows coaches to help move them towards desired outcomes. In order to accomplish this level, these coaches asserted the importance of developing trust between the coaching staff and the athletes. Again, this takes place both on and off the field.

Being a transparent leader as discussed above is one way to gain your athlete's trust. However, now once trust has been developed, it is then up to the coach to really get to know his or her athletes. When working with a large team, this might seem a difficult prospect. Willie Fritz (Football) says it takes just a few minutes a day. He calls athletes into his office and simply chats with them just to see how things are. He put it simply, *"You want to have kids comfortable enough to come in your office and tell you that their*

mom has cancer rather than you see their behavior change and figure it out later.” On the other hand, coaches such as Mic Potter (Women’s Golf) have a little easier time keeping up with athletes as they number so much fewer. He simply takes the time at the beginning of practices to gauge their attitudes and feeling that day. Simply taking the time to chat with athletes can go a long way towards developing a strong relationship with them.

Other coaches spoke of simply having an open door policy so the athletes knew they were always welcome to share their feelings with them. Showing the athletes you care also goes a long way. Andy Lopez (Baseball) uses actions as much as he uses words. When he arrived at Arizona, he took it upon himself to show the team he intended on making their organization first class by going out and having a new outfield fence built to replace an old chain link fence. Then he and the coaching staff went out and painted it. This gesture let the team know that no one was above working towards making the program the best it could be.

In addition to their athletes, coaches must also develop solid mutual relationships with assistant coaches, administrators, support staff, and even boosters. This is a difficult juggling act that few can handle and separates collegiate coaches from other youth and professional coaches. Head coaches and assistants work in such close quarters for extended periods of time; it only makes sense they need to understand one another. However, assistant coaches must know they have a voice as well. Many of the coaches mentioned having conversations with their assistants so they know their input is welcome. Again, transparent governance by the head coach is key, not just with their athletes but with their assistants as well.

Administrators and boosters proved to be another group of people with whom these coaches felt it was important to establish meaningful relationships. One way exceptionally adaptable coaches can start this process is by embracing established traditions. Collegiate athletics are ripe with traditions, which connect not only a fan, but also a university, to an athletic team. Willie Fritz (Football) spoke of how some coaches who had come to Georgia Southern prior to him really did not grasp this concept, but he was determined to do so. In fact, one tradition involved the team arriving to the stadium in a yellow school bus and Coach Fritz asked if he needed to drive. Jay Seawell (Men's Golf), as well as Mic Potter (Women's Golf), take the University of Alabama's athletic success as a whole very seriously and strive to make sure their programs fit in line with the mission of the University's athletic department.

Embracing tradition is a way for a coach to reach out and establish trust to both the administration and boosters. However, it is a two-way street. Jim Donnan (Football) revealed that in trying to please his athletes, he made a decision to change the football uniform at the University of Georgia and simply add a stripe to the helmet. He spoke with the administration and they agreed to the change. However, when the fans (and boosters) saw it, they were livid. Instead of uniting the team and its fans, the move became an obstacle Coach Donnan had to overcome.

If Knowledge of Personnel is a key component to adaptability in coaches, then that knowledge is requisite for developing strong interpersonal relationships with the people a coach must deal with each day. This is a difficult behavior simply because of the sheer number of people involved, but coaches must engage in it, at the very least with

their athletes. Exceptionally adaptable coaches are able to complete this task efficiently and effectively.

Summary

Every coach engages in a list of behaviors to accomplish their jobs. However, exceptionally adaptable coaches seem to have a unique set of behavior that separates them from other coaches. These behaviors mirror that of a business leader or CEO and include: (a) surrounding themselves with talented personnel, (b) integrating a multifaceted plan, and (c) cultivating interpersonal relationships. Understanding that their job is very much a business enables these coaches to exemplify the adaptability needed to be successful in multiple contexts.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Implications

To date, very little research existed on adaptability in coaching and what little work had been done only focused on a small portion of the behaviors exhibited in displaying adaptability (Gauthier, Schinke, & Pickard, 2006; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013). While many presume adaptability existed as a characteristic of effective coaching, there was no idea as to exactly what made a coach adaptable. This research fills a gap in the literature by examining adaptability through the eyes of coaches who seem to possess the trait in an exceptional quantity. Additionally, this research study helps to uncover the knowledge, experiences, and behaviors that these coaches attributed to their exceptional adaptability. The findings from this investigation are the first step towards building a paradigm of an exceptionally adaptable coach, which had previously been assumed but never, existed.

The results of this study shed light on how adaptability is represented in the world of collegiate coaching through knowledge, experiences, and behaviors. These findings support the claim that coaching leadership has a strong connection to business leadership (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Kellett, 1999) and coaching leadership literature through the use of Yukl's (2012) Taxonomy of Leadership Behavior as a way of understanding the findings. Furthermore, adaptability seems to be a key trait in effecting coaching. Perhaps most apparent from the findings of this study, however, is that Pulakos and colleagues' (2000) Taxonomy of Adaptive Behavior seems to be an appropriate framework by which to study the nature of adaptability of coaches. This chapter will discuss the individual

findings and their implications in the following sections labeled by the themes that emerged from the data: (a) a non-sport related knowledge base, (b) formative encounters related to the profession, (c) comporting oneself as a corporate executive. This will be followed by a description of how this knowledge, these experiences, and these behaviors link adaptability for coaches to the business literature. The final section will discuss future suggestions for research in the area of adaptability in coaching.

A Non-Sport Related Knowledge Base

Previous research has indicated a coach's knowledge base should include some steadfast information (Blumenstein, Orbach, Bar-Eli, Dreshman & Weinstein, 2012). This information includes: (a) knowledge of the sport, (b) knowledge of the people in the sport (e.g. athletes, coaches), and (c) scientific knowledge relating to the sport (e.g. technique, methodology, physiology, and psychology). One would think the exceptionally adaptable coaches who participated in this study possessed these three areas of knowledge as they all have achieved success at a high level. However, there were other forms of knowledge that appeared to be essential in the development of their exceptional adaptability.

The idea these exceptionally adaptable coaches hold an interpersonal knowledge of how to successfully interact with personnel should come as no surprise based on this previous work (Cote & Gilbert, 2009). These coaches valued the knowledge required to communicate effectively with personnel, including, players, assistant coaches, and staff. Similarly, intrapersonal knowledge of themselves is important for expert coaches. Possessing a knowledge of self seems arbitrary at first, but there is little doubt this knowledge base is an important one from which these coaches draw. These coaches were

very mindful of the role they played in their own program and this knowledge helped them with the direction of their program. Without this knowledge, these coaches may not have had the wherewithal to make changes as needed. Andy Lopez (Baseball) could very well still be coaching mediocre teams at the Division II level rather than being a national championship winning coach had he not listened to himself when he felt that feeling of “*déjà vu*” his second year at California State-Dominguez Hills. These exceptionally adaptable coaches mirror this description set forth in previous research to define expert coaches. However, there were other forms of this knowledge and completely new knowledge types not previously found to which they ascribed their exceptional adaptability.

This knowledge of self also made these coaches’ personal lives matter as well. Events which impacted them personally also impacted their coaching. This finding aligns with Cote and colleagues’ (1995) Coaching Model, which incorporated experience as an influence on athlete development. However, these exceptionally adaptable coaches utilized more than the experiences they encounter on the field of play. They were also impacted by things they go through in their personal life. The example of KJ Kindler (Women’s Gymnastics) being influenced by the birth of her children is a prime example of this. The role of parent made her more aware of how she treated her athletes as she self-reflected on how she would want her children to be treated by a coach.

Understanding the role of one’s personal life plays in coaching is an important difference between successful coaches and exceptionally adaptable coaches. These coaches seem to self-monitor in a style very similar to that of expert coaches (Schempp, Webster, McCullick, Busch, Mason, 2007). Much like the expert golf instructors from

Schempp and colleagues' study, these exceptionally adaptable coaches understand their personal knowledge and even characteristics shape their approach. Expert coaches appear to have this understanding there is "an underlying connection between their personal lifestyle and their professional practice (p. 181). This trait seems evident in exceptionally adaptable coaches as well. While successful coaches may draw upon their experiences on the court/field and use them to further their success, exceptionally adaptable coaches, like expert coaches, draw from experiences throughout their lives, which impact their ability to coach.

While Cote and colleagues' (1995) Coaching Model discusses knowledge as it pertains to the sport itself, perhaps knowledge of self outside of the realm of coaching strongly influences coaches in the development of their athletes as well. Coaching does not take place in a bubble strictly on the field of practice and play. Rather, these coaches were very keen on the idea life experiences impacting their coaching performance and cited evidence that indicated it influenced their unique approach. Expanding what constitutes the knowledge required to develop athletes to include these life experiences seems worth further inquiry.

An additional knowledge base displayed by exceptionally adaptable coaches was the knowledge of how to develop trust-filled relationships. Chan and Mallett (2011) suggested this knowledge was as important as specific content and strategical knowledge for high performance coaches so it should come as no surprise these coaches possess such information. However, coaches credit this base of knowledge with their exceptional adaptability as well. Not only do they feel it is important as a knowledge base, these coaches then utilize that knowledge in developing relationships. Again, as contexts

change, there is little wonder as to why these coaches feel this is important. In a career where there are new faces on a yearly basis, this knowledge is paramount to the development of strong relationships with players, assistants, administrators, boosters, and staff.

Coaches must possess a wealth of knowledge to successfully navigate their job description on a daily basis (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, & Baria, 1995). However, many make the mistake this knowledge is merely of the sport they coach and the strategy involved in it. Exceptionally adaptable coaches do possess such knowledge, yet there is far more involved than simply content knowledge of the sport. Their knowledge of personnel, themselves, and how to develop trust-filled relationships are important factors in their exceptional adaptability. Drawing from these knowledge bases enable them to thrive in a multitude of contexts and in a profession where turnover is a part of life.

Formative Encounters Related to the Profession

As previously mentioned, Cote and colleagues' (1995) work on the Coaching Model expresses previous experience as a key factor in the goal of developing athletes. While these coaches may be somewhat unique in being affected by experiences outside the realm of their sport, they are also most certainly influenced by experiences related to their profession. Not only do these coaches employ what they gleaned from these experiences to better develop athletes, they are also able to draw from them to help the progress of their own adaptability. These coaches pointed to a number of specific experiences which they attributed as key factors to their exceptional adaptability: (a) immersion into the profession, (b) circumstances of limited restraint, (c) coaching an ever-changing athlete, and (d) having accessible role models.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding in this category of experiences was the immersion into the profession. These events may or may not have occurred during the coaches' professional careers, but were a compelling force in achieving both success and exceptional adaptability during their careers. For many of these coaches, this experience took place well before they began their coaching career. Yet, there was still a strong desire to be involved in the sport. For Mark Guilbeau (Women's Tennis) it was being thrust into the role of caretaker and instructor at a small clay court club in Louisiana. For Jay Seawell (Men's Golf), it was working as a cart boy for his dad who was a club professional. Regardless of the scenario, it seems a love for the sport these coaches are involved in was developed long before a university ever paid them. This desire to be a part of the sport was something they felt was key to their adaptability.

Others were thrust into a role that demanded they learn as much about coaching in a short amount of as possible. This exposure to the world of coaching served as their immersive experience and led to very similar outcomes. While these coaches are obviously life-long learners, they are also equipped to handle a large amount of information at once and process it accordingly. These coaches are as resilient as they are intelligent. These traits are imperative to their adaptability as a coach and they have a firm grasp of that.

Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas (2007) found there was a path many coaches took in advancing to working at such a high level. However, this research seems to focus on playing experience specifically. Additionally, while the coaches involved in this study seem to fit the description of a high performance coach, there is a difference in being a high performance coach and being an exceptionally adaptable high performance coach.

These coaches speak to an immersive experience which is more than merely playing the sport they eventually coached. Instead, they discuss being true students of the game. Perhaps, being life-long learners helps them to achieve exceptional adaptability.

One formative encounter reported by these coaches, yet seemingly absent elsewhere in coaching literature, was experiencing at least one stage in their careers where they were able to do their jobs with limited restraint. This was a position where they were free to make decisions with little fear of repercussions from their institutions. This situation may have come about because of reputation. However, more often than not, it occurred early in their careers. Perhaps it was because they were employed in a job that was more anonymous or the school they were hired by was desperate for a change. Regardless, these coaches took the opportunity of limited restraint and honed their approach to coaching. However, this topic needs to be researched further to better understand its true impact on adaptability.

Another experience these coaches are able to draw from was coaching an ever-changing athlete. All of these coaches have at least a decade of experience and reported one of their most daunting tasks was relating to an athlete that is constantly changing. Today's problems of entitlement and grasping social media may give way to a newer set of problems in the future. However, these coaches are prepared for any changes that may occur in the athletes they coach. Understanding athletes evolve is a strength not every coach possesses. It seems the term 'dinosaur' is tossed around a lot describing coaches who are slow to accept changing culture. Coaches who cannot change with their athletes have little hope of being truly adaptable.

These coaches embrace the idea their athletes will evolve over time. While this may institute change in these coaches' approach, it has little impact on their core values. Becker (2009) found there were certain traits athletes who experienced great coaching possessed. One such trait is the ability to disregard the irrelevant. These coaches understand which trends in today's athletes demand their attention, and which do not. They are then able to focus on things which matter most to their teams. Based on their accolades, these coaches could probably be deemed great, yet this is a trait which also makes them exceptionally adaptable.

These exceptionally adaptable coaches also describe having access to role models throughout their careers. They do not merely accept mentoring as it happens as Cushion (2011) suggests, but go out and seek information from a variety of role models. It may be as simple as emulating another coach as Andy Lopez (Baseball) did when he aped John Wooden by writing everything on a 3x5 card. It could be more direct such as when Ian Duvenhage (Men's Tennis) sought the advice of a former coach. Regardless, these exceptionally adaptable coaches not only understand the value of having role models, they also know where to seek them out and how to gather knowledge from them.

Comporting Oneself as a Corporate Executive

Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) were among the first to make a connection between the leadership styles in the coaching world being similar to the business world. The data from this study suggests these two styles are not merely similar as suggested previously. Rather, in cases where there is exceptional adaptability, coaches essentially play a near exact role of a corporate executive. These coaches embraced the idea they were more than coaches. Willie Fritz (Football) even joked his job consisted of more 'corporate'

duties and the university “*gets the coaching for free.*” As research is furthered in the field, this idea only becomes more apparent.

During the last two decades of the 20th century, research in the business literature turned its gaze to transactional and transformational leadership (Burn, 1978; Bass, 1985). Despite the idea coaching leadership and business leadership were related, research, especially, on transformational leadership was not conducted in coaching until after the turn of the century. Charbonneau and colleagues (2001) were the first to link this model of leadership by a coach to athletic performance. Their findings indicated transformational leadership exhibited by the coach raised the level of intrinsic motivation of athletes. This, in turn, increased performance during competition. Once again, an idea rooted in the world of business was successfully applied to the coaching world.

More recently, another construct from the business leadership literature has been applied to coaching. Emotional Intelligence (EI) was first derived as a construct in leadership and is defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among the, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Characteristics of EI include (a) understanding one own emotions, (b) knowing how to manage them, (c) emotional self-control, (d) understanding others; emotions, and (e) managing relationships (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000). While research on EI in the field of business has been prevalent for two and a half decades, it was not until more recently it found its way into the coaching literature. Chan and Mallett (2011) first proposed EI’s potential value for coaches, concluding, “For a coach (leader), low EI may contribute to poor interpersonal skills and the inability to develop a trustworthy and inspiring relationship with their staff

or athletes. Hence, EI Seems invaluable for the high performance coach as it contributes to effective leadership” (p. 325). Based on the similarities between EI and the responses of these coaches, EI seems to be essential to exceptional adaptability.

Coaches appear to lead in a fashion very similar to that of corporate executives (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Kellett, 1999). The exceptionally adaptable coaches involved in this study played the role of executive by: (a) surrounding themselves with talented personnel, (b) displaying a blueprint for success, and (c) cultivating interpersonal relationships. These behaviors are also the hallmark of effective leadership in the corporate world. Iacocca (1984) showed these behaviors in his transition between *Ford* and *Chrysler*. One of his priorities was to bring passionate, intelligent, and hard-working *Ford* executives with him to his new position. With this new influx of talent, he developed a plan which he shared with the company. Finally, through the relations he was able to cultivate, this group implemented a plan that saved *Chrysler* from imminent bankruptcy. The exceptionally adaptable coaches acted in the same manner as their contexts changed. These behaviors were the reason they experienced continued success.

The awareness of how to build strong, trust-filled relationships with a number of different people was imperative to the exceptional adaptability of these coaches. Rynne and Mallett (2012) referred to this sort of behavior when directed towards athletes as “pastoral care” (p. 512). These coaches felt it was important to go beyond merely the athletes and also know how to do this with other associates including their assistant coaches, boosters, administrators, and other support staff they encountered on a regular basis. Not only did these coaches speak of having the knowledge to develop these relationships, they utilized that knowledge to cultivate strong interpersonal relationships

with these people. Almost unanimously, these coaches discussed the importance of being able to interact with a number of people. However, it seems the most important communication, according to these coaches, occurs with their players.

Utilizing these three behaviors which seem imperative to exceptional adaptability in coaches allowed these coaches to employ a number of leadership behaviors described in Yukl's (2012) Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors. The bulk of these behaviors fall under the relations-oriented behavior category. These exceptionally adaptable coaches strengthened the tie to business leadership by discussing at great length behaviors such as supporting, developing, recognizing, and empowering. However, developing trusting relationships also was an important aspect of networking, which falls under the external leadership category of Yukl's description.

Through cultivating strong interpersonal relationships, these coaches were able to engage in a number of other behaviors that characterize effective leadership. For instance, because of the ability to develop relationships, these coaches were able to plan based on the knowledge of their athletes. Additionally, they were able to employ their assistant coaches to effectively do their own jobs. Once tasks were assigned to both players and assistants, these coaches were able to clarify the plan as needed. A strong dynamic between the head coach and his subordinates makes the coach seem approachable which is imperative to actively plan and clarify that plan with others involved. This eventually led to another behavior of leadership classified by Yukl (2012), monitoring operations.

Perhaps the leadership behavior that could most easily be tied to the themes elaborated on by these coaches was that of problem solving. One could argue almost every knowledge, experience, or behavior displayed by these coaches could lead to

advanced problem solving skills. For example, the previously discussed attribute of knowledge of personnel could certainly make a coach more informed about problems which could arise with their athletes or coaching staff. Additionally, the experience of Immersion into the Profession gave many of these coaches a foundation of which to draw from should they encounter a specific set of problems. This should certainly ring true for the coaches who were asked to take on multiple roles early in their career. Coaching the Ever-changing Athlete helps these coaches navigate a landscape of constant evolution. This category alone is an experience of problem solving as coaches are forced to come up with solutions to keep their athletes on-task as their personalities and behaviors change.

Apart from their knowledge and experiences, coaches utilized behavior, which enhance their problem solving capabilities. Surrounding themselves with talented personnel gives these coaches a broader wealth of knowledge from which to draw. Each piece of this personnel puzzle represents a specific understanding; one which the coach may not possess. Accessing and using this knowledge can assist a coach greatly when faced with a problem. Furthermore, having the Blueprint for Success would also be key in problem solving as many of these coaches have a prescribed set of outcomes that they can turn to when in need. This was also true of expert coaches who use a blueprint to team build (Bloom, Stevens, & Wickwire, 2003). As these expert coaches worked towards building a team, they learned from previous experiences sometimes through a trial and error process. These exceptionally adaptable coaches seemed to act in a similar manner though they all did not meet the criteria for experts. Regardless, the ability to know how to react when a problem arises can often be key in the remedy of the problem.

The blueprint these coaches employ to attain success allows them to react in an appropriate manner when the time comes.

To this point, a great deal has been made about the fact the structure of business parallels with that of sport. A coach would seem to play a similar role as a CEO in the business world. The coaching literature, to this point, has compared the style of leadership exhibited by coaches to leaders in the business world. There has also been much research on behaviors exhibited by coaches. However, there has been little comparison to how these behaviors are linked to those shown by effective leaders in business. To effectively lead, CEOs exhibit a certain set of behaviors. It seems, at the very least, coaches who possess exceptional adaptability also exhibit many of these behaviors as well. Based on the literature regarding effective leadership by corporate executives, these exceptionally adaptable coaches approach their position in a similar fashion.

Exceptional Adaptability in Coaching

The knowledge, experience, and behaviors recounted by these coaches are what they feel makes them exceptionally adaptable. To this point, there has been no description of what exactly makes a coach adaptable. While it does seem apparent that coaching mirrors business, this has been a missing link in the coaching leadership literature. Therefore, this section aims to discuss how the exceptionally adaptable coaches from this study exhibit adaptability as described in Pulakos and colleagues' (2000) Taxonomy of Adaptive Behavior, thus seeking to link adaptability in coaching with adaptable business behaviors.

The previous section discussed problem solving as an important aspect of leadership behavior. This is also a major feature of adaptable behavior. In deriving themes from these coaches' comments, one thing standing out was how all of these coaches overcame a variety of problems. From Jay Miller discussing how he overcame his pitcher's 4th inning problems to Andy Lopez determination to not repeat the past in his second season as a collegiate head coach, these coaches faced and overcame problems from a multitude of different sources. While it would be difficult to call a problem expected, there are some problems that every coach faces. However, Pulakos and colleagues (2000) specifically cited adaptive behaviors as being able to solve the "atypical, ill-defined, and complex problems" (p. 613). These coaches relayed they were able to do this when the challenge arose. In doing so, they often were creative in their solutions. Problems often arose for these coaches, yet solving these problems was rarely an issue.

If solving atypical problems is a regular behavior of adaptable leaders, then it makes sense another behavior is dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations. Coaching is rife with unexpected situations. Additionally, competition provides as unpredictable a working environment as imaginable. Yet, these adaptable coaches seemed to thrive in such situations and seized the opportunity to employ their superior problem solving skills. Previous research indicates these coaches sometimes have only a limited amount of time to act in these scenarios (Giske, Benestad, Haraldstad, & Høigaard, 2013). Yet, this does not seem to impact the ability of these coaches to deal with these problems. The ability to thrive in these situations is critical to these coaches adaptability.

Another key behavior displayed by adaptable leaders is learning new work tasks, technologies and procedures (Noe & Ford, 1992; Thach & Woodman, 1994). A handful of these coaches discussed in great detail the learning process they had to go through at a new position, especially as a beginning coach. However, where this behavior may have been most illustrated was in learning new technologies. The exceptionally adaptable coaches involved in this study revealed the importance keeping up with technology had on their job. Specifically, the rise of social media and its impact on recruiting and how they deal with their players' use of it has been a major issue they have had to overcome. While not all coaches were thrilled with the thought of engaging in social media, they also recognize its importance and embrace the chance to take advantage of it where less ambitious coaches do not. Apart from this major development, these coaches also discussed procedures which have changed over the course of their careers as coaches. Perhaps the most related story was that of the NCAA's change to the '20 hour rule.' This rule limited the amount of time a coach could have contact with his athletes to 20 hours, whereas before it was unlimited. This completely changed how these coaches approached practice time. Yet, they were able to adjust to this change and maintain a high level of success which was another indicator of their exceptional adaptability.

An aspect of adaptability which seems a perfect fit for these exceptionally adaptable coaches is demonstrating interpersonal adaptability. The knowledge of how to develop strong interpersonal relationships and actually implementing this knowledge were both an unfaltering part of what made these coaches adaptable. It was apparent that the knowledge to be able to build trust-filled relationships was an integral part of their adaptability. However, displaying the behavior of cultivating interpersonal relationships

only strengthens the point that these coaches understood the value of interpersonal relationships. This may be the biggest strength in the argument that coaches display similar adaptable behaviors to business leaders.

One expectation of coaches, especially those hired to change the direction of a program from losing to winning, is to change the culture of a program. These coaches mentioned this as an important part of their jobs. This culture is redefined on a yearly basis with the influx of new players and personnel. These coaches have to take that into consideration when they establish this culture. The ever-changing athlete has forced these coaches to adapt to new personalities and attitudes possessed by players. Perhaps this has been most influenced by the rise of entitlement discussed by these coaches. Despite this change in their athletes, these coaches take advantage of their adaptability and make necessary adjustments to maintain a high level of success. These coaches' ability to institute culture change, sometimes on a yearly basis, is an example of what Pulakos and colleagues (2000) defined as demonstrating culture adaptability.

One potential weak link between the behaviors displayed by these coaches and those listed in the Taxonomy of Adaptive Behaviors may be demonstrating physical adaptability. While there are physical demands experienced by these coaches, the issues described by Pulakos and colleagues (2000) were rarely discussed by these coaches, even when pressed. However, Jay Miller did mention overcoming physical conditions as a softball coach. Specifically, he mentioned practice conditions in colder climates. An expanded definition of physical adaptability may include care of the coaches' physical self. Many of these coaches did mention exercise, meditation, and peer debriefing as way to maintain both physical and mental self. Some coaches went so far as to schedule time

for themselves and their staffs to have time to do these things, this may be a stretch of the definition and more suitable to the definition of handling work stress.

Handling emergencies is yet another facet of adaptability (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). These coaches experienced emergencies both on and off the field of competition. Coaches experienced the death of players, horrific injuries, and personal health scares. Despite these crises which affected their teams, they were able to maintain their resolve and lead their teams to success. KJ Kindler spoke of changing her team's practice after witnessing a shocking injury during a practice. Two coaches had a player pass away under their leadership. These events led to changes for both coaches which they credited with part of their success. Every job eventually tests leaders with emergencies. These adaptable leaders were able to take these episodes and find a way to use them for positive purposes. This is another illustration of utilizing previous experience to make necessary adjustments needed for sustained success.

The final aspect of adaptive behavior is handling work stress (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). As mentioned earlier, these coaches employ a variety of therapies to relieve stress. Many utilize exercise as an outlet. However, also mentioned was meditation, discussion with peers, outdoor activities, and even cooking. The most oft mentioned relief for stress though was family. Almost unanimously, these coaches find solace in having strong family ties. Additionally, these coaches are grounded by realizing the reason they initially began coaching, which was to work with young people and develop them as athletes. This is something they consistently remind themselves of when the stress of the job bears down on them. In a job filled with stress, there seems to be little doubt these coaches exhibit this particular behavior.

In analyzing the interview data collected from these exceptionally adaptable coaches, it was quite evident that their knowledge, experiences, and behaviors are nearly in direct alignment with Pulakos and colleagues' (2000) Taxonomy of Adaptive Behavior with little exception. Because adaptability is an important construct in business leadership, and business leadership and coaching leadership are closely intertwined, this should come as no surprise. It seems coaching is further tied to business in the fact that effective leaders display yet another series of traits in a similar manner. More so, it seems the construct of adaptability is a resolute characteristic in coaching.

Implications for Becoming an Adaptive Coach

Coaching at any level can be a stressful job. One factor in the stress coaches feel is from pressure to succeed (Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, & Hays, 2010). Part of the reason this pressure exists is worry of job security if the coach does not meet or succeed expectations from their governing body. This creates an environment very similar to the one Hall and Chandler (2005) describe for businesses. If one is unable to excel at their current position, corporations will not hesitate to find someone else they think will. Sport has become somewhat of a corporation these days with the bottom line being wins and championships. If these are not being produced then it is difficult to maintain a coaching position. Adding to this turmoil is the ambition of coaches. Much like a business employee, these coaches want to climb the 'corporate ladder' to reach a job they perceive as the top. This causes a great deal of change as they move from job to job.

As coaches move, regardless of reasons, they face new problems, procedures, and personnel, often in a very different context from the one they moved from. The idea that adaptability is an important concept to understand is not far-fetched. Coaches exist in a

volatile world and it is critical for them to display behaviors such as: (a) solving problems creatively, (b) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (c) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (d) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, (e) demonstrating cultural adaptability, (f) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability, (g) handling emergencies, and (h) handling work stress. Without doing so, puts them at risk to not be able to maintain a high level of success as they are presented with new problems.

As one can see from the data, change can very well occur without move from job to job. These coaches noted the difference in athletes through the years. Coaches who maintain tenure in at one institution also face this problem. Additionally, there is regular turnover from team to team every year with the addition of new players, the hiring of new assistants, or a change in management as when a new general manager or athletic director is hired. One thing is certain in the coaching world; change is inevitable.

With a high demand for success and competition that breeds uncertain situations, coaches who do not possess high levels of adaptability are doomed to fail. This study has succeeded in seeing how adaptability manifests itself in the eyes of successful coaches. These coaches have not only had long careers, but have managed to succeed despite a number of changes in context at different positions across the United States. Additionally, their description of adaptability in coaching can be easily compared with the construct of adaptability in business as the exact same behaviors are displayed.

From a practical standpoint, coaches from all levels can benefit from this research. Knowing they exist in a tumultuous world, the knowledge of what it takes to be adaptable is powerful. Understanding that knowledge of more than sport and strategy,

seeking formative experiences to strengthen, and behaving much like a corporate executive may be a model coaches can use to increase their adaptability. Coaches who anticipate change can use this knowledge to be better prepared for it and even institute change themselves. After all, adaptability is not necessarily a reactive trait but can be a proactive one as well.

Directions for Future Research

Coaching is a volatile world where change is inevitable. Adaptability is the ability to deal with change. The results of this study have shown how exceptional adaptability manifests in collegiate coaches. There are examples of the knowledge, experiences, and behaviors, which they feel, have led them to possess this increasingly important trait. However, there is much left to research on the topic of adaptability. This section discusses future potential topics for research on this subject.

Admittedly, this is a very small sample of coaches from one specific area of coaching-- high-level intercollegiate level. The question remains as to how important adaptability might be to coaches at varying levels of competition. For instance, how important is adaptability in youth sport leagues that should focus on skill development rather than competition outcomes? Additionally, work needs to continue in higher performance levels of coaching to better understand adaptability as it relates to the field. For instance, while one would be hard pressed to argue that these coaches are successful, only one meets the requirement of expert coach. Having a better understanding of adaptability through expert eyes could greatly further the topic.

While this study has enabled a better understanding of adaptability as it is related to coaching, there are still questions about the subject. These coaches discussed in great

detail what knowledge, experiences, and behaviors make them adaptable. However, an instrument to measure adaptability in coaching and what behaviors are most important would enable a further understanding of how adaptability manifests itself in this field. As coaching seems to be so closely related to the field of business, there are a number of instruments which may be able to easily be adapted. This could inform coach education curriculum and aid in training future coaches.

While not all of these coaches would be deemed experts, there does seem to be some parallel to the approach exceptionally adaptable coaches take when compared to the approach of expert. In building a program, expert coaches seem to draw from their individual growth, organizational skills, and coaches' attributes to come up with a vision for athlete development (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). These traits seem to mirror the knowledge, experience, and behaviors of an adaptable coach. For instance, life skills, planning, and commitment to learning were all listed as attributes in helping to create this vision for experts. These exceptionally adaptable coaches also discussed these topics; additionally, their commitment to self-monitoring and developing a blueprint for success also rings true for experts (Schempp, Webster, McCullick, Busch, & Mason, 2007; Bloom, Stevens, & Wickwire, 2003). Further research is needed to uncover a possible link between adaptability and expertise theory.

Finally, there are a number of coaches who experience high levels of success in one context but cannot duplicate this success elsewhere. There seems to be a point when adaptability is no longer enough to maintain a high level of success. For instance, this occurs when a long-time, successful coach either begins to falter, or is unable to translate past success to a new position. Research is needed on the barriers that keep the coach

from sustaining their usual high level of success. Coaching is a profession where loss is inevitable. No coach remains undefeated and very few coaches maintain success year in and year out over the span of a long career. However, understanding barriers to adaptability can help prepare coaches as best as possible for a world filled with strife and turnover. Knowing what goes into adaptability and what keeps one from possessing it is knowledge helpful to any coach.

Adaptability has proven to be a valuable characteristic to succeed in business leadership. This study shows it may be just as valuable in the world of coaching leadership. Having a firm grasp of adaptability, how it manifests in coaching, what the barriers are to it, and what are the most prominent behaviors displayed by coaches with adaptability are all pieces of knowledge important to coaching. This research enables the beginning of better understanding this construct in coaching. However, this is just the first step in truly understanding adaptability as it pertains to the coaching world.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Date

Coach _____

Address

Dear Coach _____,

My name is Jeremy Elliott. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Georgia (UGA) in the Department of Kinesiology. For my dissertation, I am conducting a research study focusing on successful collegiate coaches' adaptability. I am contacting you because of your continued success as a coach at multiple schools.

I am well-aware of your hectic schedule and fully understand that your free-time is limited. However, I am writing this letter to request your participation in the study. All I am asking from you is to allow me a one hour interview and respond to a possible follow-up e-mail or phone call for any clarification of answers. This interview would be conducted in a location of your choice or, if you prefer, via telephone or video-conferencing tool (i.e., *Skype*). The interview questions will cover aspects of your career and the nature of your success as a coach at multiple institutions.

I believe that the findings from this study could help coaches at all levels be more aware of how crucial adaptability is to their own success. I will be contacting you via telephone within the week to seek your approval and to possibly schedule a time for the interview. I hope that you will consider my request and choose to participate.

Should you have any questions before I contact you, please do not hesitate to contact me at (706) 474-4595 or via e-mail at jerell@uga.edu.

Thank you so much for your time. I very much look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Elliott, M. S.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM ADAPTABILITY IN COLLEGIATE COACHING

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Jeremy Elliott
Department of Kinesiology
219 Ramsey Center
330 River Road
Athens, GA 30602
jerell@uga.edu
(706)-474-4595

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the trait of adaptability in collegiate coaches. Adaptability is a trait that enables people to seek new ways to solve problems, master new skills, and embrace new challenges. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your success with multiple collegiate athletic programs. Specifically, you fit the following criteria: (a) an overall winning record at more than one collegiate athletic program, (b) conference or national championships at more than one collegiate athletic program (c) coach of the year honors given wither nationally or by conferences at more than one collegiate program, and (d) post-season appearances at more than one collegiate athletic program (if there are not enough participants with conference/national championships).

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one hour interview (either in person, on the phone, or through video conferencing technology). The interview will be audio recorded so that it can later be transcribed verbatim. You will have an opportunity to go through the transcript to clarify any answers given. Additionally, if the researcher has additional questions based on your interview, he may contact you again via telephone or e-mail for a follow-up. The total time commitment for this study should

be less than 2 hours. During the interview you will be about your transition from one place of employment to the next as a head coach. Questions will revolve around the actions you employed to maintain a level of success. Specifically, the researcher wants to know what you brought with you from a former position and what you kept the same and why that mattered in a given context.

Risks and discomforts

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits

Participants in the study will be able to better grasp their own Adaptability in the role it plays in their success. This knowledge may enable the coaches to have continued success in their chosen occupation. Additionally, coaching careers can be turbulent. Rarely does one person stay in the same job for their entire life. Better understanding how adaptability works within successful coaches will enable other coaches at all levels to transition more easily between jobs.

Audio/Video Recording

Interviews will be audio recorded. This is important as the audio recording will later be transcribed so that the researcher can analyze the data contained within to better understand adaptability through the answers you give. The recordings will be archived until the completion of the study and will then be destroyed.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Due to the nature of employment for the participants in this study, your identities will be made public when the data analysis is presented. The number of participants that fit the criteria for this study is so small, confidentiality cannot be assumed. In other words, people could likely identify you based on your accolades. Because this is the case, you will not be given a pseudonym or code to conceal your identity. However, the only people with access to your audio recordings or full transcripts will be members of the research team. Once the study is completed all of these materials will be destroyed.

Taking part is voluntary

Your participation in this study is voluntary and if you would like to withdraw as a participant at any time you are free to do so. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Jeremy Elliott, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Jeremy Elliott at jerell@uga.edu or at (706)-474-4595. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Name of Participant Signature Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. Take me through what a typical day is like for you here at _____. Tell me how this differs from when you were at _____? Other schools?
2. Please describe a problematic situation you encountered upon your arrival at _____. Please walk me through how you navigated that situation.
 - a. Would you have been able to do things the same way if that would have happened at _____?
 - b. How were you able to navigate the best ways to deal with those differences?
3. Think of an unexpected situation that occurred upon arriving at _____. Tell me the how you were able to come to a solution.
 - a. What might be some differences in how you would have handled it at _____?
4. When you arrived here at _____, what were some procedures you brought with you from _____?
 - a. What were some procedures you kept intact throughout your career?
 - b. Describe something you knew would not work when you arrived and were forced to change.
5. Tell me what it was like meeting your new players when you arrived at _____.

- a. How were you able to get them to buy in to what you wanted to do?
 - b. Explain how that process was with administrators? Boosters? Media?
6. How was the culture of athletics evolved over time?
 - a. How have you changed your approach to account for the differences?
 - b. How have you been able to overcome any cultural challenges presented from school to school?
7. Tell me how the physical toll coaching takes on you has changed you over time.
 - a. How have you changed what you do to account for this?
8. Tell me about how work stress has changed when moving from _____ to _____.
 - a. How have you managed to cope with changing stress?
9. Think about an emergency or crisis you had to navigate at _____. How were you able to navigate the situation?
 - a. How did you know what to do?
 - b. Would there have been a difference if that scenario would have occurred at _____?
10. Tell me about what it means to you to be recognized as someone with exceptional Adaptability.
 - a. How aware of your Adaptability do you feel you are?
11. Over the span of your career, tell me where you drew any information on Adaptability from?
12. What advice regarding Adaptability would you give to another coach (protégé) who is preparing to enter a new coaching situation

Appendix D

Biographies of Participants

Jim Donnan (Football) – After a 20 year career as a top assistant in football, Donnan received his first opportunity as a head coach at Marshall University. After a mediocre first season in Huntington, Donnan’s team became the class of the Division I-AA level posting double digit wins for the next 5 seasons. Every year they made the playoffs and ever year they reached at least the semi-finals. In a 5 year span they finished runner-up 3 times and won one National Championship in 1992. Donnan was hired by the University of Georgia prior to the 1996 season, his only sub .500 record. In the next 4 years, the Bulldogs were able to compete in and win 4 bowl games posting a winning record every year. Donnan was named Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year in 1997. At both schools he posted a 104-40 record. After the 2000 season, Donnan spent several years working as an analyst for College Football. He still works in the media but is retired from coaching. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2009.

Ian Duvenhage (Men’s & Women’s Tennis)– In a career spanning multiple decades, schools, and even coaching both males and females, Duvenhage can certainly claim to possess exceptional adaptability. Starting his coaching career immediately after his playing career ended, Duvenhage led the University of Miami’s women’s tennis program to the upper echelons of the sport. Finishing with a 131-44 record and named national coach of the year in 1986, Duvenhage and his Hurricane teams were fixtures in the

NCAA Sweet 16 and beyond. In 1989 he moved to the University of Florida where he took over their men's program and sustained his success. He posted a 221-126 in his time with the Gators and was named both conference and national coach of the year multiple times. After taking time away from college to coach professional athletes, Duvenhage returned to campus in 2005 taking over the Vanderbilt men's program which has made NCAA postseason appearances in 8 of his 11 seasons. This included a 2nd round appearance in 2015. He will return for another season at Vanderbilt next year.

Willie Fritz (Football) – Coaching across numerous levels of football, Fritz may have coached in the most different contexts of anyone in this study. Starting as the head coach of a Blinn Junior College, Fritz quickly turned around a program which had only won 5 games during the previous 3 seasons. In his tenure they posted a 39-5-1 record and won 2 National Junior College Championships. Fritz then took over as head coach of Division II Central Missouri where he spent 13 seasons compiling a 97-47 record with one bowl appearance and one playoff appearance. For the 2010 season, Fritz took over Division I Sam Houston State. In just 4 seasons he posted 40 wins and two FCS National Championships. In 2014 he became the head coach of Georgia Southern University where he won 9 games in his first season and conference championship. He was named FCS Coach of the year in 2012 is an inductee into the National Junior College Hall of Fame. He will return to Georgia Southern in 2015 as head coach.

Mark Guilbeau (Women's Tennis) – After a successful career as an assistant, Guilbeau received the opportunity to be a head coach at University of Kentucky. In 9 seasons with the Wildcats, his teams competed in the postseason every year. Each of his last 4 teams there made the round of 16. Overall he posted a record of 154-89 and led the team to its

best season ever in 2006 posting a 26-6 record. In his time in Lexington he coached 9 All-Americans. In 2006, he took over a University of Virginia program which had underachieved. However, in his 11 seasons there, they have reached the NCAA Tournament 10 times and been a presence in the national rankings. By 2010, Guilbeau had led the Cavaliers to their first 20 win season. He continues to build a strong program at the University of Virginia where they were once again a staple in the national rankings for the 2015 season. He will return for a 12th year at Virginia next season.

Lou Holtz (Football) - Perhaps most famous for his time as the head football coach at Notre Dame, Holtz was actually a successful coach of 6 different collegiate programs. While his first job as a head coach was a three year stint at William and Mary. Holtz managed a conference title and trip to a bowl game in only his 2nd year. He was hired as the head coach at North Carolina State in 1972 where he posted a 32-12-3 record in 4 years, won an ACC title in 1973, and competed in 4 bowl games. After a sub-par season in the NFL with the New York Jets, Holtz returned to college with the University of Arkansas where he fielded some excellent teams. The Razorbacks finished 11-1 in 1977, won the Southwestern Conference title in 1979, and went to bowls in 6 of his 7 seasons. Holtz compiled a 60-21-2 record during his tenure there. After 2 years at the University of Minnesota, Holtz was hired as the head coach at Notre Dame. In 11 seasons he won 100 games and led the Irish to 9 bowl games. His team managed double-digit victories in 5 seasons and won the National Championship in 1988 while finishing 2nd in both 1989 and 1993. After a few years out of coaching, Holtz's final stop was at the University of South Carolina. After a winless initial year, Holtz led the Gamecocks to their first ever back to back bowl game seasons in 2000 and 2001. He retired at the end of the 2004

season and has spent many football seasons since as an analyst. He was inducted into the National Collegiate Football Hall of Fame in 2008.

KJ Kindler (Women's Gymnastics) – The sport of Women's Gymnastics at the collegiate level is typically dominated by a handful of powerful programs. Kindler was the first to take two programs to the top of the sport's postseason by having them compete in the year-end Super 6. After a career as an athlete at Iowa State followed by 10 as an assistant coach, Kindler was named head coach of the Cyclone program prior to the 2001 season. She took a middle of the road program and in her final 3 years as coach took them to 3 straight NCAA Regional appearances along with the aforementioned trip to the Super Six in 2006. She was named National Coach of the Year in 2005. She took over the Oklahoma Sooner program prior to the 2007 season and quickly helped it to fulfill high expectations. They have appeared in the NCAA Regionals every year since 2010 and the school claimed its first title in 2014. Kindler has coached 58 All-Americans and 44 Big 12 champions at both stops in her career. Her 2015 squad spent much of the year ranked #1 in the country but came up short of a repeat National Championship in yet another trip to the Super 6. She will return to the Sooners for the 2016 season.

Andy Lopez (Baseball) – Most recently the head baseball coach at the University of Arizona, Lopez has been considered one of the top collegiate baseball coaches in the game for a number of years. His overall record of 1177-742-7 gives him a .611 winning percentage for a career that has spanned over three decades. Lopez began his career as a successful high school coach before accepting a position at Division II Cal-State-Dominguez Hills. After struggling for his first 2 years, he managed to post an overall record of 168-152-2 before being hired as the head coach of Pepperdine University in

1989. In 6 years at the helm, Lopez posted a winning record in every campaign. The Waves made the NCAA playoffs 4 times and in 1992 won the College World Series. Lopez was hired away by the University of Florida in 1995 where he was able to sustain his success. Again, in 7 seasons he never posted a losing record and appeared in the postseason 5 times with two trips to the College World Series. In 2002, Lopez returned to the west coast as head coach of the Arizona Wildcats. In 14 seasons he led the Wildcats to 8 postseason appearances and two College World Series where he managed a second National Championship in 2012. Lopez has been named National Coach of the Year three times (1992, 1996, 2012) and won numerous conference championships. He retired after participation in this study at the conclusion of the 2015 season.

Jay Miller (Softball) – Perhaps best known for leading Team USA to 6 gold medals in softball, Miller also has an impressive resume as a collegiate softball coach. His first position was at Oklahoma City University. Taking the job thinking the school would operate at the Division I level, the team ultimately competed in NAIA where Miller started a powerhouse. In two seasons at the NAIA level, Miller coached Oklahoma City to a 2nd and 4th place finish nationally. Prior to the 1987 season, Miller fulfilled his dream of coaching at the Division I level when he took over the softball program at Missouri. Over 15 seasons he compiled a 556-309 overall record and won two regular season conference championships and three Big 8 tournament championships. Additionally his teams competed in the College World Series twice (1991, 1994) and he won conference coach of the year honors three times (1991, 1992, 1997). Miller headed the Mississippi State program from 2003-2011 where he averaged 32 wins a year and led the Bulldogs to 6 NCAA postseason appearances. It was during this time he became only the 13th coach

to post 1,000 wins in their career. Miller now continues his career as the pitching coach for the University of Louisville.

Ron Polk (Baseball) – Despite his retirement as a head coach at the end of the 2008 season, Ron Polk is widely considered one of the greatest to ever coach collegiate baseball. His 1218 wins are the most by any coach in the history of the Southeastern Conference. He has written what many consider the must own textbook for baseball coaches at any level. He is one of only 3 coaches to reach the College World Series with 3 different teams. His first head coaching job was at Georgia Southern where he posted a 155-64 record over the course of 4 seasons. Despite recently moving from the NAIA to the NCAA Division I level, Polk led the Eagles to 2 postseason appearances and the College World Series in 1974. After a dispute with administration, he left for Mississippi State University where he would cement his legacy as a Hall of Fame collegiate coach. In 22 seasons he compiled an 888-422 record and led the Bulldogs to 15 postseasons and 5 College World Series births. Under his watch, Mississippi State became a powerhouse and he also helped usher baseball to a power sport in the Southeastern Conference. He retired at the conclusion of the 1997 season only to be asked to come back as the head coach at the University of Georgia in 2000. In only two seasons in Athens, he led the Bulldogs to an SEC regular season championship and a birth in the College World Series. He returned to Mississippi State in 2002 and in his final 7 seasons posted 5 trips to the postseason and one more return to the College World Series. In his sterling career, Polk was named National Coach of the Year twice (1973, 1985). He retired from head coaching but still acts as a volunteer assistant for the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Polk was elected to the Collegiate Baseball Hall of Fame in 2009. He

continues to stay active as a public speaker and continues to sell his textbook around the world.

Mic Potter (Women's Golf) – There are few in the sport of women's golf who can claim the resume of Potter. His coaching experience dates back to 1983 when he took over the reins of the Furman women's program and in 30+ years since, he has failed to reach the postseason one time. He has been named conference coach of the year an astounding 13 times (8 Southern Conference, 5 Southeastern Conference). Potter has coached 15 women who went on to careers in the LPGA. His Furman teams captured 10 conference tournament championships from 1994-2005. At the end of the 2005 season he was hired as head coach at the University of Alabama where he has continued his success reaching the postseason every year. He coached a National Runner-Up team at Furman in 1987 and a National Championship winning at Alabama in 2012. Potter concluded the 2015 with another trip to the NCAA Regionals and will be returning to Alabama in 2016.

Jay Seawell (Men's Golf) – In 30 years of coaching, Seawell has made his mark as one of the best in men's golf. He has led two different teams to NCAA postseason appearances claimed two National Championships. He has coached over 60 All-Americans and won both National and Conference Coach of the Year. His first coaching experience came in the Junior College ranks at Anderson College 1991. He moved to Division I at Augusta State in 1998 where he led his squad to the postseason in 4 of his 5 years there placing 7th overall in 2001 and 5th overall in 2002. In 2003, he began his career at the University of Alabama where he has had a remarkable run only missing out on the postseason in one year. Most recently his team has made the most of those appearances by winning National Championships in 2013 and 2014 after a 2nd place

finish in 2012. Seawell just completed the 2015 season with another trip to the postseason and will return for another year in 2016.