

# **Understanding Effective Transitions between a Coach and an Athlete**

**Greg Hitchen**

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Summary and application of learning to practice.

## **Abstract**

### **Background and Purpose**

The project aims to establish a recommendation of best practice for coaches, Governing Bodies and high performance managers to follow when transitioning an athlete to work with a new coach. Athlete transitions in sport are an area of ever growing interest for sports researchers and National Governing Bodies, however very little research has been carried out in relation to transitions of this nature within an athletes sporting career. There is a need to further understand the impact that successful and unsuccessful transitions in this area have on an athlete's performance and wellbeing.

### **What was done?**

Seven elite male canoe slalom athletes were interviewed. Each athlete was questioned about their experiences of transitioning to work with new coaches. A thematic analysis was then carried out in order to analyse the data that was recorded during each interview. Through the analysis process a recommendation of best practice for coaches to consider when transitioning athletes to work with new coaches was established.

### **Key findings**

Several key themes emerged from the analysis of the data that was gathered from the interview process. Through the athletes sharing their past experiences of transitioning to a new coach, commonalities within the data that were collected from each athlete and were then associated into relevant categories in order to form a consideration of best practice. These categories included: (a) the role of the athlete, (b) the role of the new coach, (c) the role of the old coach, (d) negative factors, (e) critical factors associated with a positive transition. Each category further established specific considerations.

### **Points of interest for coaches**

Through coaches recognising when transitions may occur, greater planning can take place and consequently enabling the involvement of the athlete at an earlier stage. Where possible, coaches should seek to understand how to build effective relationships with new athletes. Coaches and athletes who are better prepared to deal with transitions, will be able to carry out more effective transitions, whilst creating a reduction in the emotional turbulence that is created during a transition and thus causing a positive effect on athlete welfare and athletic performance.

### **Conclusion**

When engaging with athletes to understand their experiences around transitioning to a new coach, it has been possible to suggest a proposal of best practice for coaches, Governing Bodies and high performance managers to follow. Further to this, the study has highlighted additional areas in which recommendations can be sought to encourage a level of best practice not only for the coach but also

the athlete. It would also be possible to establish a greater understanding of the hurdles and critical factors that athletes and coaches face when seeking to undertake a transition of this nature.

To discuss this project further please contact Greg at [greg.hitchen@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:greg.hitchen@britishcanoeing.org.uk)