

Team Flow in a University Baseball Team: Narrative Study of a University Baseball Coach

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the role of the coach in developing team flow and achieving successful results in Japanese university baseball. The purpose of this study, which was addressed using narrative analysis of coach interviews and participant observation, is to understand the team flow state in a Japanese university baseball team. The specific aims are to describe the characteristics of the team flow state, and describe how the coach is able to guide the team along the path to team flow and successful results. In this narrative research, the primary method was a life story interview with a coach about his coaching experience over 4 years. The initial life story interview and follow-up interviews were analyzed based on constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The results suggest that a team in the team flow state practices an excellence-centered philosophy premised on doing everything to maximize use of everyone's potential ability, which is the Successful Result or "SR". By building the coaches' and players' thinking, actions, and tactics from an excellence-centered philosophy with the SR standard as the foundation, it is thought that the team flow state can be achieved. From the analysis of the Japanese baseball coach's narrative, five characteristics of the team in the team flow state were identified: deep understanding of successful result (SR), successful results realized through a regular routine, players perform with a feeling of ease in a self-directed manner, players understand what they need to do, and bond of trust between players and coach. The coach's philosophy should be the foundation of the coach's actions and should then influence the will and actions of the players. The players should experience this philosophy on a daily basis in various situations so that the players comprehend the coach's value system.

INTRODUCTION

- Why some athletes and teams willingly deal with the various events and problems, while other athletes and teams do not.

- Positive
 - Enjoy those challenges
 - Willingly face and deal with the events
- Negative
 - Hard to devote themselves to developing their teams

STUDY PURPOSES

- To understand the team flow state in a Japanese university baseball team
 - by describing the characteristics of the team flow state.
 - by describing how the coach is able to guide the team along the

METHODS

Participants

- A university baseball coach
- A mental advisor

Procedures

- Informed consent
- Interviews was conducted in the winter of 2011
- Semi-structured interviews (2 x 120-minute sessions)
- Follow-up interview (1 x 120 minute)
- All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim

Analysis

- listen to recorded tape multiple times
 - Notes were taken on points of realization and impressions
- In reference to the interview flow, each was read over repeatedly until overall familiarity
 - Intertextuality
 - major themes
- The objective of using a constructivist approach will be to clarify the extent to which latent unconscious principles and standards regulate tangible behaviors (Flick, 2002).
- Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding

Results & Discussion

Characteristics of a team in team flow

Characteristic 1: Deep Understanding of Successful Result (SR)

Characteristic 2: Successful Results are Realized through a Regular Routine

Characteristic 3: Players Perform with a Feeling of Ease in a Self-directed Manner

Characteristic 4: Players Understand What They Need to Do

Characteristic 5: Bond of Trust Exists Between Players and Coach

Characteristic 1: Deep Understanding of Successful Result (SR)

- A team in the team flow state does not swing from joy to sorrow from results alone.
- The coach and players seek out an SR that allows them to best showcase their potential capabilities and then continue to perform

Coach A conveyed the importance of elements incorporated within the SR :

- Attitude
- Mission
- Consideration of process

Characteristic 2: Successful Results are Realized through a Regular Routine

- A team that has attained team flow does not just raise the SR as a slogan, but strives for deep understanding of the SR within the course of daily activities.
- One's actions are selected and put into practice in pursuit of team flow.

2006:

- At the practice H field, coach A would frequently use the expression H field (practice field) = not like J Stadium."
- Despite the scolding there was no impact on the performance of the players.
- The real meaning that coach had in mind was not being conveyed.

2007:

- "just do it" (mandatory) & "don't do that" (repudiation) type of communication
- Tenaciously follow each ball, Don't look down
- Players had a feeling of being managed and the sense that instruction was being imposed on them.

2009:

- Coach A's thinking changed
- The job of the coach is to translate the thinking traced back to the SR into action or to create the environment conducive to translating this thinking into action.

Characteristic 3: Players Perform with a Feeling of Ease in a Self-directed Manner

- Players do not get caught up in W/L results but instead take proactive actions with understanding of the SR in pursuit of this SR goal.
- Players also reflect a relaxed feeling of ease in their play.

How coach A feels the players in the team flow state?

- They are not stressed but calm. But when it comes time to perform they can turn it on like a switch.
- No sense of being under pressure
- No impatience
- Energetic
- They are not afraid of the outcome.

Characteristic 4: Players Understand What They Need to Do

- Players on a team in the team flow state continue optimal challenging with the SR as the standard.

- Players receive feedback from a large number of challenges and understand themselves what action should be taken next.

How coach's players were able to start challenging without fear of the result:

- "I myself changed...I jumped over the edge. It felt like there was no going back..."

- When the coach first changed from a results-based to challenging-based approach as the standard for judging actions as good or bad, the players were able to challenge without fear of the result.

Characteristic 5: Bond of Trust Exists Between Players and Coach

- For the team with an SR the players understand the philosophy of the coach and can act in accordance with this thinking.
- A relationship of mutual trust can be built because the thinking is consistent.

Change coach A's inside:

- "It's gotta be this kind of team to win, and players gotta be like this to be good. There were parts of what I requested that were in place but I quit it. I know the guys play with this will and desire to win so it became all about receiving."

Difference between 2007 and 2009:

- In 2007 the coach created the player activity manual
- In the fall of 2009 the coach had established his own philosophy. A safe and secure foundation formed from the bond of trust with the players was in place.

Coach A's thinking in the team flow:

- "Creating baseball together with these guys, with a feeling of togetherness...and no deviation in the direction set forth."

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. Thinking and Actions of Players in Team Flow
2. Development of Team Flow Culture
3. Coaching Method for Mastering the SR way of Thinking