

Publication

Players' perception of coaches' contribution to their mental toughness

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This study examined elite rugby players' perceptions of the mechanisms by which their coaches contribute to the development and maintenance of their mental toughness. Seventeen elite rugby players (Mage = 28.6 years; SD = 6.1 years) from the Swiss National Rugby Team were interviewed individually. Qualitative data analysis based on personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955/1991) revealed three dimensions of the coaches' role: (1) expertise, (2) instruction, and (3) development. The findings show that the nature of the coach-athlete relationship and interactions can help to develop and maintain mental toughness. Moreover, coaches have a particularly strong influence during the development stage, when athletes express great interest in their coaches' behaviour as a model for improving their own mental toughness. The findings have both practical and theoretical implications and are valuable for coaches, athletes, sport practitioners and scholars, informing their understanding of athletes' mental toughness and the coach-athlete working relationship. Further, they inform coaching scientists and practitioners in their endeavours to design educational programmes for coaches.

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