Coaching Sport in Belize: Stories That Frame Sport for Development

James D. Ressler, Northern Illinois University
Steven M. Howell, Northern Illinois University
Jenn Jacobs, Northern Illinois University
Paul M. Wright, Northern Illinois University

Sport for Development - Other (International Sport)  
Poster  
Abstract 2018-302  
Saturday, June 9, 2018  
Room: Halifax  
9:20 AM

Introduction
Effective coaches are integral to the delivery of effectively organized youth sport programming. Their role as facilitator to implement and maintain values and model positive behaviors is arguably the most important external asset for youth, and sport can provide a wonderful forum for youth to learn about themselves personally and socially (Petipas et al., 2005). In order to facilitate effective programming with youth, methods are necessary for training and supporting coaches to implement such programs with fidelity (Hemphill, Templin, & Wright, 2013; Pascual et al., 2011).

This investigation stemmed from a program designed to promote youth development and social change through youth sport in Belize. Like many Central American nations, Belize struggles with gang- and drug-related violence, poverty and low educational outcomes. Among the aims of the coalition was to increase coaches’ knowledge, confidence, and skills in using intentional coaching strategies. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of coaching sport in Belize from the perspectives of youth sport leaders in local community agencies, primary and secondary school sport, university athletics, and semi-professional and international sport settings.

Literature Review
The capacity for effective sport and coaching programming is lessened in countries where public safety and social unrest are daily concerns. However, in recent years sport has been utilized as a tool to bring about positive shifts in personal social development. Coaches view performance and development as inclusive pursuits of coaching and utilize many strategies to promote player development (Gould, 2007). Sport for Development programs can foster social change and provide educational experiences (Wright, et al., 2016). A pro-social coaching perspective is one where youth are viewed as resources to be developed, to be invested in, and teach life skills and values necessary for becoming productive citizens (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Coaches often spend significant amounts of time with their players, with the opportunity to nurture quality relationships and implement innovative strategies to teach life skills and values (Camire & Trudel, 2013). Integral to the quality of such relationships are purposeful and systematic interactions (Gould & Carson, 2008). With support of coaching training and small communities of similar practice, coaches become more equipped to facilitate these outcomes across all ages, skill levels, and sport contexts. To their credit, sport-based development programs are especially designed to expose youth to a variety of life skills and values (Hellison & Walsh, 2002), as well as integrating best practices for implementation and evaluation (Petipas et al., 2005).

Methodology
Data were collected from eight coaches throughout Belize who had different roles as part of a newly implemented Belizean Youth Sport Coalition (BYSC). The BYSC was a three-year, two-way exchange project funded by the US Department of State. The project involved training administrators and coaches in youth sport organizations to make organizational changes and integrate coaching strategies to promote youth development and social change.

The Belizean coaches had a range of experiences as players and coaches in community, school-based, club, and semi-professional contexts with female and male populations. Each coach was interviewed 2-3 times while engaged in BYSC training at different stages of the program while in their different roles of participant, model teacher and mentor, and trainer in the third year. Questions were organized in the categories of (a) personal background with sport, (b) their transition into coaching and the range of sports coached, (c) coaching frustrations, (d) the local meaning and role of sport, and (e) differences among gender, age, and specific sports nationally.
Analysis and Findings

Data were initially analyzed using inductive and deductive analysis strategies (Patton, 2015). Constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were employed to identify and expound upon generative themes with the data set beyond semi-structured interviews. To date, generative themes are (a) focus on self, (b) sport as a vehicle, and (c) behind the eight ball.

Coaches expressed an importance of national history and their personal timeline with sport and physical activity, their reasons for getting involved as a performer, and staying involved as a youth leader and eventual coach. To a person, each expressed a need for their continued involvement in order to advance current programming and welfare of sport in their communities.

The recent training and regular correspondence with BYSC stakeholders framed the understanding and evolution of sport. Sport was described differently for participants who recounted their formative years and the successes and frustrations on and off the playing field. Further, sport was observed differently to be the vehicle for positive community action, a representation for affiliated employment and careers, the means to pursue formal academic training internationally.

Systematic processes for convening national and international sport, from early primary years to internationally-recognized sports were disjointed and contingent upon priorities of current political leadership. The coaches were positive, despite acknowledging a norm of limited or no resources, and taking creative, unconventional measures to run programs. Additionally, inequities were discussed related to International/ Olympic sports, primary and secondary school sport, and recreation, as well as more opportunities for males than females.

Discussion and Next Steps

The purpose of this study was to better understand Belizean coaches in different environments. Initial findings supported the need for systematic training and program delivery (Hemphill, Templin, & Wright, 2013), continued professional development of sport leaders, and innovative methods for evaluating social change through sport (Wright et al., 2016). Sport is held in the highest regard from the selected sample of coaches, and one of few outlets that can provide a platform to demonstrate and practice life skills and values necessary for becoming productive citizens (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Coaching stories are in process to depict the role and influence of sport and coaching for each participant. Influenced by physical activity stories (Johnson, 2016) and phenomenological design, these stories will present the depth of richness and realness of participants’ specific experiences. Complete findings and further analysis of each Belizean coach will be presented and discussed in the form of coaching stories.