The question of coaches is the crucial one when thinking about the future of the sport system, because the coaches are of fundamental importance for the protection of the key "resource" of sport: the athlete. The author describes the current situation of German coaches on the basis of an empirical study with a total of 111 questionnaires and a return ratio of 68.5%.

In the following the author analyses various sociological findings. He concludes: to improve the situation of coaches they need to organise themselves through a association of coaches, to participate in decision-making committees of their particular sport and to change fundamentally their approach to the profession. Just like any modern occupation, the coaching profession cannot be a secure job. Part of a modern understanding of the coaching profession might possibly be that rotation and professional mobility are urgently necessary for the sake of high-performance sport.

1 Introduction to the Subject

The prospect of maintaining Germany's competitiveness in an ever-expanding world of high-performance sport came to the fore at the recent Olympic Games in Sydney. This spectacle represented, at the same time, an opportunity for German athletes to excel and a risk that Germany might lose even more ground relative to other nations. Discussions concerning the position of German sport relative to that of its competitors should be distinguished, primarily, by one characteristic feature: Those involved in the assessment should, without...
self-deception, ensure that they make a realistic appraisal of the potentialities. Emotional speculation concerning German omnipotence – speculation, which, in recent years, has often revealed ignorance about the international state-of-affairs of high-performance sport – ought not interfere with a realistic assessment. Only on the basis of rational, empirical analyses is it possible to describe sensible ways by which Germany's international competitiveness can be assured in longer terms.

Much needs to be discussed. Is sport managed adequately by volunteer labour? Aren't job specifications also important in specifying the responsibilities of volunteers? How is voluntary work supervised, how is it sanctioned in the negative sense, and how is it rewarded if successful?

Full-time, paid labour in the sport associations must be put under close scrutiny. Are the full-time, high-performance sport apparatuses too big? Has the effectiveness of these apparatuses been diminished by the sheer size of the sport bureaucracy? Are the motives of staff members honourable? Is there still sufficient creative potential for change? Have replacements in personnel been missed out on or deliberately obstructed? Are the institutional bodies for high-performance sport in Germany sufficient or is a new structure required here, as well?

The Olympic Training Centres must also be scrutinized for obvious reasons. Do we have an adequate system of talent identification or do we just support those who have defined themselves as talents in a sport? Is the long path to the outstanding Olympic performance suitably looked after or do we lose too many talented young people along the way? Has school sport become counter-productive with respect to the commitment of youth to 'serious' sport? What was the situation in the 'old states' (of Germany, i.e. Federal Republic of Germany before reunification, the editor) that made it possible to establish effective, acceptable structures within the school system that fostered serious sport for children and youth?

The questions could go on endlessly. However, something seems certain to me: The most important issues that each system of serious sport in the world will have to deal with are those pertaining, specifically, to the athletes and the coaches. In the future, will we have enough athletes in the various Olympic sports that are, judging by their talent and personality, capable of achieving outstanding Olympic performances? Will we have enough coaches that are, judging by their personality, education and motivation, capable of looking after and guiding these athletes in an appropriate way?

Those who want to ensure the future of serious sport will have to focus, primarily, on the future of athletes and coaches. Upon close inspection of serious sport systems in various industrial societies, it is clear that those in Western Europe are particularly vulnerable with respect to these two factors. In some cases, one must seriously consider whether a given sport will survive at all, given the current level of difficulty in attracting talented athletes.

But, without any doubt, the question of coaches is the crucial one when we think about the future of our sport system, because the coaches are of fundamental importance for the protection of the key "resource" of sport: the athlete. In many European countries the role of the coach is ambiguous. While the "continuity of generations" has become fragile in the case of athletes, one can hardly even talk about ensuring the "continuity of generations" when it comes to coaches. Considering the publicity that serious sport can attain today, considering the billions of dollars that modern society spends on sport and considering the profits that top athletes can make, the situation of coaches appears absurd.

2 The Situation of Coaches

In many ways, the current plight of coaches arises from the broader trends in the labour market as a whole. Their problems are typical of labourers, in general. For this
very reason the coaches' problems might be difficult to resolve. In recent years the system of employment, within which coaches are embedded, has increasingly diversified. An increasing number of employees are working in the services sector and, here, primarily in the area of new technology. Pluralisation of job structures makes it almost impossible to determine precise job and career profiles any longer. Normal working conditions have turned under the counter into a type of "cottage industry", with odd employment and income conditions and unknown future perspectives.

The job structure of coaches in German sports clubs and associations has not remained uninfluenced by the much-discussed processes of individualisation, pluralisation and deconstruction that have long been affecting the employment system, in general. As with many jobs, the concept of "coach" is comparatively vague. The processes of job initiation and corporate mobility are not clearly defined. In most cases, clear-cut job specifications for full- and part-time coaches do not even exist. And, often, at identical salary levels extremely different work is achieved.

In a nutshell, the current situation of coaches can be characterised by the following items:

- An accurate job profile for full-time coaches in the Olympic sport associations is often not revealed. Frequently there are activities included under the mandate of "coach" that have nothing to do with the actual occupation of a coach; namely, coaching. Especially problematic are the terms "chief coach" and "national coach".
- Distinct job specifications for paid coaches do not exist.
- Coaches' salaries are highly unjust and are distinguished by a pronounced social inequality. At identical salary levels extremely different work is achieved. In this regard, there is little transparency in the 'system of coaches'.
- The occupation of "coach" is one of the riskiest jobs there are in our society.

- The work of a coach is of public interest and, hence, subject to intense public scrutiny. Protection of the personality can, therefore, only partly be granted. The personality of the coach is thus implicitly endangered.
- Communication amongst coaches is very unsatisfactory. Possible means for communication are often used insufficiently.
- Coaches are unable to express themselves "sport-politically". They are not able to advocate their own interests co-operatively.
- The coaching occupation as an academic profession involves the need for and, even the expectation of, scientifically based continuing education. But today's coaches often do not have a sufficient and continuing qualification system at hand.
- Masculinity rituals and the 'old boys' network' often dominate the coaching profession, preventing desirable modernisation to a great extent.

Considering this situation, it is hardly surprising that the occupation of "coach" rates poorly whenever young people identify on questionnaires which job they would like to carry out in the future. When asked more closely if the occupation of coach could be a possibility for young people, only a small minority might indicate that they would wish to pursue this intention today. In fact, given the conditions that predominate in the occupation of "coach" in almost any Olympic event today, it would be almost irresponsible to recommend that young people set out on this professional route. Hence a "continuity of generations" does not exist any longer in the coaching profession and, hence, the prospect of quality coaching for future generations is bleak. Considering this problem the whole high-performance sport system is in danger of imploding.

My remarks are intended to show that the situation is dramatic. Some of the problems have been caused by political mismanagement. Some have been self-inflicted. One certainly can be justified in asking why coaches have tolerated the awkward
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predicament that they find themselves in today. It would seem that coaches are buddies for about as long as they are having a beer together at the canteen after a hard day's training camp. But you can forget about solidarity in favour of a colleague when it comes to such a situation as an industrial lawsuit with the employer.

Joint actions aimed at reasonable earnings can likewise be seen nowhere; public articulation of legitimate interests are only rarely found in their professional group. Today many coaches accept without question managers who take, without any understandable labour, up to 30% of the appearance and prize money of their athletes, while they themselves do not partake in any way in this commercial success. Many coaches accept without question that their athletes are to be coached on national teams by team officials who are nothing more than former athletes, themselves, and who have never been asked to produce a formal coaching qualification as an initial condition of being selected as a national team leader. Many coaches accept without question that other coaches get absurdly high salaries, such as the ones that are common in football today, even when they know that there are coaches of much higher professional standing than those overpaid football instructors who do not have a salary sufficient to ensure even a meagre standard of living.

The inequality of the salary of coaches becomes especially clear when one compares the salary of a so-called chief of team in football to the salaries of other coaches. Adding the annual salaries of all full- and part-time athletics coaches you will get an amount that is smaller than the salary the DFB (German Football Association, the editor) wanted to pay its new first team coach. Many coaches accept without question that high-performance sport is, in its entirety, publicly defined by a few stars, while 90% of all persons involved in high-performance sport work more or less under amateurish circumstances. Many coaches accept without question that the term “coach” has become semantically perverted and rendered totally unclear, when they could have made a case that the high-performance system should long since have been subjected to a professional division of labour in favour of the athletes and ‘real’ coaches, personal coach included. Many coaches permit sport performances to be manipulated by drugs without realising that this action jeopardises their own professional identity; that the playing down of doping offences shifts the credit for sport success to the pharmacologists and biochemists and away from themselves.

It seems obvious that this wholesale devaluation of the coaching profession, whether self-inflicted or otherwise, is bound to culminate in an outstanding crisis of legitimacy for high-performance sport.

Let me paint the present picture of a coach even more clearly and, in doing so, ask the question, again: What does the situation of the coach in Olympic high-performance sport look like at the moment? There are people who, by their actions, legitimately distinguish themselves as a “coach” in the truest sense of that word. They are regularly involved in instructing athletes at the swimming pool, in the gymnasium or on an open-air sports ground. Several times per week they lead training units, having prepared for these units and having fitted these units into medium and long-term training plans. These are people who are in a daily dialogue with the athletes, who know the athletes in their private sphere. Together with the athletes they set goals. And together with the athletes they experience success and failure, the highs and lows of sport. While they are noticed by the public at times, they also tend to be put aside, neglected, and sometimes remain in the shadow of their athletes for all their lives.

The efforts of these coaches are rewarded highly differently in pay. Some do it for the sake of honour, others receive expense allowances, and yet another group depends on honorarium contracts to supplement their income. Only very few have full-time contracts that offer a certain amount of financial security, at least for the time being.
The German high-performance sport system depends on the coaches who rightly hold the title "coach" for their profession. Around these coaches there is a number of additional people who have been allocated the term "coach". There are coaches of training bases, event coaches, team coaches and National Coaches. All these people only rightly earn the term "coach", if they themselves coach the athletes week after week and carry out practices directly with the athletes.

I know that with respect to the National Coach Seminar I have entered your territory and provoked you. Given the observations that I made in Sydney, I would at least like to put forth the following assertion: that over the past few decades personnel structures built around the coach who is actively working with the athlete have long since developed into a trouble spot that appears to be out of control. At least in my own sport of Athletics – but I believe that this is also true for swimming and several other sports – it is obvious that there is a latent conflict between the personal coaches and all other training experts in an association who are arranged hierarchically above the personal coach.

Let me give you an example by sketching some features of this conflict: In Sydney there is the so-called National Coach sitting on the grandstand and being broadcast live to Germany in his function as a "coach" with his gestures, facial play and articulation. At the same time there is an athlete in the arena competing in the final of an Olympic competition. The public is persuaded that this National Coach sitting on the grandstand is Coaching the athlete competing in the arena, even that this National Coach has an immediate relationship to this athlete and, hence, gets a well-deserved share of this athlete's success.

However, if you know the background of the relationship between the National Coach and this athlete, the situation looks totally different. The athlete would have wished to be coached by his personal coach in the Olympic competition. But the accreditation was not granted to this personal coach for quite understandable reasons. The athlete himself has had disputes with the National Coach for a long time. From a human perspective his relationship with the National Coach is irreparable. He talks to the National Coach only very rarely. This can be witnessed both in the Olympic village and at the stadium. In a very real sense the athlete coaches himself on this important occasion.

### 3 Selected characteristic features of a new idea of coaches

What should a coach, then, be like to meet the demands of high-performance sport? Allow me offer my personal answer to this question. I wish for coaches who turn to a sport with passion and call it their sport. I wish for coaches who are enthusiastic about getting the chance to work with young people, who are willing to adapt themselves time and again to the living conditions of young people. I wish for coaches who accept that they have chosen a relatively risky profession, who know how to articulate their own interests, who face the achievement principle that determines high-performance sport, and who know, at the same time, that in this system one can only rarely be on the side of the winners. I wish for coaches who are ready for dialogue with experts, who heed advice, but who, despite of all external counselling, put emphasis on the fact that they themselves have to accept responsibility for their coaching and that nobody may relieve them of this responsibility. I wish for coaches who love and hate their athletes, who develop emotional bonds with their athletes and, yet, are able to keep the necessary distance that is in order to have an impact, professionally, on people. I wish for coaches who do not grow stiff with ritual approaches to teaching and who are ready for lifetime learning. I wish for coaches who are also ready to get active sport-politically, who can articulate their own social interest, who have the nerve to protest against being told what to do and...
who feel responsibility for the public image that is created of them.

My observations at the Olympic Games in Sydney have made one aspect especially clear to me: Those who are coaches should feel responsible for more than merely the sport performance. The coach should consider himself to be an "arms length" friend to the athlete, yet be able to keep in perspective that he is primarily an educator, providing necessary help to the athlete which is urgently needed prior to crucial competitions. Coaches who get together for a beer in coaches' circles every evening after having coached their athletes on the practice ground during the day are only just half-coaches. Coaches who do not take the psyche and emotions of their athletes seriously, but consider them as God-given, are only partly willing to look after high-performance athletes in an adequate way.

My idea of coaches may be utopian to you all, and your sense of reality may suggest to you to reject utopias. However, utopias do have a unique quality: they are closely linked to the principle of hope. And would I myself, in my work as an official, not have confidence in this principle, my commitment would have long since become obsolete.

However, the expression of my ideal is not utopian. I have presented my concept of the ideal coach in order to clearly lay out the demands of the profession, as I see them, so that they may be put under close scrutiny by yourselves. Before I continue with this approach, I would like to present some empirical data that pertain to this topic. In a way, the survey results that follow allow coaches to speak for themselves. Even though these survey responses cannot be considered to be statistically representative of all coaches, the opinions offered during the interviews certainly substantiate some of the views I have expressed above and, if nothing else, serve as food for thought.

4 Empirical findings on the situation of DLV coaches

(DLV = German Athletic Association, the editor)

A written interview of DLV coaches was carried out in the summer of 2000 in anticipation of a conference, in order to gain an understanding of the issues that might need to be addressed for the further development of serious sport. The objective of the survey was to find out about the problems that coaches experience and consider especially serious in their work for the DLV. The key results are given below. A total of 111 questionnaires were dispatched, of which 76 were sent back. This is equivalent to a return ratio of 68.5%, which is considered to be very good for such a survey.

4.1 School education and professional training

A first glance at the socio-demographic findings clearly indicates that the coaches who were interviewed - 89.5% of them were male and 10.5% female - are well educated and have high professional qualifications. Of the coaches asked 88% hold an A level certificate and about 4% have a technical college qualification (Figure 1).
About 90% of the coaches hold a university or technical college degree (Figure 2). This tremendously high level of qualification clearly contradicts the already mentioned awkward situation of employment and payment. It seems as if the coaches holding university degrees (it should mostly be coaching diplomas) are hardest hit by the recent secular trend which involves the loss of prestige of higher educational titles.

One conclusion might be that the coaches seem to belong to the “losers of modernisation”. They certainly hold high educational titles, but none of them are seen as innovative or market relevant, i.e. immediately realisable.

4.2 Complex of Problems: Payment and Social Security

It is not surprising that the coaches expressed criticism regarding the amount of their payment. Almost 50% of interviewees judged the payment for their job as a coach to be either inadequate or totally inadequate. Only 5.5% were very content and believed their payment to be totally adequate (Figure 3).

A similar, albeit less distinct, situation was shown in the question about social security provided by the sport organisation. Still 17.1% are very dissatisfied, 25.7% of the coaches asked are dissatisfied. Almost 30% are satisfied, while merely 1.4% are very satisfied with the social security (Figure 4).
4.3 Complex of problems: potential of danger

The thesis that the occupation of a coach is one of the riskiest jobs available in our society was indirectly confirmed by the coaches' responses. Of the interviewees 85.3% answered with "yes" when questioned whether the occupation of a coach involved a particular "potential of danger" (Figure 5).

The development of interdependent relationships between coach and athlete was seen as an important potential of danger. More than 60% considered work in this field to involve a strong- to very strong possibility of danger (Figure 6). The criterion 'lack of professional perspectives' was similarly assessed as endangering, while the so-called 'problems of addiction' did not appear to represent any particular potential of danger to the interviewees (Figures 7 and 8).

The thesis that the payment of coaches is highly unjust and is distinguished by a pronounced social inequality was reflected in the answers to the question of financial problems. More than 40% see at least a strong danger in the criterion financial problems (Figure 9). However, family problems turned out to be the strongest potential of danger. About 85% of the coaches viewed danger to family life as being a high- to very high possibility (Figure 10).

Hence, it would appear that not only do coaches face an awkward employment and
low salary situation, they also are hardly able to reconcile family and job due to the circumstances of the coaching occupation. By the same token, more than two thirds of the coaches asked answer "yes" when asked whether the coaching profession influenced their relationship with their partner (Figure 11).

'Shortage of time' is hereby mentioned as the main problem. The majority of the coaches complained about not being able to spend enough time with the family (partner, children, etc.) or with friends due to inopportune working hours (in the evening and at weekends). Competitions do frequently coincide with the period of school holidays so that common (family) holidays are hardly possible (Figure 12). This problem seems even more urgent as 82.9% of the coaches were people with children.

4.4 Summary of problems: coaching profession as choice of career

Considering the responses above it is surprising that about 60% of the coaches were still willing to recommend that young people should consider coaching to be a worthwhile profession. The prospect of uncertain job and career options, poor financial security, low acceptance/low prestige of the coaching profession, as well as time involved/shortage of time were all named in disapproval of the coaching profession as choice of career (Figure 13).
4.5 Summary of problems: public image of coaches in the media

Coaches expressed a great dissatisfaction with the public image of coaches that is presented in the mass media. Only 20% of the interviewees were content with this image, while about 80% were dissatisfied (Figure 14).

The following measures (listed below) were recommended in order to improve the public image of coaches as presented by the mass media.

1. There should be more comprehensive reports on the coaching profession.
2. The work of the particular coach should be seen independently from the performance of the athlete.
3. There should not only be reports on the “millionaire-coaches” (e.g. German Football Premier League: Bundesliga), but also on coaches of various sports and their range of tasks.
4. The reports should be less sensationalistic and less negative.

4.6 Summary of problems: further vocational training for coaches

The majority (96%) of full-time and part-time coaches of the DLV indicated that they would be pleased if they were offered further vocational training specific to coaching (Figure 15).

The interviewees wished, especially, for further vocational training in the application of "new technologies" (e.g. video analysis, computer simula-
Fig. 14: Are you satisfied with the public image of coaches as presented by the coverage of the mass media?
- yes (N = 73; data in per cent)
- no

20.5

79.5

Fig. 15: Should your employer offer you further vocational training specific to coaches?
- yes (N = 76; data in per cent)
- no

96.1

3.9

About 42% of the coaches also expressed a desire for vocational training to be provided by the DLV for the time after their coaching occupation (Figure 17). The following fields were mentioned as relevant for the post-coaching era: marketing/rehabilitation, staff management and the area of electronic data processing (Figure 18).

4.7 Summary of problems: coaches' union

As suggested earlier in this article, coaches have thus far been unable to cooperate in articulating their interests sport-politically. Yet, almost two thirds of the interviewees indicated that they would support the introduction of an association of coaches in Germany (Figure 19). The interviewees expressed the hope that such a union would serve as an efficient way to represent their interests, so that they might better lobby for professional support with respect to the
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every-day problems that they face on the job and in their search for employment. They also indicated that they would hope to influence more control over industrial law and pay policy and to improve recognition and acceptance of the coaching profession (Figure 20).

5 Empirical findings on the situation of DSV coaches

(DSV = German Swimming Association, the editor)

In addition to interviews with DLV coaches there were also DSV coaches that were questioned (return ratio so far: n=10). The results of the survey, which was conducted using a questionnaire that was modified to fit the swimming context, are offered below. Swimming coaches also seemed to have a relatively high education, with most having high school education and professional training certificates. About two thirds of the interviewees indicated that they have accomplished A-Level certificates, have a technical college qualification in school and hold a university degree. DSV coaches were also rather dissatisfied with the payment of their occupation as well as with the social security provided by their sport association. Additionally, 80% of the interviewees indicated that they see the coaching profession as being tainted with a particular potential of danger.

In contrast to DLV coaches, however, the DSV coaches consid-
ered the problem of addiction as relevant to their profession.

In solidarity with the DLV coaches, a strong majority of DSV coaches (65%) found potential danger in the lack of professional perspectives. As for the DLV coaches, DSV coaches also considered family problems to be particularly worrisome. Hence, one big problem of the coaching profession seems to be the reconciliation of family and job.

DSV coaches also seemed to share sentiments with DLV coaches in the area of further vocational training specific to coaches. Of the DSV coaches interviewed, 80% indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to acquire further vocational training if it was offered to them. With respect to the question regarding the introduction of an association of coaches (coaches' union), more than three quarters of the interviewees indicated that they would support this idea. Their views mirrored that of the DLV coaches, in that the DSV coaches, too, expressed the hope that such a union would serve as an efficient way to represent their interests, so that they might better lobby for professional support with respect to the everyday problems that they face on the job and in their search for employment. They also indicated a desire for more control over industrial law and pay policy.

### 6 Coaching - an occupation with a future?

Apart from the empirically established problems discussed thus far, it must be emphasized that the coaching profession is primarily distinguished by the fact that it is publicly presented by the work done with the athlete and that success in this job is measured by the same tough criteria that the athletes are subjected to. Centimetres, grams and seconds become the yardsticks by which the work of the coach is measured, too.

Expressed in these terms the coaching occupation can only be seen as an insecure job. Success and failure lie closely together, as close as they typically are in all sports. Rising and falling in status are realities for coaches, as well. Therefore, there can actually be no "civil servant coaches", in contrast to the secure administration jobs within the associations, if a coach wants to remain internationally competitive. Coaching positions are, by nature, desired jobs that are evaluated regularly by verifiable achievements, and must change hands if success is not realized. Unfortunately, this employment situation is problematic. Coaches are constantly exposed to the danger of losing their professional position; families are affected by the uncertainty and fates are dictated by it. Whoever takes up the coaching profession has to be aware of the fact that one is somehow in an ejection seat, is in competition with other coaches and is judged by one's success. This seems just, especially when one considers that success is equally demanded of athletes.

What, then, can be done to improve the status quo of coaches? The wish probably closest at hand is the one for an association of coaches. If coaches do not come of age, politically, then their problems can surely not be resolved. Coaches are in a situation comparable to workers of the 19th century. Those workers had to develop a class-consciousness in order to expedite their own liberation - they had to develop from a "general class" to a "class of its own". Likewise, coaches need to develop a coach consciousness, a pride in their occupation, if they want to take the initiative in solving the problems that interfere with their work.

Participation in the decision-making committees of their particular sport should be one obvious demand of coaches. But, secondly, coaches have to be willing to fundamentally change their approach to the profession. Part of this task will be to find a new relationship with their athletes. Coaches are going to have to take the concept of guidance and care taking of the athlete to a whole new level of professionalism; to a much higher level than what is generally the case today.

Upgrading of the job also includes the requirement that coaches make use of the most modern working technologies; an inevitable demand given that coaching is an occupation that is scientifically aligned.
It should be made clear that, just like any modern occupation, the coaching profession cannot be a secure job. Most jobs these days do not at all have the security that defined them for many decades. By the same token, however, a job that is marked by competition should also be paid and rewarded equivalently. Hence, coaches deserve a salary, but also have to accept one that is success-oriented, without giving up a basic allowance that is urgently necessary for their own social security.

Part of a modern understanding of the coaching profession might possibly be that rotation and professional mobility are urgently necessary for the sake of high-performance sport. In my opinion, a particular weakness of the German sport system is that as soon as a position is once taken it is held by the same person for up to 30 years. Obviously, signs of wear are inevitable with such a manpower policy and that, especially in this way, a creative development is rather improbable. Hence, it would be welcome if serious sport personnel within German sport were subjected to regular exchange. It might even be good to a swap personnel from one association to another if possible; assuming, of course, that the exchange would be conscientiously directed and even-handed.

Coaches also need their own public relations policy and their own communication bodies. Other countries have set a positive example for the way that will have to be taken.

Furthermore, there is the need for a special fund, considering the risks that will inevitably be part of the coaching profession in the future.

Finally, in order to ensure a 'continuity of generations' amongst coaches, there is the need for a new advertisement strategy in favour of the coaching profession. Only in this way can talented young people be made aware of this occupation and can be recruited for future instructional tasks in the realm of high-performance sport.

If my demands can be met in our society, then the answer to the question regarding what kind of a future the coaching profession will have need not be pessimistic.

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