The 2012 Olympic Global Coaches House

London, England

Prelude

The science of coaching is taught; the art of coaching can only be learned... and the learning is through life experience. The problem is:

“Experience is a hard teacher, because she gives the test first and the lesson afterwards.”
(Vernon Law)

In this world of accelerating change for those in coaching and in performance, the challenge is less about what is taught in formal education than in making informal development through experience more “user friendly” and facilitating continuous professional development.

Introduction

In September 2011, the ICCE - International Council for Coaching Excellence (formerly the International Council for Coaches Education) agreed an initiative that represented a significant step in addressing this challenge. The initiative was branded as the Global Coaches House (GCH).

Ostensibly, the intention was to establish a base for coaches of all sports attending the 2012 Olympic Games in London to meet. However, in being invited by the ICCE President, John Bales, and the European Coaching Council (ECC) President, Pat Duffy, to direct the project, it was clear that there was a great opportunity to build on the experience of IAAF World Class Coaches Club (WCCC) and the very successful Berlin 2009 WCCC served as a starting model to build something that hopefully would be groundbreaking in several ways.

John Bales agreed with Dr Lim Kok Wing, Founder and President of Limkokwing University in Piccadilly, London, that the GHC would have access to the university’s iconic building during the Games and Ian Smyth of Leeds
Objectives

**Primary:**
To provide and facilitate opportunity for coaches to network and to grow personal networks.

To afford opportunity for coaches to learn and to share learning as part of the Olympic experience.

**Secondary:**
To create the foundation for building an international community of coaches.

To create a start up knowledge resource through recorded materials for practising coaches.

To inaugurate a continuing product and service offering for coaches at Olympic Games and other major international sport events.

In light of the experience, it would be decided after the Games whether or not to continue growing the concept and whether to do so by leadership or facilitation through the GCH brand.

Programme Design

It was agreed early that the GCH programme would have two parts: Part 1 open to all bona fide coaches and free of charge and Part 2 a number of dedicated sub-programmes for which there could be a cost.

Moreover, it was agreed to create the following services:

- A main presentation room with full audio-visual support
- Auxiliary presentation rooms with full individual support
- Meeting rooms
- A viewing gallery with six TV screens for watching the Games
- A cafeteria area – also with TV screen
- Dartfish suites for analysis (sponsored by Dartfish)

Concept

The Aim and Objectives grew from the basic framework defined by the ICCE initiative and expansion of WCCC.

Aim

To establish a meeting place for coaches during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
The Open Programme

- “Hot Topics” Breakfasts (08:00 – 08:45): Each morning over coffee and croissants an issue in sport was discussed.
- “Workout Lunches” (13:00 – 14:00): Coaching/performance related topics were presented by international experts.
- “Supper Interviews” (19:30 – 20:30): Coaches were interviewed on everything from philosophy to practice.

Dedicated Programmes

- “Games Ready” (08:45 – 10:15): This programme of 12 inputs (2 each morning for 6 days 30th Jul – 4th Aug and 6th Aug – 11th Aug) was designed for coaches who were not with their Olympic teams in London, but will probably be so in Rio and in other major international championships. The objective was to prepare coaches for such roles.
- “Technology Day” 13:00 – 18:00 (1st Aug): This session examined technology, science and medicine as influences in the coach’s decision making and operational effectiveness.
- “Swimming Debrief” 10:30 – 17:00 (5th Aug): At the conclusion of the swimming competition this session examined trends and changes in technique, training and talent progression as a foundation for national debriefings.
- “Rugby Day” 10:30 – 17:00 (6th Aug): This workshop focused on current trends and influences in the game and on the “Sevens” competition that will be added to the Olympic programme in Rio.
- “Winning Women” 13:00 – 19:00 (7th Aug): This very comprehensive session addressed the specifics of coaching female athletes and of developing female coaches.

Because there was substantial diversity in the potential participating population in the shape of different sports, national cultures and levels of coaching expertise, the programme was designed to have broad appeal and to explore the advantage of diverse mindsets as enrichment to learning.

Related to this, there was within the management team language capacity in addition to English, to cover German, French, Spanish, Italian and Chinese.

Because the scheduling of Olympic competition programmes was from early morning to late evening, the GCH programming required the distribution throughout the day of items that would appeal to a variety of interests at times convenient to participants.

While it was clear that the open and dedicated programmes demanded a range of carefully selected high quality inputs, it was important to avoid creating a sense of a formal conference. Rather, the mood was to be one of a festival, where those participating could “pick and mix” in choosing what they wished to be part of.

Therefore, in terms of programme design and for all involved in its delivery, the guiding principle was to ensure a quality personal experience for each participant. “Quality” in this context relates both to value and to enjoyment.
“Games Debrief” 10:30 – 13:00 (13th Aug): This workshop examined the overall de-brief process as a key component in designing a 2012-2016 strategy.

“After Hours” 18:00 – 19:00 (31st July, 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th Aug): There were two parts to this activity – supper interviews and specific extra inputs. These were supplementary inputs from experts in the field of relating sports coaching principles to the world of business.

Additional Activities

In addition to the formal programme, the GCH became a venue for various launches, meetings and workshops. These included:
- Coachnet meeting
- A technical debrief of the Olympic race walking competitions
- Technical seminar delivered by Canoe Kayak of Canada technical seminar
- Launch of the International Sports Coaches Framework
- Performance Summit Group examined the relationship between coaching and performance related practitioners in sports High Performance Programs; and the basics of advancing human potential.

Programme Delivery

The appointed senior management staff from LMU, headed by General Event Manager Karen Mockett, led a team of staff and students from LMU and LKW to cover each day from 07:30 – 23:00. Steve Lum, Vice President LKW Corporate, was liaison lead for LKW. Co-coordinators were appointed to run each of the three streams of the open programme and the dedicated programmes. Sergio Lara-Vercial provided valued support in technical programme coordination.

Listed below are the topics, presenters and key points of the delivered sessions.

Games Ready (Leader: Frank Dick)
- Coaching Effectiveness – Bill Sweetenham. Quantitative and qualitative measure of coaching effectiveness and efficiency
- Decisions, Decisions – Frank Dick. The process of decision making from the Big Stuff (e.g. culture change) to those made “in a blink”.
- Learning Faster than the Opposition – Sue Smith. Training to learn faster, to review intuitively, to be more effective in reflective practice.
- Preparation for the Team – Jenny Gray (at the Paralympic GCH, Frank Dick). Management of a Games team is about eliminating those things that detract from or interfere with athlete performance.
- The Coach Development Process – Kim Cardile. Self managed learning is as important for the coach as for the athlete. A self-assessment coach development instrument was proposed.
- Preparation of the Team – Frank Dick (Paralympic GCH Stan Madiri, Frank Dick). Bringing structure to athlete development and performance plans based on performance/structure design and delivery.
- Snakes and Ladders -- Craig Handford (Paralympic GCH Craig Handford). Understanding and managing those things that help or hinder performance.
- Managing Personal Well-Being and Lifestyle – Dean Benton (Paralympic GCH Malcolm Brown). Coaches must be as thorough in managing their own stressful life as helping the athletes manage theirs.
- In-Games Leading, Managing, Coaching – Elio Locatelli (Paralympic GCH: Raylene Bates). A guide to providing high quality professional service to athletes and staff in the high pressure world of the Games.
• Double Vision – Eddie Jones (Paralympic GCH: Frankie Thanapal). The chief coach must deliver in today's arenas while preparing for tomorrow's. The goal is an excellence dynasty.

• The Entourage Context – Penny Werthner (week 1); Frank Dick (week 2). Behind every high performance athlete there is a great team from parents and partners through to performance science and medicine support experts. The coach must lead this team.

• Coaching Philosophy Shaping Policy and Practice – Vern Gambetta (Week 1 GCH) and Jim Crake/Russell Smelley (Week 2). Coaches must keep vision and values front and centre in delivering their craft and do so on the foundation of a strong coaching philosophy.

**Workout Lunches (Leader: Frank Dick)**

• What is Coaching Effectiveness and Expertise? – Cliff Mallet, Jean Cote. Interactive session to establish perception of coaching expertise and effective coaching.

• Global Coaching Framework and Network Build – Pat Duffy. Explanation of the framework within which coach education and development can effectively be delivered and can serve as a guide to coach education and certification program design.

• Winning from the Beginning – Bill Sweetenham. Talent selection and development strategy which in principle is transferable across all sports in pursuit of realising potential.

• Joining up the Learning Dots of Coaching – Terry Crawford, Sue Smith, Kim Cardile. As communication means and methods have been transformed, so also has teaching and learning. Systems, strategies, styles and skills must be constantly reviewed to leverage the advantage of such change.

• Coaching and Performance in Partnership – Vern Gambetta, Danny Meuken, Dean Benton. The last 20 years have seen growth of Performance Direction and in the sports sciences as a parallel influence with Coaching in the development of athletes and teams. What is the nature of this partnership?

• Getting There in One Piece – Kevin Lidlow. 25% of high performance athletes experience breakdown through stress related injury or illness. Careful preparation management to protect athletes and ability to make sound judgment calls under pressure may reduce that statistic.

• Anti-Doping in Sport – Lea Claret. WA-DA's story in the fight for fair sport is a big success story. Most importantly, WADA's work has changed attitudes and behaviours to make fair sport everyone's personal responsibility.

• Towards a Performance and Coaching Profession – Miguel Crespo. It is time for coaches to have a properly regulated profession. To achieve this there must be clarity in how all, from the purely voluntary to the full time professional, fit within the concept of an overarching professional body recognized in law. Coaches themselves have a key role in taking this forward.

• Physical Competency Profiles – Kelvin Giles. If athletes do not have a sound basic balanced level of physical competence, all techniques learned will demand compensatory movement. An assessment instrument and exercise prescription system are proposed.

• Bio Neural Changes as the Key to Opening the Door of Human Potential – Vin Walsh. Our most untapped resource is the brain. There is breakthrough in understanding how to leverage its advantage.
• Coaching Paralympians – Peter Eriksson. All coaching focuses on building on ability. Coaching Paralympians is simply coaching specific levels of ability. Technical components may differ but no more than long jump versus triple jump. The art of applying the sciences remains the issue.

• The Business of Coaching – Frank Dick. The world of sport at all levels has a commercial dimension. Coaches must learn how to “take care of business” from continuous professional development to contract and appropriate compensation.

**Technology and Coaching Day** (Leader: Sergio Lara-Bercial)

• Decision Making, Technology and the Coach – Scott Drawer. The accelerating rate of change in technology and in the sports sciences represents an information tsunami for coaches. It is critical to have a synthesis resource to translate the information so that coaches can make right judgment calls. (also a workout lunches session)

• Performance Analysis the Dartfish Way – Victor Bergonzoli. Biomechanical analysis has been demystified by the excellence and simplicity of the Dartfish system.

• Performance Analysis on the Ground: The Gaelic Football Experience – Robert Carroll. Excellent practical example of design and delivery in the process of data gathering, analysis and synthesis to give coaches the information they need in a form they can use.

• Professional Judgment in Coaching: What Role for Technology? – Andy Abraham. An examination of decision making models, how they are used in coaching and the role technology can play in facilitating this process.

• Social Media, Sport and Coaching: What Next? – Lewis Howes. Social media has not only changed how we communicate but how we think, learn and make decisions. Building on strategies based on LinkedIn, it is proposed that coaches’ performance related staff consider an integrated social media program within their sport’s social media strategy.

**Rugby Day** (Leader: Ian Smyth)

• Creating an Effective Attack System – Eddie Jones. Detailed assimilation of physiological, skill and tactical implications in addressing challenge of high pressure, high performance rugby.

• Assembling and Managing a Performance team – Dean Benton. Performance and coaching teams work together to create high performance on the field. The process is player-centred, coach-led, performance-team supported. Getting the performance team input right in delivering role excellence is critical.

• Creating the Best Learning Environment – Gregor Townsend. If teaching is more about textbooks, learning is about experience. The right learning environment must ensure experience is turned to advantage for players and for coaching staff.

• The “I” Generation – A modern tale on a basic approach – Damian McGrath. Rugby is about the genius learning to play with the team first, then the team learning to play with the genius – not the other way around. We are the product of our generation, but the fact remains – the strength of the wolf is the pack; the strength of the pack is the wolf.

**Winning Women Day** (Leader: Pauline Harrison)

• Changing Perceptions – Marion Lay. Identifying the need for more recognition in women’s coaching.
• Our Purpose, My Responsibility – Judy Murray, Kate Howey. Exploring the vision and values of coaching elite women and explaining what the coach is trying to believe and how.

• My Pathway, My Expectations – Claire Prideaux, Kim Crane, Carlota Castrejana. The athlete’s 360° view on what they need from a coach to be successful explained by former Olympians who now hold leadership positions in sport.

• The Coach I Need to Be – Stan Madiri, Mark Lane. Exploring the intricacies and nuances of coaching female athletes in high performance sport.

• Understanding What Women Want from Sport and coaching – Annabel Kehoe, Leanne Norman. Presentation and research on what women want from their sport participation and those who lead it.

• The Athlete Entourage – Darlene Harrison. Explaining how to put the right performance and support team around the athlete to maximise realising potential in pursuit of competitive achievement.

• Building the Foundation – Kelvin Giles. Explaining the importance of building the physical competencies platform from which top performances emerge. Developing understanding of coaching young female athletes.

• Design Thinking for the Next Competitive Advantage – Kim Cardile. An opportunity to experience Design Thinking and learn how this can be implemented in a given sport.

• All I Can Become—Caroline McHugh. Understanding we each are far more than the labels we have and that in doing all we can do to being all we can become is our goal in realising our potential.

Olympic champion Jessica Ennis (GBR) and her coach Tony Minichello answered questions during an After Hours programme.
General management of process was excellently handled by Karen Mockett, while Steven Lum did an immense job in LKW management team contribution and leadership. Thanks also to Pauline Harrison for coordinating a great Winning Women Day.

To all presenters, my admiration and thanks for going beyond their input function to add to the quality of experience we worked to provide.

And of course, thanks to all the coaches participating at LKW and Eversheds. They have launched our international coaching community.

To LKW and Eversheds, most sincere thanks for their generosity in making available two wonderful venues.

Last, but certainly not least, special thanks to LMU for creating the economic platform for GCH to happen; and to Dartfish and Human Kinetics for their sponsorships.

**Reported by Frank Dick**

Frank Dick OBE was the GCH Director. He is a motivational speaker and writer. He is the president of the European Athletics Coaches Association and a member of the IAAF Coaches Commission. From 1979 to 1994 he was the British Athletics Federation’s Director of Coaching.

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