LIFE HISTORY OF EXPERT WHEELCHAIR AND
STANDING BASKETBALL COACHES

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to extend previous research on coaching and teaching by developing an in-depth understanding of the process by which expert wheelchair and standing collegiate basketball coaches acquire, develop, and implement the knowledge and essential attributes necessary to succeed in professional coaching. This was accomplished by examining, through a life history approach, the coaches’ reflections about their sporting backgrounds, processes of acquiring coaching knowledge, and knowledge sources and attributes that were most meaningful toward their growth as successful coaches. One researcher observed, interviewed, and analyzed two successful collegiate head basketball coaches while focusing on the life events of each coach to illustrate how their background and experiences in coaching and sport have shaped their expert coaching practice, knowledge, application of that knowledge, and helped identify the essential attributes necessary to become an expert coach. Using analytic induction, the data analysis revealed five themes: (a) for love of the game, (b) the coach as teacher and learner, (c) the thinking coach, (d) values and principles as attributes, and (e) communication. The findings provide a glimpse into the lives of expert wheelchair and standing basketball coaches and identify the most prominent knowledge sources and attributes of the expert coach.
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CHAPTER I
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Life history research promotes, first and foremost, a concern for the role of lived experience, with the ways in which individuals understand their own lives and the world around them. According to Plummer (1983), there are many ways of getting at the phenomenology of experience, but there is no substitute for spending many hours talking with the subject, gathering up his or her perceptions of the world, and developing an intense intimate familiarity with one concrete life. Goodson (1980) documented the procedures and protocol for using life history as a research method that employs a range of strategies for exploring the subjective meanings individuals give their life experiences.

Wright Mills (1959) suggested that

Order as well as disorder is relative to viewpoint: to come to an orderly understanding of men (sic) and societies requires a set of viewpoints that are simple enough to make understanding possible, yet comprehensive enough to permit us to include in our views the range and depth of human variety. The struggle for such viewpoints is the first and continuing struggle of social science. (p. 133)

The increased use of life history as a research approach has coincided with the current focus to acknowledge the subjective, multiple, and partial nature of human experience (Sparkes, Schempp, & Templin, 1993). The life history approach allows the researcher an insider’s view into people’s lives. Life-story, occasionally referred to as narrative research, is a research method that is rich in potential for providing insights into performance coaching (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000). The life-story approach has recently become more widely used in the field of physical education (Schempp, 1993) but this trend is not particularly evident in coaching
The main strength of the life-story approach is that it enables the exploration of an individual’s subjective reality (Dowling Naess, 1996). It is able to capture the often chaotic, complex, and ambiguous working lives of professionals such as coaches, and illustrate how such lives are negotiated (Carter, 1993). The life-story approach is able to tease out a coach’s perspective as it respects the uniqueness of the individual through allowing them greater voice than is the case in other research genres (Sparkes, 1993). Life-story is a genre that is able to provide valuable insights into the social complexity of the problematic phenomenon under study (Jones, 2000).

Research into coaching should acknowledge the multitude of dynamic variables that comprise coaching, and should seek to allow coaches and athletes to recognize themselves in the findings wherever possible (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003). Goodson (1992) made the basic distinction between a life-story and a life history. Life-story is a “story we tell about our life; the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence . . . The crucial focus for life history work is to locate the teacher’s own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis” (p. 6). Competing ideologies on sport, education, and physical education are understood as the result of a complex amalgam of teachers’ personal life experiences and their interaction with the broader social structures of departments and schools (Armour & Jones, 1998).

In a review article of narrative research, Armour (2006) established the importance of the narrative form including life history. She summarized the major findings of narrative research in physical education thus far and suggested that this type of research has an unrivaled capacity to reach teachers—to really engage them—and, as a result, to change them and their practices. In summarizing narrative research, Armour wrote how, as a student, narrative spoke to her in ways
that quantitative research could not. She did not regard such approaches as a fad, rather there are endless stories to be told, and suggested such research is valuable because it can speak to teachers, help them be reflective, and ultimately change teaching practice for the better.

Using a qualitative life history approach, Jones et al. (2003) investigated how an expert soccer coach acquired and constructed professional coaching knowledge. The findings supported previous research (Schempp, Templeton, & Clark, 1998) identifying the most often used sources of coaching knowledge as other coaches, players, coaching experience, and a formalized education program. Hardin, Wheeler, and Oh (2008) identified sources of knowledge most often used by a successful wheelchair basketball coach. The knowledge sources found to be most valuable were coaching clinics, other wheelchair basketball coaches, past playing experience, coaching experience, and player feedback.

Sport can be a powerful means for athletes to develop confidence and character. Coaches’ interaction with their players offers unique ways to influence their athletes’ psychological growth (Horn, 2008). At any level, the importance of the roles and responsibilities of a head coach remain crucial to the overall success of any athlete or team. A major task in coaching is to work to balance individual and collective needs and manage the consequent dilemmas that arise (Rovegno & Kirk, 1995). The success of a coach may be measured by the win-loss record, athlete skill and character development, championships won, or simply by the perception of professionalism. The bottom line is that coaches are essential to athlete achievement. This opinion has been delineated by past research on coaching which postulates that the “quality of a participant’s experience . . . is largely dependent on the environment created by the coach” [National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), 2008, p. 10]. At the same
time, coaches are often held responsible for the failure of their teams to win or their players to achieve personal success.

Given the increasing importance of money in sports and the possibilities that sport can contribute to contending with the growing obesity crisis, coaches play an important part in sporting culture. If, as Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) asserted, learning to coach is a complex, interrelated and inter-dependent process that is firmly embedded within the specific social and cultural contexts, to understand the coaching process research should focus on the social world of individual coaches and how they operate within given guidelines (Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002). In the physical education literature, Templin, Sparkes, Grant, and Schempp (1994) used the life history approach to help physical educators begin to understand the influences of workplace conditions on the teacher socialization process. Cote, Samela, and Russell (1995a) suggested that research should address individual coaches’ interpretations of their experiences and the social processes by which meanings and knowledge are used to guide actions, as such investigation could contribute toward the generation of theory that is faithful to the complex realities of sports coaching.

Quality coaching has now been recognized as one of the key aspects in both player and team development but the role of coach is very diverse and often not fully understood (Nash & Collins, 2006). Coaches perform various duties such as planning and supervising practice, preparing for games, providing feedback and instruction, and monitoring learning and performance of athletes to motivate and empower them to reach their full potential as athletes and citizens in the community.

Although there is no single definition of “knowledge,” it should include personal behaviors and beliefs, past experiences, and strategies needed to effectively and successfully
meet the various demands of coaching. Many of a coach’s actions may appear instinctive, like he or she was born to coach, but are based on a synergy of acquired knowledge, lived experiences, and continual self-reflection (Schon, 1987). Some players and coaches assume that coaching is indeed instinctive and does not need to be learned, while others assume a coach is hired because of past performance as an athlete, have little or no knowledge of coaching principles, and that anyone can coach (Nash & Collins, 2006).

Coaches also fulfill multiple roles such as teacher, motivator, strategist, and character builder (Gould, 1987). Like teachers, the coach’s job is to transmit and transform a collective body of knowledge and skills on a given subject in order to help athletes acquire and use that knowledge in various game-like situations. According to Macdonald and Tinning (1995), coaches are merely technicians involved in the transfer of knowledge. A coach’s challenge is to teach physical skills, as well as to build character, instill integrity, and point the way for youngsters to become confident, self-reliant adults (Martens, 1988). More important is how coaches develop knowledge, how they access that knowledge at the appropriate times, and how this affects their decision-making process (Nash & Collins, 2006).

**Knowledge Acquisition**

Shulman (1987) presented a set of knowledge sources for teaching that has helped answer these questions by serving as the framework for future studies looking at coaching knowledge acquisition. This framework served as a guide for Schempp et al. (1998) who used it to study the coaching knowledge of expert golf coaches. Their findings showed that interactions with coaching colleagues and coaches’ personal experiences were the primary knowledge sources used most often by the expert coach. In line with Shulman’s (1987) ideas, Berliner (1986) suggested that three important types of knowledge comprise expertise in teaching and may also
be applicable to coaching: content knowledge (knowledge or skill to be learned by the student), pedagogical knowledge (educational theory of factors that affect learning), and pedagogical-content knowledge (unique ways in which content knowledge is conveyed to learners in specific settings).

According to Schempp (1993), the degree of success that professionals experience in meeting societal demands for coaching success is largely dependent on the knowledge they generate and accumulate for the tasks they undertake. As a result, it becomes necessary to further understand the knowledge acquisition of expert coaches. Shulman (1987) concluded that this issue carried so much importance that he called for knowledge to serve as the focal point for educational reform. Schempp (1993) argued that from an “understanding of knowledge sources and the process of pedagogical reasoning and action can come a firm foundation for educating” (p. 3). This is a line of thinking that can be applied to coaching.

Other research results have shown that expert coaches rely on their education, organizational skills, experience, work ethic, and knowledge to further their coaching careers and successfully perform their job at the highest levels (Cote, 1998). Anderson and Gill (1983) found that many expert coaches acquired fundamental coaching knowledge while studying for an undergraduate degree in physical education. Durand-Bush (1996) interviewed expert coaches and identified the different areas of coaches’ knowledge to be technical, tactical, physical, and mental. In a study directly related to knowledge acquisition, Werthner and Trudel (2006) suggested that coaches acquired knowledge through mediated (coaching clinics), unmediated (observation of other coaches), and internal (self-reflection) learning situations. Successful coaches actively search out these learning opportunities to enhance their expertise as a coaching professional. These findings support previous research by Anderson and Gill (1983) that found
that many coaches acquired fundamental coaching knowledge while studying for an undergraduate degree in physical education.

Expert coaches have also shown to have gained knowledge through their initial experiences as high school head coaches, college assistant coaches, mentees, and previous athletic experiences during their careers (Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007). Werthner and Trudel (2006) also found that previous elite-level athletic experiences were viewed as a valuable source of coaching knowledge acquisition.

From a constructivist viewpoint, learning is defined as the meaning individuals construct from their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It recognizes the relationship between past and current experiences, and this is the context where learning takes place. By examining the lives of expert coaches from this perspective, there can be a deeper understanding regarding the meaning that coaches assign to continued knowledge acquisition throughout their careers. The education of a coach is a continuing, developmental process rather than a “one-time” initial program (Halberstam, 2005). This study viewed coaches’ knowledge acquisition as a social construction stemming from the belief that knowledge is constructed from the world in which we live. It aimed to take into account the many contextual variables which comprise the complex reality in which coaches work (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995b) and gain a holistic understanding of coaches as coaches.

To understand coaches’ knowledge, we need to learn about their philosophies, goals, priorities, and how they rationalize their behaviors (Jones et al., 2003). We need to know about their lives around coaching and how coaches develop to become experts in their field. To understand coaches’ knowledge and how they effectively use it, it is necessary to understand the dynamic influences upon their occupational and social worlds as perceived by them (Schempp,
1993). It is expert coaches themselves who can offer considerable depth to our understanding of key issues in the lives and careers of coaches. The life history approach is an excellent method for studying adult socialization, thus being able to assist in understanding coaches and informing the development of coach-centered professional knowledge (Templin et al., 1994).

Schinke, Bloom, and Salmela (1995) analyzed the career progression patterns of elite Canadian University and Olympic team sport coaches and found that during both their athletic and coaching careers coaches passed through a number of developmental stages that provided them with the knowledge needed to reach their status as expert coaches. The coaches felt their past athletic experiences helped shape how they trained and developed athletes, formed a coaching philosophy, and interacted with athletes during practice and games.

Apprenticeship is still prevalent within coaching and has proven merit in the early stages of development, but much of the success or failure of a mentoring experience depends on the ability to pass on coaching wisdom and relevant information (Nash & Sproule, 2009). According to experienced coaches, learning from successful coaches is still considered an effective method of achieving the development of expertise (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, & Chung, 2002).

Experience is also an important part of the coaching process, enabling coaches to interpret their coaching practice and develop knowledge through this authentic learning environment (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Jones et al., 2003). Bates (2007) claimed that experience plays a key role within coaching performance due to the limitations of formal coaching education. This is particularly true in disabled sport where formal educational opportunities for coaches are extremely limited. As the sport movement for people with disabilities grows, the role of coach will become more significant (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). DePauw and Gavron (1991) studied 155 coaches of disability sport and found that only 16% of those coaches were disabled
themselves and only 56% of all disabled sport coaches had attended workshops on coaching athletes with disabilities. Past research has also shown that successful coaches accumulate thousands of hours of pre-coaching experience while competing in sport as athletes (Gilbert & Cote, 2003).

Nash and Sproule (2009) found that expert coaches’ methods of development were considered to be informal, with networking with other coaches of like mind believed to be essential to their progress, and the ability to contextualize knowledge and information to suit both the individual and situation, as well as appropriate mentors at the initial stages of their coaching careers, to be vital. Coakley (1978) noted that these mentorship experiences are the channels through which the traditional accepted methods of coaching become integrated into the behavior of aspiring coaches. Mentoring in its current form seems unstructured, somewhat informal, and unequal in terms of overall quality, and only serves to reproduce the existing culture of coaching. Bleed (2001) stated the importance of peer socialization in the learning process and King (1990) suggested that the process of constructing new knowledge or the process of transforming previous knowledge into new formats is actually enhanced through peer interaction.

**Expertise**

Defining expertise in coaching is not easy due to varying definitions of what expertise is. A number of suggestions have been made regarding expertise and tested in a variety of contexts (e.g., chess, music, clinical diagnosis, and sport) (Nash & Collins, 2006). Expertise can be defined as “a fluid configuration of knowledge, information and situated experience, all of which are apt to change in response to questions arising in highly specific and localized contexts”
(Nowotny, 2000, p. 12). Similar themes have emerged across these disciplines concerning the nature of expertise, which, according to Glaser (1990), include

- Expertise is domain specific and developed over a prolonged period of time;
- Experts recognize patterns faster than novices;
- Expert knowledge is structured to allow easier recall;
- Experts sort problems into categories according to features of their solutions;
- Experts initially are slower to solve problems than non-experts, but are faster overall;
- Experts are more flexible and are more able to adapt to situations;
- Experts develop routines to allow processing capacity to be focused on ongoing environments; and
- Experts take deeper meanings from cues than novices.

An expert is someone who achieves exceptionally high performance in a particular domain (Ericsson & Smith, 1991). Expertise implies a super-ordinate capability to consistently maximize student learning with a diversity of students under varying conditions (Dodds, 1994). Dodds went on to state:

Expert teachers teach intuitively, having an overall sense of the situation such that they can respond fluidly without deliberating. They work unconsciously until there is a specific problem on which to focus their analytical skills. They operate a cut above all other teachers, just as expert musicians and sports performers do. (p. 156)

Expertise is grounded in a variety of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge that make up a coach’s schema. Schemata are abstract knowledge structures that summarize information about many particular cases and the various relationships among them (Anderson, 1984). Expert teachers have been shown to possess more domain-specific declarative and procedural knowledge than do novices (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981). Declarative knowledge refers to known facts in a particular area or domain while procedural knowledge represents processes and
conditions; it refers to the ability to perform mental operations or to use declarative knowledge in appropriate ways (Graham, French, & Woods, 1993). Carter, Cushing, Sabers, and Berliner (1988) suggested that expert teachers, by the very nature of acquiring expertise through extensive and varied teaching experiences, have a rich store of classroom knowledge about students and events and use that knowledge to understand and explain classroom phenomena.

Effective coaching over an extended period of time is the hallmark of an expert coach (Bowes & Jones, 2006) and correlates with the idea that a significant part of expertise in coaching is based on past experiences and interpretations of those experiences. As Cassidy (2004) suggested, best practices signify that coaches are better off being educated than trained. Past research substantiates her assertion by suggesting a vital part of this education is building on past experiences (Schempp, 1993). This evidence suggests that both the experience of the coach and encounters with other coaches are fundamental to the shaping of effective coaching practice. Influencing these experiences would directly affect the acquisition of coaching knowledge.

Research on coaching expertise has used several criteria for identifying expert coaches: (a) number of years of coaching experience, (b) performance levels attained by their athletes, (c) the level they attained when in professional competition, and (d) recognition of their expertise by peers (Cote et al., 1995b). Coaches often attempt to put themselves in the athletes’ shoes or relate to their own memories as an athlete to understand behavior from within (Nash & Collins, 2006). A link between the instructional styles of classroom teachers and tacit knowledge from childhood play has been shown to assist them in understanding their students (Witte, Everett-Turner, & Sawada, 1991). This might infer that basketball coaches interact better with their players if they actually played competitive wheelchair or standing basketball. Many coaches
attribute their development of coaching knowledge to their own experience and observing experienced coaches (Cushion et al., 2003).

Research into the development of expertise in problem solving has shown that experts access a greater knowledge of the domain, organize their knowledge in ways that make information more accessible, perceive domain-related information and patterns faster and more effortlessly, make use of more complex strategies and contemplate a wider range of alternatives, and are more efficient in monitoring the progress of their problem solving and allocating effort appropriately (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996).

**Attributes**

Hardin (2000) identified and compared the coaching attributes of five expert high school coaches and found that planning, experience, and continuing education were the most important attributes of the expert coach. According to Bloom, Schinke, and Salmela (1997), communication lies at the heart of effective coaching. Coaches must be skillful senders of information, as well as expert listeners for receiving messages (Bloom et al.). Martens (1990) added that critical attributes of coaching include being positive, unpretentious, non-evaluative, emotional, and having a positive approach was the most important attribute a coach could possess.

Bloom and Salmela (2000) completed a qualitative study of 16 expert team sport coaches using in-depth open-ended interviews to ascertain the personal characteristics of the coaches. These coaches were seen as the most knowledgeable and respected in their sport and were selected to the study based on winning percentage and number of elite performers produced. The researchers found that the coaches had a desire to continue growing and improving and that each coach placed high value on communicating effectively with their players (Bloom & Samela).
In order to discover how expert coaches acquire their professional knowledge and coaching attributes, it becomes important to identify and understand the knowledge they already possess. Proper design of methods and regulations for educating and licensing requires a better understanding of the knowledge and skills possessed, developed, and used by coaches recognized as the most effective in the field (Salmela, 1996).

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the ways in which expert basketball coaches acquired and implemented the knowledge and attributes necessary to succeed in professional coaching by examining, through a life history approach, the coaches’ backgrounds, processes of acquiring coaching knowledge, and knowledge sources and characteristics that were most meaningful for their growth as a successful coach. An assumption supporting this purpose is that life history research offers the potential to “fill in the huge gaps in our understanding of the shifting sands of careers and professional lives” (Benyon, 1985, p. 164). This study focused on and compared the life events of two expert collegiate head basketball coaches to illustrate how their backgrounds and experiences have shaped their beliefs, coaching knowledge, application of that knowledge, and helped to identify the essential attributes necessary to become a successful coach.

**Research Questions**

Direct subjective observation and analysis of coaching behaviors and experiences has provided considerable insight into the development of personal and professional identities and associated knowledges (Sage, 1987). Four questions guided this study: (1) where did these two expert coaches acquire their coaching knowledge, (2) what are the essential attributes of these expert coaches, (3) what are the similarities and differences between a wheelchair basketball
coach and a standing basketball coach in these areas, and, (4) how do these two coaches define expertise in coaching?

**Significance of Study**

Over the last 30 years, interest in coaching effectiveness has grown tremendously. Available research on coaching has focused on specific coaching behaviors exhibited by coaches such as motivation, leadership, expertise, coach-athlete relationship, professionalism, education, and knowledge (Bowes & Jones, 2006). There is limited research on the life experiences of a wheelchair coach in any sport and absolutely no available research comparing the life histories of an expert wheelchair and standing coach. New research in this area will bring a deeper understanding of what coaching attributes and knowledges are important in becoming an expert coach. The findings of this study may be used to guide those that may be interested in or are currently coaching, with or without a disability, to becoming more effective and employable professional coaches.

**Assumptions**

The assumptions inherent in this study are as follows:

1. It is assumed that the participants were honest and sincere while participating in this study.
2. It is assumed that the participants were able to accurately reflect on their individual playing and coaching experiences.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

In this chapter, the methods and procedures selected for use in this study are presented in the following arrangement: (a) participants, (b) role of the researcher, (c) interviews, (d) observations, (e) stimulated recall interviews, (f) documents, (g) modified Q-sort, (h) data analysis techniques, and (i) data trustworthiness.

Participants

Two highly successful men’s collegiate head basketball coaches were purposefully chosen for participation in this study through a process of what Patton (1990) called purposeful sampling; “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful” (p. 169). The criteria employed to select the coaches included (a) a minimum of 10 years coaching experience, (b) a career winning percentage greater than .600 as a head coach, (c) a record of two or more postseason playoff titles (i.e., conference, regional, or national championships), (d) recommendation or recognition by peers for outstanding coaching (e.g., coach of the year), (e) leadership roles in establishing camps and conducting basketball clinics, (f) actively coaching at a representative level, and (g) accessibility to the researcher (Cote et al., 1995b; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 1996; Jones, Housner, & Kornspan, 1995; Valee & Bloom, 2005). By and large, these criteria agree with that of Cote, Young, North, and Duffy (2007). One participant was an NCAA Division 1
head coach who is ambulatory and the other participant a NWBA Intercollegiate wheelchair basketball coach with a physical disability.

**Role of Researcher**

This study is an interpretive study so the researcher used qualitative methods to collect data. The need to utilize interpretive methods to explore the sporting lives of coaches has been highlighted as essential for generating an understanding of the experiential, social, and contextual factors which impact upon the instructional process in sport (Potrac et al., 2000).

Since the researcher is a key component in any qualitative study, it is important to take note that the researcher holds a Professional Level 1 (P1) certification from the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) and has also coached youth baseball, intercollegiate wheelchair basketball, and standing high school basketball. The researcher is a three-time Paralympian and medalist in wheelchair tennis, played standing football, basketball, and baseball in high school, and has played wheelchair basketball at the highest national levels for over 20 years. At the time this study was completed, the researcher was a player on the University of Alabama Men's Wheelchair Basketball Team. In addition, the researcher has an extensive background in disability sport both as Athletic Director at the U.S. Olympic Committee’s Olympic & Paralympic Training Site and as Assistant Chef de Mission for the USA Paralympic Delegation that competed in Athens, Greece in 2004.

Due to the researcher’s international involvement in sport, it was impossible to say that the researcher did not have any personal relationships with the participants. However, the researcher believed these personal relationships only further allowed the participants to feel comfortable while reflecting on their coaching experiences. Outside of the interactions involved directly with this study, this study was never talked about amongst the researcher and
participants. The researcher also met with his faculty advisor to monitor research activities. The researcher was also a certified teacher and had remained very involved in adapted and standing sports. Therefore, the researcher acknowledged preconceived attitudes and perceptions about expert collegiate basketball coaches. During this study, the researcher attempted to not let his opinions and perceptions interfere with the data collection and analysis, and tried to capture and describe the life history of each participant as told by the participants.

Data Collection

Interviews. After obtaining consent to participate from the coaches (Appendix B), the researcher conducted 10 in-depth, semi-structured, 60–90 minute interviews (5 with each coach) that were audio taped, transcribed, and subjected to the constant comparison analysis technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview questions were formed in a way that allowed the participants to thoroughly explain their backgrounds, philosophies, and experiences in coaching and sport, and the meanings they have assigned to these experiences. Throughout the series of interviews, the new data were inductively coded into categories. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews (Gratton & Jones, 2004) was to investigate the processes that the coaches have gone through to become expert coaches while focusing on their backgrounds in sport and coaching, career education and sources of knowledge, and their pathway to becoming recognized as an expert coach (Nash & Sproule, 2009).

The interview process began with general information about the purpose of the study and then focused on background and demographic issues (Cote et al., 1995a). Open-ended questions were used to elucidate the experiential, contextual, and situational factors that the participants perceived to have influenced their coaching behavior (Potrac et al., 2002). Interviews were reflexive in nature in that the participants were invited to explore certain themes with the
interviewer (Sparkes & Templin, 1992). The coaches’ insights and professional perspectives remained at the heart of the interviews. Sparkes and Templin (1992, p. 121) asserted that “such a perspective is of great importance in any attempt to explain why people act in certain ways rather than others.”

Multiple forms and sources of coaches’ professional knowledge can be accessed using a variety of research strategies. As a research method, life history employs a range of strategies for exploring the subjective meanings individuals give their life experiences (Goodson, 2000). The coaches were encouraged to discuss their general coaching philosophy, coaching principles, entry into coaching, personal athletic background, knowledge sources, essential attributes, beliefs, and visions of coaching and coaching education during this phase. The questions for the interviews were specifically designed in line with the main purpose of the study to learn about the participants’ knowledge and how that knowledge was acquired (Appendix A). All formal interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

**Observations.** Field notes were added to the transcript about the participant’s experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to highlight the most prominent points raised by the coach and ensure consistency between the intention of the coach and the interpretation of the researcher (Nash & Sproule, 2009).

Field observations of five regular season games and five organized team practices with copious field notes were analyzed and utilized to help inform each formal interview and served to further explore an understanding of coaching philosophy and coaching style.

**Stimulated Recall Interviews.** Following meticulous analysis of the data, selected segments of these games and practice sessions were reviewed and discussed during three stimulated recall interviews with each coach to verify understanding and accuracy, not only from
the words in the transcript that were verbalized, but more importantly to elicit the meaning of what was expressed (Stake, 1995). O’Sullivan (1996) stated that stimulated recall enables the researcher to capture the thought processes of teachers as they analyze their own instructional behaviors. Sparkes (1992) has recommended that researchers discuss their interpretations of events with those involved in the study, as agreements and disagreements in themselves provide a rich source of data that is pertinent to the researcher’s analysis and ongoing interpretation. The researcher and interviewee act as collaborators, or “narrator” and “researcher” (Sparkes & Templin, 1992).

Documents. Documents were used as a secondary data source. Examples of documents that were analyzed include practice plans, bulletin and dry-erase boards, books, camp brochures, stat sheets, and journals. These data were used to corroborate data collected from other sources during the study.

Modified Q-Sort Interview. Finally, a modified Q-Sort interview was performed to rank order a set of 10 cards, each depicting a source of the coaches’ knowledge drawn from previous teaching research, coaching literature, and data collected during the present study (Schempp et al., 1998; Shulman, 1987). Past sources of knowledge have included books, peer coaches, mentors, film and video, past playing experience, coaching experience, clinics and conferences, player feedback, and formal education (Schempp et al.). Block (1978) recommended this person-centered assessment approach in a study of personality development.

At the completion of the first semi-structured interview the researcher placed 12 index cards in front of the participants to sort by priority while the process of the modified Q-sort interview was explained in detail. Two cards were left blank so as to encourage the coach to explore and write down new knowledge sources not previously discussed in past research. Each
of the other 10 cards contained one source of knowledge from previous research. Each of these knowledge sources was reviewed with the coach followed by a ranking of the cards according to their own experiences in sport and coaching. As the order of the cards began to take shape, each source of knowledge was discussed in-depth with the goal of explaining and linking that particular knowledge source to past experiences of the coach. Thus, the Q-Sort method has the purpose of giving a picture of the point of view or attitude of the respondent toward a particular topic (Block). After sorting the final cards, the coach was asked to review the order of cards and take a holistic look at explaining their importance and meaning as a source of their lifelong coaching knowledge. The modified Q-Sort interview sessions were audio-taped and transcribed.

**Data Analysis**

For this study, the researcher used analytic induction and constant comparison method to analyze the data (Goetz & LeComte, 1984). This is the process of drawing themes and emergent patterns from data, and an effective way to ascertain the thoughts and experiences of the participants.

This study followed the guidelines of Huberman and Miles (1995) in which data analysis is done in four stages. In the first stage, data collection and preliminary analysis of quotes and themes found in the words of the participating coaches were conducted. Themes that emerged from the initial formal interview transcripts and observational field notes were used to establish an initial set of categories and guided the stimulated recall interview questions. I employed recursive data analysis and interpretation, that is, rather than gathering all data and analyzing it together, I immediately searched for themes and connections (Goetz & LeComte, 1984). An attempt was made to interweave data collection and analysis, and all answers given in one interview helped to inform future interviews. In the second stage, data reduction, data were
coded, summarized, and categorized. In the third stage, data were organized into smaller forms and assorted constructs. This allowed the researcher to not only display the main categories that developed from the data, but also the sub-categories in which the researcher believed to fall under each main category. The fourth stage included drawing conclusions and verifying the data (Huberman & Miles, 1995).

Document analysis incorporated reviewing the coach’s practice plans prior to the observed practices and later during data analysis. This process helped to validate collected data relating to the organization and knowledge of the participants (Weber, 1990). Upon completion of each interview, transcription, and coding, stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each coach. These interviews allowed the researcher the opportunity to ask the coaches about specific episodes of coaching behavior they exhibited and to share their thoughts on different coaching techniques they may have used. Behavioral data were compiled, triangulated, and inductively analyzed.

**Data Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher. Qualitative research seeks to diminish the possibility for misinterpretation or mishandling of data through means that enhance trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness of the data the following strategies were employed:

1. Prolonged engagement with the participants.
2. Triangulation of data.
3. Use of thick description to report results.
4. Member checking.
In addition to formal and informal interviews, prolonged engagement was used by the researcher to learn the culture and build the trust of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This included observations of all aspects of their coaching practice, including self-reflection, coaches’ meetings, team meetings, player meetings and film sessions, practices, and games during the prescribed time allotment.

A researcher can establish data trustworthiness in a qualitative study through data triangulation. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), triangulation is defined as “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 79). In this study, the researcher achieved triangulation by attempting to connect the themes noted in the formal interview transcripts, the stimulated recall transcripts, field observations, and the modified Q-sort interview transcripts.

Member checks were used at the completion of transcription to ensure the validity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants received a full verbatim transcript and were given the opportunity to eliminate, add, or clarify any comments made during any of the interviews. The participants were asked to read the transcripts and confirm, dispute, or revise them in any way they deemed necessary. As themes emerged within the data, the researcher checked back with the participants for comments and verification. Once the member checks were completed, the researcher presented the finalized data. A critical component of data analysis was to ensure that the data stayed consistent with the interpretation and application of the coding system (Cote et al., 1995b).
CHAPTER III
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

This chapter provides a detailed description of each of the participants’ backgrounds. The following profiles are presented in the order in which the interviews took place. In order to protect each of the participants’ identity and confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for their names, where they grew up, and for any team or school names they may have mentioned during the study. The data presented in the participant profiles were gathered from the individual semi-structured background interviews that were recorded and transcribed.

Coach Fuller

Coach Fuller was a White male who used a manual wheelchair for daily living. This coach was in his 9th season as the head coach of the Men’s Wheelchair Basketball Team at a large university located in the Midwestern United States. During his unprecedented coaching career, his men’s teams have won six national intercollegiate championships. As the former men’s and women’s head coach at the same university, his women’s teams won five national championships. Coach Fuller grew up in the Eastern region of Canada where he was a multi-sport (wrestling and basketball) athlete in high school. As the three-time head coach of the Canadian Men’s Wheelchair Basketball Team, Coach Fuller has led his national teams to a 24-1 record and two gold medals and one silver medal in the Paralympic Games. As a renowned basketball teacher, Coach Fuller has made a significant contribution to the worldwide growth and development of the sport of wheelchair basketball. His accolades include numerous leadership
and community service awards. When asked about his favorite sporting and coaching memories, Coach Fuller revealed,

I didn’t play competitive sports at all until I was in the 7th grade and made our basketball team in middle school. Everything before that . . . all of my sport experiences . . . they’re all pick-up. It’s all . . . it’s not even basketball actually. Most of it it’s things like British bulldog, tag, hide n’ seek, it’s canoeing, hiking, camping, cross country skiing, snow shoeing—all those kinds of things. My Dad did tons of swimming. My dad was big on golf. That’s the other one too. My dad wasn’t big on competitive sports. In fact he told me I wasn’t allowed to play. All the kids in our neighborhood when I was growing up, they all played football. He said you’re not allowed to play football. He said the kids at that age didn’t know how to play the game properly so you’re going to get injured. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

The first competitive sport I played was soccer when I was in the third grade. I was horrible, horrible. I just didn’t do that much. I just wasn’t that interested in playing competitive soccer. So I did tons and tons of lifetime sports and all kinds of things—everything. I think that did a couple different things for me. When I look at athlete development now as everyone discusses it . . . one, I had a really broad physical literacy experience so my body understood all kinds of different positions and balances, and movements and spaces. Plus, I was a late maturer. When you’re learning how to golf as an eleven-year-old and you’re undersized but you’re given adult clubs. How does that teach you how to harness your body to be able to maximize your power? So I learned how to use every inch of my body. Like my golf swing when I was an eleven-year-old was a full-body swing. Then you think about all your experiences of hiking and climbing and doing all these different things. Think about all the different muscle groups you’re using in different ways. And I think that rounded me out in terms of my fundamental movements. That changed my thinking when I got into a chair. It made me think about okay how am I going to use everything that I’ve got. I didn’t think how am I going to only use the things that are functional. I was used to using everything that I had. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

I call them snapshots (memories). Okay because for me it’s a short little vignette. I guess in essence what it is, it’s a snapshot of a moment that I think just captures other things. So I can remember playing for example, street hockey. As a kid growing up maybe I’m eight or nine years old. I can remember being the goalie that day and playing a group of kids from another section of our neighborhood. You know those kind of little cross-town rivalry type things. I can remember that I never played goalie at all. I got stuck in the net and I remember getting pelted with like probably a gazillion shots. I can remember this one . . . that for whatever reason the kid shot it and I don’t know why but I pinched my legs together and caught the tennis ball right literally . . . right in-between my legs. I don’t know why I pinched my legs together but in that moment I began to understand . . . let your instincts happen—don’t restrain them. There’s something that told me and I don’t know what it was to this day. It’s not like I actually said okay take a look at the blade it’s lined up. It looks like the ball is here and it’s going to be going this way. I just
put some things together . . . pinched my legs together. There is a concept of “thin slicing” which is big in decision making right now. You know it’s like you don’t need everything to make a decision. There are key elements. Somewhere in there I saw a key element. So it’s just trust your instincts. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010).

I can remember getting subbed on . . . and in a game when I was in high school and defending a kid from the other team. He was like an all-city kid and throwing my body around to deflect passes going in . . . like literally just throwing my body to tap a ball here and there. Getting subbed out and subbed back in and the kid looked at me and goes, “great, I get captain of the floor burn team.” I don’t know why but it’s one of those things that sticks with you. I remember my first basket playing high school basketball. Literally getting the rebound and the way I remember it, stumbling down the court, like going down the court and just reacting. It’s almost like I was just as close to falling but every time I’d just catch myself going in another direction and almost falling back and finally just threw the ball up and it went in. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

I remember winning the city championship with the first team I coached . . . a high school able-bodied team. I remember seeing our little point guard Don Hubert standing at center court, not going crazy or anything, just very quietly . . . the buzzer goes off and he just stood there . . . just very quiet, understated—were number one. Enough said. No chest bumping . . . no in your face. Very quiet and dignified number one. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

My first moment as a coach that I can remember is the first time I met with our high school basketball team after my accident. I was still in rehab at the time so I literally had gotten up out of bed early in the morning, five in the morning . . . gotten all showered and everything like that. My dad picked me up at the hospital and drove me to my old high school for the first tryout. So I got there. I think we started at 6:30, went out . . . gathered all the guys around. I can remember the first thing I said was just hi, my name is Coach Fuller. I’m going to be your coach. These are my expectations . . . went through my list of expectations . . . went through my list of expectations and then began getting into the drills. So you know, start off with a layup drill then we did some passing drills . . . some dribbling drills and some things like this. The things that I remember from that first practice, one . . . I never wanted . . . I was coaching able-bodied kids. So I didn’t say anything really about my chair. I didn’t want it to be about my chair. I didn’t want it to be about my disability. I wanted it to be about coaching. I wanted my relationship with them as a coach. And then as we started doing things that day the thing I realized was, wow, do I have a lot to learn and how [laughing] I had a completely different idea about what it took to run a practice or in that case, a tryout that day. At that moment it was like okay man, I’ve got a lot to learn. I better start learning and really fast because these guys are ready to learn right now. Then literally that night I started to try to find ways to learn, to improve, to grow, to get better. To be prepared for the next day [laughing] at that particular point. But overall, to be a better coach for them for the season and from that point on. I mean I liked coaching from that moment. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)
Coach Tucker

Coach Tucker was a White male standing coach in his 13th season as the head coach of the Men’s Basketball Team at a medium-sized university located in the Southeastern United States. During his highly productive tenure, Coach Tucker has led his teams to a pair of NCAA Tournament bids and has registered an impressive 135-96 record against conference opponents, and has over 200 coaching victories at the Division 1 level. As head coach, Coach Tucker immediately made a mark on his university’s basketball program, incorporating the Princeton-style offense, which relies on precision cuts and 3-point shooting. In 1999, his team finished number one in the nation in field-goal percentage and posted a remarkable 15-1 record in conference play. For his efforts, Coach Tucker was named his conference’s Coach of the Year.

Coach Tucker is widely respected in coaching circles for his teaching of the motion offense. Coach Tucker grew up in the Southern region of the United States where he began his career as a head coach in the high school ranks and won a state championship in addition to being named the High School Coach of the Year. When asked about his favorite sport and coaching memories, Coach Tucker responded,

Well, I think what is important to success, some of which is beyond our control, are the genes we inherit. Then our early experiences, or early circumstances, which can help to provide a confidence to be able to explore things. I was lucky enough that my parents were both athletes. I make a joke about this but there was not really a book in the house. But from my early experiences I remember my mother taking me outside for baseball practice. She was a professional softball player. My dad played college football and also pitched softball before he went into the Navy for World War II. He played for Neyland at Tennessee. I remember my dad would throw me footballs. My mother was a first baseman and she was trained to do that as a left-hander. I remember being in the backyard from four or five years old and she would hit a baseball to me sometimes as hard as she could. I would miss it and it would go past me and break our wooden fence. So I occasionally came away with some bloody noses. They obviously knew I had a little bit of ability but it was this early formative experience that . . . I didn’t realize it at the time, I wasn’t necessarily consciously processing what was going on, but being competitive, trying to be focused as much as I could. Obviously a baseball coming at you, you can get hurt. And then I just gravitated to different sports as a kid. My personality is
competitive and I don’t shirk from responsibility and challenges. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/2010)

As a baseball player I was a pitcher and first baseman. As a football player, all the way through high school, I was a quarterback and defensive back. As a basketball player, I was a point guard. So these are positions of responsibility, which I held in earnest. And then from there I went into college and as my playing days wore down gravitated to the idea of coaching. You know, I enjoy teaching, which is what coaching is. You know it is a specific skill. I enjoy trying to organize and systematize. Because I had experienced relative success, I had a lot of confidence in my ability. I was very curious. I was not afraid to make mistakes. I always figured I would be able to figure out a way to do these things. So that became a challenge for me. I attribute that to my parents. You know if I had tried to be an intellectual early on or tried to have success as a musician I wouldn’t have had that success and that may have inhibited my sense of empowerment as I moved on in life. So it was through that athletics that I gained confidence. It is really when people are not confident that they are inhibited or stultified in their growth. They don’t really explore because there is a lot of insecurity there. So that’s why I was lucky to start with the base I did in athletics. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/2010)

I was very lucky and this goes back to the confidence level. I was able to play on some national championship teams. When I was 12, 13 there was something called Biddy Basketball and I made this All-Star team. You had to win your district and you had to win the state and then you went to a certain region and all these regions play. Then we played in Scranton, Pennsylvania. We played New York City for the national championship and we won by a point. I was fouled with ten seconds to go and we were down one, shooting one and one. I made both free throws luckily and we won the game. So that helped me. And when I was 15, I played Babe Ruth baseball . . . made the All Star team. We had to win our district. We had to win our state. We had to go to a region and win there. Then we went to the World Series in Anderson, Indiana. We went all the way through and we won the World Series. And they had to pick a most valuable player and they picked me. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/2010)

And then when I was 18 or 19, right after high school before college there was something called All American Baseball, which is in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Where you . . . same idea, you go and you qualify and you play against other teams from Detroit, wherever, you know all over the country. One of the 2 years that I made this team we won the championship. So this was all formative for me in terms of feeling like . . . you know I was part of being a winner. I was part of being a team. But I wanted to be able to coach and to get kids to be able to imprint into them techniques so that they could experience the same joy that I felt. So that was sort of a motivation for me. So I got into coaching and worked my way up. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/2010)
These snapshots add some significant insight into the knowledge sources of expert coaches. Both coaches were influenced by their earliest sport experiences and applied those experiences and lessons learned directly to their expert coaching practice.

Results from the modified Q-sort interviews revealed that the two participants had similar experiences but prioritized their knowledge sources differently. Coach Fuller ranked his sources of coaching knowledge in the following order:

1. Mom and Dad.
2. Playing Experiences.
3. Formal Education and Mentors.
4. Past Coaching Experiences and Feedback from Players.
5. Instructional Videos, Films, and Books.
6. Peer Coaches and Coaching Clinics or Conferences.

Coach Fuller further explained,

Mom and Dad were most important because of the characteristics and the principles and values that they initially taught me. All of my early experiences . . . they’re the foundation that shape who I am today. I am really lucky because my mom and dad were really involved. When I say to people the thing that they gave me the most—they gave me their time. We weren’t rich . . . super rich family. We weren’t poor either or anything like this. But what I remember about my mom or my dad is the time they spent. I can remember my dad, I talked about all that breadth of experience in all the different things . . . that’s my dad. That’s my dad when he’d get home from work. We’d go out and take the dog for a walk or we’d go . . . I can remember when he went on a kick when he was running. He started running so he wanted to get in shape, lose some weight. He went out . . . he bought these Adidas track suits. You remember the old . . . almost like they’d melt if they got in the sun too much ones? You know those ones? Okay he got three of ’em. One for me. One for my brother. One for himself and we’d go running. And so we did stuff like that. He loved to golf. We went out and learned how to golf. He didn’t want us to have the habits he had. So he said the first thing you’re going to do before you even get on a golf course . . . taking some lessons. So I remember all those kinds of things—it was the time. Right off the bat that’s the single biggest one right there. (Modified Q-Sort Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/10)
Coach Tucker ranked his sources of knowledge in the following order:

3. Coaching Clinics or Conferences, Mentors, Feedback from Players.
4. Instructional Videos and Films.

During the modified Q-sort interview Coach Tucker commented,

So this is all . . . it is not a hierarchy for me. This stuff is all kind of lumped in together. The peer coaches for sustenance. The parents for what they gave me and the sustenance there. And the playing experiences lumped into the coaching experience which impacts the coaching than the teaching. And my own education . . . you know learn to rely on . . . again I’ve never really had a mentor so, if it’s going to get done, I delusionally think that I’m going to have to do it. (Modified Q-Sort, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

![Fig. 1. Comparison of two expert coaches at the collegiate level.](image-url)
CHAPTER IV
PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

The data sources in this study were five semi-structured interviews with each participant, three different stimulated recall interviews, a modified Q-sort interview, observations, and documents. The information gathered from the data sources was compiled, sorted, and analyzed and five major themes, based on the participants’ reflection on their sport and coaching experiences emerged from the data analysis. As the themes emerged from the data, each theme was individually validated with corresponding evidence in other data sources. For example, if a theme was noted when reviewing a participant’s individual interview transcript, then the researcher attempted to find further evidence of that theme among other individual interview transcripts and the stimulated recall transcripts. The themes were checked with the participants for validation and comments.

The findings of this study, only specific to these college coaches, have been summarized into five themes: (a) for love of the game, (b) the coach as teacher and learner, (c) the thinking coach, (d) values and principles as attributes, and (e) communication. Also, within all of these overall themes, several sub-themes emerged.

For Love of the Game

To be successful coaching in any sport the expert coach must have a passion for the sport and for teaching the proper way to play the game. Good coaches love and appreciate competition and the regular “tests” that games provide to both themselves and their players. Passion and a love for the game can come in many forms including a coach’s work ethic, drive, mental
toughness, discipline, intensity, determination, and resiliency. These are but a few of the essential attributes necessary to become an expert coach. Expert coaches do not allow their players to just get by with the status quo. They refuse to accept mediocrity in effort, attitude, technique, or performance. Because they continually challenge their athletes, they are able to keep them motivated. There is nothing more motivating to an athlete than being challenged and experiencing the success of rising to meet and overcome adversity.

Both coaches spoke about effort and work ethic while expecting athletes to work hard, do well academically, and prepare properly for athletic competition. They show an intense passion for the game and expect exceptional effort not only from themselves but from their athletes. During interviews and observations, the participants additionally revealed numerous essential attributes of an expert coach such as persistence, focus, and an obsession to win. Each of these attributes was learned from various key sources including parents and past coaches. While discussing work ethic, Coach Fuller stated,

I was not a gifted athlete. When I started off, when I first played basketball when I was 10 years old . . . I wasn’t good. Remember what I said the other day? I was the smallest guy, too. I wasn’t good and I wasn’t big. So that’s a deadly combination to put together. Plus I lived in Canada so hockey is more important than basketball. So I chose an unimportant sport and I was like tiny and not very good at it. I worked at it. I listed my mom and my dad as the most important things in terms of my development as a coach. That’s the work ethic right there. I learned that from my parents. So I just worked hard and I got better. I had to learn a lot of things through that process. I think that helped me understand how all the different pieces fit together better. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

When I went on to high school . . . I started wrestling in high school. I had a great wrestling coach. He was on the Canadian Olympic wrestling team . . . his name was Mr. Arnold . . . Arnie. Now that I’m an adult I probably call him Arnie [laughing]. He was a great teacher of technique as a wrestler and he combined that with an unbelievable . . . a resolute work ethic. He taught me those things. He taught me that if you combine those two things together, especially work ethic—you can control your future. It’s like you take that work ethic . . . you know your work ethic controls . . . is the single most important factor really in the kind of successes you’re going to have. And the neat thing
about it is you control that. So you control your future to the greatest extent you possibly can. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/2010)

Coach Tucker added some interesting comments on attributes such as effort, passion, and persistence:

Sometimes you tear your favorite shirt and it’s to realize that’s nothing is permanent. It might be an illness. It could be this but if you can actively remind yourself of this on a daily basis, constantly evaluating and putting passion into your life, like I said, there is nothing to me, a fate worse than death, than to have a life devoid of passion. Have a life that you know is steeped in mediocrity and it is shaped by ambivalence. And he’s the famous guy who said make your yes a yes and your no a no. Spit out the lukewarm. Make a decision, do something. Put your life into it because we are here for a limited time on earth so this is what I am trying to remind myself of when I am trying to help them. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

I think my parents were able to push me in the field of athletics. I think that’s . . . to answer honestly, I think if you experience success too much then success is not highly esteemed. So I think failure is part of the learning process. And the whole notion of resiliency and perseverance, which my parents were able to push me through early failure . . . and then you gain the confidence through the success because you know the success is earned. Sometimes you can tell a guy “great job” trying to build their confidence but if they really haven’t done it there is a sense of hollowness. It really doesn’t build within anything solid. So I think if you can help somebody in a positive way, a productive way, push you through the failure . . . understand there is going to be failure and then you experience some success then you really do have confidence, which you know can lead to a lot of different things. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/15/10)

Well I used the metaphor of the baseball diamond. That just to get to first base and particularly early on in the year because everybody has had limited practice time. Sometimes you can win games . . . we were obviously deficient in one area. But there are two areas if we get beat: if you give greater effort than a team and if you shoot free throws better. Everybody shoots free throws better as the year goes on because you have more time. You get more reps. But just to get to first base. Okay just to have a chance. That’s the price of admission as it were. Just to be able to get into the theater you’ve got to have great effort. And now as the season lengthens . . . to get to second and get to third and have a chance to come home . . . you got to play smart and you’ve got to be together. There’s got to be a chemistry and your skill has got to develop and these other things. But if you can’t get to first base with effort you have no chance. We have no chance of winning unless we play with great effort. So that’s the prerequisite . . . the precondition, and people do that when they have a “why.” When they’re committed to something. That’s the persistence, the determination I’m talking about . . . trying to connect the two. And if you have a “why” you can figure out “how”. Like I said, even if it’s by trial and error people will figure out how. But if you don’t have a why . . . it’s like what’s the point? That’s your short-term behavior. Well I’m only doing this if I’m putting up with
the pain because of the why—the reward is at the end. So my effort is based upon that. If you’re not really committed to why. If you are not valuing why we’re doing all this shit well then you know your efforts not going to be enough. So that’s what I’m trying to connect for them. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

The “how” is “how” are we going to do this and we’re going to make some mistakes versus the “why”. If we need to give you a why . . . if you don’t know why we’re doing this . . . you know what’s the purpose? Why should I be invested? Well then you know you’re not invested. I mean the “why” is your energy, your passion. The “how” to is the technique. That’s the difference when I correct them. That’s not it means your technique is off versus “that’s not good enough.” We need more life. We need more passion. We need more effort. We need more energy. You know you need to be more motivated. So guys who have the “why” are going to be motivated. If you don’t have the” why” well then you’re going to be anemic. You may have technique. Passion without technique is dangerous . . . technique without passion is anemic. So you got to strike the balance between the two. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

I feel the same as when I coached in high school. It’s all an internal barometer you know. You know if you’re in it for the wrong reasons then . . . which some people are I believe. They’re in it for the trappings of power . . . the prestige . . . the monetary pay off. And those things are good you know. Nothing wrong with doing good and well [laughing]. It’s more about I guess the notion of making a productive difference in someone’s life down the future because that doesn’t always evidence itself you know. There is a translation with sports as I told you early on my connection with my parents. You know having the success and confidence and persistence and things of that nature. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

Being an expert means being focused and task-oriented. These were common observable everyday attributes of both coaches. Coach Fuller commented on his own weakness of being overly driven and the meaning of the “F” word:

That’s one of my weaknesses (having fun at practice). I’m so driven and goal and focused. You talk to like, you talk to Barney and Taylor. They talk to you . . . they’ll talk to you about the “F” word around our office . . . and that’s focus. When I get focused I’m just [gesture with hands] . . . that’s it. I’ve got to make sure that I incorporate more fun into things. What we’ll do is some stuff where I’ll change up match-ups to get certain types of fun accomplished. That’s one of my weaknesses too and I have to catch myself on that all the time. I think that is one of the things I try to do. I try to do some informal things with them. I try to touch them informally before practice. After I do my little things to do list, I try to go and talk to each one of the athletes. I’m talking to them about different things like that. It’s more informal things. Like hey Jeremy, I know you had a chemistry test, how did it go? You know, something is going on with your girlfriend or . . . bust somebody’s chops because they cut themselves shaving. Those kinds of things. Try to laugh and joke a little bit. Play and have some fun. Things like that. For me, those
are work. Those are the areas that I really have to grow in because I’m so focused. I would be fine . . . I don’t want to say fine it’s not the right way to put it . . . but it would be easier for me to just stay focused on technical improvement. Maximizing our potential. But a component of that are my relationships with the players so I have to grow those kinds of things. It’s important . . . it is. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

Coach Tucker stated his views about the perceptions of his personality and the attributes of passion, persistence, and determination:

People have told me I have an intensity about me. Maybe people don’t speak as freely around me sometimes as they do but try to get them to speak and tell me not what I want to hear but what’s true. And let their guard down. That’s what is important. I think at the end the players see you in a different light. You know they see you laughing and joking. This morning I delivered breakfast to all the players. Yeah. Yeah. Just its like well thanks coach. So I walked around and all the biscuits and stuff. Went to each room and knocked on the door you know. I called them in . . . we were laughing and joking. I think based upon me delivering breakfast. I knocked on the door. I said, it’s a geek bearing gifts [laughing]. Then we came in here (hotel suite). I said, you know I want to talk to you because . . . I sat right here and they were all around . . . and I said, because I have some concerns. I said, I’m not here to chastise you. I said, this is more a council. I have concerns because I care about you. It looks to me like were lacking a persistence . . . a constant focus and an energy. That’s always a derivative of what your purpose is. If you know what your purpose is you’re able to withstand the gap between effort and reward because you’re heading toward that reward. So there’s always going to be that gap. And if you really aren’t motivated and you don’t have a purpose you’re not valuing something. You’re not trying to achieve something. Then I said, your short-term and your long-term satisfaction . . . your short-term gains versus your long-term gains are always going to be in constant turmoil with each other. It’s like well why the shit should I sacrifice now? I’m trying to get them to clarify their values. Even with the best of intentions we take things for granted at times. Sometimes we have external reminders . . . life and truths. Sickness . . . injury . . . death . . . whatever, et cetera . . . reality. We’re not really in control of our lives if we don’t have internal . . . you know constantly reminders of what’s valuable to us. And where were going and why were going there. And that’s what leads to persistence. That’s why we have persistence. That’s the single greatest indicator of success in life. Just dogged determination. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

This goes against the grain of today’s society. Kids treat reinforcement now as a form of punishment. The fact that you got to do something over and over. It’s like because they want instant on. They want gratification. They want this and that. It’s not their fault. This is what they get in society you know. So this is a real challenge. Whereas years ago my coach would just say (in tough coach voice), do it over and over and over again. Just do it. Don’t ask questions. I don’t give a shit. Just do it over. And nowadays you know it's like I tell the kids, I can only set myself on fire one time to get your attention. Then it’s over. So you try to have some novelty and variation within the theme but it
can’t all just be you know hey beer and pretzels. You know it’s got to be working at it . . .
grinding away at it. You know it’s the idea that we’re going stick with this because this is
important. And it’s the ability to grind through something. Grinding through man . . .
persevere you know. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

As a coach, your passion and excitement for the sport and coaching are what ultimately
make you an expert coach. This passion can be infectious with your athletes and everyone you
interact with. It gets other people motivated and gives them a reason to strive for excellence in
their own lives. If you are bored with your job then your players will probably act bored.

Both coaches were observed multiple times at practice, games, coaches’ meetings, film
sessions, and at times in-between. The coaches maintained a strict daily schedule and remained
committed to achieving team goals at all times no matter the obstacles or perceived mood of the
day. There were no shortcuts in the routine. This committed mindset transcended down the ranks
through the assistant coaches, support staff, and administrators who all maintained a high level of
focus and orientation toward task completion (Observations, Coach Fuller and Coach Tucker,
11/2010).

The Coach as Teacher and Learner

Teachers and coaches demonstrate competence through exploring different experiences,
gaining new knowledge, and reflecting thoughtfully. The expert coach as teacher has the desire
and the ability to learn something new and then translate that knowledge to others for
demonstration. Gaining on-going knowledge and planning the best way to teach a concept is at
the heart of good coaching. Being a lifelong learner does not mean watching other coaches and a
game or two to learn a new play. It means looking at yourself and striving to discover the most
effective way to achieve prescribed team goals using that knowledge. The coach as learner
observes other experts and takes little pieces of information and molds them together to create
new ideas and understanding. Both coaches recognized the importance of having good teachers
that taught them important life lessons. Coach Fuller spoke about the role of his parents, teachers, teaching, and other important knowledge sources that contributed to his expert coaching knowledge:

It’s phenomenal . . . what’s interesting is they both taught really really well. They’re both great, great teachers and they had some really interesting insights in terms of how they taught my brother and I. My mom is more of the traditional teacher, very nurturing teacher. She teaches you higher level processing and all that sort of thing. My Dad, if you were to interact with him, you wouldn’t think he has great instructional abilities because he is a pretty cut and dry type of guy. Like, why wouldn’t you do it this way? But he spends so much time and he’s unbelievably patient. He’s so willing to let you make mistakes . . . understanding how much you learn. That is . . . not a mistake where you are going to lose your hand but . . . I think you absolutely have to be patient. (Modified Q-Sort Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/10)

For me it’s about learning things from different coaches . . . different things from different coaches. I’ve had a lot of different coaches cross my path as probably most people have like yourself over . . . over all the years of being involved with sport and . . . and I can very specifically see things that each coach taught me. I can go . . . I can go back to um . . . well, small little technical things that my middle school basketball coach taught me. Then my coach was Jerry Rodgers. He wasn’t a basketball coach . . . he wasn’t. He was, what he was, was a football Coach and a really good football coach. But he was a really good teacher. He really understood how to get the most out of everybody playing. He really understood how to get us to play in a team concept to maximize our roles. And so I learned things like that from him. Other people . . . Ned Ronald—my college coach. Ned, he really broke the game down well. He is an extremely talented coach. He is the one who taught me all the little fundamental things that I still apply when I’m teaching today. So I learned really how . . . all those fundamental skills from him. I learned sort of to approach the game from a scientific perspective from Mike McNeil. You know a great track coach in wheelchair racing. I learned management and all the support areas of the game from Fred Timothy when I was an assistant with him in ‘96. I learned you know sport psychology, sports nutrition, all those kinds of things . . . how do you look at your players and manage their personalities to get them to play together. How do you go about a selection process. I learned details about officiating from Peter Buckley. I learned post play from John Wright. I watched videotapes . . . I’ve watched DVD tapes . . . teaching tapes from guys like Roy Williams and Coach K on how they run certain aspects of the game that I took and I translated that into what it would look like in wheelchair basketball. I learned from Bobby Cremmins in coaching his camp. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

I think I was really fortunate (playing experiences) because the right people seemed to cross my path at the right time. I didn’t like wheelchair basketball at first. That’s why I got into coaching. I just didn’t like it. But being on the court every single day with the kids in drills . . . passing . . . just being around you know . . . it just scratched an itch I
had. And then I started getting opportunities where I was getting to play so then I get a chance to have a national team tryout. From that I got a chance to see it. Coach Berkman and Scotty his assistant coach . . . see how they coached and learned from them. I watched how they ran tryouts, I watched how they managed different things and learned from those kinds of experiences. Where they were strong. Where I would do things differently. I knew I wanted to get better. I moved down to the states to play at Western under Ned. I knew I needed to be coached every single day to learn fundamentals. I felt like that’s the place where I could learn it. So I got a chance to be coached every day. From that I learned the details of breaking down all the fundamentals from Ned. Then I had Berkman and Scotty as my coaches all the way through but then I crossed paths . . . I wanted to broaden my experience so I went to PVA camps in the summer when I was in college at Western. And then I got a chance to see how Dave and Larry all these other guys coached and I learned from them. I saw some coaches that I also learned what not to do and that was important too. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

Coach Tucker responses reflected many of the same thoughts as Coach Fuller in gaining knowledge from other expert coaches:

I began to identify and study those coaches who were able to explain things on the front end and then try to impart that on the back end. So, you know, I respected Bobby Knight for his mind and for the clarity of his reasoning. It is more guys like Dick Bennett, if you know Dick Bennett, you know he was a coach at Wisconsin and other guys I saw that just had things in perspective. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

I’ve never really had a significant mentor where I sat at the foot of learning. It’s almost like I was called upon and asked so many questions. That was good because as an auto didact . . . I got and had to figure this stuff out for myself. That really spurred me on to put a lot of thought . . . I put a lot of thought into this. Some of it wrong. And also . . . and this is what we have in our staff. I don’t want platitudes. I’m not afraid. I have enough confidence that I can say I am wrong. And my staff is great because they hold me accountable and point out when I’m wrong, I’ve developed over time and over age the ability to say, I screwed that up. I was totally wrong. I know we said we are going to do it that way . . . and people don’t want to change because they look inconsistent . . . I don’t care about that. Our whole thing is to improvise, improve, optimize . . . constantly thinking how can we do this better? How can we do this better if we’ve got to change it . . . we change it. We change stuff all the time during the season. I’ll change stuff in the practice. I know I said it this way but I don’t like it. I don’t think this . . . I think this is better. And I don’t worry about kids who are going to look at me like I’m sort of weather vane just kind of turning in the wind. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Coach Fuller spoke to the depth of experience and differences between coaching an able-bodied student athlete and a student athlete with a disability:
I think there are a couple of things that go along with coaching kids with disabilities. The first thing I would say is . . . from an athletic perspective, they don’t have the depth of participation in sport that their peers who are able bodied typically have. You know they haven’t been running, jumping, doing all those fundamental movement things all through elementary school. They haven’t being playing tee ball for the most part or Pop Warner football or any of those kinds of different things. So where we start teaching them is a little bit different. We have to give them some of those kinds of skills. You know like picking for example. We teach our kids how to pick. We teach them one on one defense from the beginning. We want to make sure that they know exactly how to do that. We work on pushing mechanics. How do you properly push your chair? On the able-bodied side you don’t have to work . . . you still work on some things like footwork and some stuff like that as you refine it . . . but you’re not having to give them the basic footwork. You usually . . . actually expanding it . . . teaching it at a more advanced level. At least from what I’ve seen when I’ve watched college practices. So we have to start and we have to give them a lot of those things. Some of those things are some basic basketball things. Some of them are fundamental movement things. So we’ve got to build from a lower base. I think the other piece is we also have to teach them how to be an athlete sometimes because they haven’t had that experience. They haven’t. I always say that one of the things, the skills that our athletes have to learn, is that they have to learn to compete. Sometimes you know parents of kids with disabilities, they tend to want things to be warm and fuzzy in competition growing up. It’s like, oh no we can’t lose any games. That’s not right. You know that’s not good. Our kid will be crushed. Well no, you actually get stronger from losing games because you realize guess what? It’s not the end of the world. You live the next day. That’s an important skill. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Learning how to practice hard—really practice hard. Like, that when you’re tired and your body is saying you’re tired, you actually have more. Learning how to . . . our freshman especially, they probably practice at about 80% that first couple of weeks. When we are doing our pre-season conditioning especially. You see them doing ramps and chair skills and stuff like that. They are probably practicing about 80% because they don’t know what their 100% is because the people around them didn’t have any expectations. They didn’t look at them and go, I think you’ve got more in you and I think you can go harder. They looked at them and said, that’s great . . . nice job . . . awesome . . . and because they didn’t know where the bar should be. The difference is that when they come here we know where the bar is and we’ve got to teach them that . . . you know what? You’re really only going at 80%. We’re going to teach you what your 100% looks like. That’s a skill you know. Once you know what that 100% looks like then you can really start to make some gains because then you know now I got to be there all the time. And so those are some of the different types of things. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

You start teaching them how to . . . it’s amazing some of the things. We had a kid that I always talked about how you need to build in room for error because life happens to you. Don’t tell me yeah, the elevator is out and I can’t make it to practice. You know what? You find a way to make it to practice. There’s lots of different ways. What’s neat about
that is . . . that’s what having a disability is about. It is about . . . it's not about not doing things. It’s about doing things differently. That’s really what we're teaching the kids. When we're teaching them all those things . . . you are going to do everything everybody else does. You are just going to do it differently. The expectation is you do everything. So when you take that and apply that as a student, you’re going to get your papers done. Not doing them is not an option. You’re going to be an “A” student. You’re going to go out and you're going to have a summer job. You’re going to do an internship. You're going to learn how to dress yourself properly so you don’t look like a disabled kid. You know, like your clothes just got pulled out of the wrapper with lines all over them, or wrinkles and stuff like that. You’re going to know how to tie a tie. How to iron your stuff. You are going to look professional. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

I think that people automatically think well that’s great . . . you’re doing a great job coaching these athletes but it’s not the same as coaching the University men’s basketball . . . it’s not quite that level. But it is. It actually is. When you get out here it absolutely is but I think there’s that problem. What would you describe that as? Is that a credibility issue? Is that a stereotype issue? I’m not sure, is that a lack of knowledge . . . an ignorance issue with people? It’s a social issue. They don’t look at them because they have disabilities and can’t do some things a certain way. They automatically think well they’re not quite athletes but they’re doing great for what they’ve got. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

If we go to D3 we have coaches that are saying no you got to set a pick . . . you got to pick for him. He's our shooter. Kids don’t know how to set a pick because the coach doesn’t know how to teach that fundamental skill. We don’t know how to teach shooting to people with all these different levels of functional muscle. We know how to teach it to able bodied players and we apply those principles but there are some differences. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Coach Fuller commented on the recruitment of new wheelchair basketball coaches into the sport and the teaching of wheelchair basketball by incoming standing coaches:

I actually think that’s a big issue. It goes back to the teaching thing. I think you should be in a chair teaching. That doesn’t mean you should have a disability but when you look at all other sports . . . and in football they have a huge issue with a lack of African American personnel in management and coaching positions. Part of it is we have a caretaker mentality associated with disability. Think about how many females are involved in sport, particularly at the junior level. That nurturing, caretaker, I want to look after you . . . you’re not capable of looking after yourself mentality. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

We get a lot of . . . I don’t know what you call them . . . transitional coaches. We get guys that come from the able bodied game and they get pulled in to coach our game. Ladies that get in to coach our game because they coached able bodied basketball. And somebody would say, hey, you used to play or you used to coach able-bodied basketball.
You were a great player, a great coach. Can you coach us? They get into it and they try to coach and to a degree they can. But at the end of the day, I’m a really firm believer they got to get in a chair. They got to get in a chair and play the game. They don’t have to be a national team athlete but they got to get in a chair. They have to understand the mechanics of the movement in a chair to be able to really understand it and teach it and explain it well. That’s no different than the elite athlete that everything comes naturally and they can't really communicate all the different little pieces. That’s the same idea. When I’m talking to coaches who are able-bodied and I’m doing coaches clinics . . . I want them to bring a chair with them. I want them to get in a chair. I want them when they’re coaching . . . I would rather see them demonstrate it in a chair. I’d rather see them get on the court and see them move their chair around. You’ll see me from time to time get out there and say…here, here, this is what it looks like. Because they’ve got to see where all of the cueing things are. I see able-bodied guys and ladies get out there and they try to demonstrate something standing up. It’s not the same. It’s just not the same. You’ve got to demonstrate it in the chair because all your cuing points come off the chair. The position on the court . . . all those things are so important. I think yeah, you’ve got to have played at some level. You don’t have to be a superstar. You don’t have to be a national team player but you’ve got to have played at some level. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Both coaches described some of their more formalized sources of knowledge. Coach Fuller responded,

I think the formal aspects of my training come in a couple of different places, general places than some specific places. The first general place is just in my education. My undergrad is in social studies at the secondary level. My masters is in special education for kids with learning disabilities and my Ph.D., which I never did get to a chance to finish . . . I’m ABD . . . was in physical education specifically with an emphasis in adapted physical education. So all the way along everything about my education . . . has always been . . . my formal education . . . has always been about teaching in some way, shape, or form. What’s neat is it’s been teaching lots of different populations. There’s actually a segment in there, when I first started my masters, I was looking at multi-cultural education . . . so looking at really diverse populations and cultural differences and how those impact how you teach. That’s the first part . . . is I’ve been constantly exposed. That’s the first part. The other part is, I mean the other formal aspects . . . I’ve gone to lots and lots of clinics and been part of lots and lots of coaching certification programs. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Well, I went to able-bodied ones (clinics) first. When I was first coaching, I was coaching an able-bodied team so I knew I had to get better. I knew like within the first day . . . I was coaching an able bodied team that I was not equipped to coach. And so I had to get better to be able to teach these kids. So I started looking for clinics and they had an able bodied certification program in Canada. The national coaching certification program . . . they had Level 1-5. So I went through Level 1 and Level 2 before I ended up moving down here. So I went through able-bodied clinics first. I went to just the general clinics.
like a Nike clinic and listened to coaches speak and learned from coaches there. In terms of wheelchair basketball you know Bruce and Milton . . . when I was finishing up as a player . . . Bruce and Milton were doing a coaching clinic down here that was part of A.S.E.P. Rob brought me down here so I began to learn how to coach. And then I kept coming down here for the same clinic even though I’d been through the A.S.E.P test and have my certification. I continue to go through coaching education programs. I’m always looking for some formal ways to . . . that I can improve myself and then there’s always the informal stuff as well. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

If you get somebody who’s a really good teacher . . . those DVDs are really, really useful. You really learn a lot about teaching and about some technical stuff from great teachers. So I think those are useful. I get footage sent to me from all over the world from coaches. I just want to watch. I want to watch other players. I want to learn from other players. I’ve got connections in Europe so I’ve got some footage coming from the Kitikishu Cup . . . and Dallas . . . and the Australia team, and a few others playing in that. Then it’s the same things with books. It’s taking some time to look and find some books. I’m really fortunate to have some people who understand my interests in reading. It’s almost like the people who send me stuff on books . . . they’re not the same people who send me stuff on videotape . . . so I sort of have these different groups. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Coach Tucker also responded about his education and how teachers and philosophers were important sources of his coaching knowledge:

I really think it was probably some professors I had and a nun I met who inspired me, a president of a college. I had basically quit on college. I just didn’t find it relevant to my experience yet you are carting that whole notion of being credentialized. I wasn’t buying it. But then you are stuck in the whole notion that if you don’t have credentials and people are going to dismiss what you do because you don’t have credentials. But there are so many people who are qualified for jobs that have credentials but they are really ill-suited to do these jobs. That’s why they are miserable their whole lives. So I was kind of caught there and I decided after I did work . . . my dad got me a job as a beer salesman working for Jax Beer. I was a truck driver. I was making pretty good money but I quickly figured out, well this isn’t the answer, this isn’t what I want to do. So I decided I’m going to give college a try again and I went back to college, this little community school on the west bank. I went over to register and I had no idea what I was doing and I saw a nun and I said, “Excuse me sister, can you help me with this?” And she was incredibly helpful and I found out within a short period of time that she was the president of the college. And she was just being generous to me and we got to be great friends. We shared an interest in philosophy. But we shared similar interests and she really kind of . . . she was the catalyst for me kind of really beginning to really want to learn and to try and absorb as many ideas about life as I could. And at that time too I was missing sports and thinking you know I would really like to do something so I graduated and got my degree in History and Political Science and in English. I had all this stuff and then got into coaching. So from there it was really more professors. My master professor was a guy you may have
heard of. He has since deceased. It’s Stephen Ambrose. He was a great historian. He’s written a gazillion books. And he was a great guy. He understood both worlds. He lived in both worlds. So really it was a Catholic nun, an older white nun [laughing] and a teacher and then Dick Bennett. And in between I can’t say I have never been influenced by coaches but it’s less about that. It is more about examples from literature, from philosophy, from people I have studied. You know Aristotle is one of my heroes and you know just people in history and philosophy and in literature and things of that nature that have been more of an inspiration to me. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

So when I first got into this . . . I have a consumptive obsessive personality. So I went to every coaching clinic I could possibly go to. I would drive hours and hours and hours. I read every coaching book. Got every instructional video I possibly could and I still go now to coaches I respect. Like Don Meyer . . . I don’t remember if you remember Don Meyer the coach at Lipscomb? They just did the Don Meyer special. I just went to State this summer and fall looking at them do some workouts. So I will go anywhere now to try and get ideas as best I can from people. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

So I think you need formal education. You need a psychology book. You need some aspects of reading philosophy and how you relate to people and the clarity of your own ideas. And to see if whether there are any holes in your arguments . . . the coherence and the cogency of your arguments and things like that. So I would think that this is going to be up here. Books in general are going to be up here. Always thinking if I could pick up one idea. Going to the ends of the earth. You know driving 500, 1000 miles to try and . . . and then putting a lot of thought into this. It has never been just anything spouted and go, oh that sounds good. And I’m going to try and plug that in an ad hoc fashion. It’s like how does it fit in to the overall generality of what we’re trying to do? You know not . . . don’t have the drill of the day which really doesn’t apply to what you’re doing. How are we going to get better unless it can be applied and integrated into our system? So parents and relatives are important. Peer coaches more for support. So that’s what my peer coaches are for. It’s for us to bolster each other you know. It’s less about learning. It’s more about you know just helping to refuel each other. So they are important in there. (Modified Q-Sort Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

Coach Tucker was asked about the essential attributes needed by a new coach to become an expert coach and replied,

Well . . . in the beginning it’s the logos. In the beginning is the plan. Your plan is to attend as many clinics as you possibly can. Figure out who are the good coaches in the profession and try . . . and figure out what they do to be successful. Know who you are. Do not be insincere. So try and get a learning base . . . a knowledge base as best you can. So you know develop a plan. Then it’s how are you going to get better? You’re going to do clinics. You’re going to get books. You get videos. You talk to coaches as much as you can. You be around. You go watch practices. I used to go to other practices as often as possible. You try and if you can without being a pest talk to as many coaches that you respect. That you respect their style. And then you know and figure out a way to
incorporate with what’s comfortable with you. With what you do because again you have to be sincere. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

What does it take to be a great coach? Coach Fuller further discussed the similarities between coaching wheelchair and standing basketball and mentioned the importance of learning coaching expertise from the “bottom up” while maintaining balance in your instruction:

I would definitely say teaching . . . teaching. Being a great teacher as an able-bodied coach versus . . . I think it the same. That’s the first thing. That will be the first thing you’re going to see both have. I guess the example would be I look at someone like a Wooden or a Krzyzewski. Those are the guys that I know and have seen do clinics and stuff. You know Wooten and those kind of guys. They’re great teachers you know. Tony Dungy, great teacher first and foremost. So I think that’s the first thing is great teachers. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

I think to be a great coach you are first and foremost, before you are anything else—a great teacher. I think that’s . . . and when I look at people that I want involved with my staff or when I look at a staff person that I’m growing. The first area we grow somebody is always their teaching ability. Because that . . . I mean you’re going to spend the bulk of your time in practice, not in games. And so that’s the place where you’re going to have the greatest impact. The way you have the greatest impact is as a teacher. And so I want people to be great teachers. Generally speaking, I find for our athletes . . . they need to have enough time to get the repetitions in. I need to have enough time to give them appropriate feedback, as needed, in a drill. But I don’t need to beat a dead horse. Sometimes as coaches we try to make things perfect that day and I think we try to rush things because of it. Generally speaking, we try to stay on task with our feedback and what we want to accomplish that day in terms of their growth. And then we sit down and we look at other keys. The next day the keys might be different for that same skill . . . or a couple of days later as you look at our weekly plan and how we cycle through offense, defense, and individual skills through to team skills and different things like that. That’s probably the biggest thing. We don’t panic over time. What we look at is we look at generally in a year I’m going to get about 150 practices with the kids. That’s a good chunk of time. If I balance it that could be 150 times I’m getting a chance to touch on one-on-one defense, in theory. So obviously, it’s a little bit less than that because I always won’t be focusing on that. That’s a lot better than if I, just say, had focused just once a week for an hour on defense and maybe that's 16 practices. It’s just a much more effective way. It’s a better way of coaching . . . focusing on a couple things, doing them really, really well each day . . . moving on and growing them, building them, and putting it all together. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

I’m an old school kind of guy in this respect. I think you kind of got to take your lumps and you got to start at the bottom of the ladder. I don’t think that is a bad thing. I think it’s a good thing because you understand the bottom of the ladder. I think some of the coaches that I see that got a chance to . . . they just shot up there because of who they
knew or connections... they started up there really high. They have missed a lot of the stuff underneath. They’ve got huge gaps in their development because of it. When we have somebody come in and start as a grad assistant they learn everything you know. You’ve seen it probably coaching at the youth level. You’re a coach so you sweep the floor. You make sure everything is set up. You run every single thing. As you grow in experience you climb and can hand some of those things off to other people but understanding that the people that work for you have those things that helps make you a better coach. Helps with the management side of things. It also means you have an opportunity to fine tune some of your teaching when you start at that ground level because you’re generally not in charge of the whole team. You’re learning how to work one-on-one with an athlete and so you’re learning how to really individualize your instruction if you take advantage of that. And then you move up and add elements to it. I think starting at the bottom coming in as an assistant coach in a collegiate program is a good place to start as long as the coaching opportunities give you a lot of different experiences. Just coming in and just coaching a college team again will leave gaps. You want to teach kids at multiple levels at camps. You want to go out and coach club teams to understand what the club experience is like at the junior level in that region and all that type of thing. You want to then get a chance to go and coach in another country to understand the differences there. You want to get a chance to volunteer then on a national team staff. That best comes through a collegiate program. A good mentoring. So you understand all the different aspects of a national team staff. You don’t just get shot into an assistant coach or a head coach position. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

If I do a really good job teaching these assistant coaches that come through and mentor... they should, in theory, be better. Right? Because they should have what I know plus something extra from them. A great teacher should always make their students better than they were. If they don’t, we don’t move forward in society. So if I do a great job mentoring then you know what? Cheaney should beat me. Ricky should beat me... all that type of thing. So that’s sort of one of those benchmarks that I’ve got to look at. Then also it means I get beat but you know what? It’s like Coach K has beaten Coach Knight a few times now but that’s good. That means Coach Knight did a good job teaching him. You know what? Coach Keady, yeah he has lost a few times to Coach Weber so that’s good. They did a good job mentoring. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker commented on the similarities between coaching the two versions of the sport of basketball.

I think that the coaching part at any level is pretty much the same... is getting kids to appreciate their role and responsibility... you know it’s not... like I was telling them today... it's not about me... it's not about you. It’s about us. It’s getting everyone to buy in to the team concept. It’s also one of the most satisfying things. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/27/10)
Comments by both coaches on coaching style and becoming a successful coach were surprisingly similar. Coach Fuller described his coaching style:

“Educational.” That’s how I would describe it. In what I’m doing I’m always trying to teach . . . always trying to teach. Not just basketball skills but anything. It could be anything. It could be a life skill. It could be an academic skill, whatever. I’m always looking for opportunities to teach. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

What is interesting is they always try to . . . and I always tell coaches this particular thing. They always try to oh yeah, I’m this kind of coach or I’m that kind of coach. Actually what you need is to be all kinds because you need to be able to be, to your player, what allows them to maximize their personal growth . . . their academic growth . . . their athletic growth. That means there is (sic) times when you know what? You need to be . . . you need to be tough. You need to be an in-your-face kind of guy. There’s time when you need to be gentle. There’s time when you need to be task-oriented. There’s times when you need to be the manager. I think you need to be balanced. I think when coaches don’t have balance we actually miss opportunities to maximize the potential in our kids. So I always talk to coaches about being balanced. You have to be able to do everything. That is what we teach our players, too. We want them to have all the skills. You are not going to use all the skills the same. Some guys are going to shoot and they’re going to be shooting more than other guys but everybody’s got to be able to shoot. Some guys can handle the ball. Some guys are going to be defenders and you are not going to do them all the same. And so that’s how you . . . but you have to have the whole package. Otherwise, I don’t think you can be great. I think you can be pretty good but you can’t be great. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Both coaches possess prominent leadership skills and behave in manners learned and modified over the years. They recognize the impact of proper leadership. These coaches know that leadership is a behavioral process through which one person influences the behaviors of others in the accomplishment of shared goals. Coaches demonstrate leadership by helping young people take learning seriously, develop skills, and exhibit appropriate sporting behavior. Coach Tucker commented on being a leader.

I’m not only the general but sometimes I can be so strong willed that really when I want your opinion I’ll beat it out of you. You know what I’m saying? There’s a part of my personality that definitely does that. That’s the good part about being in charge. That and the fact that I can sit down and deliver my diatribes of philosophy and things like that. That they’ve got to listen to them because I’m in charge. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)
Both coaches talked about their coaching legacies with their players. This thought is important and supports the idea that a coach should strive to have a meaningful relationship with their players even after they graduate. Coach Fuller replied,

What I hope is that they just say I just learned a lot about everything. That it is more holistic in the way that they look at it. That they can’t say that I learned one definitive thing. I would hope that they would see . . . I hope they see all of the things. I hope they see integrity. I hope they see making . . . making the right choice. What I don’t think they will tell you is I don’t think they’ll say, Coach taught me how to win. I don’t think that’s what will come to mind. I don’t think it will be about winning. I think it will be about the other things. I think it will depend on the player too because different players have learned different things in our program. For some of them what they learned was how to work hard. They learned that’s a skill they needed to develop. For others it will be I learned how to be a team player, a leader, or how to be responsible. Their answer to that will be really specific to them because that’s what we’ve tried to do. We’ve tried to grow kids in different areas. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/20/10)

Similarly Coach Tucker stated,

I want them to learn a permanent skill because if the only thing that they’ve learned from me is something disposable . . . a basketball skill . . . how to dribble a ball better . . . then I’ve been a failure. I want them to learn about how toughness wins. I want them to learn about valuing things . . . keeping things in perspective. I want them to learn about sacrifice for team goals. I want them to learn about maturity . . . giving up short-term gratification for long-term development. I want them to learn all those things that are going to help them in life. But at the same time I’d like to win basketball games. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/27/10)

Both coaches have been influenced by military training or doctrine. Coach Fuller was in the Canadian Reserves and the military played a prominent role as a source of knowledge for him. Coach Fuller commented about some of the attributes he picked up while in the military:

I learned a lot of lessons about leadership, management, different things like that from being in the military. From being put in leadership positions. Watching other leaders. Looking at what happens when you’re pushing people to the very edge. Looking at what happens when small groups are brought together but put through something challenging. Those are all lessons that I carried over into my coaching. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker also has an interest in military philosophy and seriously thought about a career in the military. Many of his actions and words resemble the movement and attitude of a
general preparing his soldiers for battle. Coach Tucker commanded well-timed practices giving constant and immediate performance and motivational feedback to his players. There was no time wasted and no teachable moments missed. Coach Tucker commented on some of his military based philosophies.

I thought about joining and volunteering in the military. That’s something I think would be good for almost anyone. I mean this is probably the closest you get to it in terms of being in service to one another. The whole notion of loyalty. I’m very attracted to the notion of loyalty and responsibility to people in the group . . . and dependability. That you can count on them. They can count on you. Well that’s what sport is. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

It’s the foundation (effort) because it’s a brotherhood. It’s a commitment. It’s the idea that I’m committed to you . . . you’re committed to me. We all go through practice purgatory together. You know we all suffer the same pain. It’s not like, well good luck guys, you all are in a fox hole. See you later. I’m checking out like at the hotel. Have fun . . . good luck at Iwo Jima. It’s like the military . . . the Marines have it. It’s like sometimes it sucks. Their phrase is embrace the suck—welcome to the day. You don’t have to like it but you embrace the suck because we’re all going through this shit together. This is what we’re in this for. And that’s what a fraternity is. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Direct teaching strategies that affect learning of individual players were similar between the coaches. Having an orientation toward how different players learn, understand, and ultimately execute is vital to the success of the expert coach. Coach Fuller stated,

I’ve always asked questions. In part because I want to understand my athletes. If I’m going to be a good teacher, I actually need to fine tune my instruction to each athlete. Each one is different. You always hear coaches say, I’m not going to treat you all equally, I’m going to treat you all fairly. I think we teach that way too. I’m not going to teach you all equally. I am going to teach each of you fairly. I’m going to teach you the way you need to be taught. In order for me to do that I need to know how you’re processing information. What are you seeing? That type of thing. That’s the first part. It’s a variation on checking for understanding. It’s not exactly checking for understanding. It’s checking for learning. How do you learn? So that’s the first thing and I think I’ve always done that. I’ve always checked for understanding. Okay, do you understand? Yes. Good. Done. But the way we use our questions is actually a little bit different than just checking for understanding. The way we use our questions now . . . we do it really to do two things. One, we want higher order processing and two, we want the athletes to begin to understand all of the different connections of the game. We’ve got to teach them the how to do things. That’s the execution. But we also have to give them the skills of when.
Questioning helps them learn when . . . helps them identify the cues. We shifted our teaching probably about 2006 I think. We shifted the way we were teaching our athletes. We’d always done a lot of questioning. We’d always harped on detail but we didn’t do as good a job of teaching the athletes the game conceptually. We were still a little bit robotic. It had evolved over time, I think as . . . quite honestly I’m guilty of it myself, it was largely my fault. As I had gotten better as a coach, I believed I saw things from a very narrow perspective. I saw the reads and was just communicating the reads, like you said, hey, there’s the pick. Go set that pick. I didn’t get the athletes to think of why I . . . why I picked that pick over that pick and I wanted to teach them that. That was the piece that was missing. I’d become sort of so confident in my depth of knowledge that it had became a weakness. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

I spend a lot of time, like I said, talking to the players on the bench. It’s an opportunity to teach them whether they’re going into the game or not. It’s an opportunity to prepare them for when they do go into the game. I’m much more involved in the game myself because of the decisions that I have to make as a coach . . . understanding flow, really breaking down what’s happening on the court so that I can give pointed feedback to the players. So I am not giving them a gazillion things. I want to try to be really surgical with my feedback. I think it helps with learning. I think it really helps kids learn. It sends the message of what is important. For us, I always want our kids to always be learning . . . always improving. We talk about that at the beginning of the season straight through the season. We talk about that on a tournament weekend . . . improving through the weekend. We talk about that when we go to nationals. When I take a team to the Paralympics and were going to basically be in a tournament for ten days . . . we talk about improvement all the time. I think we coach that way. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

Planning is an essential attribute of any good coach or teacher. Coach Fuller described his practice planning.

When we start off our year at the very beginning we do a yearly plan. We write down everything, literally . . . that . . . we write down our goal first—what is the goal for the year? Then everything we think we are going to need to achieve that goal. That is really no different than a classroom teacher, a history teacher, a math teacher. They know what they want their student to look like at the end of the year. Actually, the federal government tells them that now [laughing]. Then they write down all the things that they’ve got to teach them that year in order to get to that goal. So all I’m doing is I’m doing what a classroom teacher does. The only thing I’m doing, well, I’m doing what a PE teacher does. Mine is just a little bit more focused. The goal has a little bit more of an outcome orientation to it and that type of thing. It’s really no different than that. You’ve seen it growing up yourself. You’ve had great coaches. You’ve had great teachers. You’ve had great PE teachers. You’ve had a great history teacher, English teacher, whatever . . . science teacher. They did that. You can tell that they moved from one thing to another. They had a plan. They covered everything. They had a lot of detail in there and then they put their own style into how they presented that content. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)
I’ve never seen a great coach who was not well prepared . . . who had not done great planning because you just . . . you miss things that’s all there is to it. There’s so much that you have to prepare your athletes for in a game situation that if you don’t have a plan your going to miss things. If you don’t have a plan, what's going to happen is as the year goes along you're going to be random. You’re going to be shooting . . . oh, we had a bad rebounding day so we’re going to work on rebounding. Oh, you know what? Passing . . . we’re off to passing. You look a little A.D.D when you’re like that [laughing]. You see teams like that though. You see teams that play like that. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

I don’t think you develop the kind of athlete, at least we don’t develop the kind of athlete we want to, if we don’t plan. If we plan well what we do is we convey to our athletes how to also look at the game. How to look at it . . . have that macro vision but micro attention. If we do a good job of our planning, preparation, and teaching . . . what happens is our athletes come out of the program with that kind of look on the game. They have a macro . . . they understand the macro aspects of the game but have micro attention to detail which prepared them really well for their next level of participation. Whether it’s playing pro in Europe, playing on a national team, playing club in the US or coaching in the community. They can then convey that. That’s a big, big thing of what we’re trying to do here. We are not an endpoint. We are a stepping stone in their athletic journey. And it goes in lots of different directions. The best way we have to prepare them to go in any direction is to do that . . . to plan properly and in doing that, show how we plan and then show how we teach and pay attention to details. And then they have that attention to details. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker responded about his planning, organization, and related attributes of an expert coach.

You’ve got to think like a philosopher. You have to create like a god. Okay, so I’ll start with create like a god. Which is imagination . . . so create like a god (writing on board). Imagination . . . no wings no lift. Imagination is the bridge to differentiation. Differentiation is the bridge to winning because it sets you apart from somebody else. I’m constantly sitting down . . . constantly sit down and planning . . . figuring out ways to be creative. Just anything and everything (thinking outside the box). Differentiate or die (in competition). So then you think like a philosopher. You try and be organized . . . there will be a clarity . . . a coherence through your thoughts. Okay, you’ve got to act like a king. You’re not afraid of making a command decision. If you’re afraid of what people would say if you make a tough stand . . . you’ll never be effective because you’re always afraid of people. There’s five attributes. There’s the . . . the fifth one is probably what we’ve lost. It’s communicate or tell stories. I try and tell stories a lot like a tribal elder you know sitting around a campfire. We don’t do this as much anymore. And explain to people . . . I take some from philosophy like the Nietzsche thing or psychology or literature or something in the news and try and relate that . . . how that relates to our situation. So create like a god. Think like a philosopher. Act like a king. Work like a
slave. Communicate or tell stories like a tribal elder. If you can do those five things . . . you’re going to be pretty good. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

It’s sort of an art (practice planning) as it were. Everything is science first and art second. Which is an accumulation of not a replacement for. So I’ve been doing this so many years . . . I mean I know my staff so well . . . now B.K. is coming aboard. He doesn’t really even understand the terminology yet. But I’ll say like what do you think we need to add? Where do you think we need to go? They’ll tell me, and then I’ll go home and I’ll write it out and say, here it is. (Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Practice plans were analyzed for organization, flow, depth, and overall quality. Both coaches wrote meticulous and detailed plans including a specific focus or goal, appropriate tasks, time increments, and diagrams. Each of the tasks contributed in some way to the overall goals of the team and were structured as to build on past task completion (Practice Plans, Coach Fuller and Coach Tucker, 11/2010).

Both coaches reflected on what their lives would be like if they had not pursued a career in coaching. Their responses reflect a love for teaching and learning. Coach Fuller explained,

I thought that I was going to do something else. In part because I thought that you know there’s . . . where I can contribute was going to be a different place. Part of the reason for me coming here was I wanted to develop my skills . . . my beliefs professionally. Get my Ph.D. Do research in the area of adapted physical education, not specifically wheelchair basketball, but adapted physical education. Do some model building. Do research. Teach at a university. Those are the things that I thought I was going to be doing when I came here. I am going to go teach at a high school or I’m going to go teach kids with learning disabilities. It was my way of getting through school. I was learning things going along the way because it was all teaching. And then there’s that point where it’s like no, you know what, what I really . . . at the end of the day . . . what I like to do is I like to coach. I like to be in practice. I like to teach kids skills and then I like to take those and I like to test them . . . in a tough environment. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker reflected similarly,

I can’t even imagine another life. You know I can’t . . . this has brought me more joy . . . teaching . . . I’m a teacher at heart. I love instructing. I like finding ways to communicate things. I like to create coherence and clarity. I’m logical but I’m also visual in creating things for people. If I have a strength that is it. An ability to see a bigger picture and break it down into segments and teach it in parts which are building to something which is going to be a structure built on a strong foundation. So I don’t know. I would be a teacher of some sort. I’d probably, if I would have listened to Stephen Ambrose years
ago, I would have gotten out of coaching. He was going to find a way to help me pay for my Ph.D. and get a scholarship. I’ve always you know wished I could have finished my Ph.D. gotten that and then go on to teaching because I would have liked to teach. And maybe be a history teacher . . . maybe be a writer. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

Coach Fuller commented on lifelong goals and other ways he might be able contribute to the game and his profession in the future.

I think I want to have a systemic impact. I want to change something larger. That’s the way I want to try to do things. I’m working on long-term athlete development models right now. I’d like to take that model . . . I want do it more than just as it interacts with athletes at one particular level. What I want to do is I’d like to change how sport is presented to kids with disabilities—period . . . and all athletes so it touches every single kid that plays any kind of sport and then interacts with wheelchair basketball. That’s the kind of impact I’d like to have. My future goals . . . you know what? It’s interesting so right now I actually see myself in sort of a transition phase . . . if you will. I kind of look at coaching in general but myself in particular as gone through sort of different phases of growth. I can remember vividly like first being like . . . when I started coaching, particularly in wheelchair basketball, really being like . . . the only way to describe it is like a newborn. You fall a lot. You tumble a lot . . . tons of mistakes. I couldn’t teach nearly with as much depth or as comprehensively. I wasn’t aware of this much. Just a whole bunch of things. And then somewhere after 2008 I think I’ve . . . there has been a shift again and I’m still trying to figure that out. I feel like something has happened even though I’m not that old as coaches go chronologically. I’m still pretty young. I’ve been really fortunate to have had a phenomenal number of experiences that, if I was on the able-bodied side of the sport, you’d probably be late 50s early 60s to have this depth of experience. I was really fortunate to get a lot of these and I recognize that. So I kind of think that now the place that I’m in is . . . I’m supposed to take what I’ve learned and I’m supposed to learn how to teach it to others. How to mentor others better. I think that’s one of the things that is lacking in wheelchair basketball. I don’t think we have coach mentors. I feel like that’s a gap that I might be able to help fill a bit as we move forward. I’ve never been . . . I didn’t have lots of direct mentors. I was listening last night to the radio and Coach Weber and Coach Painter were talking. They were at the beef house doing a fundraiser and they were both talking about Coach Keady being their mentor and what they learned from him. Weber was an assistant at Purdue for like 17 years. I’ve never had that depth of mentorship. In that situation to learn that mechanism. So for me it’s kind of trying to learn how can I mentor other coaches. How can I you know be a mentor to Melanie to be a good coach . . . not dominate her in practice . . . which is real easy for any coach to do. I think it’s kind of our nature . . . but to mentor her. I’ve got Willy and Karen now. I’m going to mentor them. You know I’ve kind of mentored Cheaney. I’ve sort of mentored Ricky and Trey Jeffries, Barney, Bruce Daniels, you know Greggs . . . when they came through as assistants. But it was more random like and less structured. So I think that’s sort of the next place I go in one perspective. How do I learn this new role and accept it appropriately and develop it with the understanding that you know it could mean at times that I’m going to lose some games. Which is kind of
like . . . okay you got to suck it up and you got to lose. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/20/10)

Both coaches were not born with the distinction of being an expert coach. Their expertise was nurtured through a lifelong process of observations, curiosity, learning, and self-reflection. Coach Fuller was highly committed to the development of basketball on a global scale. This difference may be a result of the coaches’ age difference or the development and history of the two respective sports (Observations, Coach Fuller and Coach Tucker, 11/2010).

Coach Fuller commented on the pluses and minuses of having the women's wheelchair team practice alongside the men’s wheelchair team:

I think the first thing is . . . fundamentally in our sport because of where it is in its overall development . . . I believe everybody has a responsibility for development. We’re not big enough where we can kind of just focus on just ourselves I think. I think we have to because we’re still in a fledgling level and we’ve seen that. Think of D1. That was supposed to be the strongest of the NWBA. It didn’t take that long for it to fold. You know what, did we have it around for about 13, 14 years? That’s not long at what is supposed to be your strongest, best funded, everything like that. Completely crumbled. I think that’s the first thing. Fundamentally it’s all about development. We have to be selfless in that way. That’s our obligation. That’s our tradition here. We want to continue with that. So if that’s the case then we have to help our women develop and one of the best ways to do that is mixing them with our guys. You know playing against our guys from time to time. You saw some match-ups this week where we matched up our women against our guys. Why? Because it’s a good match-up. If our women went against our women, in some situations, they might not push them the way they need to be pushed at that point in time. Sometimes they need to go women against women. Sometimes they need to go against a tough match-up and the reality is “Q” is a tough match-up—period. She’s just a good player so she pushes our guys too. She does some things differently with her chair that challenge our guys and our guys have to think outside the box. We’ll blend them in. We’ll control the match-ups to get the right level of match up. I’ll give you an example; so last year we had a pretty talented group of guys . . . an unusually talented group top to bottom. When we would come back in January as part of our tune-up for our ladies who needed, we felt . . . needed to be pushed just a little bit more. Because they spent the first semester kind of learning where our guys are right now. So a lot of young players got to grow. In January, when we brought them back, we felt that now we needed to challenge them a little bit more with some speed, some strength, and stuff like that. So we ran them against the guys a little bit more. We had to work our match-ups a little bit so what we would do . . . we’d run a three-on-three game full court with our guys, our six guys that were balanced. Then we would take five of our guys, some of our redshirts and some of our rostered players, and run them against the ladies to
sort of give them five-on-five full court and push them a little bit. That was a way we could get our guys worked and get our ladies worked. We explain to our guys the responsibility that they’ve got. We also tell them too . . . don’t be a bunch of jerks out there. Be respectful. These are your teammates. They may be on the women’s team but they’re still teammates and you can help them get better. Now that doesn’t mean don’t do things . . . don’t mess up with your execution out there too. They need you to execute properly in order to be pushed to the proper level. If you guys go out there and you take it easy . . . you do things incorrectly because you have the athleticism to correct for it . . . that will not help them. If you are disrespectful, you are disrespecting your teammates. That’s one of those balancing points you have to find. On the flip side, I think guys can learn from ladies. Ladies tend to really focus on the fundamental execution a little bit more. Guys tend to try to beat you with their athleticism . . . with their physicality a little bit more. So we can learn from each other in that way. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

The primary aspects of the theme the coach as teacher and learner concerns an expert coach’s continued commitment to everyday excellence in their professional field and personal lives by being knowledgeable and always searching for the attainment of new knowledge. This allows the expert coach the opportunity for self-reflection and the ability to teach and learn at the highest appropriate levels. The main perspectives of both coaches were relatively indistinguishable. The only differences were the experience level of the athletes they recruit, certain terminology, and how they approach the long-term development of their respective sports.

**The Thinking Coach**

The theme of the thinking coach was born from the essential attributes identified and described by both coaches relating to being thoughtful about their professional practice. Expert coaches, as thinkers, must possess important attributes such as being self-reflective, innovative, adaptive, creative, and curious. Having the ability to be philosophical and use past experiences, both good and bad, to problem solve and overcome difficult obstacles is important in the fast-paced world of professional coaching. Adaptability and curiosity are key components to inquiry, understanding, and making changes to coaching practice when needed. Both participants are
recognized as being innovators to their sport and profession. Coach Fuller commented on
innovation.

You’re always looking for new and better ways to play the game and make it better. You just got to be creative. You got to just sit down and sometimes you just got to think. I wish I could describe it in some nice step-by-step format but I think what you do is . . . and I heard a lady at the team sport summit a couple weeks ago say that. She said sometimes you need to just sit back and think. If you’re going to take the sport in a different direction. If you’re going to stay at the cutting edge then sometimes you need to take the time to just sit down and think. The other piece to that thinking is you got to remove the restrictions that you’re placing . . . the box you put the game in and allow it to grow you know. So we’ve got an idea what a wheelchair is but that wheelchair is actually restricting, right now, to us. The biggest problem we have relative to our equipment is we still have huge differences in functional ability. So how can we in the future take chair design to even out functional ability? Are there things . . . some mechanical things we can put in place that will allow us to sort of recapture, or learn to recapture, some functional loss. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

All innovation is is it's taking things where they have never been before. It's removing the assumptions as rules and saying hold it, we made that rule. That’s not actually a rule. Like the other day I think you heard John say something like that when we were in small groups. Remember, don’t put rules where there aren’t rules. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

My . . . one of my basketball coaches in high school Mr. Smith . . . John “The Hammer” Smith . . . tough, tough guy. He always taught me to think outside the box. That whole idea that the rules don’t put you in a box—they can actually create a bigger box. And don’t create rules that aren’t there. He was really creative. He wasn’t super talented as a basketball player. He was an okay athlete but what he was is . . . was he really understood the rules that people were imposing on themselves when they were playing in a game—how to take advantage of those. He removed those assumptions, those rules. He didn’t play . . . I’m not saying he’s a cheater, not by any stretch, but there are certain things you assume. A certain, you know everybody’s going to do a certain thing. Line up a certain way. Well don’t go there. Go someplace else. Now line up some different way. When I start looking at something. When I’m looking at something new or I’m beginning to analyze something. One of the first things I try to do is I try to take a look at . . . okay so what are the things that I am putting in place as assumptions . . . uh or . . . what are the rules I’m creating that are actually there. Okay, say coach tells you a drill to do. They tell you how the game is played. They also tell you how the game is played by what they don’t say. And you have to listen to what they don’t say the same as you have to listen to what they do say. So he taught me . . . he taught me that. The cliché term is to think outside the box. I actually think it’s not about thinking outside the box. It’s about understanding the box you actually . . . exactly what the walls are and removing what the walls are. So there actually isn’t even a box. So that’s one of the things I learned from him. Plus he was tough, tough! And he appreciated toughness so that became a quality
that if you were tough . . . you know you got praised for that in high school. So it taught me the skill of being mentally tough. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

What I always try to do is be creative about the game. So okay where is the game going? Let’s use the international game as an example right now. So FIBA just passed a new rule or new set of rules and there’s going to be a three-on-three full court basketball game. FIBA is going to do that in the IWBF. It’s going to be 14 second shot clock . . . 8.5 points on the court . . . no back court violation. I started thinking . . . so what does that game start to look like? Heck, if you own 14 seconds you got to get up the court as fast as you possibly can. So what systems do you then train to prepare for that? Are you going to have speed? It’s going to be a lot of sprinting. There are two 7-minute halves that you’re going to play so basically you may not get a chance to sub. So what are your fitness guys going to be doing? Okay, that’s sprinting—your recovery times are going to be really small now. Can you imagine sprinting all out for 7 minutes with just maybe 5 seconds here . . . 10 seconds there, if that, to catch your breath. Refs won’t handle the ball in the backcourt. It’s a sprinting game so what’s the most important thing? Speed and quickness—14 seconds. Height is actually not that critical anymore. So does that change chair setup? Do you end up setting your chair up for speed and quickness if that was the priority and not height? Do you change the setup just a little bit? Maybe, maybe not, I don’t know. Would you change your wheel sizes? Things like that. So you begin to get creative about what the game looks like and you start thinking about where you can gain advantages and where you can take the game and be ahead of the curve. Don’t think, okay, not just how can I improve to get to the curve but how do I get ahead. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker added his comments about new ideas, being innovative, curious, philosophical and keeping things in perspective.

Ideas fascinate me. I find ideas much more stimulating than people. For me for people to be interesting they have to be interested in more than themselves. They have to be able to talk about other things as opposed to when I was in first grade, you know, it’s like, come on. So I have always been stimulated by ideas and also by conundrums, and puzzles, and paradoxes, and figuring out systems and things of this nature. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

So it’s on us. We say it’s Rule 101. It’s the people who are successful in life I think are the ones who are most curious. You know its Rule 101. If . . . be an auto didact. Be curious about things . . . ask questions. So the whole point is you’re asking questions. You’re curious about life. Why is this the way it is? You try and find answers. The people who are curious are able then to investigate things and widen their spectrums and widen their horizons. So we tell our guys all the time . . . it’s called . . . military academies have this. They call it Rule 101. It’s called failure to inform oneself. You violate Rule 101. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)
So I notate in letters not numbers. “P” is in his own game. Our other four positions are interchangeable. So that’s where the complexity is . . . this (P) is the easiest position to learn because you’ve got your own specific rules. For our other guys, you’re here . . . you could be here. You could be here or you could be here [drawing on board]. So that’s why its complex for these guys to learn. And again, I think I might have told you this. But it takes a while to develop good judgment. I use Plato’s definition of good judgment. Did I tell you this one? It’s the ability to discern the difference in similar things and the similarity in different things. So it takes a while. So the point of this shit is it masks . . . it deceives. Hopefully it confuses the defense. You get all kind of crazy movement but it’s all the same stuff. And then sometimes we do stuff that looks the same but it’s different. There’s just a little slight key. So that’s where it hopefully extends the scout to somewhere into 2014 before they figure out exactly what we’re doing. We can’t beat people if they have complete certainty of how to guard us. We have to get them to zig when we zag. You know what I’m saying? To keep them off balance a little bit. But you can have too much freedom. They become paralyzed sometimes when there’s too much to do. That restricts their movement. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Again it’s still a work in progress. The certainty of life is that not all change is improvement but there can be no improvement without change. So it’s constantly looking for ways to optimize. Get better. Get better. Get better. Get better. How do we teach better? How do we coach better? How do we observe better? How we do this and there’s always the human frailty part of it you know. We’ve got a motto . . . we say toughness wins. Well that’s the physical manifestation of a mental activity. The toughness . . . when I tell them . . . when I get them to understand about the scrutiny. That’s one of the things I do best. I have an ability to look at something and see exactly what’s wrong. I can scrutinize it and criticize it and critique it. But it’s not to be negative. But toughness wins for them if they don’t turn me off. They’re fresh to the scrutiny on Day 1. Where are they on Day 100? If they turn me off, well they’re not winning. And if I scrutinize them on Day 1 and by Day 10 the kid is still making the same mistake and I just go, it’s close enough . . . then I’m not tough enough to just stay with it. Because the laws of learning (drawing on board) . . . the first law is readiness. They got to be ready to learn and I got to be ready to teach. Next law is explanation. You’re ready to learn. The Buddhistic statement that when the student is ready the teacher will appear. If you’re not ready to learn then . . . I call it watering anvil days. When we have these watering anvil days you know you pour water into an anvil and it doesn’t go in. So I say, forget it. We’re just going to run our asses off. So explanation or demonstration. So I’m either talking about . . . I’m explaining something or we’re demonstrating. That’s the second law. And the third law would be replication. So explain to me what I just explained to you or show me what I just demonstrated. Now, and this is the toughest one today, . . . correction. Now this step, correction, you can bypass, that if they got it exactly right or they heard it exactly right . . . you can move to reinforcement. Okay? But if it’s wrong, you’ve got to continue to correct it until gets right. Because this is the very definition of being counter-productive. If it’s wrong . . . why would you reinforce anything that’s wrong? So you got to stay at this. This is one of the toughest ones. You got to stay at correction until they get it right. Then you reinforce it. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)
Let me speak about perspective. In my mind, life is movement on a high wire. And as you move on that high wire in your life’s journey often the wire gets thinner and often the breeze picks up. And what keeps you from falling off of that is a balancing bar. And the balancing bar is what perspective is. And if you lose your perspective then you are probably going to fall off the bar. Trying to achieve perspective is what I would impart. Maybe our players are too young or too immature to understand this. It is learning how to remember and revalue those things in life that we have taken for granted. Like I am about walking when I see you. And sometimes life helps us in different ways. You can take playing for granted, even if you valued it, until you get an injury. You will remember how important opportunities to compete are then. Or maybe even a personal relationship, you begin taking loved ones for granted. We have this incredible . . . in my mind . . . capacity, which is built into our DNA to do two things. One, we can pay attention to something, really be aware of it and then we can habituate it and it becomes second nature. And paying attention to anything, really giving it your full attention, is because something has value and then when it becomes habituated . . . you’ve kind of taken it for granted. We go through life taking things for granted. So sometimes life intrudes sometimes in a negative way like last year we had a boy pass away. I had a seizure, so life then helps you regain your perspective but this is what I know. I constantly have to address this intellectually. I constantly have to tell myself, what do I value? What’s important? And spend time doing that and that has to be constant. You have to do that on a daily basis otherwise if you don’t do it actively things will slip, they will regress to the background and these will be things you will take for granted. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Being a thinker means looking and thinking ahead and not resting on past achievement.

Coach Fuller commented on the future of wheelchair basketball.

I think that the game is definitely going to be a full court game. I absolutely think that’s the way it’s going to go. We’ve got all of this extra space out here and we're not using it all the time. When we walk it up and down the court we make it into shooting contest. When you watch European teams play that’s basically what it is. That’s why on any given day anybody wins the European Championships because they just let you come down and if you’re on that day you win. If you’re off—you don’t. I think the game is going to use . . . we’re going to use every inch of space on the court. That’s the first thing. So that’s going to change our training systems and how we train for the sport. I think it’s going to make us play deeper. You can’t just have the five guys who are going to play like we always have in wheelchair basketball. That’s going to help development because now you know what? Those five to seven guys on the bench . . . they’re going to get to play. They’re going to have to develop. I think that that changes things. I think that if you’re playing full court then being big is not as critical an attribute as it used to be. So I think you may not sit people at their max height. I think as you start opening up in space, sitting people lower, mobility improves . . . I think we’re going start to be able to teach people how to go one on one off the dribble which is something that’s always been really, really difficult because you’re usually slower than the other person. We haven’t had a systematic way of breaking down that task . . . how do you attack somebody one on
one. You know so there’s a bunch of things like that. I think you know spacing in the lane . . . our lane is not changing but internationally it's moving out a little bit. It’s not as wide at the bottom but it’s wider at the top. That means your spacing at the top is more which means you have better places to attack. So I think that the teams that understand how to begin to attack through the middle high are going to be able to take advantage of some scoring opportunities. Those are just a bunch of things just kind of off the top of my head.  
(Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)

Coach Fuller allows players a different freedom during pre-game than does Coach Tucker. His players were observed listening to music and socializing with teammates prior to the warm-ups. This has no bearing on whether the players have disabilities or not. This is each coach’s personal preference and philosophy of how to best prepare their teams for competition.

Coach Tucker commented about team silence and pre-game routines.

We’re quiet. I don’t like a lot of loud laughing and talking before . . . like when we go over on the bus we don’t say a word . . . when we go to pregame meal . . . no talking. Not on the bus (earphones). Where I can hear those things or anything like that. Certainly not at pre-game meal. You’re going to be surprised. It’s like back to the same idea. It’s like when these guys were going to go into Iwo Jima there was no lightness about any of that shit. They were nervous. They were thinking about what they had to do. They were thinking about their mortality. And again I’m not trying to equate the two. I know they’re distinct. I know they’re different. But this is as close as it comes to being competitive and that aspect. In the same way, I find an interesting paradox but I wouldn’t trade it for anything. When in a collective setting . . . what I tell them is when you’re in a collective team setting of the day of a game as we’re getting ready to approach the game. Respect other people’s thoughts because you know people prepare in different ways. Not everybody prepares the same. But if we’re going to err, let’s err on the side of conservatism. Let’s just say okay, I’m going to respect the silence. I’m going to respect our commitment together. There’s nothing inherently valuable about basketball but you choose to make it valuable because you spend time doing it . . . since we have limited time on the planet . . . well then let’s respect that—people’s time. So that is why we were quiet. Maybe the next coach will do it differently. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/27/10)

Yeah I do (believe in routines). I quit believing in superstition because I found out it was bad luck [smiling]. But I worked for other guys. Donald Anchors was like me and so was Brad Johns. When I worked for Chris Petersen at State it was mayhem. I couldn’t stand it. Drove me insane. Guys were laughing, joking, running around throwing food. It’s like, what the hell man? But you got to be who you are. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Where do the best coaches come from? Is it nature or nurture that determines who the best coaches are? A coach’s playing experience and athletic background are central to the current
research in trying to identify knowledge sources and essential attributes of expert basketball coaches. Both coaches recognized the importance of sporting background and playing experience as they relate to coaching expertise. Coach Fuller stated,

I’m a firm believer that the guys that have an athletic background . . . that had to work at it. It didn’t just come natural to them. They tend to make the best coaches because I think they understand why something was done and how to do it. I’ve had the great pleasure and opportunity . . . good fortune to be able to coach some pretty talented athletes. So I think the best coaches are the ones who have had to go through that learning process. They’re the ones who tend to be . . . they’ve gotten it really through hard work. They probably had some gifts . . . some athletic gifts but they weren’t those exceptional athletes typically. Some instances they are but generally speaking they weren’t the exceptional ones. You talk about Magic Johnson, yeah Magic Johnson had some unique gifts. He couldn’t communicate those gifts. Those things that were always there for him. He never had to learn them. He couldn’t communicate those to other guys. I remember watching Jacob Tyson teaching a bounce-stop at a PVA camp one time. He goes, he’s got all the guys lined up on the baseline, here you go guys this is what you do . . . boom. Like that (grabbing his wheels and spinning). Got it everybody? Okay, let’s go . . . your turn! You know and you got some of the guys are like, okay I think I can piece that together. There are some guys that are like, you said 85 things. I got one of them you know. And so, you know Jacob, unbelievably gifted guy. What’s fun now is his having, coaching juniors and he’s really being challenged to examine why he’s doing things. You got to watch him sometimes . . . when he coaches. He will look . . . he’s like, what are you thinking? That’s just it. He doesn’t know what the kid is thinking. Doesn’t know what that 13-year-old kid with spina bifida is thinking. Well you know what? He's thinking about one little thing. He’s thinking about I got to bounce the ball right there, every time . . . that’s it. After that it’s up for grabs (laughing). So I think that the thing that’s really helped me in my coaching was . . . things didn’t come naturally to me. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)

Coach Tucker stated similarly about an accomplished player becoming a coach who is thoughtful,

Because generally those guys . . . they don’t put a lot of thought into it intuitively. They’re just blessed with ability so it’s hard for them to articulate what they know. It’s almost a compensation for weaknesses. The funny part about coaching for me and, you might have some insight into this and can maybe quote some statistics, but I think more often than not coaches compensate for their weaknesses meaning this . . . when I played I was . . . if I had a strength it was on the defensive end. I was a really good passer. I was a point guard and I could really defend. When I became a coach I really studied the offensive side of basketball. I can still coach defense but really I enjoy and I gravitate to the offensive side of the ball. Bobby Knight was an offensive player. He really began to study . . . not that he couldn’t coach defensive but he put more time and energy into
coaching defense. It’s almost a compensation for some weaknesses and really having to put thought in play and what gets you open and those kinds of things. But I think when you’re really good at something it’s like you know . . . making Ted Williams the hitting coach. It’s like you’ve got some ideas but basically he’s friggin’ Ted Williams. He can just do it. I mean I don’t know how much thought they put into it. Ted Williams wrote the science of hitting. He probably put more thought than most. Like Willie Mays, who was a great player and I’m not denigrating him. What do they do? When they hit it I catch it. When they throw it I hit it. And it’s like that’s how good he was. Although I’m sure he put more thought into it that . . . you know its self-deprecating humor or as Johns would say self-defecating humor but anyway (laughing). But I think that plays a part into it. I think it’s very difficult for someone to have not ever played the game and be successful. Cerebrally . . . abstractly they can break down a game and be an effective coach but I think it’s much harder because they don’t have an intuitive . . . a kinetic feel for really having gone out there and gone through the battle. I think it’s really, really difficult for those guys to have a sense of what it's like when you strap it on. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

I think it usually goes with Type A personalities. I think there’s a real correlation there. That’s what point guards usually are. They're verbal. They're aware. They're communicative. They don’t shirk responsibility. They want the responsibility. So yeah, I think that’s all that goes into the fundamentals of being a coach. It’s why the catchers make the best managers. You know they’re in the control position. They’re calling the game. They’ve got everybody in front of them. They’re dictating where to go. Get over there. Move over here. They are calling pitches. Some of the best pitchers now just take their heads out of the game and pitch, like Andy Pettite. I’m a Yankees fan. Posada and Burnett can never get on the same page because A.J. Burnett wants to be in charge. Hey just pitch if the guy puts down #1 . . . just throw what the hell he wants. It’s almost Bull Durham like you know he’s got this idiot on the mound . . . okay that’s what you want? You want the fastball? Okay fine we’ll do it your way asshole—batter hits a home run. Now we’ll do it my way. Let me think . . . you pitch. Just throw the pitch I’m telling you. So that’s why catchers make the best managers. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

Coach Fuller was observed using his time on the bench before a game and during team warm-ups to reflect on past games and experiences. He visualized players, plays, and past performances of players against his and other team. From there, he mentally picked out player tendencies which added to his already thorough breakdown of each opponent from more current scouting and game observations. Each coach was observed closely analyzing players, plays, and tendencies while constantly searching for any new twist that might lead to a winning advantage
for his team. Coach Tucker has a different thought process before game and during pre-game warm-ups than Coach Fuller.

I was looking at us. I think you have to look at yourself. I think that . . . that was what I was trying to tell them about. Don’t be fooled by how people warm-up. People have made that mistake for us and it’s costly. It’s like you can go back and . . . did I tell you the story of when we scrimmaged Kennesaw three weeks ago. We go over to Kennesaw. Who is Kennesaw right? They’re in the Atlantic Sun. We go without Will, without Doug . . . two of our best post players. Now it’s a scrimmage and it’s not perfect because we didn’t shoot one and ones. We only shot two shot fouls. Well we scrimmage them . . . we beat them. We beat them in all three halves. You know everybody’s thinking well they’re not any good. So we were thinking we don’t know if we’re any good or not. Well, they go on to Georgia Tech and beat Georgia Tech by 17. So now are we good? So now you let other people . . . you know make your determinations about yourself. How hard are you going to work independent of your opponent? We beat Tennessee Wesleyan by 3 but I don’t give a shit. We improved. We got better in that game. It was a weird game. So that doesn’t even factor into my thinking. I just want us to get better. It’s not about the opponent. If you play to the opponent you’re going to be up or down based upon if you think how good or bad they’re going to be. It’s about yourself. Focus in on us.

(Stimulated Recall Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

The primary aspects of the theme the thinking coach concern an expert coach’s continued process of thinking about his own thinking by being curious, innovative, and thinking “outside the box.” This allows the expert coach the opportunity for self-reflectivity and the ability to teach and learn at the highest appropriate levels. The main perspectives of both coaches were similar in nature. The only differences were in how they prepared their teams before tip-off.

**Values and Principles as Attributes**

If a coach wants to be effective reaching the people they coach then they must “walk the talk.” There must be congruence between what you say and what you do. Head coaches maintain a position of perceived power and prestige and not a day goes by when someone is not watching the behavior and actions of a high profile coach. A coach’s most powerful teaching tool is positively modeling the same values and principles that are expected and necessary from players to achieve everyday success in school, sport, and daily living. This does not mandate expert
coaches having a fabricated belief in God or always tucking their shirt in their pants. It does mean being yourself and portraying an honest, approachable, and reliable leadership figure for the school, team, and community. Coach Fuller talked about the importance and impact of family and faith on his success as a coach:

For me my wife and kids are so . . . so critical. I know what I was like as a coach before. I was the guy that you know slept in the office and stuff like that. I was the . . . that’s all that did. All I did was basketball. And yeah it probably helped me develop quite a bit. I know all the things that happen when you get married . . . there are things that you have to grow and change because you’re basically going from an individual sport to a team sport. That’s probably the best way of putting it. But it rounded me out. It taught me a lot of things about relationships and it made me a better coach. It made me a better person, too. I couldn’t do the things I do without her support. The Mrs. and I are an example of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It’s so, so . . . she just makes all of it better. The tough times aren’t as tough and the good times are better. We’ve gone through experiences. We’ve had to learn all this stuff along the way. It’s important to be able to share that with somebody. To have somebody who gets the depth of that experience. Part of where you get that experience . . . that is from your team. It’s such a unique moment in life to have somebody connect with you at such a profound level. Which is why you get married. You found a person that connects with you at that profound level. So you want to share everything but you can’t share everything unless you have that connection . . . that support, you know. I also have to make sure that they (my kids) know at the end of the day they’re . . . they’re really valued. They’re really important to me. So I really try to make an effort to communicate that all the time. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/20/10)

What I really have been trying . . . it’s a new area I’ve been trying to grow in . . . having a young family right now. I want my kids to know my ballplayers. I want them to grow up and . . . George and M have a unique relationship. They have this kind of back and forth . . . and there is somebody who softens up George . . . who can take that New York tough thing . . . M. Like you watch. If he goes, hey M, give me a hug. And M goes no . . . like that. George actually . . . he actually seemed a little taken back, a little hurt. So there’s this little 5-year-old girl in the world that you know could put George in his place. What’s interesting is I want my ballplayers and my kids, and my family . . . I want them to know each other. I want there to be a connection there because they’re both important. I think that’s important. I want the ballplayers to always understand that you know what? Family is important. That is one of the things I get an opportunity to teach them. I think one of the places where we are sadly lacking in our society now days . . . and maybe I’m chauvinistic or traditional about this. I think we’re sadly lacking in men that are good fathers. Not necessarily married. I’m not going to go there in terms of that value but I think that there are a lot of young men . . . a lot of young women, who are lacking a good male role model in their life. Somebody they can call Dad. One of the things I want to do in the process of being their coach . . . and being a father to my kids . . . is to some extent try to show them how you be a Dad. That . . . that is important. That it’s not all about
winning and that you do need to . . . you know there is a time where you are going to set aside some other things because your kids come first. They are really, really important. They need you. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/20/10)

There’s one overriding one that comes into this more . . . I don’t want to say lately. I’ve understood how to integrate it more lately and that’s my faith. The best way I can describe how that plays into it is the preparation before the semi-final game in Beijing. I didn’t really know how you blended faith and sport in a super-competitive environment. Beat the other guy. I’m as competitive as anybody. I read a book leading up to the Beijing Paralympics that explained to me really how I blend that in. It was one of Tony Dungy’s books. He one of the guys I would love to sit down and chat with actually. What he talked about is, he talked about the moment before they played in the Super Bowl in 2005. What he prayed about was not to win. He didn’t pray about winning. He prayed that he would conduct himself in a manner so at the end of that game God would be smiling down on him. In preparation for that semifinal game, my focus was not winning from a personal standpoint. My focus was to prepare in such a way and conduct myself in such a way during that game that at the end of the game God would be smiling. So it wasn’t about winning or losing. I think in a lot of ways that changed how I made my decision-making in the game. So, that would be an overriding thing. It’s not a specific card. What it is . . . it is the spaces between the cards is a better way of putting it. I didn’t go to church a whole lot as a kid growing up but I’d say my prayers every night. God was introduced to me at a very young age but my mom and my dad were not what I would call religious people. Probably the best way to describe it is like you’re a young adult and you’re looking at your life and there’s just like . . . it just seems like things don’t connect. There’s something missing. What I discovered was what was missing was faith—a spirituality. For me, that was a relationship with God. When I had that relationship I understood how all these different things would connect. That filled in . . . I’ve heard people talk about it in the past . . . all these pieces if you’re sitting them out and they’re floating around in space . . . what there is is there’s blackness . . . darkness in between those because you don’t understand how their linked. But for me, my faith creates light in all these spaces so that I can see how they link to each other. (Modified Q-Sort Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/10)

Coach Tucker revealed some philosophical differences between the beliefs of the two coaches. As a 60-year-old man, his son was already in adulthood and Coach Tucker had currently remarried. His faith was not an observable driving force in his life nor did he consider it an important attribute toward his coaching success. Coach Fuller spoke about self-improvement, self-evaluation, the notion of improvement, and learning what not to do as a coach:
I think it's a matter of in order to coach at the high . . . very highest level you need all the different pieces put together. So it it's kind of like a team. You know, yeah is your 20 point a game scorer really valuable? Yeah. they are but you also need that kid that’s playing 3 minutes a game and is busting his butt in practice that’s making the 20 point a game scorer have to work his butt off in practice. And that’s where all these little pieces fit. It’s without one of them . . . without some of these pieces then . . . then me as a coach . . . I’m not as well-rounded. I end up with gaps. I still have gaps. I’m always looking for ways to improve. Always looking for places to fill those gaps and become better. But if I’m going to coach at the very highest level . . . I have to, a tiny little piece missing and a big piece missing really have the same value. They still keep you away from that highest level. I think there are a couple different things that you do whether you’re on the summit or not. I think this is the way a coach needs to approach their coaching in the same way we ask athletes’ to approach their sport . . . or their athleticism, or their development. The first thing I always start with . . . I always want to know things that I shouldn’t do. So when I watch other coaches and I see certain things . . . if they’re doing something that’s wrong I want to take a look at . . . I’ll say yeah, no, I . . . no, that’s definitely . . . shouldn’t do that—that . . . that’s bad [laughing] right there. So I think that a starting point is you always want to be reminded of what not to do. I think you want to take a look and constantly evaluate yourself . . . remind yourself what things you are doing well because you want to keep doing those things. I think then you . . . you come up with lots of different ways of evaluating yourself and improving your areas of weakness.

(Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

You always go back, you pay attention to these details, you examine yourself. You never get so full of yourself that you stop improving. It was an important lesson for me to learn and it helped me become a better coach. It starts with you, too. If you’re going to ask your players to do something . . . I’ve always believed you have to do it yourself. You have to be willing to do that. So if I’m asking my players to constantly evaluate themselves, constantly find ways to improve themselves, whether its Nate or Billy or Ryan, it doesn’t matter skill level. I’ve got to model that for them or they won’t learn it.

(Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker spoke about self-belief, leadership, confidence, setting goals, laying a foundation for future success, and the notion of improvement.

I just was blessed with a passion. And my parents helped to cultivate that. And then with success, I just had a sense that I could achieve some things. But as a coach . . . it’s one thing for you to feel passionate. It’s another thing to be able to figure out what other people need and lead from the middle. You know it’s almost like herding ducks. You kind of get behind them a little bit. Some of them you got to pull. Some you got to push a little bit. So that to me again . . . that’s the game of coaching . . . is trying to get everybody with the same heartbeat. Some people’s heart beats a little slower. The other people’s beat faster and how to you get them on the same heartbeat. So for me as a player I was always blessed with passion. I just intuitively understood how to play. But I never really reasoned it out until I started coaching. And thinking as a player, well you just did
that but as a coach how can you explain that to other people? Learning how to be an effective teacher. Learning how to be a visual teacher . . . when what you’re saying to people can be easily visualized in your language. That allows you to productively cut corners. You know we want to cut corners to shorten teaching time but not in a negative way. Productively cut corners and teaching effectively. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Well, like I said, I think you know confidence comes from success. I think you work hard at something which leads to improvement. Improvement then always leads to some form of success. Like we improved the other night. That was important for us to improve. And then you gain success from that and you do it through hard work. You miss less balls. You turn the ball over less. When I was getting grounders hit to me by my mom, I got hit in the face less times. I only got hit in the face 4 times today as opposed to 12. So that’s a weird way but you know you’ve earned that. I don’t think confidence comes before success. I think it’s the other way around. We talked about that. That’s the chicken-egg thing. You can give a kid a false . . . great job Johnny . . . everybody gets a trophy. Well what the . . . that’s a joke. Kids know deep down that they really, really haven’t achieved anything. They’re being rewarded for just being . . . a guy. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Well in quantitative terms it’s the notion of being able to win the championship and go to the NCAA but that’s not always possible. But, and I know it almost sounds trite. It’s when kids have really improved and played about to their capacities. Because obviously you know your talent is going to be a variable from year to year. You know it’s not a shame to lose games. It’s a shame to lose games if you haven’t . . . if you have skills and talent but you’re losing games because your guys aren’t focused or not energized or they’re really not committed and those types of things. You know that was the big talk earlier which I said before about how it works for life. So that’s it. That’s more of the subjective measure. Sometimes you know you’re laying the foundation for something greater in the future. Like this year we’re . . . I know we have four seniors but we’ll end up starting one or two of them. But we got a lot of young kids that can help us win so it could be a successful season from that standpoint. You know you’ve built the foundation. Now they know what’s expected of them at this level and what it takes to win at this level and that type of thing. It will pay off at a later date. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

That’s sort of liquid (future goals). Also one of my goals is to be better . . . constantly want to improve . . . process philosophy. William James and John Dewey philosophy. The whole notion that we can find a way to get things better. The whole notion of improvement. That there’s not a finality that we’ve reached and we go oh there it is. No, that’s what life is. We are always searching for a way to get things better. So that’s sort of a natural bend. So that’s easier for me. But also, and this is a personal pride issue. I have X number of years left on my contract. I don’t want to end my contract . . . in two ways. One . . . I don’t want to be crazy old coot on the bench going . . . put Davenport in [old man voice]. Coach he graduated in 1996 [laughing]. You know you become a caricature. Two . . . it’s like everybody looking at their watch going, shit he’s got how many more years to coach? Like when is this guy going to leave? You’d like to end it on a high note.
[laughing]. It doesn’t have to be that you won the national championship but people remember you for what you’ve contributed. And say, we appreciate what you did. I know it’s time to go . . . we’re sorry you’re leaving but good luck. Just that whole thing. Just a clean finish. For me that means a lot [laughing]. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)

Both coaches talked about being genuine and honest. Coach Fuller commented on the journey, humility, and being approachable:

I remember traveling in a 15 passenger van in a snow storm. They had us going like 20-25 mph when I was on the wrestling team and stuff like that. In terms of like those kinds of moments of camaraderie there . . . captured in some of those pictures (on wall in office). Like when I’ve been part of national championship teams, I’ve never been the one to rush on the court. What I’ve always wanted to do is I want to see each and every one of the players at that moment. Because that is what you’re working for as a coach. Especially as a coach, I think. I want to like . . . like the reason why I remember Don standing there at half court is because I remember each one of the guys. He’s one of the guys that I remember. He’s the first one that I saw as the buzzer went. I remember you know . . . Jerry Childress and Tim Andrews and I could go through the list of all those kids. I remember the look on their faces and for me that tells me about the journey we went on. The way they did it because they . . . you know Tim, it was, there was a dignity to that. I can look at Nick Cook and I see him looking around for, you know, his teammates because of the sharing. He was all about giving up for the team. And he wanted to be there with the team to share that moment. You celebrate through your athletes. You get a chance to see them . . . it’s truly that moment where you I believe you truly live vicariously. You get a chance to see how much joy you brought to a person. The true realization as you know . . . the explosion is in the moment but the appreciation happens over time. It’s weeks, months, years later. You’re still like wow that was the most awesome thing. You have to let it stretch out that way. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

You know . . . he (President Obama) misses jump shots. He trips coming out of the rose garden and stuff like that. I’m sure he gets a cold. He’s just . . . he’s like us. He’s just in a particular place. So, I know one of the things I always want is I want kids to be comfortable coming up and talking to me. So I think you have to also make yourself approachable . . . which I think is increasingly difficult as people move up in the sort of the . . . the coaching world . . . or any world. People feel like they are flawless and they’re not. I think we all have things we can grow in. Just like any elite athlete, some of those things are tinier and tinier. But that’s what happens as you move up. The margins for victory, the margins for success, the margins for improvement are smaller and smaller but you still need to have those covered. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker also brought up the attributes of humility, purpose, awareness, self-evaluation, and self-critique:
Robert Frost said, “Fault is the greatest reward that labor knows—accomplishment however, accomplishment can lead to arrogance.” You want to be successful without arrogance, which is the final stage, which is humility. Humility is what I would tell these guys. Humility is not when you think less of yourself but when you think about yourself less. You know, then you will have truly pushed through some thresholds and particularly as a coach try to make some differences . . . some positive differences in the lives of others. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

As I told you earlier, I’ve always found ideas more stimulating than people. I am still trying to improve. I’m not looking for life’s answers. That’s not what I’m saying. Like I told you, I think the Founders had it wrong. You don’t pursue happiness. Happiness is a byproduct or residue of a combination of purpose and passion. So I’m the happiest I’ve ever been because I’m fully embraced in everything and I have a purpose. I do know what’s valuable in my life. And I do know what’s superficial. It’s like if you shaved a peacock it looks like an ugly chicken (laughing). That’s what is beyond the superficiality of things. So I think I realize what’s authentic in my life. And it’s also . . . it obviously happens to all of us with age. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

Yeah, I mean again it’s an ongoing process. I’m always . . . always tabulating what are we doing? Where are we? The question of awareness. I remember one of the first times I saw a video of myself. I was shocked liked these guys are today. They all thought they played perfect games. I remember the very first time . . . this is way back in ’66 or something. And we had a basketball game and I thought I played a great game. We actually looked at the game and I stunk. I was terrible. And I know they remember it the same way. The more we can show them themselves, the better. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

I am critical. I critique. I also self-critique. You know most coaches, it’s not the externals. It’s great to be paid . . . that’s nice. There’s also the fear of failure in terms of being fired but that’s really not what motivates most of the guys I know at this level. It’s all internal. It’s you just expect more from yourself and put pressure on yourself. I don’t feel any pressure from the media . . . what’s going on in the community or from our president. I don’t need the lure of winning so many games to get a bonus. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/26/10)

Coach Fuller commented on the attributes of being thankful and appreciative:

I don’t know but I’ve had a chance to thank a couple of the coaches . . . so like I’ve had a chance to thank Coach Cremins. I’ve thanked him on a couple of occasions and I see Fred all the time. I still work with him at various times with consulting and some coach’s education stuff. Every chance I get I want to let people know that he helped me learn . . . helped me become better. The people I was in the reserves with my . . . our commanding officer passed away about 3 weeks ago and I learned things from him that I wished I had a chance to thank him for . . . but our Sgt. Major taught me about . . . things about leadership. And I got a chance through that passing of our C.O. to thank him for things that I had learned and thank my Sergeant at that time for things that I learned and stuff
like that. That is actually one of the things I learned from Coach Cremmins is you can’t say thank you too much. He was always letting the people around him know how much he was thankful for and appreciative of what they did. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/16/10)

Typically when were coming up on Thanksgiving and our kids are getting ready to go home for the holidays, one of the things we always try to remind our kids is hey, remember you’re going to go home and you’re going to have a great time in the holidays. You’re going to be eating a ton of food and everything. Remember how fortunate we are and that there are people out there that don’t have as much. If you have an opportunity to help somebody over the holidays . . . to give to somebody when you have . . . do it. You know appreciate that and those types of things. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker also talked about the attributes of being appreciative and finding joy in everyday life:

I’ve always been very much a planner. And very much . . . the hardest thing to do as you know is live in the present. It is very difficult for me because I’m always in my head about what we should have done . . . how we get better . . . where are we going et cetera . . . particularly as a person of authority you have to figure out where we’re going. You know again we have to create the North Star . . . the vision. Which is . . . it’s the light at the end of the tunnel. What you do on a daily basis is the tunnel to get to the light but you have to be certain where you’re going. So with all these life experiences have allowed me to do is be more appreciative of the day. And to embrace the day more. I know that sounds trite but in my case it’s true. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

How you conduct yourself in relation to your athletes, their parents, your opponents, the referees, and the fans and media is never lost on your players. They see and hear virtually everything you say and do. Be an honest role model. Demonstrate integrity, character, and class. These qualities are far more important than how many games or championships your teams have won. Coach Fuller spoke to doing the right thing, demonstrating the values and principles that you learn from an early age, and pursuing your dreams:

I think one is . . . one is integrity. They (my parents) were all about you do the right thing. End of story. No matter how difficult it is you do the right thing. I can remember breaking a window at a house and having to go up . . . being a 4-year-old . . . having to go up to the house of our elderly neighbors and say, sorry I threw my baseball and I wasn’t supposed to. It taught me you do the right thing regardless of how difficult it is. So that aspect of integrity. They taught me to work hard, to be responsible, to be selfless, to be a team player—so many things. They taught me to be creative, to be smart, to be patient, to
try to see things from another’s perspective . . . which is still always a weakness of mine. All kinds of things like that. All of those characteristics . . . each of them slightly different things. So what that taught me is you know what? You go after your dreams. You pursue it . . . that is what life is about. It’s about pursuing your dreams. My Dad taught me that if you’re really good at something . . . really good . . . someone will pay you for it, they will. So just be the best you can be. Why not find the things you love . . . be great at them and then you’ll be okay financially. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/15/10)

Similarly, Coach Tucker responded about the attributes of love and affection, respect, and striving for your goals:

Well I think because you interact with them off the court. You have jokes and things of that nature. I think in the long run . . . I’m not opposed to using . . . making them run their ass off and I’ll blow the whistle because they’re not doing whatever. But I think in the long run that’s not as successful as affection and respect because here’s what I know . . . mother is coming home from going to the store and she sees a fire in her building and it’s cordoned off by the police and the fireman. She tries to get in because her kids are there and she has to be restrained. She’s not running into that building because of fear. She’s running into that building because of love. So she has to be restrained for that reason. So that’s a much more powerful motivator in the long run. You use both ends of the stick. I call it “flexidoxy.” Some days I’m the anchor. Some days I’m the sail. You know you just got to figure out what they need at that point. You have something you’re trying to achieve. It’s you know a goal but your flexible. So it’s not an orthodoxy. It’s a “flexidoxy” depending on what you think they need at that moment. But in the long run, love overrides fear. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Integrity is the adherence to moral principles such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness, and is considered central to the character of leaders. What attributes do expert coaches look for in other expert coaches? Coach Fuller responded,

First thing? Integrity, flat out. First thing. That’s . . . that’s the first thing. Compassionate, you know. Those are the kinds of things. I want to see some discipline in the coach. I want them to be . . . I want to see detail and organization in their communication. I want to see good communication style. I want to see a person who can listen as well as talk . . . you know those kinds of types of things. So there’s a whole host of things to do with that. I think that’s a sort of foundation. If you don’t have integrity then I don’t think you can count on the other things being present on a consistent basis. Integrity really is . . . its consistent behavior that you can count on. A consistent set of values and principles that . . . that align to . . . and I mean that’s important too. Like again I said, honesty, that’s a real big thing. Loyalty. Trustworthiness. All these different types of things I think are really, really important as components of integrity in terms of that. So I think that’s the first thing. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)
Second thing, I want to see them teach. I want to see a really good teacher because that is where I think kids . . . the kids things want to do . . . they want social experiences. They want to learn and they want to win. Those first two, learning and social experiences, they flip flop from time to time. Winning is generally almost always third for kids. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)

Both coaches had similar views about recruiting and the values of an expert coach in the recruiting process. These responses can both be linked to athletics, school, and life's lessons.

Coach Fuller spoke to recruiting of young student-athletes and the three “A’s”:

I have no idea what it’s like on the able-bodied side. I only read what’s in the paper. But I can say from the wheelchair basketball side, that is my perception. I think coaches are way too willing to do basically anything in the name of getting a recruit and don’t understand, and this may be different on the able-bodied side because of life experience, but on the wheelchair side I feel like that 17-, 18-year-old kid getting ready to graduate from high school . . . we’re doing some things that are unethical that we’re able to do . . . to take advantage of kids. It's just not right. It's just not right. They don’t have the life experiences. They’re trusting in us. They’re trusting in us to guide them. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had parents come up to me and say hey, you’re going to have to help me out you know. You’re going to have to talk to me . . . educate me in this process because this is the first time I’ve gone through it. Holy cow! They’re completely trusting in you to shape the future of their son or daughter’s life and we are going to make some self-centered guided decision? Wow, you know step back from that because you’re about to set up a kid for 60, 70 years of their life. You’re going to help to create that. Every facet of my life is now linked to my combining wheelchair basketball with school. You know where I am career-wise. The things I’ve enjoyed and learned. The opportunities I’ve had. My wife. My kids . . . everything. It’s directly tied to combining athletics and school and the lessons I’ve learned. I know what that can do for every single one of the kids. I know how important it is that I manage that. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)

So when I talk to kids, the first thing we talk about are the three A’s . . . attitude, academics, and athletics. That’s our priorities. I want good kids. I don’t want kids with attitude problems. I want a coachable kid. I want a kid who’s interested in school . . . here in particular. The majority of your time you will spend in class studying in groups. Despite the fantasy of collegiate athletics, most of your time is in the classroom. So that better be your priority and if it’s not, you’ll have an unhappy experience and probably transfer and that’s just not good for the program, the coach, or the kid at all. The attitude thing, I’ve coached a player with a bad attitude. You remember when I coached Rory years ago right? That’s where I learned that lesson from. I said after that, because he took about 80% of my energy, which meant I only 20% for the remainder of the team . . . and I said after that I will never take another kid with a bad attitude. I would rather coach a kid that is horrible athletically than the most gifted athlete in the world that has a bad attitude. And then the third one is athletic ability. If you have some athletic ability I believe that, if you come here for 4 or 5 years, we can maximize your potential.
Now I said 4 or 5 years because that’s how long it takes you I think to fully realize your potential as an athlete, as a person, and as a student. I think the kids that come for a year or 2 years . . . I don’t think they can fully do it. I feel it is unethical actually for me to recruit a kid that I don’t think will be successful here. You should go someplace else because our goal is to not to be world beater. Our goal is to maximize potential in a kid right? You got to know the ones that it’s not the right fit. You know so when we go through the recruiting process with a kid. One of the things we always . . . when we bring them on campus sort of epitomizes the recruiting process for us . . . when we bring him on campus we want him to see a regular day. I want him to get up in the morning. They got to see practice. They’re going to go to classes with our athletes. They’re going to meet with potential advisers. I want them to meet with the people that they’re going to be interacting with. I want them to see lifting. I want them to see what . . . you know do our athletes get together and hang out. What does social life look like? I want them to see exactly what we look like on a regular day because I want to match expectations. Then I tell them very simply. You know what? We want you to get as much information as possible about our program. We want you to see our warts because if we’ve got what’s right for you—you will choose us. If we have to sell you on our program then we are not the right fit for you. I tell them, I want you to see as regular day because you know what? If you decide to come here . . . the day you came to campus for your recruit visit will look like every other day [tapping table]. So what you’re seeing is a snapshot of your next 4 or 5 years. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/19/10)

Coach Tucker explained how being sincere and authentic are critical attributes of an expert coach. Coach Tucker talked about his recruiting philosophy and used the analogy of a three-legged stool to describe recruiting and the kids that he looks to bring in to his system.

Well, our philosophy is we don’t recruit any “JuCo” (junior college) kids. I don’t mean to impugn “JuCo” kids but we want to develop kids and that takes time. It’s funny, there used to be this whole notion of the recruiters as the used car salesman. That may still occur at some level. It surely doesn’t occur for us and here’s why. You want as much information about each other on the front end because coaches and the kids we recruit . . . you don’t want surprises. So when we recruit a kid we're going to tell them exactly what he can expect from us. We tell him if you don’t want to be coached every day and scrutinized don’t come here. We’re going to coach you every day. We’re never going to roll the balls out and not watch you and not critique you. That’s our jobs. And tell them other things about us. Because we don’t want . . . if you’re not the kid we think you are don’t come here because we don’t want surprises. We all want to put our best foot forward but we don’t want that kid to think we are something we’re not. Because then the kids comes . . . he’s unhappy . . . he leaves after a year so you’ve wasted a year. You’ve coached him . . . he’s a problem, and now you’ve got a kid failing out of school or we don’t like him and saying well he’s not the kid we thought he was. We thought he could do this. So surprises are not good. So I’d rather lose a kid on occasion . . . I’d rather lose none of them . . . but occasionally I’d rather lose a kid that way than lose him on the back end by you thought he was someone different. Or we’re these nice touchy-feely guys and
all of a sudden the kids come in and were on their ass about stuff. It's like, hey we’re going to coach you every day. Do you know what we want you to do on your visit? We want you to meet every one of our players and I want you to do this . . . you have the freedom to ask everyone, and please take advantage of this, every one of our players what are these coaches really like? I want you to know what you’re going to get into because otherwise it bites you in the ass if you do it the other way. Our thing is developing kids over 4 and 5 years. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Well, we have the aesthetics. We have the academics. We have a coaching staff that you really should choose. What are your teammates like? That’s going to be your real support services. And then your backup support services are your coaching staff. Is there stability in the coaching staff? Is there a revolving door? Is the coach looking to get out of there? Are they firing coaches left and right? You know what’s going on with that? And that’s a trust factor because I tell them . . . and I take this in earnest as being a coach . . . because I was a parent that sent my kid away. I wanted my kid to play for somebody that I could trust. I want your kid to get a degree. I’m going to make decisions that are going to be not only in his best interest but our team’s best interest. We might not always agree but you’ve got to trust me. It’s one thing to make a decision out of self-interest . . . my own . . . but that doesn’t mean . . . I can make a decision where self-interest is involved but it’s not about self interest. You see what I’m saying? There’s a distinction there. There’s got to be a trust factor. At some point in time we’re going to disagree especially now as you get into crunch time when every kid thinks he should play 40 minutes and he should be the go-to guy. It’s not just reality. So you’ve got to trust me. I’m going to talk to you and develop relationships over the years. Sometimes you part ways, too. I also believe that kids in general because it’s just a societal trait . . . in general, not specifically, there tends to be a lack of stick-to-itiveness . . . perseverance. So sometimes kids give up and go somewhere else. And that’s fine if the fit’s wrong. I’ve changed my opinion and it’s like there is nothing wrong with that. There’s not a stigma. In fact, I’ve suggested that we just take our team picture at the end of the year because that's a mark of who made it through the year. Times are tough. It's hard . . . it's hard at this level . . . it's competitive. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/27/10)

I like to look at him (new recruit) when things go wrong. I like to see how he reacts. I like to see how he talks to his mom and dad when I get a chance to. I like to see how he reacts to his coach. I like to see what he does with his teammates. It’s almost that I can pick out the obvious skill . . . but I want to see how he reacts when the official makes a bad call and he’s all about himself or if he lets that go through him. I want to see all those things. I know I’m going to coach him and if he’s going to roll his eyes looking at me then we’re not going to have a very good relationship. So recruit who you think. And also we’re recruiting to the system. We know what our system is about. And then we know what the school is about. We’re trying to sign the best kids we can. It’s a three-legged stool. Character—Academics—Basketball skills. I think that what you have to do is be sincere. The players have to know you’re authentic. You have to be who you are. Everybody can spot a phony. If you spend enough time with people you can tell if they’re full of shit or not. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/27/10)
Both coaches were closely observed during their interactions with individual players while practicing, playing in a game, and during team meetings and film sessions. It was obvious that both coaches possessed a tremendous amount of integrity for the game and life itself. Attributes such as fairness, humility, sincerity, loyalty, trustworthiness, appreciation, respect, and compassion were all observed and identified behaviors of both expert coaches.

An expert coach understands that what he is teaching goes beyond the Xs and O's. The expert coach does not just teach skills, technique, and strategy within the narrow confines of the sport. Instead, he looks for opportunities to teach more important life lessons such as overcoming adversity, trusting your teammates, sacrificing individual needs for the team, dealing with winning and losing, sportsmanship, honesty, and integrity. These are all important attributes that were learned from a particular source and then transferred to players through rigorous and thoughtful teaching.

**Communication**

The final theme that emerged from the data in this study was that the participants both showed direct and purposeful communication both on and off the court. Being an effective communicator seems to be vital to the success of both coaches. This theme emerged as a result of the stated and observed importance of being clear, concise, verbal, and articulate in any and all communications with people. The way a coach talks to players, coaches, support staff, and administrators can lead to on-going interactions that ultimately lead to meaningful and trusting relationships, enhanced support, and harmony throughout the program. Coach Fuller reflected on how he communicated to his players, team, and referees on and off the court:

Every now and then there have been times where I get caught up in the game and I can’t get a player in for one reason or another . . . the foul situation changes in our game with classifications. All of a sudden it’s like you’re screwed. You can put two ones on the court you know and play down points or whatever. I’ll just go up to a player after the
game and say, I apologize. The reason you didn’t play is not because you’re not a good player. It’s my mistake. I needed to pay attention to the flow of the game. I’ll make sure you get in. Usually, if you’re honest with a player and you accept responsibility . . . you don’t kind of say, the score was this and blah blah . . . If you just screwed up, say you screwed up. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

In Beijing? You know it was just like, hey guys you know what? We played great. You know we wanted to paint the whole picture for them. It’s like, it is not about this one game. That group of guys, the core group that has been together . . . said let’s put it in context. Let’s understand that this core group of guys is 23-1 in the last Paralympic Games. We’ve lost one game with less than a minute to go. One game. Think about that over the course of history. This group of guys, you’ve done something phenomenal. Most teams talk about a gold medal and you look at all the teams that have won recent gold medals . . . Australia as an example. They had a loss. They weren’t undefeated. This is a group of guys . . . we put it in context so that they understand that it’s not about one game—it’s about the body of work. We did great guys. We did great. Think about . . . we got everybody’s best game for three Paralympics. We didn’t get anybody coming in saying, oh yeah we can take it easy on Canada today. We got everybody’s best game. We took their best shot and we only had one loss. So let’s be proud of that, guys. Let’s not define ourselves by this one game. Let’s define ourselves by our career. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

I think that I tend not to be super emotional in games. At least I don’t think I am. I’m not a rah-rah coach. I spend a lot of time . . . a ton of time talking to the bench. I’m constantly moving up and down. So I think that most people would be wondering what am I doing because of the amount of time I spend talking with the bench as compared to the amount I spend talking to the players and coach. Some people would look at it and say, well he’s not coaching at all he’s not talking to his players. We can adjust to that. Some people would have a tendency, if they were watching me from a distance, probably question how much I’m coaching the players on the court or how much I’m working the officials. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

You have to give players feedback every time even if it’s just something as simple as hey, nice job. I think you’ve got to give players feedback every single time. I think it’s the worst thing in the world for a player . . . so you’re out there . . . you’re playing your butt off . . . you’re working really, really hard . . . you come off the court and just get sent to the end of the bench. You’re thinking, okay did I just mess up . . . how can I fix it? I was playing great, I’m not tired, why are you taking me off? They never think coach just took me off because he thinks I played great. They don’t put that in their mind—they just don’t. So you got to let them in. Sometimes I’ll pull a kid off and . . . or even if I’m subbing a kid on. Sometimes I will be like hey, you know what? I am going to sub you on. You’re only going to be on for a couple possessions because I just want to give this other person some quick feedback and get them out. I want them to know that when they get subbed off it’s not because they screwed up. Absolutely, every single time they get feedback. Every time. Every player. Every single game when we are finished. The kids go in the corner. I leave them there for a second. I want them to talk amongst themselves
. . . a little debrief. I come in and then . . . okay, tell me thoughts and comments. I want to hear their thoughts on the game. I want to hear what they think we did well and what they think we can improve on. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

Coach Tucker's communication during all aspects of games, home or away, followed a strict style and routine. Coaches and players are tuned in to the timing of events leading up to tip-off and during halftime. Coach Tucker was very cerebral in his approach to communicating with his players and assistant coaches. While observing the coach in the locker room before each game, Coach Tucker was seen waiting in the next room or hallway while his assistants went over the initial game plan. Coach Tucker was observed standing alone pondering his words before entering the room to deliver a purposeful and applicative statement or two about the game, the team, what it would take to win the game, or ultimately improve his team.

I’m not a big talker in the locker room. I’ll spend like 5 minutes talking. Hopefully, I would have prepared the team on the floor. So we go in with 40 minutes left on the clock so it’s at 6:20 for a 7 o'clock game they’ll be in the locker room. At about 6:25 I go in there and speak for 4 or 5 minutes and we’ll go warm up and that’s about all I’m going to say. Then I’ll come back in with under 10. I’ll start speaking to them for a minute or 2. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Coach Tucker was observed in a team film session after a tough loss on the road. One of his assistant coaches operated the remote while all the coaches provided feedback to the players on certain plays or possessions. Coach Tucker sat near the front of the room and intermittently stood up to address the players at key teaching moments on the film. Otherwise, he sat down and listened to the other coaches’ feedback and watched the film—waiting for a mistake that he could quickly correct or a player he could question. His feedback was direct, corrective, and sometimes philosophical in nature to his players. (Film Session, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

Coach Fuller talked about communicating with his team during the season, with new recruits, or simply teaching a concept or terminology to players:
Well, the first thing I do when I’m teaching something . . . I want to make sure they understand context. I want it to look like it’s going look in a game. So like you know it’s just that whole-part-whole thing. Sometimes we’ll draw it first. Not always but sometimes. I mean we’ll do it sometimes like that. So that’s the first thing. I want to give them the context. Then I want to explain why we have all of the detail that we do. Then I want to get running it. Then I want to get into it. Once we’ve got that, then I want to get them into it using it in context. Now we’ll focus on a couple things and fine tune as we go along . . . and we’ll use multiple opportunities for repetition to do that. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

The way you coach definitely changes. I probably give a lot more feedback right now than I will later on. Like as we get into January and February . . . when we’re scrummaging for example, at the end of a practice . . . there are probably going to be longer stretches when I’m not going to say anything. Because I’m just going to let them . . . they're at that point where I want them to do a little bit more learning on their own. You know a little bit less . . . and that’s even pulling the questions away . . . so it’s . . . at that particular point they're doing a lot more self-evaluation. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

The common terminology that we develop just happens over time. We’re using it over and over again. When you have a veteran, and you’re a rookie and you say, you know, I’m jumping, I’m jumping, and the veteran responds to that. There’s a learned behavior that occurs. Just over the course of the season they develop that common language that allows them to be on the same page. And we’ll talk about it from time to time. Then the kids start to understand the importance of language. The importance of communication. Saying the right thing. Saying what you want them to do. We talk a lot about not communication but communicating actions . . . telling people what to do. There’s information we have on the court. We’ll say, I’m guarding 13. I got 13. I got 13. That’s information . . . that’s okay but what we really want . . . we want you to tell us what you want us to do. I’m guarding 13 . . . you can jump. Turn left. Go under. Those types of things. That’s the information that is really important. It really doesn’t tell you how to connect with your teammate. It’s the action that makes you connect with your teammate and so we want to take our communication to that level. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/17/10)

We don’t talk about wheel position in our program actually. We talk about axle-caster. Because you think about that concept of wheel position . . . how nebulous that is . . . how gray that is. So what we’ve done is we’ve just said, okay this is where you are. You get your axle. You put it on that caster. That’s it. That’s where you got to be. That’s a nice narrow thing. It’s like when you shoot, do you have a specific target when you shoot or do you just kind of shoot at the hoop? Probably have a narrow target . . . you’re a pretty good shooter. And most guys are. I remember Burt Franks was always like, front rim, front rim, front rim. And there’s this spot on the front of the rim he wants guys to shoot at. I think you want to have those narrow targets. Cues do that. They give you something narrow to focus on so you know what information is important . . . what’s not. So when we say axle to caster, the kid’s not looking at a tire, or rim, or footplate. They're looking
at your caster. And so I think that really helps sort out all the information. That helps with
narrowing your execution and focusing on your execution. Well the way all of our stuff is
designed, it’s designed on . . . to be understood conceptually. (Interview, Coach Fuller,
11/17/10)

Coaches in the current study focused on the individuality and difference of each athlete.

For example, Coach Tucker talked about his communication with senior players versus freshman
players:

This year like I said we have the most unsettled in our mind starting lineup that we’ve
ever had here in all my years. So it’s a good problem to have and it’s a bad because the
space between let’s say position A is narrow. You got player 1 in years past is here and
this guy knows he’s going to get 32 minutes and the backup player 8 minutes. And but
now it’s like here . . . and its virtually every position. It’s here. It’s here. It’s here . . . you
know at the “P” position . . . our post . . . we got four guys. I got a freshman, and I got a
senior, a junior, and they're all right here. So it’s like we’re not playing four guys at this
position. So I just spent 10, 15 minutes telling Doug and Mark where we are. They don’t
have to agree with me. They just have to understand what I’m telling them. And this is
what you have to do to increase your playing time. You know you have to be proficient in
this area. You can’t slip. And you have to be more productive in these other areas.
(Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/23/10)

I talk to freshman different than seniors. I just think when you have seniors that they have
invested time in the program . . . the freshman are more malleable. They don’t know what
to expect. They’ve come from high school programs. For them it’s just this wall of
change. We don’t just come at them . . . it’s been an upheaval. And so you constantly just
kind of pat them on the butts and tell them to buck up. At the same time you’re de-
recruiting them. Now they learn they’re just as special as everybody else is. So they kind
of figure out the drill pretty quickly. But the seniors that have been here . . . they’ve been
invested and particularly David. David Joshua started every game his sophomore year.
Every game his junior year and all of a sudden game 2 his senior year . . . he’s our leading
scorer . . . he doesn’t start. There’s a reason why and I told him. We talked and I said, so
tell me what you think? I said, what did you do during the scrimmage? What kind of
scrimmage did you have? What about the exhibition? I said, let’s take the first half . . .
how good were you? Not very. Second half? Good. I said, exactly. What did you do
against Youngstown? Mmm. I said, well you’re a senior. And he said, well yeah, I kind
of understood that. He said, but I kind of thought maybe what I had done my sophomore
and junior years would count for something. I said, that’s exactly the point. You’ve got it
completely backwards. It doesn’t count for anything. I said, Josh you want to be a coach.
You’re going into the wrong profession if you’re expecting to keep your job and keep
people satisfied when you say . . . you know I won a game in 2006. They don’t transfer. I
said, it’s a competitive world out there. Nobody wants to hear what you did for me
yesterday . . . especially in a competitive situation like coaching or even playing. It’s
Coach Tucker also stated how he uses vehicular language with his players that is clear and concise and moves them to action:

I remember telling my dad that when I said I wanted to coach, he said they already have people that do that because he didn’t think I would make any money [laughing]. I was not particularly verbal or articulate. I have learned how to become verbal and articulate and tried to learn how to use language in an effective way over the years. The example from that is Patton who said, you never give instructions that explain things in ways that can be understood. You give instructions or explain things in ways that can’t be misunderstood. That’s a subtle difference but it’s an important difference. So that framed my teaching and my language . . . language should be vehicular, beyond just clear, reasonable, and logical. It has to be vehicular and get them to act. Because that’s the ultimate end of education is not knowledge but action. So you are trying to get them to act on what they’ve learned. Well, that’s what I talk about. Your language has to not only be clear and concise. It has to be vehicular. So I try to purposefully create phrases that are going to move people to action. Doesn’t always work that way but I mean that’s what I’m trying to do is not only be clear and concise but I’m trying to get you to move toward action. You know in self-descriptive terms. Just trying to create phrases where it will stick . . . easily absorbed and it makes sense at the same time. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/24/10)
I always believe in giving a rationale. This is why we're doing this. But I’m also a coach that after I’ve given you a rationale five times. I’ve told you why we need to do this. Why it benefits you . . . why it benefits our team. I’m also a . . . don’t have a problem . . . listen man, I am tired of telling you why. I’ve explained to you why. Now just frickin’ do it or I’m going to sit your ass down. So I think there’s a time limit that expires in terms of explanations. And I said the other day, too, in the film session. There’s a difference between interpreting complexities . . . it takes a while for guys to understand things and follow instructions. In the heat of battle you need to just follow instructions. So guys have got to be able to follow instructions. There’s nothing complex about that.

(Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

So a lot of times and Bobby Knight said this . . . you know a lot of time you send nonverbal messages. It’s a kinetic message. Ass to bench sends a message. So we started David in the second half and he made his first four shots. So he figured it out without me having to say a word. He realized that if I don’t make these wide open shots . . . if I’m not playing better then I’m going to be back on the bench. So the bench can convey a lot of messages to people. Sometimes like I said it's David's transition. I told him you know this is not a sneeze. This is not like, oh well coach benched me but I’m going to regain my position. I said, that’s not happening. You’re thinking completely backwards by just what you said. I said, I understood what you said that just because you played your sophomore and junior year would count. I said, it counts for nothing. It counts for zero. But the flip side of that is . . . because kids are getting older and we tell them on the front end now there are really two things. There’s basketball and there's academics. Your social life has to come third. So that’s a real challenge sometimes. It’s definitely with David Joshua. We told him this when he came back. Again, I’ll tell him straight. Man, it’s like you might not like it but here it is. Also, I’m not afraid to make the tough decisions but I will tell them this is the unanimous judgment of our staff. Our whole staff thinks this. I told him I said, man you’re a great guy but you didn’t work as hard as you needed to this summer. I didn’t see the improvement we talked about. You didn’t put in the requisite time. You know you might not agree with that but I’m telling you where it is. So if you want to play this is what you need to do. (Interview, Coach Tucker, 11/22/10)

You cannot be effective as a coach unless you can successfully reach the people around you in a clear and concise way. Expert coaches understand that communication is a two-way street. This requires that as a coach you carefully listen to what your athletes are saying in addition to clearly stating and reinforcing your expectations. Both coaches had a very direct communication style and pulled no punches with anyone. They had a plan that included input from assistant coaches and a corresponding schedule. Both coaches’ communication was clear,
concise, and held to an expectation of understanding less questions of inquiry (Observations, Coach Fuller and Coach Tucker, 11/2010).
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

According to Schon (1983), the practice of a profession requires not only an initial period of education and orientation, but the continual construction of new knowledge to meet challenging changes. Ultimately, the results of all five themes painted a picture of the lives of two different expert collegiate basketball coaches and their philosophies, ideas, and beliefs about coaching. Many similarities exist between the two coaches. The results of this study demonstrate that the knowledge of the two coaches is similar in many ways to other expert coaches who have competed as athletes, despite some differences in their knowledge sources. Their acquisition of knowledge held constant a long-term interest, or passion, in sport that was sparked by participation in competitive sport at an early age, some formal training, and starting to coach at the secondary school level (Schinke et al., 1995).

There were considerable similarities and shared beliefs between these coaches from both their backgrounds and current practices perspectives. Both coaches were introduced to sport at an early age by a parent. These memories were mostly positive and each had various individuals, like a teacher or coach, who made a positive impact on their sport participation and choice in becoming a coach. The similarities between coaching the sports of wheelchair basketball and standing basketball speak strongly to the fact that expert coaches are more concerned with coaching effectively than worrying about limiting labels put on their players because of appearance or ability.
Similar to the soccer coaches in Jones et al.’s (2003) study investigating how an expert coach acquired and constructed professional coaching knowledge, the findings of the current study support this previous research identifying the most often used sources of coaching knowledge as other coaches, players, coaching experience, and a formalized education program. It is vital that the novice coach take the necessary and desired steps to expertise by first seeking out other expert coaches and then asking poignant questions that allow for a transfer of knowledge from one coach to the other. This constant interaction, mixed with past experiences and other previously identified sources, is a key ingredient to coaching success.

This research corroborates findings by Hardin et al. (2008) identifying sources of knowledge most often used by a successful wheelchair basketball coach. The knowledge sources found to be most valuable in the current study were parents, peer coaches, coaches while playing, teachers, past playing experiences, books, coaching experience, coaching clinics, and observations of other coaches’ practice sessions. Interestingly, both coaches ranked their parents as their number one source of knowledge. The observation of other coaches’ practice is a new source of knowledge discovered through the current study. This source may have been coded in prior research under the knowledge source of peer coaches but its importance as a separate source now needs recognition.

The philosophies of both these coaches are closely linked to those from Martens’ (1988) study which found that a coach’s ultimate challenge is to teach physical skills, as well as to build character, instill integrity, and point the way for youngsters to become confident, self-reliant adults (Martens). This is a challenge that keeps most decent coaches from becoming experts in their field. There have been numerous coaches who have won a great percentage of their games but that does not guarantee expertise. A coach with a losing record can still be an expert coach if
he maintains a high level of the other attributes outlined as necessary for recognition as an expert coach, like athlete outcomes. Was the player on the end of the bench treated fairly and made to feel like they mattered? Expertise also includes producing positive outcomes with players not just physically, but emotionally as well.

The work of Werthner and Trudel (2006) has important implications on the present study. In their study, directly related to knowledge acquisition, they suggested that coaches acquired knowledge through coaching clinics, observation of other coaches, and internal learning situations. Internal learning or the skill of self-reflection was found to be a vital attribute of the expert coach in this research. Many sources of knowledge for a coach must be sought after. Travelling thousands of miles to participate in a Nike clinic or visit a respected coach is a noble cause but being able to step away and be productively critical of yourself is paramount.

Similar to the Schinke et al. (1995) study, both coaches also passed through a number of developmental stages during both their athletic and coaching careers that provided them with the necessary knowledge needed to reach their status as expert coaches. Past athletic experiences have indeed shaped how they approach, train, develop, and communicate with athletes. These same experiences have played a major role in their coaching and personal philosophies—which were observed to go hand-in-hand.

There are also implications for the findings of Bates (2007) who claimed that experience plays a key role within coaching performance due to the limitations of formal coaching education. Coach Fuller explained his frustration with the lack of formal educational opportunities for wheelchair basketball coaches. Currently, an aspiring coach must go through the standing basketball curriculum and then translate that knowledge to the sport of wheelchair basketball. This knowledge is not easily transferrable because of the specialized nature of
wheelchair basketball and the level of expertise of the aspiring coach. As is evident in the sport today, there are many novice coaches who coach wheelchair basketball as though it is the same game as standing basketball. Many of the best wheelchair basketball coaches played the sport of wheelchair basketball when they were younger or became intimately knowledgeable about the game's intricacies from actually spending time sitting in a wheelchair and playing the game. This was a prerequisite for coaching expertise identified within the current study by Coach Fuller.

Almost all the research that has focused on expertise has relied solely on years of experience and/or performance records although there is no proof that either of these variables are valid ways to identify an expert coach (Cote & Gilbert, 2009). Many similarities can be seen between Glaser’s (1990) study and the present research concerning the nature of expertise. Expertise is definitely domain specific and developed over a prolonged period of time. Expert coaches recognize patterns faster than novices as evidenced by the corrective nature of their feedback in practice and games. Experts are also more flexible and are more able to adapt to situations because they have numerous prior learning experiences to draw from that may also include a period of self-reflection, correction, and/or experimentation.

Current research also supports the criteria used in Cote and colleagues’ (1995b) study that identified expert coaches by (a) number of years of coaching experience, (b) performance levels attained by their athletes, (c) the level they attained when in professional competition, and (d) recognition of their expertise by peers. In this study, other qualifications or attributes of an expert coach include use of appropriate “vehicular” terminology that moves players to action, honest and proper recruiting conduct, passion, consistent work ethic and the notion of improvement, appropriate communication with players and staff, ability to self-critique, and a love for lifelong learning.
Findings in this study also demonstrated that expert coaches invest a great deal of time and energy preparing both themselves and their teams for competition. It was found that although each coach had his own set of perceptions and beliefs on how to do perform his duties as coaches, they both subscribed to remarkably common routines that enabled them to accomplish certain tasks leading up to competition (Bloom & Salmela, 1997).

The participants differed with regard to their backgrounds and experiences in sport but they ultimately shared many of the same sources of knowledge and essential attributes necessary to be a successful coach. The similarities between the standing and wheelchair versions of basketball speak to the fact that expert coaches are rightfully concentrated on coaching the game and its players as members of an exclusive sporting fraternity. The differences between wheelchair and standing basketball coaches were minimal and may exist because of the inherent physical differences between athletes with disabilities and able-bodied players and the more developed history and nature of the standing game at the collegiate level. Wheelchair coaches must deal with social misperceptions of their players (and themselves) with different disabilities and the game of wheelchair basketball itself. In addition, they enjoy a much less significant involvement with the school, its students, and the surrounding community as a whole. However, very few differences existed between the attributes of an expert wheelchair coach and an expert standing coach.

The current study also corroborated the findings by Hardin (2000) who identified and compared the coaching attributes of five expert high school coaches and found that planning, experience, and continuing education were the most important attributes of the expert coach. These provide a firm foundation for the attributes needed to become an expert coach. The coaches in this study clearly explained and showed the importance of having a love and passion
for the game, of being a teacher, of being thoughtful, of maintaining appropriate values and
principles, and of being an effective communicator. These were the five main themes that
organized the results of this study.

Similarities between the two coaches revealed that both coaches focused their behaviors
on recruiting good kids, maximizing potential, maintaining perspective, valuing the things in our
lives that we may take for granted, the importance of integrity, remaining authentic, having a
resolute work ethic, being passionate and persistent, maintaining balance and focus, planning
properly, being confident and curious, communicating clearly, and, most importantly, being
thoughtful and self-reflective. These behaviors supported the five main themes in this study.

This study identified many similar sources of knowledge of the expert coach such as
parents, peer coaches, coaches while playing, teachers, playing experiences, books, videos,
clinics, conferences, formal education, past coaching experiences, and watching other coach’s
practices were identified.

Both participants had a few different sources of their knowledge acquisition such as
religion, mentors, and military experience. Coach Fuller enlisted in the Canadian Reserves while
Coach Tucker, holding a keen interest and belief in military doctrine, was never in the military.
Also, it was not apparent that Coach Tucker relied on his religious beliefs to guide his coaching
while Coach Fuller’s overall coaching philosophy was indeed influenced by his. It is interesting
to note that both coaches did not recognize one significant mentor in their lives as a source of
their knowledge or attributes, nor did they gain anything from Hollywood films other than pure
enjoyment and entertainment value.

An expert coach understands that what he is teaching goes beyond the Xs and Os. The
expert coach does not just teach skills, technique, and strategy within the narrow confines of the
sport. Instead, he looks for opportunities to teach more important life lessons such as overcoming adversity, trusting your teammates, sacrificing individual needs for the team, dealing with winning and losing, sportsmanship, honesty, and integrity. These are all important attributes that were learned from a particular source and then transferred to players through rigorous and thoughtful teaching.

**Research Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study and the valuable lessons learned during the data collection and analysis process, the current research offers the following recommendations for future research on how expert college coaches acquire their coaching knowledge and attain the essential attributes to become successful coaches.

First of all, future studies may want to examine a wider variety of sports using a qualitative study similar to the present study within the context of tennis, rugby, track and field, or any other Paralympic sport for ease of comparison. The sport of basketball was useful for comparing coaches of athletes with and without disabilities. I believe that if I had also included the reflections of expert coaches in other sports, I would have been able to provide a more varied description of the life histories of expert coaches.

Second, I would recommend conducting a similar qualitative study using the life history approach but with female coaches, African American coaches, or coaches from other countries. Based on the local sport culture, the sporting experiences of expert coaches differ from country to country, region to region, and city to city. Many countries also have different societal views based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or disability. It would be interesting to see if expert coaches from other countries had sporting experiences similar to the two in the present study.
Finally, I would recommend a study that investigates the perceptions of athletes toward their coaches with a disability. In most cases, individuals who coach sports typically are not disabled. By investigating the players’ perceptions of coaches with disabilities, we can gain a deeper understanding of what it takes to be employed as and become a successful coach with or without a disability.

These and other future findings may be useful for coaches who may be interested in a career in coaching or who are seeking ways of attaining additional knowledge that may lead to improvement, success, and the ultimate recognition by one’s peers as being an expert coach. In addition, the ideas outlined in the life histories of participating coaches may provide interesting insights into the thought processes of a select group of professional coaches.

**Recommendations for Coaches**

Coaches need to re-conceptualize what expertise means and then set out on a personal and professional journey to try and achieve it. My recommendations for coaches are organized into three main areas: (a) teaching, (b) self-reflection, and (c) passion.

An expert coach’s activity must be highly adaptive in nature and their planning must remain flexible and be based within the context of their teaching environment. The transfer of knowledge to players must be clear, concise, and reek of expectation while providing an encouraging and supportive environment. The present research also suggests maintaining a balance in your feedback that allows athletes to remain self-confident while making the necessary corrections to improve play while facilitating athlete empowerment and some level of “fun” as a member of the team. Coaches must also “walk the talk,” as it were. Players will sometimes mirror the behavior of their coach or other leaders on the team. It is imperative that coaches maintain the highest level of professional integrity that sends the most positive message.
to each student-athlete and leads to mutual respect and the appropriate professional perception of
the coach.

A coach's ability to maximize athletes' outcomes rests not only on extensive professional
and interpersonal knowledge, but also on constant introspection, review, and revision of one's
practice (Cote & Gilbert, 2009). The purpose of reflection is to try and grasp the essential
meaning of something. This can be a challenge for some of the most experienced coaches who
fail to find meaning in the decisions they make as a coach. In other words, they may have a
notion of what an expert coach is but they cannot explain what that is. This insight involves a
thinking process that clarifies that meaning. An expert coach can self-reflect and then explain
that meaning and apply it within his own environment while attempting to grasp the pedagogical
essence of that experience (van Manen, 1990). “Self-reflection is the manner by which pedagogy
tries to come to terms with self and other. In other words, self-reflection is the way in which
pedagogy reflects on itself while serving others” (van Manen, p. 89).

Past memories and recollections enter directly or indirectly into our actions as coaches
and people. Building on the essential attribute of being a reflective thinker will increase coaching
expertise exponentially as each experience scaffolds a coach toward habitual self-reflectivity and
personal and professional success. Failure to be a reflective thinker may lead to narrow-
mindedness and a life of unfulfilled personal and professional aspirations.

Most expert coaches have experienced the thrill of competition from the inside. But what
does it mean to be competitive? How can a coach learn work ethic? What does it mean to be
passionate? Passion and a strong work ethic come from within. It comes from a love for the
game, vowing to finish what you start, and never giving up. Expert coaches are driven, focused,
emotional, and goal-oriented people. Many expert coaches were taught discipline, toughness, and
persistence by parents or coaches at a very young age. Many of these attributes were attained by
the experiences of being in the heat of the battle. For some, it is only a small part of a personal
journey toward excellence. The journey to expertise must include a plan, a map, and a never-
ending desire for individual and team success. Then there has to be action, effort, and the
awareness to adapt to the current situation. This includes overcoming adversity and always
giving your best no matter the circumstances. Expert coaches do not wait for things to happen,
they make things happen. If there is an opportunity to learn, they seize it.

My last recommendation for coaches is to become a student of the game. Both of the
coaches in this study had a passion and appreciation for how the game of basketball should be
played. They knew all about current trends in the sport and spent most of their day either talking
about, learning, or coaching basketball. They lived it. Being an expert coach is a difficult job and
there are no vacations. It is more than just rolling a ball out to your players and saying, “go.” It is
about consistent and ongoing excellence in teaching, learning, and self-improvement.

**Final Thoughts**

My observations led me to conclude that expert coaches always maintain an eagerness for
learning when it comes to their professional development. They understand that regardless of
how much success they have had in the past doing things their own way, they can always learn
better and new ways of teaching. These coaches are always open to learning the very latest that is
available within their field, be it mental, physical, or technical training. They attend conferences,
read books, watch games and practices, rent DVDs, talk to other coaches, and actively explore
ways of getting the job done better.

The best coaches do not allow their players to just get by with the status quo and always
remain flexible and strong. Expert coaches refuse to tolerate mediocrity in attitude, effort,
performance, training, and technique. They continually challenge their athletes and themselves, and are able to keep both highly motivated. They do not let their egos and self-worth get tied up in the final outcome of one game and understand that what they teach and how they teach it will have an impact on the student-athlete that goes far beyond the sport. Successful coaches know that mistakes and failures are the necessary prerequisites to learning, improvement, and ultimate success.

The focus of this study was to add the voices of expert collegiate wheelchair and standing basketball coaches to past research by asking these coaches to reflect on their sport and coaching experiences. The term reflection is used to refer to the interpretations and meanings of these reflections that these participants have assigned to their own lived experiences (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Coach Fuller summed up his goal in life as a basketball coach:

I heard a great . . . great thing that really has always stuck in my mind. It was the kicker from the Minnesota Vikings. He had two or three young kids. He was a single dad because his wife had passed away because of cancer. And they were talking about being a single dad and balancing things and stuff like this. And he said . . . and I always get choked up about this when I think about it. He said, when he is old and gray or dead and somebody asks his kids . . . I think it was Morten Anderson actually . . . and he says . . . could be a Hall of Fame kicker one day . . . and he says if anybody asks my kids like tell me about your Dad. I want them to say he was the best Dad ever. And you know by the way he played some football. You know and I would want that. I hope that one day you know my kids . . . that if somebody asks them that they say, wow, my Dad was the best Dad ever. And you know what? He coached wheelchair basketball. (Interview, Coach Fuller, 11/18/10)

There is no checklist to become a great coach. Many of the essential attributes that you need cannot be acquired by going to a clinic or reading a book but rather it is just who you are—regardless. It is not necessarily what you started out to be but who you became. It is a journey—a sometimes painful, self-reflective quest for personal and professional excellence. A mixture of this type of reflection and proper mentoring can help develop most of the essential attributes which will allow a coach to synthesize all the different components of being called an expert
coach (Nash & Collins, 2006). It is also vital that the notion of lifelong learning become the accepted practice within not only teaching and education, but sport coaching.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the ways in which expert basketball coaches acquire and implement the knowledge and attributes necessary to succeed in professional coaching by examining, through a life history approach, the coach’s background, processes of acquiring coaching knowledge, and knowledge sources and characteristics that were most meaningful toward their growth as a successful coach.

Research Questions
Four important questions that need to be answered are: (1) where did these two expert coaches acquire their coaching knowledge, (2) what are the essential coaching attributes of these expert coaches, (3) what are the similarities and differences between a wheelchair basketball coach and a standing basketball coach in these areas and, (4) how do these two coaches define expertise in coaching?

Interview Questions

Warm-up
1. Who is your favorite coach, and why?
2. What are your favorite sport memories as a coach? A player? A spectator?
3. What is your earliest memory of playing sports? How does that memory impact you as a coach today?

Knowledge Acquisition and Utilization
1. What formal (and informal) training have you had as a coach? Describe.
2. What have been the sources of attaining your coaching knowledge (clinics, coaches, parents, classes, experiences, videos, formal education, etc.)?
3. What role does past playing experience and athletic background play in being a coach?
4. What are the processes by which you implement a new skill, concept, or play to your team? How explicit is your communication?
5. What are the most challenging aspects of teaching athletes with physical disabilities / college student-athletes?

Essential Attributes
1. What are the essential attributes needed to become an expert coach? How can a basketball coach attain these attributes?
2. How would you describe your personal coaching style (task vs. ego, old school vs. new)?
3. How have your past experiences as a player and/or coach influenced your coaching style?
4. How does coaching-style impact the perception people have about a coach?
5. What most do you want your players and coaches to learn from you?

Past Experience / Expertise
1. Why did you choose coaching as a career? Was there any one incident that inspired you to become a basketball coach?
2. What was your first coaching experience at any level? How did that experience impact you as a coach today?
3. How do you define success as a coach? What makes a good coach? What makes an expert coach?
4. What levels have you participated in sport during your life?
5. Who have been the major influences in your life that have brought you to a successful career in coaching (other coaches, parents, players)?
6. What are your future goals as a coach?
7. What are the perceived similarities between an expert wheelchair basketball coach and a standing basketball coach? Differences?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR
PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

“LIFE HISTORY OF EXPERT WHEELCHAIR AND STANDING BASKETBALL COACHES”

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by graduate student Scott Douglas, Department of Kinesiology and Dr. Brent Hardin, Department of Kinesiology from The University of Alabama. We hope to learn: (1) where expert coaches acquire their coaching knowledge and, (2) what are the essential coaching attributes of expert coaches and, (3) what are the similarities and differences between a wheelchair basketball coach and a standing basketball coach in these areas and, (4) how do successful coaches define expertise in coaching?

You were selected to participate in this study because you will be coaching collegiate basketball during the 2010 - 2011 season and have been identified as an expert in the field of coaching basketball.

You are being asked to participate in four audio taped interviews lasting approximately 60 - 90 minutes each, six informal interviews each lasting a 10 – 20 minutes, and daily observations during your team practices and games where the researcher will review daily practice plans and take field notes. We would like your permission to use all of this data in the research project described above.

The information provided will be confidential. All data, including audio tapes, will be retained by the principal investigator for a period of one year. The data will be kept locked in the principal investigator's home office during that time. After one year from completion of this study, all data will be destroyed. The principal investigator will be the only person with access to the data.

Only the researchers will know your identity. In the event that the information collected is published in a professional journal, your confidentiality will be protected by referring to you only by pseudonym. On completion of the study the results will be made available and explained to you.

The nature of the data collection ensures that there is no physical or psychological risk of any kind to you. The data that could be gained from such a study would provide a valuable addition to the coaching education and teacher education literature. The data collection techniques may well improve your coaching performance when instructing athletes and the data may well facilitate the enhancement of the physical education teacher education undergraduate program at The University of Alabama. I cannot, however, guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.
Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Alabama. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research contact: Scott Douglas: 205-563-9173 or sdo\[email protected] or Dr. Brent Hardin at 205-348-0867 or bhardin@ua.edu. Finally, if you have any questions about research participants’ rights then you may contact Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-5152.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the nature of this study and agree to participate. I understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I have not waived any legal or human rights. I also understand that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice. Finally, I understand that I will receive a copy of this form.

Signature_________________________ Date ______________________

Researcher as witness_________________________ Date ______________________

Audio Taping Consent

As mentioned above, the individual qualitative interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes to ensure data trustworthiness. These tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office and only available to the researcher. We will only keep these tapes until the interviews have been transcribed and the transcripts have been checked by the participant. Once this is completed, the researcher will then destroy the tapes.

I understand that part of my participation in this research study will be audiotaped and I give my permission to the research team to record the interview.

☐ Yes, my participation in these qualitative interviews can be audiotaped.

☐ No, I do not want my participation in these qualitative interviews to be audiotaped.