

Introduction to Roles within Sport Groups

Within every group environment, roles are defined as a set of expectations concerning one's behaviors while holding a particular position¹. Roles may contribute to both individual perceptions (e.g., satisfaction, cohesion) and team performance². As coaches, it is important to ensure you are implementing and fostering positive roles within your team for optimal outcomes. Although the idea of roles may seem simple, the classification, development, and athletes' experiences regarding their role responsibilities can be quite complex. For further information about the classification of roles and important elements of roles to consider, see the "Roles in Sport" infographic.

Developing Roles

There are three main steps for coaches to consider when structuring roles within their team: (a) developing roles, (b) effectively communicating roles, and (c) ensuring that athletes fully understand their roles³. The Role Episode Model⁴ explains how formal role expectations and pressures are developed and communicated. In brief, this model suggests that the coach exerts role expectations and role pressures onto the athlete. The athlete will interpret these expectations and pressures, and this will elicit a response by the athlete, that can take several forms, including how an athlete feels, behaves, and thinks about their role responsibilities⁵. The way the role is both communicated by the coach and how it is perceived by the athlete can be influenced by factors such as personality, expectations, or personal values. For further information regarding role development see the "Effective Role Development" infographic.

Summary

Coaches need to be aware of the role expectations and pressures they are placing on their athletes. Make sure to focus on communicating clearly to your athletes in terms of what you expect from them as a player. By doing so, it is more likely your athlete will experience positive role elements such as role clarity, role satisfaction, and role efficacy. Furthermore, it will be less likely for problematic roles and intrusive role perceptions (e.g., role conflict) to be present within the team that can diminish performance. It is recommended that coaches strive to properly

communicate, and reinforce, formal and informal roles that contribute to overall team functioning.

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<https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-science/faculty-profiles/mark-eyss/group-dynamics-physical-activity-lab.html>

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