The Value of Emotional Intelligence for High Performance Coaching

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ABSTRACT
Similar to an effective leader in business, a high-performance sports coach requires qualities beyond technical and tactical acumen, such as leadership and the ability to facilitate a functional leader-follower relationship. Underpinning this dynamic relationship that exists between the coach and athlete is a leader's acumen associated with emotional intelligence (EI). This article aims to highlight the utility of EI for high-performance sport coaches, and provide concrete examples as to how EI might enhance a coaches' ability to lead and direct the production of high-performance with their staff and athletes. First, a brief overview of the link between EI and leadership quality is presented. Second, Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four-branch model of EI (i.e., perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions) will be used as a framework for demonstrating how a coach may use such abilities to lead and produce high-performance.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Self-Awareness, Sports Coaching

INTRODUCTION

High-performance coaches lead and manage multiple human elements associated with enabling high-performance [e.g., 1, 2]. Combined with the dynamic nature of sport and the real-time adaptability necessary for success within this complex domain [3], a coach requires strong leadership to guide the coach-team-performance relationship [e.g., 1, 2, 4]. Hence, the profession of coaching is more than just the instruction of skills and drills [5]. Moreover, high-performance coaching requires leadership qualities beyond technical and tactical acumen. Such leadership qualities include 'soft skills' such as emotional intelligence (EI), motivation and inspiration, conflict management, and the ability to align all team members

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towards a common purpose. Although additional abilities are necessary for successful high-performance coaching, this article will specifically examine leadership quality and EI, and outline how this ability may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and success of high-performance coaches. Due to the limited literature associated with EI in sports coaching and sport leadership, the broad domain of research that examines EI is acknowledged (e.g., leadership and management literature), and contextualised for sport and high-performance coaching. Nevertheless, although the authors acknowledge that important differences exist between organisational and sport settings, the authors interpret the broader literature and application of EI, leadership, and human performance, as applicable to the management of human elements associated with the work of a high-performance coach [e.g., 1, 2].

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: MAYER AND SALOVEY'S (1997) ABILITY MODEL

Lengthy discussions have been raised as to what EI is, and what it is not [6-9]. Such descriptions of EI include the skill-driven, ability-based framework [e.g., 10], and the liberal competency framework of mixed models [e.g., 11, 12] that encompassed everything that was not IQ (i.e., non-cognitive factors such as personality). Hence, the mixed model approach to EI became widely popularised in the 1990's despite a lack of intelligence criteria and an overlapping conceptualisation with other constructs (e.g., Big Five Personality Traits). Moreover, measurement based upon the mixed models is equally problematic as measures are incapable of adequately measuring an individual's ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions. Despite the divergence in EI research, Mayer and Salovey's [10] ability model that is driven by an intelligence criterion retained scholarly recommendations [13-15] because it sufficiently described the EI construct as an individual's ability to effectively manage the interplay between emotion and cognition. Thus, Mayer and Salovey's [10] ability model conceptualisation of EI shall be used as a framework for structuring this article. Hence, "EI refers to an ability to recognise the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them" [16, p. 267]. What this infers is that EI is the ability to: a) perceive emotion; b) use emotions to facilitate thought; c) understand emotions; and d) manage emotions [10, 16]. Although these ability branches are conceptualised independently, the application of EI (or the art of practising emotionally intelligent behaviour) integrates these abilities. Moreover, the abilities scaffold upon each other, with emotional management presented as the highest order ability within EI [10]. This framework is presented in Figure 1.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR FOR LEADERSHIP QUALITY

Although the conceptualisation of leadership is broad [17], leadership according to John Sculley:

> "…revolves around vision, ideas, direction, and has more to do with inspiring people as to direction and goals than with day-to-day implementation. He must be capable of inspiring other people to do things without sitting on top of them with a checklist," [18, p. 139].

Similarly, through the lens of value-driven leadership, Kouzes and Posner describe leadership as, "the art of mobilising others to want to struggle for shared aspirations" [19, p. 30]. A theme underpinning both interpretations of leadership is the social process associated with

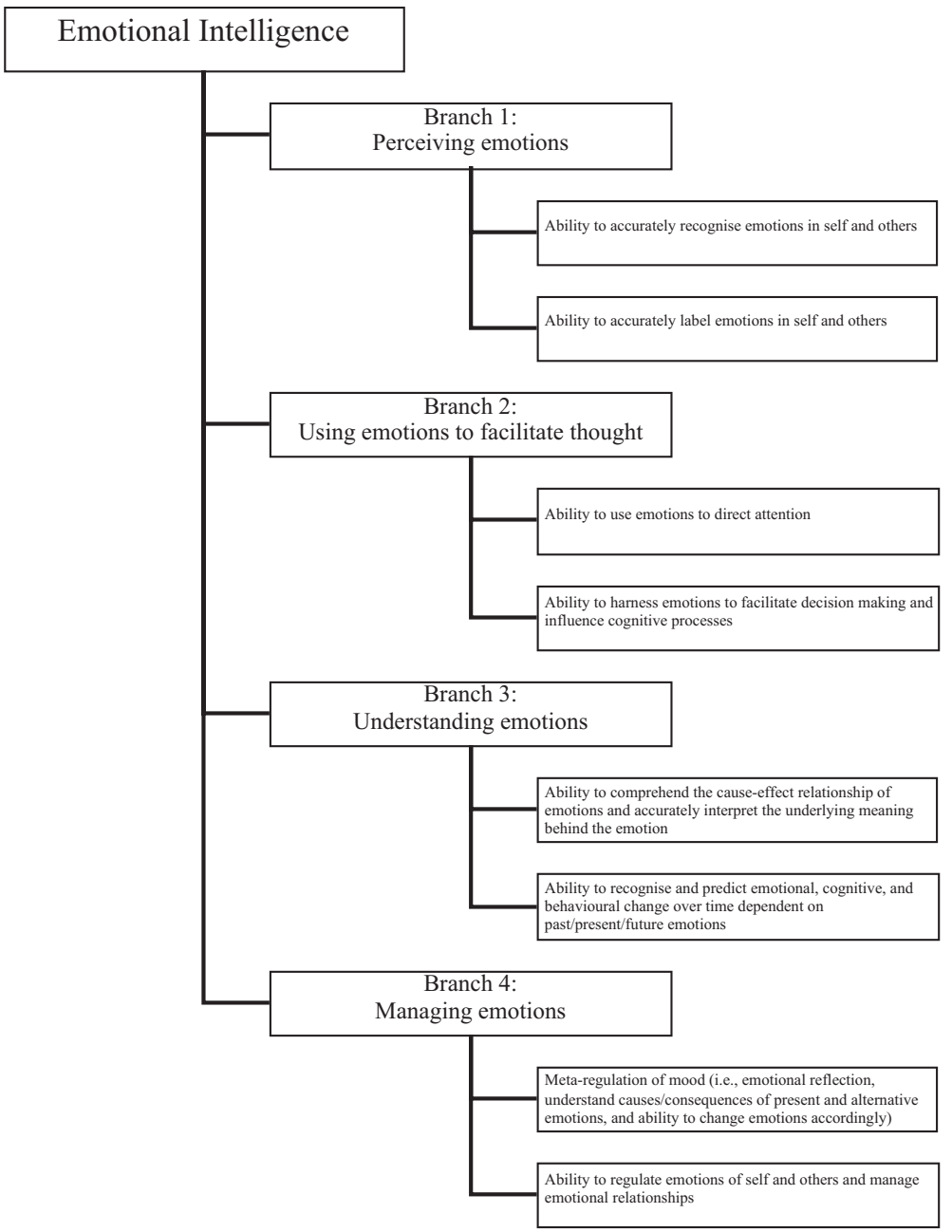

Figure 1. A Graphic Depiction of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

the leader-follower relationship, and the leader's ability to evoke emotions within followers that heighten commitment and drive towards the achievement of a common goal. Moreover, the quality of the interpersonal relationship and trust within the relationship between the leader and follower (or coach and athlete/coach and support staff) is often linked with feelings and emotions between both parties [20]. Inherently, what may contribute to enhancing effective leadership, and the difference between good and great leadership, is EI: the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions intelligently [20-23].

Nevertheless, much debate has been spawned as to whether leaders actually need EI to succeed [24, 25, 26, 27]. Antonakis [24] highlighted that intelligence (IQ) itself and the ability to understand cause-effect relationships (i.e., schemata) may be sufficient for leading effectively, and that high levels of EI may not be as necessary. For example, a leader with adequate cognitive abilities would be able to understand the schemata: if in circumstance A (i.e., an athlete is disappointed about an error at a critical stage of the match that the team lost), then engage in behaviour A1 (i.e., acknowledge that the athlete did not purposely make the error, and act considerately towards him). If this cause-effect relationship was not adhered to (i.e., Ax: verbally abuse this athlete in front of the team), this would likely lead to a negative outcome (e.g., decreased trust in the coach-athlete relationship). Although IQ is essential for leadership and for understanding people, other scholars such as Ashkanasy and Dasborough argue that, "it [IQ] is not sufficient to account for many aspects of leadership, especially those involving social relationships and stressful situations" [25, p. 254]. For example, Elliot, a patient of Antonio Damasio [28] acquired brain damage, but was still able to consistently score high on IQ. Nevertheless, Elliot's EI was extremely low, and the once successful businessman with a happy and stable life could no longer manage personal affairs (e.g., relationships) or basic decision-making. This exemplar case highlights the importance of EI for daily functioning; and for the leadership context, EI seems invaluable for managing relationships. Moreover, other leadership and EI literature has specifically linked EI and leadership quality [20, 21, 23], EI and transformational leadership [22, 29, 30], emotions and leadership [31], and the effect of a leader's emotions upon their followers [32, 33]. Ultimately, such research and literature indicate that EI is a contributing element for leadership quality, and potentially, a useful capability for the success and effectiveness of high-performance coaches.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AN IMPORTANT ABILITY FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE COACHING

A fundamental purpose of a high-performance coach is to lead and manage the production of high-performance [1, 4]. Throughout this dynamic process, a coach is likely to establish bonds of trust to facilitate appropriate functioning with his or her many unique relationships (i.e., coach-management, coach-assistant, coach-athlete, and coach-team). As feelings and emotions contribute to the quality of the interpersonal relationships [20], it could be proposed that for a coach to be effective, they require qualities beyond sport-specific knowledge and tactical acumen. Hence, as coaches lead and manage the coaching process [4] EI may be useful for facilitating improved interpersonal relationships that may lead to improved interpersonal functioning and performance outcomes. The following story will highlight a scenario where a coach applies EI.

AN EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT COACH

During the opening game of a football tournament, the goalkeeper makes an uncharacteristic error right before full-time that costs the team the game; a game they were expected to win

in order to rank highly within their pool. This player is devastated that he has let the team down and is angry at himself, the team is frustrated at this individual, and the fanatical crowd is calling for his blood. The coach identifying the gradual emotional shift from disappointment to frustration, and from frustration to anger, realised that if this situation was not handled appropriately during the post-game debrief, the once cohesive team could be torn apart, and any chances at progressing to the next stage of the tournament would be unlikely. The coach too is also frustrated, but instead, he takes a deep breath, bites his tongue, and directs the team to the locker room to spend 30 minutes adhering to their post-game cool down. As the coach understands that thinking can be blinded by negative emotions, the coach takes his time trying to slow the energy within the room and models this in his behaviour. When he notices the intensity of anger and frustration in the room has somewhat decreased, he finally addresses the team in a purposeful manner. He speaks with a lowered speech rate and a low tone in order to invoke calm within the emotional climate. Nevertheless, although he acknowledges the frustration in the room, the coach highlights the positive aspects of the game. Moreover, he emphasises and acknowledges the hard work to date, and describes shared experiences throughout the season of teamwork, cohesion, and how this unity is critical if the team was to have any chance of success in the tournament. The coach finally reminds the team to draw strength and unity from what they have accomplished to date, and their shared purpose for the tournament. Afterwards as the team continued to cool down, the coach takes a private moment to sit with the goalkeeper, and lets him know that when he wants to have a chat, his door was always open.

As emotions play an important role within teams [34] and as emotions have been identified as a factor that influences a group's success [35], the interaction in the aforementioned story offers an artful display of EI. Moreover, it highlights the importance of having the ability to identify and understand the cause of emotions, perceive the emotional climate, understand how emotions can influence thinking, the usage of positive memories to elicit positive emotions, the management of unhelpful emotions in self and others dependent on the context, and the acumen to respond appropriately. Hence, as EI is a factor that contributes to leadership quality, this article will highlight the importance of EI for high-performance coaching. Thus, the remainder of this article will use Mayer and Salovey's [10] ability model framework to systematically examine the value of EI for the high-performance coach.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONTEXT

Bruce Lee's philosophical comment, "Knowing is not enough; we must apply," is extremely relevant to the following descriptive explanations of EI abilities. Being emotionally intelligent (i.e., being skilled at the various EI abilities) and choosing to behave or engage in an emotionally intelligent manner are two distinct entities. In the following descriptions of EI abilities, the authors assume EI will be translated into appropriate behaviours informed by the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions.

PERCEIVING EMOTIONS

Being highly attuned to others' moods and emotions is a fundamental aspect of understanding what other people may be feeling or experiencing, and, in turn, conceptualising others' needs. A gymnastics coach that recognises his/her gymnast fears of failure could predict that the training session may be unproductive if he/she is not trialling new ideas. Hence, accurate perception of others' feelings may inform the prediction of behaviour and outcomes [36]. Nevertheless, this emotional recognition may inform how the

coach might tweak the training session; such that the coach might stagger challenging but achievable drills to increase the gymnast's self-belief and self-confidence to take risks. Thus, emotional information may enable a leader to respond appropriately, such as through adapting their leadership style or planning for the situation and emotional climate, or knowing when to play the role of counsellor rather than director; an artful skill for developing quality relationships, working successfully with people, and engaging and influencing followership [20, 37].

Similarly, a high-performance coach skilled at perceiving emotions could use this information (in conjunction with other EI abilities – using, understanding, and managing emotions) to inform appropriate and effective behavioural responses such as in the aforementioned story with the football coach. If the coach had not sensed the goalkeeper's self-directed anger and disappointment (i.e., an intense negative emotion), and immediately offered instructional advice/constructive criticism, the goalkeeper may have misinterpreted the feedback as a personal attack, and begun engaging in ego-protective behaviours (e.g., defensiveness). Allowing the goalkeeper time and physical space to regain some composure before offering counsel might be more constructive, as negative emotions such as sadness (i.e., disappointment) and anger narrows thought and enhances critical thinking [38]. Moreover, perceiving other emotions, such as performance anxiety, which is often experienced by athletes in high-performance situations (e.g., pressure situations, pre-game preparation), may be unhelpful if not regulated. Hence, a coach that is able to identify this emotion when it initially presents itself, may be able to provide early intervention before the anxiety becomes incapacitating or dysfunctional for the individual and team. Thus, the ability to accurately perceive emotions is a critical skill for enabling positive management of interpersonal relations, and invaluable for a high-performance coach's bond with his/her athletes.

Additionally, emotional self-awareness is important for a leader (and coach) as the leader can take advantage of their emotional state or respond as required if they are able to identify what and why they might be feeling or experiencing a specific mood [20]. For example, if a leader (i.e., Head Coach or high-performance Manager) is mindful that they are feeling elated, they could purposefully engage with their support staff in order to evoke a positive affective climate through the contagious effect of emotions [32, 33, 35]. Alternatively, if a coach identified that he was angry or disappointed; he could postpone a meeting to a time when he was able to think rationally and in a non-overly critical manner in order to ensure he did not unintentionally offend others [38]. Moreover, a lack of emotional self-awareness for a coach is often subsequently problematic for their athlete. For example, a coach that is unaware of his/her own anxiety (i.e., due to the need for their athlete to succeed so it would positively reflect upon them) may inadvertently alter their normal coaching behaviours in important situations (i.e., world championships) and over-coach in an attempt to optimise his/her athlete's success. Such a sudden change in behaviour may actually be detrimental to the athlete, as the over-coaching would be a significant change within the traditional training/preparation routine, or alternatively, the athlete might think that something is dramatically wrong (thereby potentially fuelling self-doubt), hence the need for extra coaching. Thus, although the skill associated with perceiving emotions is important for appraising emotions in others, this ability is equally if not more important for identifying emotional experiences in oneself and acting upon it (or managing it) appropriately.

Finally, accurate emotional appraisal is important for a coach (leader) as it can assist in the discrimination between honest and dishonest expressions of feelings [39], and subsequently, enable the coach to understand the realities of a situation. For example, a

subordinate might feign understanding to avoid being perceived as incompetent by others; this situation may also be experienced between coach and athlete (or team) such as when an individual does not understand the task at hand, yet pretends they comprehend task requirements. Thus, a leader ambivalent to accurate emotional appraisal may experience compounded problems in the future if they are unable to ensure that all team members understand the required task, role, or ideal outcome. Hence, the ability of accurately appraising emotions – a skill that underpins the other three EI abilities [10] – is a fundamental ability that may support the effective leadership of the high performance coach.

USING EMOTIONS TO FACILITATE THOUGHT

Napoleon Bonaparte's quote, "nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide," is extremely appropriate for exploring leadership and decision-making within a high-performance domain. The outcomes associated with a decision under pressure or when faced with the process of satisfying multiple stakeholders can create a broad perception of being a mastermind of strategy if successful, or alternatively an incompetent coach when faced with sub-optimal achievement or failure. Moreover, within the high-performance coaching domain and the multiple stressors experienced in elite sports coaching [40, 41], a correct or incorrect decision may potentially be grounds for accolades or termination of a contract. Thus, it is in the best interests of a high-performance coach to draw upon multiple sources of information, whether this be past experiences (heuristics) and cognitive schemas, tacit knowledge, statistical data, feedback, counsel from subject matter experts, or evidence-based research prior to making a decision. Similarly within business, optimal decision-making adopts a multifaceted approach; however, time pressures [42], insufficient information [43], and rapid change [44] may impact quality decision-making. One such factor that may aid quality decision-making is intrapersonal emotional information; however, the authors are not advocating that decisions should be made purely on a "gut feeling," but argue that it is important to integrate multiple sources of information, as emotions have served an evolutionary purpose (e.g., anxiety/fear and the fight-flight response). Nevertheless, research in high pressure contexts has highlighted high performing individuals (e.g., traders in business) have a willingness to critically reflect and incorporate emotional information within their decision-making processes [45]. Moreover, in a field strongly dominated by rational analysis (i.e., investment banking), it was highlighted that emotions played a central role for the higher performing traders [45]. Thus, given that high-performance coaches face multiple stressors [40, 41]; such as conflict, injuries to key players, pressure and expectation, athlete concerns, coaching responsibilities, underperformance, and organisational management, a coach may find some value in acknowledging why they might be feeling a certain way and incorporating this emotional information for decision-making.

Moreover, emotional information serves a functional purpose for facilitating thought if used appropriately [10], such as for planning [28] or directing attention [46]. For example, when experiencing positive emotions (e.g., happiness, joy), thought patterns broaden and cognitions are more likely to be optimistic [47, 48] – an opportune time for the coaching staff to explore multiple strategic avenues for club development. Hence, a leader or coach that is capable of producing positive emotions to facilitate broad and expansive thinking is likely to be more capable of "seeing the bigger picture" [49]. Additionally, when experiencing positive moods, thought patterns are noticeably creative [50] and support the production of creative actions or innovative solutions – an opportune time for a coach to brainstorm strategies for their playbook. Such positive emotions also lead to less analytical thought

processes (i.e., being less judgemental), and from an evolutionary perspective, emotions such as joy and happiness facilitate positive companionships, community, and trust, in comparison to relationships based upon transactional exchanges. Hence, high-performance coaches that frequently celebrate small wins, acknowledge effort, and genuinely recognise and praise their staff and athletes, are able to contribute towards additional positive emotional experiences between leader and follower, and potentially stronger bonds of trust. Moreover, in the aforementioned story, despite the sombre mood within the room, the coach intelligently emphasised the past and current achievements to provide evidence of success and hope in order to facilitate a change in the emotional climate. This artful display of EI also subsequently aimed at neutralising the tension within the room; a skill useful for defusing emotion-laden situations in various high pressure contexts.

Although negative emotions such as sadness, anger, or fear may seem somewhat dysfunctional within high-performance coaching and leadership, negative emotions can be useful. Typically, negative emotional experiences produce thought patterns that are pessimistic and narrow [51]; however, if one is able to illicit a negative emotion whereby cognitions become focused and critical, the individual might apply myopic evaluation for a task at hand; a skill useful for critically evaluating an individual's performance, reviewing a contract, or identifying gaps within a strategic plan. Additionally, when people experience negative emotions, an individual directs attention towards the immediate threat (i.e., the target of concern) thereby decreasing cognitive resources toward less meaningful concerns at that moment in time [52]. Such a situation might be when a coach experiences negative emotions (i.e., disappointment or frustration) when he/she notices team conflict (e.g., due to racist comments) and he/she immediately addresses this high-priority matter rather than concerning himself/herself with less important matters (e.g., player statistics) at that moment in time. Thus, emotions provide a unique data source that can aid decision-making, such as acknowledging a 'gut instinct' or alternatively, for taking time to thoroughly review a decision because 'it doesn't *feel* right.' Hence, if acknowledged and used intelligently, emotions can contribute to improved decision-making, and also for understanding how others might think and respond when in a particular mood (i.e., empathy). Hence, the ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking and associated behaviours is valuable within the high-performance domain and for effective sports leadership.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Understanding emotions, and how emotions affect individuals, teams, and organisations, can inform how a coach or leader might create conditions to support higher performance. For example, a coach's understanding of their athletes' ideal performance state (i.e., their optimal level of anxiety or anger), and how they might contribute to enabling their athlete reach their ideal zone of performance would be invaluable for supporting conditions in which their athlete could excel [53, 54]. Although many factors associated with understanding emotions may be explored (e.g., understanding why certain emotions are experienced, understanding the progression of emotions), this section of the article will specifically examine how the ability of understanding emotions can facilitate high performance. Within the aforementioned story, the coach's knowledge of emotions was useful for intervening after a critical event that might have negatively affected team cohesion and their future prospects of tournament success. For example, the coach's understanding of the consequences of negative emotions informed his decision to direct his players to physically cool down in addition to him purposefully slowing the energy within the room by slowing his behaviours and speech rate. Moreover, the coach's understanding of the value of positive emotions for

strengthening relationships enabled the coach to remind the team of their accomplishments in order to initiate the repair of a small rip in the social fabric of team cohesion. Therefore, understanding emotions may contribute to a coach's leadership acumen if he/she can use this knowledge to navigate critical (such as emotionally-laden events) or non-critical events (such as throughout daily operations) in order to get the best from people.

A critical element of leadership is the ability to influence people to extend themselves to achieve extraordinary things despite challenging circumstances [55]. In consideration, there may be a variety of methods of influencing people (i.e., persuasion, role modelling, leveraging credibility, and using incentives); an additional factor that may contribute to influencing others' emotions and behaviours is through the process of emotional contagion. This dynamic process highlights that people are susceptible to "catching" and "feeling" emotions of others in proximity [32, 33]. For example, one enthusiastic individual that can garner the attention of others, and passionately communicate a relevant message, has the ability to foster a sense of excitement and passion in a team – such as during a pre-game speech. Alternatively, an individual that might be sad or upset in a meeting may often elicit a sense of concern or sadness from the rest of the team. Although such emotional reflections could be considered social etiquette, neuroscience and the research associated with mirror neurons has provided insight into how emotions may spread from one person to another [56-59]. It is proposed that when observing another individual in action, the mirror neurons (found in the premotor cortex and inferior parietal cortex) of the observer replicate similar brain activity as if they were behaving in the same manner as the one being observed [58, 59]. Although innovative research is continuing within the area of emotions, similar findings within neuroscience and the mirror neurons are providing a potential explanation as to how and why emotions may be spread between people [59]. A situation where an emotionally intelligent coach (leader) could leverage emotional contagion could be when he/she recognises the team's emotional climate was not conducive to high performance. Consequently, his/her understanding of how emotions might influence others could prompt him/her to "get in the mood" and engage in behaviours that might generate positivity (e.g., publically acknowledge individuals whom have achieved personal bests in the gym at the start of a team meeting); thereby transferring productive emotions that generate emotional uplifts and facilitating a positive vibe within the team.

Employees' emotions (positive and negative) within the workplace can stem from the leader's behaviours, attitudes, and emotions [33, 60]. Moreover, as people generally have greater preferences for recalling negative incidents in comparison to positive incidents (Asymmetry Effect of Emotion) [61], and with negative incidents evoking intense emotions [33], it is vital for a leader to do their best in order to minimise negative incidents (i.e., within their control), or to facilitate a context-dependent intervention promptly. Furthermore, a leader that is able to frequently generate positive boosts may assist in the inoculation of the rigmarole and hassles associated with daily operations [33], a useful ability for coaches within sports that have lengthy pre- and in-season schedules. Direct positive boosts may include behaviours such as: acknowledging and recognising people (e.g., verbally acknowledging and highlighting a player's commitment during a training session, publically sharing an athlete's personal best to the training squad, acknowledging club tenure such as the 1-year anniversary of a rookie, or hosting an event similar to the Rugby League World Golden Boot Award), being aware of followers' concerns (e.g., personally chatting with an athlete about how they are feeling about a certain decision), enabling others to act (e.g., offering an opportunity for an assistant coach to take a lead role during a training session), providing autonomy and responsibility (e.g., letting a new team/crew/squad establish their

code of conduct), effectively communicating with followers (e.g., highlighting purpose and the expected outcomes), giving feedback (e.g., immediate reinforcement of a player's engagement in desirable skills in addition to the provision of technical advice), and modelling valued behaviours (e.g., leading by example and not asking support staff to do something that they are not prepared to do themself). Indirect positive boosts may include: developing a culture that facilitates positive emotions (e.g., team members recognise and celebrate others' accomplishments, an anonymous compliments box), camaraderie (e.g., gatherings/social events so people get to know each other better), or giving followers the opportunity and responsibility to make decisions that they are able to actively follow through (e.g., giving the team the responsibility of choosing three of five technical drills to practise). Ultimately, understanding emotions enables a leader to engage in specific behaviours and emotions, or establish both structure and a culture that may positively influence others' behaviours and emotions in order to produce high performance.

MANAGING EMOTIONS IN SELF AND OTHERS

Jim Rohn's quote, "emotions will either serve or master, depending on who is in charge," aptly summarises emotional management; the final branch within the EI framework that requires overall emotional competence. Described as meta-regulation of mood [10], emotional management relies heavily upon the skill to reflect upon an emotional experience; such as having the emotional astuteness to perceive an emotion, knowledge of how the emotion might be influencing the individual, and an understanding of the causes and consequences of the present and alternative emotions. The masterful display of EI from the coach in the aforementioned story highlights the value of emotional management. This included the coach's ability to reflectively acknowledge and disconnect from his anger because he realised that this emotion could bias thinking in self and others, and importantly, was not useful for interpersonal emotional management. Additionally, he understood the progression and consequences of anger, and how moods can bias thinking. Moreover, the coach was mindful of the emotional climate, and understood that fostering calm was important, thus he spoke slowly and purposefully, and in a low tone in order to model composure within the room. Thus, without EI and specifically, the ability to manage emotions that are not conducive to productivity, problems that may be easily defused might snowball into dysfunctional interpersonal processes, thereby limiting optimal performance.

Although emotional management might be commonly entwined with conflict management and the ability to manage productive group processes [62], emotional management can also be positively used to enable consistent high performance. A leader with strong emotional management (i.e., can regulate his/her emotions extremely well and can influence others' emotions) can connect and influence others, and excite followers [20]. Such leaders with strong emotional management often demonstrate behaviours (e.g., using emotionally expressive language to paint a picture of a desirable future) associated with transformational and charismatic leadership, such as inspirational motivation [63]. For the high-performance coach, this process may involve engaging and influencing the players' leadership team to undertake a noteworthy challenge beyond their contractual obligations to the organisation (e.g., mentoring developmental athletes within the club) that might be beneficial for the players personal development, the relationships between junior and senior athletes, and for long-term succession planning. Alternatively, the ability to lead by example and model appropriate emotions, especially while under stress, may serve to foster credibility when advising players to temporarily bite their tongue in order to manage players' emotions and behaviours while in the 'heat of battle.' Finally, managing emotions to self-motivate is

important for sustaining optimal performance over lengthy periods of time, especially for sports with limited downtime. As coaches often face the challenge of managing coaching stressors in addition to work-life balance [40, 41], a coach with the ability to appropriately manage fatigue, passion, and self-motivation, would likely be in a productive physical, psychological, and emotional 'zone of performance' and the likelihood of burnout would be lessened. In consideration of the aforementioned advantages for having the ability to functionally manage and harness emotions in self and others, such skills would likely value-add to the arsenal of leadership qualities necessary for a coach to produce consistent high-performance in self and others.

CONCLUSION

Most people could probably identify someone who is knowledgeable, experienced, smart, or technically astute, but might be 'emotionally illiterate' or lacking in 'people skills.' Such individuals may have difficulty in picking up 'signals' (e.g., emotional climate in the room or how someone might be feeling) and responding appropriately, or developing quality relationships, emotional bonds, and trust. For a coach (leader), low EI may contribute to poor interpersonal skills and the inability to develop a trustworthy and inspiring relationship with their staff or athletes. Hence, EI seems invaluable for the high-performance coach as it contributes to effective leadership [e.g., 20, 24, 29, 31]. Nevertheless, successful coaches who appear to have limited EI do exist; therefore how essential is EI to be a successful high-performance coach?

Moreover, if EI is deemed to be essential, other key questions that deserve further enquiry include:

- Can EI be developed?
- If EI can be developed, how might this learning and development process work?
- What factors need to be considered for sustaining EI development for high-performance coaches and other sport leaders?
- Do coaches acknowledge the value of having soft skills?
- How might we further highlight to coaches the value of developing soft skills?
- How might coach education/accreditation embrace the development of soft skills such as EI?
- What potential barriers may impede the development of soft skills for sport coaches?
- What other soft skills might be considered essential for being an effective sport leader?

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