

**173 AN INSIGHT INTO THE INTERNATIONAL COACH AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER**

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The notion of the reflective practitioner pervades education in the UK and is currently being promoted as a hallmark of coach professionalism and good coaching practice. However, there is a lack of in-depth research on the reflective process conducted by soccer coaches. This study seeks to illustrate and understand the process of reflection as it was experienced and used by one international soccer coach. The coach kept a reflective 'think book' (learning journal) in which experiences, views, thoughts and feelings were recorded. The reflective commentaries contained in the learning journal covered the duration

of an international soccer tournament (3 weeks). In order to avoid the introduction of bias, the coach participating in this study was given an 'open' or 'free' choice in terms of the issues selected for reflection. This strategy is based on the assumption that the issues identified will represent an indication of coaches' professional and personal needs and priorities. All the reflective commentaries were read and re-read in order to identify emerging themes or patterns. Open coding was employed to allow free generation of data and to develop key categories for analysis and interpretation. In total the learning journal contained 12 reflective commentaries. The focus of the reflective commentaries ranged from the management of the coaching and medical staff; squad and team selection; training and match preparation; match review; strategic and tactical match decisions; diplomacy and coaching at international level. In terms of depth of reflection, aspects of the commentaries go beyond a technical or instrumental level. Discussion centres on the general process of coach reflection in soccer and specifically the adopted use of a 'think book' as a tool for reflection as well as the focus and extent of learning. The findings of this study should be of relevance not only to the coach involved in this study, but should equally be of interest to other coaches, coach educators and coach mentors.