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## A case study of the emotional aspects of the coach-athlete relationship in tennis

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**OBJECTIVES:** *The aim of this study is to investigate if the concept of transference developed by the psychodynamic approach is relevant to understand the emotional aspects of the coach-athlete relationship.*

**METHOD:** *Participant is a 23 years old female professional tennis player. Four interviews were carried out and interpretation was made through a case study analysis.*

**RESULTS:** *The case study gives an insight into her personal history of past relationships and how transference was central in her relationships with coaches. An examination of her past relationships and her current relationships with coaches demonstrated that transference operated in repetition of unsuccessful relationships.*

**CONCLUSION:** *It is important to analyse in depth the origins of the quality and development of coach-athlete relationship. The tennis player's stories illustrate the usefulness of taking a psychodynamic approach to understanding the lives of athletes.*

Although psychodynamic concepts have only recently begun to attract serious attention in the sport psychology literature (Conroy & Benjamin, 2001), in-depth analysis of the coach-athlete relationships with a psychodynamic aspect and influences of unconscious motives have not yet been developed by researches (Strean & Strean, 1998; 2005). Stevens (2003) and Andersen (2005) expressed the view that psychodynamic issues such as transference and countertransference should be included in sport psychology training and research.

According to psychodynamic theory, clients revive past conflicts and direct them toward therapists in the present in the therapy process. This phenomenon, known as transference, is not limited to treatment considerations,

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but influences all interpersonal interactions in a positive or negative manner. The psychodynamic concept of transference developed originally by Freud (1905), provides insight into the inter-subjective and unconscious nature of our emotional modes of relating. Greenson (1978, p201) considered transference as “the experiencing of feelings, drives, attitudes, fantasies, and defences toward a person in the present that are inappropriate to that person and are a repetition, a displacement, originating in regard to significant persons of early childhood”.

Strean (1994) points out that characteristics that influence our current interpersonal interactions have evolved from previous relationships and may not always be appropriate to the new setting. Thus, new relationships are interpreted and are subject to distortion, often unconscious, that we cannot prevent their repetition, although new experiences do provide the possibility for modification in this pattern.

When subjects meet a new individual, they will perceive this new person (if transference is operating) in a number of positions, for example, as the subject can love, respect or they can never trust. Transference may release a flow of ambiguous feelings such as love, attraction, rage, or hatred that can occur over the course of an analysis (Freud, 1953).

Although transference reactions are related to childhood relationships, there may not be a simple correlation between present and past. There is direct repetition when the therapist is a replica of a parent or sibling, but there may be a “compensatory fantasy” where the therapist becomes an “ideal parent” to compensate for what was missing in childhood (Fine, 1982). In such case, the client fantasize that the therapist is the kind of person he or she wished parents had been (Strean, 1994).

Originally analysed on the therapist-patient relationship, the psychodynamic approach extended research on similar types of relationship such as teacher-student (Price, 2006; Weiss, 2002), nurse-patient (Evans, 2007) and sport psychologist-athlete (Andersen, 2004, 2005; Stevens & Andersen, 2007). Freud (1937, p. 48) recognized transference in the teaching setting and labeled it as an “impossible” profession due to the obstacles to learning and change that are difficult to overcome. Such obstacles or resistances derive from the person’s conflictual thoughts and emotions based on their early relationship with parents or other authority figures. These feelings are transferred onto new persons who occupy similar roles. In this particular setting, transference can have impact on the pupil’s performance and learning experience whether transference is positive or negative.

Positive transference, such having strong affectionate feelings toward a person makes her or him agreeing with the person’s comments, whether

there are relevant or not. It implies that the knowledge is not determining and the relationship has a greater impact to influence the person's behaviour and experience. Whereas negative transference refers to the person experiencing fears and hate reminding of a hated relative, and rejects all his or her interventions. There is also an ambivalent transference where the person experienced mixed feelings toward the person (Sandler et al, 1992).

As Fine (1982) stated, positive transference is desirable but should be studied carefully. Freud (1925) maintained that, as long as transference is affectionate and moderate, it becomes the agent for the therapist's influence and is the mainspring of the joint work of therapy. When transference becomes passionate, or it is converted into hostility, it becomes the tool of resistance.

Transference becomes problematic when individuals are unable to see those ties from the past in perspective and, without realizing it, become stuck in inappropriate, repetitive, and sometimes bizarre behaviour (De Vries, 1991, p124).

Transference depends on projective identification (Bion, 1967) whereby one individual projectively identifies another with some characteristics. If a person has some hostile feelings towards another, she or he will attribute hostility to the other and then experiences this coming from the other. The phenomenon of projective identification was to become implicated in the understanding of the concept of countertransference.

Indeed, therapists are subject to the same types of transference reactions as their clients. So are persons in similar types of situations (teacher, psychologist, nurses, coach). It refers to the dynamic of countertransference, defined as the "analyst's inappropriate reactions to the client, based on his own unconscious association of the client with significant figures in his own past" (Malcom.1982, p 39.). Kernberg (1986) defined a broader concept of countertransference where (a) the therapists is aware of emotional responses to the client's transference and the reality of the client's life, and (b) the emotional effects on the treatment situation determined by the therapist's own reality as it may become affected by the client. Countertransference can be recognized if the response or behaviour is inappropriate to the content and the context of the interaction.

In the teaching setting, Coriat (1926, p. 21) stated that past interpersonal experience may distort teacher's view as they are often unaware of their personal subjective involvement in what they consider to be objective professional decisions .

As Andersen (2000; 2005) mentioned, transference (and countertransference) appears in relationships between students and teachers, coaches and ath-

letes, supervisors and supervisees, and sport psychologists and those in their care. However, transference tends to be more intense in the therapy setting because of the anonymity of the analyst, coupled with his position as being an expert. Yambor and Connelly (1991, p. 307) investigated the transference potential in sport psychology and emphasized the importance for female therapist to establish professional boundaries early in the relationship to minimize problems that could arise from being cast as a “mother/girlfriend/sister substitute”.

Countertransference has both potentially beneficial and harmful consequences depending on how this phenomenon is understood and handled (Strean & Strean, 1998; 2005). Transference and countertransference would interact together and the most problematic persons are those whose negative transference triggers the other person’s complementary negative countertransference.

In sport psychology, as Stevens and Andersen (2007a, 2007b) explained, the lack of guidance and discussion about transference and countertransference has a negative impact on the sport psychologist-athlete relationship, and that current training in sport psychology practice does not provide enough tools to manage such delicate and intimate problems.

The tools and skills to manage transference are also absent from most of the coaching curricula, and a limited knowledge on those aspects of relationships might leave a coach to either ignore it, deny it, or even cross professional boundaries rather than handling these emotions in different manner, such as relying on positive effects of transference to boost the athlete’s confidence.

In some cases, this attachment can lead to violations of boundaries as Olgivic (1993) stated, where athletes suffered from early deprivation coming from parents, which explains “the transferential hunger”. They added that coaches with serious emotional or social deprivations in their own lives are possibly at substantial risk for committing relationship violations with athletes. In addition, this risk increases in a context of physical closeness. Henschen (1991) described how many sports have a normalized physical contact between coaches and athletes (e.g., young female gymnasts hugging adult male coaches).

Similar to the sport psychology context, outcomes are also more devastating when these phenomena develop into erotic and romantic feelings (Andersen, 2005; Stevens & Andersen, 2007a, 2007b).

Although transference is evident in all relationships, emotional movement toward the end vary in frequency, intensity and duration. Transference reactions are prompted by current situations, however in everyday relationships, goes unnoticed or unrecognized, only receiving attention when

a person's reaction is unexpected or unrelated to the situation (Schroder, 1985).

Once a person becomes conscious of their underlying emotional conflicts, he or she is better able to define his or her feelings, can be more realistic about motivation and may change his or her behaviour as well. The psychodynamic approach in therapy help patients to understand the transference: why they relate to the therapist as they do and to other in their lives (Stearns, 1994).

Coaching, like therapy, is often a relatively long-term intimate relationship and has many of the joys, hates, epiphanies, successes, failures, and opportunities for boundary transgressions that therapy also has. Gaining insights into the emotional dimensions of the relationship can assist in clarifying and resolving differences, enhancing mutual understanding and improving conditions for change.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether psychodynamic concepts are relevant in the coach-athlete relationship and how it can be applied in this setting.

## **Method**

### **PARTICIPANT**

The participant is a 23-year-old female professional player. For confidentiality reasons, her name was changed.

### *Procedure*

Four in-depth semi-structured interviews, varying between 1 and 1.5 hours in duration, were conducted over a period of 6 months. As stated by Holstein & Gubrium (1995) in-depth interviews aimed to explore the complexity and in-process nature of meanings and interpretations.

The semi-structured enabled the participant to relate her experiences in her own words. Polgar and Thomas (1991) suggested this method as a way to reduce interviewer bias by allowing a greater range and depth of experiences to be related without being restricted and directed by the interviewer's agenda. All interviews took place at her home for her convenience. The number of interviews was not set prior to the research so as to allow her to engage in the interview process as much or as little as she wished. We agreed to terminate the interview process as she felt that the topic has been fully covered.

The first interview started with an open request: "Please tell me the story of your relationships with coaches." Then, as advised by Rapley (2004), interviews were conducted on the basis of her flow of discourse, and followed-up with questions, derived from Juliette's stories.

Juliette was assured of confidentiality and gave her consent for this research. All transcripts were given to her after each interview, and she could decide to delete some information

or even forbid any use of her transcripts. She gave consent for publication and full use of her transcripts.

## RATIONALE FOR A SINGLE CASE STUDY APPROACH

The rationale for using a single case study was to provide a detailed insight into the unique and subjective participant's experience and to understand the interpretative process rather than giving a set of broad generalizations about commonalities between different people. It was also to fully exploit one of the principal merits of qualitative methods, the analysis of meaning in-depth and in context (Yardley, 1997). To describe transference, it seemed essential to provide in-depth data about childhood, family structure and subjective experience with coaches.

## TRANSFERENCE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In a qualitative research, the researcher is central to the process and as Hinshelwood (1991) suggested, it is important to pay attention to the principle of unconscious intersubjectivity. Therefore, I questioned my own stance and the transference potentialities in the interview relationship. As a type of transference effect, she repeatedly requested my advice on her career choices. Usually after the actual interview, with my recorder switched off, she enjoyed talking about her concerns about the future. Although I listened to her concerns, I deliberately decided to not express my own opinion about her choices because this sort of "consultation" did not fit with my role as researcher. Hunt (1989) advised to pay attention to how unconscious processes structure relations between researcher, subject and the data gathered in a psychoanalytical fieldwork. Therefore, I realised that her story resonated with some personal aspects of my own story with coaches, and this "identification" was discussed with my supervisor to avoid projections onto her story. I was also amazed that she talked very freely about her relationships with coaches, her intimacies, and her sexual fantasies. At times, I maybe felt uncomfortable. I also realised throughout the process that asking her to talk about her relationships with her parents and sister was more difficult than I had imagined. I struggled some times to get the conversation going on these topics due to my own discomfort and possible resistance to where the conversations might lead. I realised that I was part of what Ogden (1994) described as a dynamic produced in each intersubjectivity relationship.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed inductively using the direct interpretation common procedure in case study formulation (Stake, 1995). It consisted of some assemblage of sequences events according to each association on topic discussed (relationships with each coach, mother, father; what tennis means to her, and so forth). As explained by Grbich (2004), I also went through a reflexive process that implied acknowledgement of my position of researcher and also the context of interviews. The participant's story was interpreted from psychodynamic perspective, and in relation to past research findings.

Interpretation went through a process of triangulation, described by Denzin (1970) as a process allowing researchers to rise above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies. Therefore I discussed them with my supervisor who acted as a peer “defriber” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to ensure the viability of my interpretation within a psychodynamic framework and to check the viability of the interpretation.

## **Results: Case Study of Juliet**

### EARLY RELATIONSHIPS

Juliette has always been close and distant with her mother. As her mother is a strong personality, Juliette always obeyed to her and accepted her ascendancy. She depicted her as both a source of stress and a necessity in her life, as she needed her to help in the decision process through all sort of things in her life. Her mother holds an important place in her life and there is a mutual dependency. Her mother-father relationship was very similar to her: her father was trying to make decisions, but her mother always had the last word. Her mother confirmed to Juliette that she had a similar character than her father: laid back and not being very self-confident and always accepting compromise.

Her mother decided that Juliette would play tennis such as her sister. She did not choose to play it and did not like it at the beginning, until her sister left tennis for another sport. There was a rivalry with her sister, who was always praised by her mother and always had better results at school. At some point, Juliette wanted to be similar to her sister and do everything she did: “I always wanted to do the same things than my sister. She tried out athletics; I did athletics as well. She started dance class, and I did one year of dance. Then she started tennis, and my mother enrolled me there as well.” Since then, their relationship was also distant and there was a lack of communication.

Her father is very discreet and distant, as he does not give any comments on her life: “He has no opinion about me” meanings that he does not involve in her life but he is very interested in her tennis results. Her father is sad to see other players being successful and not her daughter. Their relationship suffers from a lack of communication.

When referring to tennis, Juliette explained ambivalent feelings about her practice. When she was offered a place at the regional tennis centre at 12 years old, she refused it: “I did not want to leave my parents. I was not ready. And I don’t have any regrets so far. Anyway, I think I would have never been able to cope with this situation.”

Around 15 years old, she started to have pressure from her parents: “They were omnipresent. It did not prevent me from being better, and actually I think I would never be at this level without them.”

At 18 years old, she decided to gain more independence and separate from her parents but felt unhappy about her decisions to turn into a pro career as her mother told her she would never achieved anything: “My mother is convinced that I don’t have enough mental qualities and strength to be a professional. She already told me that I was not made for that job.” She felt guilty for causing so much stress in her family (according to her mother) relied on her results.

### *Transference and Loving Delusions*

Her first relationship with a coach was from 8 to 18 years old. She described him as a “paternal relationship”: “When I was young, my coach was more a role model... and I wanted to play like him.” But as Juliette grew up, the affection was different: “I was not in love... I really appreciated him, and we were very close but not as close as I have been with the next coaches.” The end of the relationship was in good terms and Juliette felt not touched of leaving him, as he did not have enough knowledge of the professional level.

After him, she had (T) for a year and she was ambiguous regarding him: “It is true that people could think we had an affair.” She failed to give details about her exact relationship with him but felt very close to him. Regarding performance, she won her first major tournament and saw this relationship as determining in her motivation: “We really got on well with each other, and this gave me some wings! I simply could not lose with him. His presence made me win.” But after some months, the relationship deteriorated with lots of arguments and mix of feelings: “His wife could not stand when we were training together.” (T) decided to move in another area and left her with some questions about the nature of their relationship: “I had the impression that he did not give me any explanation. For me, there was no good reason for that (leaving her). I wanted him to be clear with me about his reasons to stop training me”. Juliette was faced to a rupture as she did not want to stop training with him and it was the first time that somebody decided to put an end to the relationship.

Soon after, she met (S) and trained with him for 18 months. She had a great relationship of complicity with him, but (S) was a playboy who just got divorced and was not emotionally steady. (S) was accompanying her in some tournaments but she understood that he was more preoccupied with other girls: “I was warming up for half an hour before the match, and he was chatting up with every girls around and never watched me to see how I was feel-

ing before the match”. Juliette reached her best ranking in tennis, being close to the top 200. Their relationship broke up in good terms and she explained him she could not cope with him not being enough concerned about her.

She took (P), a very ambitious coach, as a replacement but their relationship did not last, as he wanted her to sign a contract: “I did not intend to invest money in a full-time coach. I could not afford it.”

After being injured, she hired an ex-boyfriend, (D), who was a PE teacher and she was not reluctant of him not being a good tennis player: “I wanted to try with him as I thought that there are players that are trained by their fathers who do not know how to play tennis”. But (D) took a sabbatical leave from his work to accompany her in tournaments: “He advised me to not be injured for one year. This was very difficult to figure it out. Before we started training together, I had to recover from a knee injury.” As soon as they started training together, she realised that they were going in the wrong direction. And initial love transformed into “I could not stand him anymore”. Juliette decided to leave him because of her serious injury: “I stopped training with him because of this injury.” She had lots of arguments with him and realised she had changed since the beginning: “I was more self-confident. Usually I was not saying anything, accepting decisions but with him, I did not accepted what he wanted me to do and then we argued a lot”.

#### HER STORIES WITH COACHES

Juliette had several coaches in her career, but at the time of the interview, she was still looking for the right coach. She admitted that the relationship is the most important thing in tennis, but it is always a source of problems as far as the relationship goes. She wants a coach who is “single and fairly young” and who ideally would be prone to a romantic relationship: “My dream is, well, ideally I would like to be with my coach... an official relationship, a boyfriend and a coach at the same time”. She also declared that she was in constant search of seduction: “I really want people who fancy me on court” that needs to be reciprocal: “I need to find him (the coach) appealing in one way or another.” However she does not choose a coach (consciously) on this criterion: “I don’t fall in love straight away or choose a coach thinking that he might be the type of guy I fancy”. She thinks that being together most of the time does not help her in finding a place for a real boyfriend and justify the attachment with a coach: “It is hard to have your private life aside of tennis. You met your coach 4 or 5 times a day and then you have a close relationship

because you talk about your life and not only tennis”. She stated that love is central in her tennis results: “If I am not in love with somebody, I cannot play tennis very well”.

She admitted that her relationship never really worked “Either he was very competent but he already had a wife or he was not competent and single. Or I could not stand that the relationship was not going any further (because he was married) and then it did not worked out”.

Juliette now wonders how she could unravel the emotional implications of her relationships with coaches: “I wonder if I will find the right person one day. I now have the impression that I would need more than one person, maybe two. I don’t know if it is wise to be with the same person all the time, 24 hours a day. It is like a couple; it’s too complicated.” She admitted that her emotional and romantic desires have always been a problem: “It (the relationship) works for a while, and suddenly it is too strong (emotionally) to carry on the relationship, because you get a real hammering, you realise that you only play for him, and if you don’t see the end of it (meaning no relationship), it gets nowhere. It is very hard.” However, she slowly evolved in the relationship and was more confident to express herself: “Now, I manage to express how I feel and before I did not. I was enduring everything without saying a word. Now it is different and maybe it is the reason why we have more arguments”.

Juliette realised that her motivation was not enough in her training and competition: “I have always had the same problem with coaches. I realised I have never played for myself. Even if I travel alone in a tournament, I always need to know for who I am going to play”.

When asking about his role, the coach could replace a mother’s role: “He knows everything about my life. It is a mother’s role because I listen to him. Even if I do not always agree with my mother, I always listen to her and she has a big influence on me”.

## EPILOGUE

When Juliette and I first met, she had recently split up from her last coach (D). She was injured and had no coach at that time. Juliette was struggling to face her career termination and also not being able to fully engaged in a professional career, “My physiotherapist told me ‘your pain is real, but it is related to your mental state. Maybe you don’t really want to play tennis; maybe you don’t wish it anymore’”. She tried, it seemed, to express through her physiotherapist’s words what she could not express herself: “He added,

‘As long as you have not decided what you want, your body will not let you play again’”.

She admitted that if she had to terminate her career (but insisted she will not), she would miss a relationship with a coach: “I am going to miss it, a coach-athlete relationship because I really grew up a lot with all of them and I was so introverted before, that I do not want to stop playing because of that”.

Whenever I stopped recording the interview for research, Juliette was carrying on about her injury and the fact she never understood what would be her ideal coach. She was looking for advices, opinions about the coach-athlete relationship and was wondering what was wrong in her.

The interviews ended 3 years ago, but I followed her career and had indirect news from her. I was informed that she decided to move to another region for training in a private professional tennis centre once she had completed her rehabilitation. She was playing some ITF tournaments accompanied by her mother. For unknown reasons, she then returned to training in her region and started a slow descent in the WTA ranking. She continued to experience occasional injuries. At present, Juliette only plays national tournaments and no longer has a WTA ranking. She achieved her coaching diploma and trains children in a club.

## **Discussion**

Juliette’s story provides several examples of transference in a coach-athlete relationship. As Strean and Strean (1998) explained, reactions towards the coach are dependent on individual life history, fantasy and dream-life, self-image, superego mandates, and transferences toward the coach and peers. She kept on repeating setbacks with coaches as she was looking for something that could not be fulfilled (romantic relationship).

Analysing her conflictual repetitions with coaches, she showed a constant search for the desired love object, possibly a replacement for her absent father, and wanted a male mentor (a father figure) and a lover (the taboo father) that she was denied all her life. Her fantasies about coach/lovers seem to be about the “perfect” father she never had. In her case, Juliette developed a “compensatory fantasy” (Fine, 1982) of an ideal coach.

Juliette was faced with a love, which has never been reciprocal, and which appears in a particular setting (coaching relationship). Hoffer (1993) emphasised in the therapy relationship, that the “one-sided” relationship is “the *raison d’être* of the relationship... [and] it exists for the patient’s benefit” and similarly for a player’s benefit in coach athlete dyads.

As De Vries (1991, p. 124) stated transference becomes problematic when a person is unable to see those ties from the past in perspective and become stuck in inappropriate, repetitive behaviour. It is problematic with Juliette as she was more focused to have a romantic relationship than being successful in tennis and declared that her performance in tennis were connected with her romantic life.

Juliette went to the emotional process of transference, from having positive to negative transference with her coach. Positive transference was apparent through evidence of fantasies and beliefs of magical powers attributed to the coach (“I could not loose with him”), especially at the beginning of the relationship. Negative transference appeared with the others, either (S) was not fulfilling her need for exclusivity, (P) wanting a professional relationship, and (D) was rejected because he asked her to be focused on tennis more than anything else.

All her coaches had a flaw that did not make them “ideal”: either one did not have enough technical knowledge, or another already had a romantic relationship (wife, girlfriend) that caused her dissatisfaction.

Juliette never became conscious of her emotional conflict (“I don’t know why I fall in love with my coaches”) and therefore cannot choose a coach on other criteria than romantic relationship, because she believes that this is helping her to achieve better performance.

Other aspects of transference are apparent in her connection between her mother and her coaches. She was dependent on her and could not make a decision without her agreement. Her mother did not support her professional career and Juliette’s goals in tennis were not very clear (whether she really wanted to be a pro). She was looking for a coach to replace her mother’s role (deciding for her) and find approbation for being a full-time tennis player.

She discovered that she was playing for somebody else or needed a support of love to be able to play tennis; there was a question of her own wish. With a constant disillusionment of not being able to find somebody who could support (and love) her, she maybe lost motivation to compete in tennis.

## RECOGNISING TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTER-TRANSFERENCE

Although coaches are not therapists, understanding transference can help them to comprehend and cope with their player’s behaviors. In Juliette’s case, countertransference should be questioned about her relationship with (T) who broke up and left her with no explanation. We can hypothesized that (T) might

have been emotionally involved or that he could not cope with his own countertransference. This illustrates the concept of repression and denial; representing mechanisms of defences which are said to operate "actively and involuntarily, without the person's awareness" (Trull, 2005). Ego defences are significant in that they deal with the internal threats of an individual.

Gaining understanding of transference in the coaching profession would help the coach to deal with emotional aspects involved in the relationship. It is also probable that feelings of love/hate from the player are a consequence of transference should not be interpreted as such in reality. The obvious outcome is, that in turn, the coach may fall in love without knowing the possible confusion of previous identifications and attachments. By knowing and understanding transference effects, they would not confuse feelings in reality with those that appear as a consequence of transference. As Freud (1912) illustrated in the analytic setting: "He (the analyst) must recognize that patients falling in love is induced by the analytic situation and is not attributed to the charms of his own person; so that he has no grounds whatever for being proud of such a "conquest", as it would be called outside analysis". There is also another risk, that this result into alienation, or the coach wanting to keep the player dependent of him/her and wish to make the player in an idealised image of him/herself.

Working with a player might revive personal history of competition and might confront his/her own success and failures through his/her conscious or unconscious filters.

It is in line with what Andersen (2005) mentioned in the therapy process, as there is a need to know oneself to become a better therapist or counsellor. It is likely that coaches would also benefit from this self-reflection.

This aspect could be important for sport psychologist working with a coach or a player to help them recognising transference and countertransference in their relationship. The role of the sport psychologist is to provide knowledge and guidance on these aspects and encourage the coach to reflect on his/her position and all the feelings deriving from this.

Acknowledging transference and countertransference would help coach and players to deal with their emotions instead of rejecting or denying them and lead to negative outcomes.

Lévêque (2005) explained that break-up in relationship is not always understood by coaches, as they see it as ungrateful whereas it is a result of a possible transference and a process of emancipation and realisation of an inner wish. It is also important to recognise some signs of transference, for example in a form of a player who constantly look for troubles and disrupt a training session as a result of transference of bad relationship with one parent for

example. It is important to detect if there is a dependency from the player, which transfers feelings on a coach who would replace a missing or absent significant other.

## Conclusion

Transference appears to be a cornerstone of the coach-athlete relationship and knowledge of its effects would help both coaches and players to handle their emotional involvement toward each other. This study has limitation due to the singularity of the case but provides an insight into how transference happens in a coach-athlete relationship. In this case, Juliette needs to be aware of her emotional bonds from her past that she revives in her present relationships with coaches.

The psychodynamic approach can provide an interesting and illuminating perspective from which to investigate these crucial aspects of the performance process and the coach-athlete relationship occurring in the sport environment.

Further exploration of this area is needed, particularly in reference to the coaches' transference processes. Learning to become aware of and manage transference phenomena, as part of the coaching education, assists coaches to respond in ways better suited to the player's interests.

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