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Safe sport in high-performance contexts: A social learning initiative

To help support the Canadian sport system commitment to create a safe sport environment for all, the CAC and OTP proposed a community of practice (CoP) for high performance coaches. The rationale was the need for clarity that NSOs and high-performance coaches require to ensure safe sport concepts are well understood. Fifteen people, invited by OTP eventually joined this 4-month CoP; eight regularly participated in the monthly online meetings. The value creation framework was used to shape and assess the changes/learning that occurred in the CoP. Mural was used as a collaborative online tool for presenting information and documenting concerns and reflections. Additional data were gathered via surveys and interviews. Driven by the participants' needs, the learning activities included presentations, discussions, individual and shared reflections, concerns and practices. While high profile media covered events were discussed the aim was to have participants understand the range of behaviours that influence the creation of a safe environment for all (e.g., athletes, coaches, IST members). The three A's (awareness, acknowledgement, and action) created a thread underlying the learning activities. Four value creation stories are documented: The first story describes the alignment needed to create a safer environment, second one illustrates how the team selection was identified as a potential threat to mental health, the third one highlights how paying attention to the effects of ordinary jokes might increase the acknowledgment of power relation between coach-athlete, and the final one recounts the collective reflection of participants about considering selfcare as a tool to enhance the environment. Key considerations for future social learning projects are: time and value creation, the importance of breakout rooms, engagement over participation numbers, and coaches need a safe space too.

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Tiago Duarte, Ph.D., is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Ottawa and has dedicated the last 15 years to working and researching sport psychology and coaching. He was honoured to receive funding from some of the most prestigious Canadian organizations to support his collaborative research with national sport organizations, coaches, and athletes. Much of his work includes the nurturing and assessment of communities of practice, sport for people with impairments, and coach development.
