

# Coaching in positive sport: theoretical bases of *i7W* model

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## Summary

Professional philosophy in sport coaching directly impacts coach behavior in practice and competitions. The coaching effectiveness in enhancing athlete performance, stimulating the individual and team potential, and supporting athlete personal growth changes across coaches' professional careers. Such changes are frequently grounded in information from other sister disciplines that support the world of sport, such as, sport psychology. In this article, we discuss the perspective of *positive sport* (PS) and present a number of practical principles for coaches' consideration. These principles were grouped together into catchy phrases as follows: inspire (*inspiruj*), explain (*wyjaśnij*), expect (*wymagaj*), support (*wspieraj*), reward (*wynagradzaj*), appreciate (*wyróżnij*), grow (*wzrastam*) and win (*wygrywam*) (in short: *i7W*). These recommendations deal with four time perspectives: one task, one training session/competition, one season, and an entire athletic career. For the development of the perspective of PS among coaches, there is a need for sound theoretical foundations that are supported in reliable basic and applied research which we review in this present report. We aspire for this content to be used by sport psychologists, coaches, and professionals in sport social sciences to increase professional qualifications among sport coaches and to enhance the social status of this important profession.

**Keywords:** positive sport, coach behavior, performance psychology

## Introduction

The challenges of contemporary sport involve not only the athlete, but also the entire coaching staff: coaches in the foreground and supporting team in the background. High performance expectations and pressure to set new records in sport are also influencing the remaining actors of the sport scene, for example, parents (both the young and adult athletes), life partners/spouses, specialists (theorists and practitioners) in physical culture and sport sciences, sport activists, as well as journalists and reporters. The pursuit of a desired outcome at any cost can cause multiple problems; all sport participants and fans can be affected in the following categories: interpersonal, health, financial, image, legal and ethical. Poczwardowski, Nowak, Parzelski and Klódecka-Różalska [2012], within the framework of the *Positive Sport* (PS), proposed an alternative to the approach focused exclusively on high performance outcomes. In short, they proposed to increase the focus on positive aspects related to the functioning of the individuals and groups involved in both competitive and recreational sport. The Positive Sport can be viewed as a dynamical system [Vallacher & Nowak 1994] in which respective concepts presented by Poczwardowski and collaborators are implemented [2012, p. 74]: (a) improv-

ing physical fitness, endurance, technical, tactical, team and psychological competences of an individual – that is, skills directly linked to competition aimed at achieving the best possible outcome in sport; (b) equally important pursuit of “non-sport” goals, related to growth in physical and mental health, and to physical, psychological and social development of an individual and groups; (c) investing in self-actualization, self-realization, and in harmonious and comprehensive development of all sport actors; and (d) creating, maintaining and promoting positive standards (role models) to follow for the sake of the common social and cultural good.

The above outlined philosophy and conceptual models of PS were created on the basis of selected sport psychology concepts. To continue with this intellectual perspective in understanding the world of sport, below, we present a few theories and their empirical verifications that have a promising practical potential for a coach's work. These are: (a) Self-determination theory [Ryan & Deci 2000], (b) models of an athlete-coach relationship [e.g., Jowett & Poczwardowski 2006], and (c) models of transformational leadership [e.g., Bass 1985; Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur & Hardy 2009]. From these theoretical frameworks, we have selected eight key practical principles dealing with four time perspectives:

one task, one training session/competition, one season, and an entire athletic career. For the sake of their recipients (i.e., coaches), these principles were grouped together into catchy phrases, as follows: inspire (*inspiruj*), explain (*wyjaśnij*), expect (*wymagaj*), support (*wspieraj*), reward (*wynagradzaj*), appreciate (*wyróżnij*), and as a result, grow (*wzrastam*) and win (*wygrywam*) (in short: *i7W*, see Figure 1). We want to stress that the principles grouped together in the *i7W* model are only examples chosen to address the needs of a coach's work within the framework of PS, (i.e., "good" sport that leads to a comprehensive development; sport that is socially responsible). The PS philosophy theoretical and practical power of attraction goes beyond the area covered by the *i7W* model, and, as we hope, future reports will continue to explore PS conceptually and empirically [e.g., Szykarewicz & Poczwardowski, this volume]. It should be stressed that the *i7W* model, after proper adjustments, can be applied in other domains of achievement, including teachers' interactions with students [Serwotka, Radomski & Zienowicz 2013]. Given the need for coaches' continuous professional development, and in support of sport psychologists' efforts who are trying to satisfy this need, further in this article, we give a concise presentation of the *i7W* model's theoretical bases (theories, models, concepts). At the same time, we attempt to show how a given theoretical aspect helps to understand the impact of the *i7W* in the above-mentioned four time perspectives (i.e., a task, a training session or a competition, a season, and an athletic career). Secondly, we provide some examples of specific and use-

ful coaches' behaviors for all of the eight elements of the model.

The article finishes with a summary and conclusions regarding the need for further theoretical and empirical explorations of PS, especially those related to coaches' work.

## Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory is one of the leading systemic frameworks explaining people's behavior in task-oriented settings. According to this theory [Ryan & Deci 2000], satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e., competence, relatedness, autonomy) improves the quality of learning, task-performance and achievements in a particular area of functioning, and translates positively into personal growth and psychological well-being [Czapiński 2008; Ryan & Deci 2000]. In other words, when a coach provides an athlete with opportunities to make enough visible progress (regular, even smallest successes in any areas of mastery) he is increasing a sense of competence in the athlete. Moreover, through open communication in consideration of a good coach-athlete relationship, and by stimulating friendly bonds in a team, a coach creates an environment to fulfill the need of relatedness. Finally, by a careful consideration of what choices are to be made by an athlete, a coach stresses the growth of an athlete's sense of autonomy. A list of some possible behaviors (in relation to the areas of competence, relatedness, autonomy, respectively) includes the following: (i) together with an athlete, a coach is looking for a new ways

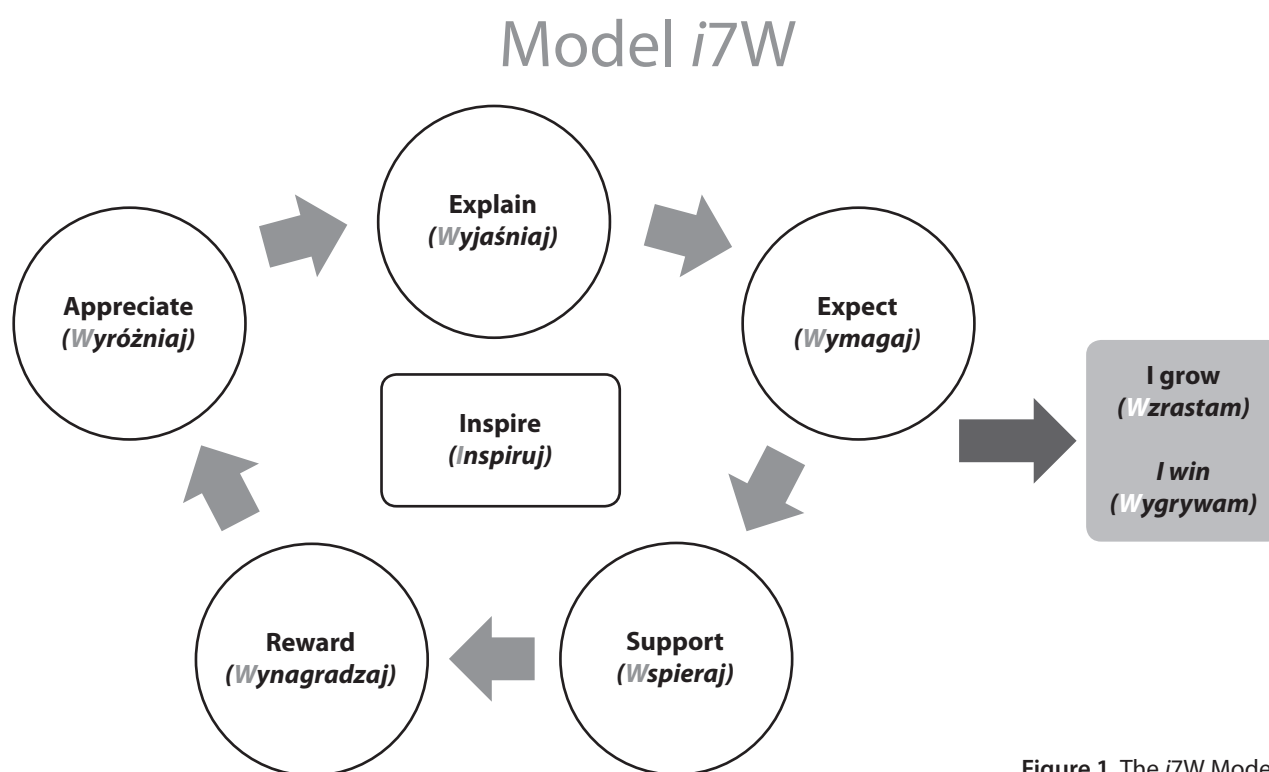


Figure 1. The *i7W* Model.

of coping during the first national team's training camp (e.g., stressing the strengths, readily available resources; while concurrently *supporting* the athlete [see *i7W*] in the context of an athletic career); (ii) s/he makes use of every opportunity to stress and reinforce team-spirited behaviors (thus, simultaneously *appreciating* [see *i7W*] in the perspective of one training [or one competition]); (iii) s/he points out different ways of solving problems and provides a choice (while at the same time *inspiring* [*i*] in the *i7W* model] within one particular training task). For example, taking perspective of a whole season, a coach can address the need to fulfill the sense of competence through regular tests of physical fitness (endurance, speed, other), technical and tactical skills, and through a constructive communication of the results and their meaning in continued growth. When communicating the results of these tests, this approach not only indicates the areas for improvement, but also stresses the progress and important achievements of the individual. For a coach who in his or her approach to an athlete uses some strategies from the *i7W* model, such a meeting is an excellent opportunity to *inspire* an athlete to engage in further efforts, to define the *expectations*, to *explain* the way to achieve the goals, to underline the existing and future resources (*support*), and also, to notice (i.e., to *appreciate*) the unique attributes of an athlete (e.g., diligence, optimism, pace of progress) that are the source of a current progress and are promising even greater improvements in the nearest future.

An optimal satisfaction of the above-mentioned three needs, when activating and relying on the intrinsic motivation to perform some tasks or activities (where on the other end of the continuum lies the lack of motivation – amotivation) is one of the mechanisms proposed by Ryan and Deci [2000] that produces positive outcomes in learning and performance. Further, the internalization of the sources of motivation results from the internalization of the behavior regulation (from external to autonomous). In another words, activities at first seen by an athlete as an obligation or something to be done to avoid negative consequences (i.e., extrinsic motivation), along with a satisfaction of the three key needs, are starting to be perceived as one's own tasks and roles; thus, more and more coherent with one's own vision and values (i.e., integrated motivation), and finally, as deeply satisfying and personal (i.e., identified motivation, which is most similar in characteristics to the intrinsic motivation). The key here is the role of the environment, in this case, it is up to a coach, who, first of all, *expects* (i.e., awaits particular efforts) and *rewards* (these are the conditions to fulfill the need of competence), *explains* and *supports* (i.e., conditions to fulfill the need of relatedness), and who *inspires* and *appreciates* (i.e., conditions to fulfill the need of autonomy).

The above sketched out coach behavior patterns are coherent with, what is described within the sport psy-

chology, characteristics of a mastery-oriented motivational climate [Ntoumanis & Biddle 1999; Kłodecka-Różalska 2003], or with widely explored characteristic of the influence of autonomy supportive environments [Conroy & Coatsworth 2007; Gagné; Ryan & Bargman 2003; Malett 2005; Reiboth & Duda 2006]. Secondly, one of the repeated correlates of the above-described strategies for coaching both individuals and teams is an effective relationship between a coach and an athlete. In line with the topics to be discussed in this article (as outlined at the beginning), the mastery orientation and autonomy supportive environments are not going to be further discussed, but the coach-athlete relationship warrants further elaboration.

## Coach-athlete relationship

Effective coach-athlete relationships [Jowett 2003; Jowett & Poczwadowski 2006] are characterized by several components that, when applied to daily practice by a coach, support positive outcomes in terms of training progress, sport performance, and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e., competence, relatedness, autonomy).

Poczwadowski and colleagues [Poczwadowski 2000; Poczwadowski, Henschen & Barott 2002] described positive elements of an athlete-coach relationship and constructed some practical indications on how to improve the functioning in an interpersonal dyad. Elements, such as “activity” (performed for another person without their presence), “interaction” (to increase performance during practice and competition), “care” (attention, trust, and respect), and “subjective positive meaning ascribed to a relationship,” contributed to the development of positive relationships. All four elements concerned both sport-related and non-sport domains of both the coach and the athletes (as proposed in *Positive Sport*). Next, the data, collected through in-depth interviews and a three-month long field observations of 18 athlete-coach relationships in a female gymnasts' team, related to four time perspectives proposed in this article, that is one task, one training session (or particular competition), one season, and a four-year athletic career (college athletics model in USA). Here are some examples of coaches' behaviors matched with elements of the *i7W* model: (i) showing interest in personal affairs, such as life decisions or academic issues (*inspire*); (ii) detailed explanation of training and competitive tasks (*explain*); (iii) expecting an injured athlete to achieve training goals, once they were consulted with a doctor regarding rehabilitation progress, or once technical elements for different programs were selected together with an athlete (*expect*); (iv) doing small favors, adjusting voice intonation to the emotions felt by an athlete, or showing patience when convincing an athlete to accept defeat in a positive

way (*support*); (v) praising an element performed by an athlete who was unaware that she was carefully watched by her coach (*reward*); and (vi) communicating an authentic care for an athlete's well-being, and underscoring, from time to time, how important an athlete is for the team (*appreciate*). Finally, the main hypothesis supported by the field data was: "the stronger and more positive an interpersonal relationship between a coach and an athlete, the more the athlete grows in sport (and a coach professionally) and in personal life (and coach as well)" [Poczwadowski 2000, p. 42]. In another words, this indicates how two principles of the *positive sport*, in the *i7W* model, *win* and *grow*, are realized among both the athletes/teams and the coach/coaches.

The 3+1C theory and research by Jowett and colleagues [Jowett 2003; Jowett & Cockerill 2003; Jowett & Meek 2000] constitute equally clear basis for the *i7W* model. Through a series of studies, an interpersonal relationship was defined as a situation in which two people's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are mutually and causally interdependent. The emotions were expressed through the construct of Closeness (*C*), thoughts (cognitive aspect) through the notion of Commitment (*C*), and behaviors through the notion of Complementarity (*C*). In short, closeness is emotional co-dependence, trust and feeling of liked, being liked, respected, appreciated, and of being taken care of [Michalak & Poczwadowski 2015]. The principles: *inspire*, *support*, *reward* and *appreciate* are easily identifiable in this construct. According to the notion of Complementarity, coach's efforts (*explain*, *expect*) are important only when an athlete responds to them accordingly through actions (e.g., motivation to train harder), and when it correlates both with better outcome in sport (*winning*) and personal growth (*growing*). Commitment assumes focus on long-term relationship, and, if needed, resignation from some of the own benefits for the sake of this other person in the dyad, provided resignation is not too challenging on a personal level. Moreover, through maintaining their relationship over a longer period, an athlete and a coach aim to maximize the sport performance [e.g., Jowett & Cockerill 2003].

Interestingly, the principles of the *positive sport* that postulate an equal importance of sport results and well-rounded development, are in some ways coherent with the notion of harmonious and obsessive passion [Vallerand et al. 2008], which when shown by a coach in his or her professional style, can influence the relationships with the athletes. In the case of obsessive passion, the activities within a particular area of achievement have been internalized in one's identity in a way that they are subject to external control. Despite liking an activity, an athlete feels compelled (internal pressure) to perform it, and he or she derives self-worth and a feeling of being accepted from it. The internal conflicts, negative emotions and

feelings of pressure lead to less flexible form of engagement, often to the detriment of personal values, relations, and unfulfilled needs in sport. Alternatively, a harmonious passion is derived from autonomous internalization of an achievement domain into one's identity. A harmoniously passionate person exhibits openness when deciding about forms of engagement in sports, and pursuit of interests and non-sport needs. Moreover, such disposition correlates with positive emotions and decreases the experience of failure as being emotionally devastating. Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue and Lorimer [2008] demonstrated, through their research on 251 athletes, that a positive coach-athlete relationship (co-determined by positive emotions) and the coach's subjective well-being are added value of the harmonious approach. It is worth stressing that for 263 athletes, harmonious passion predicts the same level of engagement and performance as obsessive passion; while bringing the added value in form of increased psychological well-being of the athletes [Vallerand et al. 2008].

The coaching styles described above lead to a particular atmosphere during training sessions and competitions, and contribute to shaping coach-athlete relationships. These coaching styles are often discussed in the literature as leadership styles, and the prevailing style in the latest sport leadership research, transformational leadership, constitutes another theoretical basis for the *i7W* model.

## Transformational Leadership

Practical advantages of transformational leadership [Bass 1998] are noticeable in different domains where human management is important: in the workplace [Pacek & Poczwadowski 2011], as well as in sport [e.g., Rowold 2006; Krukowska 2015; Krukowska, Poczwadowski & Parzelski, in print]. It applies not only to the formation of a coach-athlete relationship, but also to the influence of an individual in contact with representatives of a whole team (e.g., second coach, physiotherapist, and psychologist). In this article, we will focus on transformational leadership in the context of coach's work with an athlete and a team. To begin with a general definition, a transformational leader [Bass 1985, as cited in: Rowold 2006] is perceived as a charismatic, passionate person, driven by positive values; someone who inspires athletes to pursuit mastery performance. Transformational coaches intellectually stimulate athletes they work with, prompting their reflection. An equally important element characterizing this type of a coach is an individual approach to an athlete's physical, as well as psychological development. Such a leader [Bass 1990] takes time to know his or her athletes, to create a close relationship with them, while being clear about *expecting* high quality of performance in their respective sport.



Management style related to transformational leadership is a concept particularly well-aligned with the vision of a coach in *positive sport*, who is applying the *i7W* model in daily practice. As a result, he or she influences the functioning of the followers [Bass 1990], their motivation and sport performance [Arthur et al. 2011; Rowold 2006], thus influencing *winning* (an element of *i7W*). Increasingly, research confirms improvements in well-being of athletes coached by a transformational leader [Sivanathan, Arnold, Turner & Barling 2007; Stenling & Tafvelin 2014], because they are reinforced by sport participation and interaction with a coach (*reward* and *appreciate* from the *i7W* model). What is worth noting is the fact that an increase in transformational leadership behaviors is followed by one's own-satisfaction from being a leader and from developing professionally [Pacek & Poczwadowski 2011]. We present below examples of a coach's influence on an athlete/team in relation to the four components of transformational leadership [Bass 1985, as cited in: Rowold 2007; Callow et al. 2009] which are: (a) idealized influence; (b) inspirational motivation; (c) intellectual stimulation; (d) individualized consideration.

*Idealized influence*: (i) a coach tries to be a role model for athletes by talking about the opponents with respect (i.e., *inspiration*, see *i7W*), and during competition, by encouraging fair play behaviors; (ii) a coach *expects* athletes (see *i7W*) to verbally and non-verbally (gestures, facial expression) reassure each other when learning a new skill. Note, idealized influence, through meeting high expectations, boosts sense of competence among the followers [Shamir, House and Arthur 1993]. *Inspirational motivation*: (iii) a coach *inspires* athletes (see *i7W*) by presenting a plan (vision) for the whole season, while stressing an important role played by every athlete in realizing this vision. The *inspirational* way of motivating followers increases a sense of self-efficacy in pursuing goals [Zienowicz, Parzelski & Budnik-Przybylska 2015]. *Intellectual stimulation*: (iv) a coach *explains* (see *i7W*) that regaining concentration after a mistake in a match builds up an athlete's willpower. Bouncing back from mistakes and solving numerous problems that sport provides creates opportunities to learn and to accumulate life lessons (see Double-Goal Coach: growth in sport and in life [Thompson 2003], and *grow* and *win* in the *i7W* model). *Individualized consideration*: (v) a coach is approachable and ready to help (advice, conversation) in non-sports areas of functioning of the athletes, thus *supporting* them in life and treating their athletic careers in a holistic way (see *i7W*); (vi) when preparing strategy for a match, a coach listens to and considers athletes' suggestions – she or he *appreciates* (see *i7W*) the unique input of team members in pursuit of shared goals. This is how a coach creates open, trusting and genuine relationships with the athletes [Jowett & Cockerill 2003; Poczwadowski et al. 2002].

This way of constructing a relationship with the athletes results in an optimal (mastery or champion-like, to the extent possible given the circumstances) level of sport performance – for an individual and for a team [Riemer 2007]. Using transformational leadership style was also found to have a positive impact on intrinsic motivation [Charbonneau, Barling & Kelloway 2001], which is related to the experience of “flow” [Csikszentmihalyi 2007; a state of a complete absorption in an activity performed by an individual.

## Correlates of self-determination, of a good coach-athlete relationship and of transformational leadership

Our discussion of how coaches' actions within the *i7W* model increase chances for an optimal sport outcome and personal *growth* (two equally important goals from the perspective of *positive sport*), will be complemented with some information on selected correlates of self-determination, a productive coach-athlete relationship, and transformational leadership. On an individual level, these co-existing phenomena are: flow [Csikszentmihalyi 2007; Jackson 1996] and belief in one's own self-efficacy [Bandura 1977]. On the team level, we will discuss group cohesion and sense of team efficacy [Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley 1985].

### Flow

When discussing the functioning and performance in sport with regard to the positive emotional states, the concept of flow [Csikszentmihalyi 1990] has remained in the center of attention in the sport psychology theory and practice, and has entered the language of coaches and athletes. Flow is a state of complete absorption in an activity in which full immersion in action is a source of pleasure. Csikszentmihalyi [2000] distinguished nine dimensions of flow, which are also conditions of its occurrence. These dimensions are: (a) a balance between challenge and skill; (b) automaticity in action; (c) precisely defined goals; (d) clear interpretation of feedback; (e) full concentration on the activity; (f) feeling of being in control; (g) losing self-consciousness; (h) distortion of time; and (i) autotelic experience. It is worth considering how a coach, through the application of the *i7W* model, can reinforce occurrence of listed dimensions to stimulate flow in an athlete's experiences. Jackson [1996], in her research, discovered a strong, positive correlation of constructive coaches' behaviors and their verbal support with occurrence of flow among their athletes.

By interpreting previous research as bases for the *i7W* model, for example (in order of the conditions enumerated above) in everyday practice, a coach demands

from and *expects* (see i7W) an athlete to be engaged in a constant development of his or her skills, with simultaneous care for harmonious choice of training tasks. A coach contributes to the automaticity of task execution by designing together with an athlete a routine to be performed before every competition. Every goal related to a given performance aspect is clearly defined and *explained* (see i7W) in order to provide an athlete with a clear path to an optimal performance during competition. At the same time, a coach highlights obvious progress related to the expected performance, thus *supporting* (see i7W) unequivocal interpretation of a feedback received by an athlete during competition. A coach attempts to concentrate athlete's focus on a current task by clearly and concisely *explaining* (see i7W) different components of technique to be performed. A coach *appreciates* (see i7W) athletes' individual competencies, linking their impact on successful performance of a particular skill during a match. This is also how an athlete's feeling of being in control is shaped. Finally, an element of flow that can be consciously stimulated through a coach's influence is an autotelic experience. The main feature of an autotelic experience is that performing an activity is an end in itself. A coach, by *inspiring* (see i7W), is able to reinforce a joy-oriented attitude of feeling passionate about what an athlete is doing at the moment. One method of inspiration is through presenting quotes by famous, respected athletes, who stressed the importance of enjoying sport performance itself.

## Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is best reflected by one's confidence in being able to perform well in a given task [Bandura 1977]. People with a strong sense of efficacy set out more challenging goals for themselves and are able to maintain a higher level of commitment over a longer period of time, even when faced with failures or mistakes [Poczwadowski, 1996; Tolli & Schmidt 2008].

Bandura [1977] identified several sources influencing a level of self-efficacy. One of them is a successful performance of a task or other actual accomplishments. A coach often enhances athletes' sense of efficacy by reminding them about their previous accomplishments, thus providing them with psychological *support* (see i7W). Another source of self-efficacy is modelling, that leads to drawing conclusions from observed behaviors (successes) of other people. A coach *explains* (see i7W) a difficult training task through its presentation by an athlete who has a sufficient level of competence. Such form of presentation is likely to increase a sense of efficacy among the athletes who are watching the model before they are about to perform the task. It is critical that the coach maintains a high level of concentration among athletes observing the task. To strengthen it, a coach in-

vites (*expects* [see i7W]) all the athletes to enumerate out loud the essential elements to be executed in a given task. Another source developing one's sense of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion – a coach, following the i7W model, tries to accentuate athletes' sense of efficacy during a practice or a competition through verbal communications, demonstrating belief in their individual competence and their abilities to achieve high quality of performance (*supports, rewards and appreciates* [see i7W]). Another source for self-efficacy are vicarious experiences. Application of visualization of one's own master performance substantially increases self-esteem [Moritz, Martin, Hall & Vadocz 1996]. Regular visualization is embedded in five elements from i7W: *explained, expected, supported, rewarded and appreciated*. Finally, depending whether the physiological state of an athlete is positive or negative, it can be a source of an increase or decrease in self-efficacy. Having *explained* the rules of healthy diet, good , and daily recovery and over the whole season, a coach later *expects* his or her athletes to act accordingly. Physiological and emotional states of an athlete are equally important in building a sense of efficacy. A coach *inspires* (see i7W) athletes by keeping composure and expressing pleasure derived from being a part of a training session or competition.

From the perspective of the essential source of sense of self-efficacy (which is successful performance), it is important to provide proper feedback with enough attention paid to smaller and bigger successes in the training and competing process. We would like to remind a reader of the four time perspectives: a task, a training or a competition, a season, whole athletic career; however, the next example involves activities over a series of training units. In their research, Smoll and Smith [2006] observed increased athlete self-efficacy and more positive reactions to coaches who provided positive feedback immediately after an athlete performed a task with high engagement. The coach behaviors that had considerable impact on positive reactions of athletes were: (i) providing instructions on how to correctly perform a task, (ii) encouraging athlete to take on a challenge, (iii) providing technical instructions, (iv) increasing a total number of encouraging and supporting communications regardless of the quality of the performance. When looking into these behaviors from the perspective of i7W model, by trying to praise every athlete at least once during a training session, this coach demonstrates principles of *supporting, rewarding and appreciating* (in case of younger athletes, journaling praises might be another good idea to follow).

## Team cohesion

Carron [1982] defined team cohesion as a dynamic process characterized by a tendency to stick together as a team,

and to stress sense of the unity of a team, as well as by a pursuit of shared goals and fulfillment of shared tasks. Ball and Carron [1978] emphasized that coaches perceive cohesion as a necessary condition of a team's success.

Through behaviors based on the *i7W* Model, a coach takes care not only of an individual athlete well-being (as described above), but also of the team cohesion development. Coach's behaviors, such as highlighting teamwork, in sport and life, and setting team goals, are also tightly linked to team cohesion [Callow et al. 2009]. To put it simply, activities in the *i7W* model are aimed at a whole team and team behaviors (and not only directed to particular individuals). A coach who *explains, expects, supports, rewards* and *appreciates* whole team, is investing in the development of team cohesion. In their observations, Gardner and colleagues [1996] and Westre and Weiss [1991] discovered that coaches develop more cohesive teams when displaying democratic behaviors, social support, and positive feedback. For example, a coach during briefing after a match might try to ask more open questions related to specific match situations. Questions are focused on what went well, what could have been done differently, and what aspects should be worked on during the upcoming training sessions. A coach *appreciates* individual players, but also team behaviors, by drawing attention to the good elements of performance, or to behavior coherent with team and club values (e.g., verbal communication and supporting gestures exchanged by athletes after mistakes or when someone experiences difficulties during a game).

In sum, we described a number of theories and constructs as theoretical and empirical assumptions (postulated foundations) for the *i7W* model. One of most important threads emerging from this discussion is the conceptual coherence with the principles of personal growth through sport participation [e.g., Tołwiński 2006], and a holistic approach to the athletic career [Stambulova 2010; Siekańska 2013; Wylleman & Lavallee 2004] with particular focus on the positive approach to children and youth sport [Blecharz & Siekańska 2009; Thompson 2009; McGuire 2012].

## Personal growth

A value derived from sport participant can (but does not have to) be a driving force of personal growth [Plato 1920], and as pointed out by Sas-Nowosielski [2008], the training process includes also athlete education on how to function in a society, among other pedagogical goals. We find that it is not the sport itself, but *positive sport* (good and socially responsible) that is fulfilling this growth-oriented potential of sport. In other words, sport in itself does not define positive or negative results, but the outcomes of sport participation are shaped by the people functioning in it. Therefore, a coach must be

equipped with the knowledge and skills of socio-pedagogical aspects of sport, because this knowledge, in a natural way, is shaping the coaching behaviors, thus influencing the envisioned comprehensive development of the athletes. Especially in children and youth sport, a relationship and contact with a coach, as well as attitudes and values represented by a coach, have a profound impact on future psychosocial attitudes of young athletes. It relies upon a coach to discern these values and to find a way to implement them into his or her own coaching practice (see *inspire, support* and *explain*).

A coach, apart from supporting an athlete in achieving a performance goal should also strive to provide an athlete with appropriate diversified stimulation, joy, pleasure and fun. Such an approach ensures comprehensive development of personality and self-reliance [Czajkowski 2004]. In this natural ability to influence the athletes, coaches not *inspire* and motivate for training and competing but also educate and guide (see two elements of *i7W*: *explain, grow*). More importantly, "we are educating not by what we are saying, but by who we are" [Czajkowski, p. 55]. Thus, coaching skills also deal with education and motivation (see *inspire* from the *i7W* model), as well as with leadership and organization (see *expect, explain*). Only when coaching skills and behaviors are supported by these four functions, they can be really effective. The two-way positive communication between a coach and an athlete is important for the development of both sport and life skills, and it is a predictor of success in sport [Gould and Carson 2008 (see *win* and *grow*)]. Moreover, a coach's respect towards other athletes and coaches (also for the opposing team), can create a behavior pattern of an athlete's respect for a coach, club colleagues, and opponents [Zawalski 2004 (see *expect*)].

In short, a coach creating a space for athlete development, should start by defining own values, needs, and then include them skillfully in one's own coaching practice. It is important for a coach to remember that, at every step of the way, she or he bears responsibility for athlete education as aligned with the classical Greek rule *kalos kaghatos* ("beautiful and virtuous"), which, apart from physical development, perceives a system of physical exercises (sport) as a means of shaping foundations for life in general [Tołwiński 2006]. As coaches go through their professional journeys, they learn and grow themselves; thus are equal beneficiaries of the growth-oriented philosophy (*wzrastam*).

## Stages and course of sport talent development

One of the more important distinctions and conditions for planning coach's work, and also applying *i7W* model, is the holistic approach to the athlete over the whole course of athletic career and consideration of the fu-

ture life outside sport. This approach entails an understanding of the specific features of a given stage of athletic career [e.g., Blecharz & Siekańska 2005]. At every stage, different methods and techniques can be crucial for a transition to further stages, including continued participation in recreational sport or regular physical activity, once an athletic career has been terminated. Such career planning, in the holistic approach, was proposed by Wylleman and Lavallee [2004]. It includes the time when a child starts to enjoy physical activities, and follows through athletic career termination. In this approach, a career can be viewed from several perspectives: (a) a developmental stage, portrayed in theory as transition phase, expressed by athlete age (10–35 years); (b) athletic career process (initiation, development, mastery/perfection, termination); (c) perspective of psychological maturity (childhood, adolescence, adulthood); (d) perspective of social relations (parents, siblings, peers during initiation stage, peers, coach, parents during adolescence, life partner, and coach during mastery stage, and family in adulthood); (e) perspective of education and professional activity (basic level, medium level, higher level, professional practice and employment) and (f) funding (financing) at consecutive stages (family, family and scholarships, scholarships, sponsors and the State as well as employer and family).

It is important to remember that coach's engagement differs at every stage of athlete development and athletic career. An Olympic champion, Leszek Blanik, when he was at the peak of his athletic career (just before Olympic Games in Beijing), heard the following words from

his coach: "You have reached a stage in your career and development, when I am merely your consultant" [Pogorzelska, manuscript in preparation]. Table 1 (below) assembles together the developmental model of athletic career with coach behavior proposed by the i7W model.

As we have stressed above, in the holistic approach to an athletic career, a special place is assigned to the positive approach to children and youth sport. According to the generally accepted coaching rules for children and teenagers, it is crucial that a coach adapts his or her professional style and drills to athletes' maturation process and pace of development. The early specialization, so often resulting from professionalization of youth sport, is inadvisable for an optimal and long-term, sustainable high achievement in sport [Côté, Lidor & Hackfort 2009; Siekańska 2013]. In order to maintain positive attitudes towards physical activity among young athletes, a coach should choose specific exercises and should plan a workout with thoughtful consideration of athletes' individual capacities and temperament (see *explain* and *support*). It would be also beneficial if, within this process, a coach considered acting and coping styles of the athletes, and adjusted training tasks accordingly (see *support*); which could in a positive way influence the coach-athlete relationship and the effectiveness of their cooperation. In such environment, the athletes can strive to achieve emotional mastery that allows them to achieve good results in sport and outside it (see *grow* and *win*), while maintaining joy and satisfaction [Blecharz & Siekańska 2009; Taylor 2002].

**Table 1.** Developmental model of an athletic career and the i7W model.

Transformation phase	Age (years)					
	10	15	20	25	30	35
Athletic career	Initiation	Development	Mastery		Termination	
i7W	<i>Inspire</i>	<i>Inspire, explain, support, reward and appreciate</i>	<i>Expect, support → win and grow</i>		<i>Grow and win</i>	
Psychological maturity	Childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood			
i7W	<i>Inspire</i>	<i>Inspire, explain, expect, reward, appreciate</i>	<i>Expect, grow and win</i>		<i>Grow and win</i>	
Social relations	Parents, siblings, peers	Peers, coach, parents	Life partner, coach		Family (coach)	
i7W	<i>Inspire</i>	<i>Inspire, explain, expect, reward, appreciate</i>	<i>Expect, grow and win</i>		<i>Grow and win</i>	
Education and professional activity	Basic level	Medium level	Higher level		Professional practice and employment	
i7W		Support, expect	Support, expect			
Funding	Family	Family and scholarships	Scholarships, sponsors		Employer, family	
i7W		Support	Support, expect, explain			



From the psychological perspective discussed throughout in our article, Blecharz and Siekańska [2009] identified concrete ways of influencing young athletes and captured them in ten rules of sport training for children. These are: (i) I have fun and I do what I like; (ii) I train my brain; (iii) I do my best and patiently await results; (iv) every day, I try to do something that will get me closer to my goal; (v) I know what I am good at, and how I can achieve more; (vi) I can sometimes be wrong; (vii) I can influence how/what my day looks like; (viii) I can accept defeat and can cope with obstacles; (ix) I respect my sport opponents; and (x) every competition is an opportunity to learn something about myself. These principles are coherent with the three stages of talent development in various domains (including sport) identified by Bloom [1985]: early years (initiation stage), middle years (development stage) and late years (perfection stage). The early years (initiation stage) are mostly characterized by playing and focusing on having fun. A coach during this time mainly *supports* (see *i7W*) and *inspires* (“i” in the *i7W* model) an athlete to be focused while performing one task and be engaged within one training session. Over these years, athletes particularly rely on their coaches (are *supported* by a coach), who allow for experimentation and exploration of various physical tasks, thus contributing to athlete *growth* (see *i7W*) in physical domain of human development. During this time, a coach notices first signs of athletic talent. Coach’s *appreciation* (see *i7W*) during this time is of significant importance; for example, a coach highlights individual talent/skills of an athlete and *appreciates* those who display engagement in training. In this period, a particularly important task for a coach is to foster the original motivation to play a particular sport, which includes fun and love of the sport. Through their own attitude and behavior, the coaches set an example for the athletes, which additionally stimulates athletes’ intrinsic motivation and reinforce willingness to learn and readiness to exert efforts (see *inspire* in the *i7W* model).

The middle years are dedicated to athlete technical development. The coaches *expect* (see *i7W*) and demand from their athletes to perform harder over one training task and within whole training session. This is when an athlete-coach cooperation reaches another level. To be precise, a coach starts to *expect* more and provides more information (mostly within technical aspects; *explain*; see *i7W*) within one training, one season, but also offers more guidance on functioning outside of sport. In the timeframe of one training, for example, a coach sets high, but reachable goals, simultaneously *expecting* athletes to be fully engaged in performance execution. From the perspective of the entire athletic career, a coach clearly defines healthy values (e.g., honesty, diligence, fair play), which she or he expects the athletes to follow. As a result of these combined coaches’ efforts, in a natural

way, athletes develop their skills: they *grow* (see *i7W*). During the middle years, the first attempts at competition are made, and, given favorable conditions, sport achievements might follow (*win*). For the sake of order and clarity in Table 1, the late years of development stage are the time of an athlete’s high commitment to the ultimate goal (see *grow* and *win*), with a simultaneous development in the different areas of life (e.g., studying at a sport university). Also, in this period, responsibility for the competitions and training program lies not only on the coach, but also on an athlete (see *expect* and *grow*).

## Summary and conclusions

In our discussion of coaching styles and behaviors, we have underlined a need to invest in two equally important goals of sport participation: achievement of an optimal sport results and comprehensive development of an individual along with holistic personal growth. The recommendations provided for a coach were summed up in ‘i’ and ‘5W’ within the *i7W* model – *inspire*, *explain*, *expect*, *support*, *reward*, and *appreciate*. These six principles, supported by the theory, have positive effects on athletes, and in turn contribute to “I *grow* and I *win*” for an individual (including the coach), and for a team to “We *grow* and we *win*.” The *i7W* model was justified by three key systemic theoretical frameworks: self-determination theory, coach-athlete relationship models, and models of transformational leadership. Additionally, this model was supported by selected correlates on an individual level (flow, self-efficacy) and on a team level (team cohesion). Next, we have presented two clearly emerging threads: one related to the personal development, and another one linked to the holistic, developmental approach towards an athletic career, with special consideration of the children and youth sport. We have attempted to illustrate this discussion with examples of coaching actions and behaviors in four time perspectives: one task, one training session/competition, one season, and an entire athletic career. Once again, we want to stress the fact that this present article is yet another voice in formation of an idea and methods of the *positive sport*. Therefore, beyond as we think, broad theoretical foundation, the *i7W* model has a clear practical application, so we encourage coaches to adapt it in their professional practice.

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