

Sample Answer

- (c) A team of young hockey players are ambitious to improve their performance. They have a new coach who spends a considerable amount of time socialising with the team. He is criticised by the team's parents who think the team should always be practising their hockey. However, in the next big game the team wins.**

Discuss how a sports psychologist might apply their knowledge of sports coaching to explain the win to the team's parents. (10 marks)

According to Smith et al (1979) players' attitudes, perception of their coach's behaviours and self-esteem are key determinants of a successful team. The sports psychologist could therefore emphasise the importance of these qualities, in particular how a new coach is perceived by the team. They could explain this as a reason why socialising with the players may enhance this perception, leading to a better response to coaching before and in preparation for the game. Smith et al (1979) showed that self-esteem is an important moderator of attitudinal responses to coaching behaviours. Although this would largely be achieved on the hockey field and at training, these can also be enhanced in a social environment. Socialising together as a team would help ease anxiety and make the team more likely to develop cohesion. This promotes greater sports performance. In addition, the sports psychologist could explain the stages teams go through before they settle into higher functioning performances. According to Tuckman's (1965) theory of group formation, groups form by coming together as a whole and socialising could help move this process along quicker. Another idea for how the coaches could explain the win to parents would be to outline the inverted U hypothesis (Yerkes-Dodson, 1908) which shows that increasing arousal leads to increasing performance, however this only works to a certain optimum level, after which the effect drops off. The sports psychologist could explain to parents that with a big game coming up there was a likelihood that players would be too anxious and over-aroused for peak performance and that socialising as a team could help ease the anxiety.

