The term Athlete Centred coaching has been floating around for a number of years and formally made its way into the NZ Coaching framework on the mid 2000’s. At the recent Sport NZ Connecting Coaches Conference, Baroness Sue Campbell & Ali Oliver from the Youth Sport Trust (UK) provided an international perspective on recruiting, developing and deploying Athlete Centred coaches throughout the sporting pathway.

Athlete Centred coaching is exactly what it says on the tin – the core philosophy is to understand and coach to an athletes MOTIVATION, AMBITION and CAPABILITY. The characteristics of an Athlete Centred approach provide a focus for effective coaching and the approach helps to develop athletes who take responsibility for their own learning, regardless of the coaching community they participate in, or their stage of development.

Behaviours you would observe through an Athlete Centred coaching approach include:

**ATHLETE CENTRED BEHAVIOURS**

**COACH**
- Empowering
- Questioning
- Listening | Observing
- Collaborating
- Self Awareness
- Self Reflection

**ATHLETE**
- Commitment
- Ownership
- Responsibility
- Autonomous
- Decision Making
Athlete-centred coaching encompasses ideas such as Game Sense, Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU), and long term athlete development, as well as concepts like emotional intelligence and player empowerment. By utilising an Athlete Centred approach, coaches have the ability to give athletes an increased understanding of the game as well as encouraging creativity in athletes.

As identified by Professor Lynn Kidman in her book “Athlete Centred Coaching - Developing Decision Makers”, the approach is about empowering athletes to make choices, to develop higher levels of motivation and learn how to develop solutions to enhance their performance and the performance of the team.

The approach isn’t about letting athletes do what they want, nor is about being soft or weak-minded. An Athlete Centred approach is challenging and takes in a longer term view to performance.

Reflecting on our own coaching........
1. Do we understand our athletes MOTIVATION, AMBITION and CAPABILITY?
2. Are we really engaging with our athletes, both in how we talk with them, but also what we are talking to them about?
3. Do we review our coaching based on an Athlete Centred approach?

Click the link below to view videos and presentations from the Connecting Coaches Convention
http://connectingcoaches.org.nz/resources/

Ten years on – where’s coaching at?