

Title: Returning to play: What does this have to do with ethics?**Presenters: Tania Cassidy¹, PhD, and Phil Handcock² PhD.****Affiliation:**

1. School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ
2. School of Sport and Exercise, Southern Institute of Technology, Invercargill, NZ

Abstract

Many contact sports have 'return to play' guidelines to follow if an athlete is injured. Yet, a commonly held belief is that it is acceptable for athletes to return to play before the injury site is fully pain-free. What is more, athletes would be expected to return to training, albeit not doing any contact drills, prior to returning to play. In this context, those charged with making the decision as to when an athlete is ready to 'return to play' are still expected to act ethically. Tensions inevitably arise between official protocols and widely practiced conventions, informed by custom, practice or self-interest (Hardman & Jones, 2011), so how do coaches know if they are acting ethically, and/or even facing an ethical situation?

The focus of this presentation is two-fold; a critical review of the ways in which acting ethically is promoted in the sports coaching literature, and a discussion on what these approaches could mean for coaching practice. A dominant way of thinking about ethics in the Western world is via a normative ethical framework, which is largely premised on philosophies whose origins are the ancient Greeks. Normative ethical frameworks have been challenged for not acknowledging culture (Miller, 2005) and recently scholars have drawn on examples from Asia, Arabia, Latin America, and Africa to demonstrate the importance of culture on ethical business practice (Crane & Matten, 2016). This presentation contributes to the discussion of ethics in sports coaching by questioning the dominance of the normative ethical framework and exploring the role culture plays in a coach's decision to act ethically. The presentation also introduces the critiques of normative ethics from proponents of care ethics (Cronin, et al., 2019; Noddings, 2014).

We support Hardman and Jones' (2011) suggestion that 'argument and critical reflection is paramount' (p.4) to understanding ethical practice in sports coaching, yet it is a challenge for most of us to; first, become aware of the assumptions we draw upon when making decisions in an ethical situation, and second, to know how to apply our understanding in practice. In this presentation we use the context of coaches working with an injured athlete and 'return to play' guidelines, and various ethical frameworks, to illustrate how our ethical framework informs, and could be applied to, coaching practice. This discussion builds upon suggestions made by Purdy et. al., (2016) regarding how coaches could apply the work of Noddings (2014).

References

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Presenting author

Tania Cassidy is an Associate Professor in the area of Sport Pedagogy in the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research interests include: pedagogy of sports coaching and coach education/ development; youth development and sports coaching, and; politics and policies of coach development and education. Tania is the first author of a co-authored text entitled *Understanding Sports Coaching: The Pedagogical, Social, and Cultural Foundations of Coaching Practice* (2106; Routledge).

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- 1.Coaching research abstract
 2. Oral presentation
- Theme 7:** Coaching ethics/integrity

