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2019

### Facilitating the Development of Shared Athlete Leadership: Insights from Intercollegiate Coaches

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#### Recommended Citation

Duguay, A. M., Loughead, T. M., Hoffmann, M. D., & Caron, J. G. (2019). Facilitating the Development of Shared Athlete Leadership: Insights from Intercollegiate Coaches. Retrieved from <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/102>

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## **Facilitating the Development of Shared Athlete Leadership: Insights from Intercollegiate Coaches**

A growing body of literature supports the shared nature of athlete leadership, where athletes engage in a collaborative process of influence through formal or informal leadership positions. This shared approach has been positively associated with a number of characteristics of effective team functioning including team identification, collective efficacy, cohesion, and team resilience. Despite this, scant research is available on how coaches are developing shared athlete leadership in their teams. As such, the purpose of the present study was to examine intercollegiate coaches' practices for facilitating the development of shared athlete leadership. Data from semi-structured interviews with 15 current U Sports ( $n = 10$ ) and Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association ( $n = 5$ ) head coaches were analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis. The coaches described their desire to empower athletes as a motive for adopting shared approaches to athlete leadership. In turn, coaches discussed various practices for facilitating the development of shared athlete leadership in their teams. Specifically, coaches' practices were discussed in relation to the use of leadership groups and alternative leadership structures (e.g., rotating captaincy, defined leadership roles, and 'captainless' teams), the creation of a positive team environment, and deliberate athlete leadership development efforts. The findings provide insights into how coaches can facilitate the development of shared athlete leadership in their teams.