

1st Step Towards The Next Level - Profiling tool for coaches.

Case study: Salavat Yulaev (KHL)

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<p>Athlete-centered coaching is an approach that is used by a majority of high-performance coaches. This method has an emphasis on an individualized approach to every athlete, where athletes are encouraged to be actively involved in the decision-making process of their own development. Research literature suggests athlete-profiling as a tool for coaches that would work as a supplement for the individualization of the coaching process.</p> <p>The primary aim of this thesis was to build an athlete-profiling tool in collaboration with Erkkä Westerlund, who is the head coach of Salavat Yulaev, a professional ice hockey team that competes in the Kontinental Hockey League (i.e., the highest level of competition of ice hockey in Russia). The secondary aim was to assess the effectiveness of the profiling tool through qualitative interviews with coach Westerlund and three Salavat Yulaev athletes who completed the profiling tool.</p> <p>The profiling tool was built with an emphasis on the mental side of the coaching process. It included five key elements that serve as cornerstones to the coaching philosophy of Coach Westerlund: Motivation, Attitude, Self-Confidence, Responsibility and Emotional Preparation. The data from interviews revealed that both the coach and the athletes found the profiling to be useful at the beginning of the season, as it helped to learn about each other and outline the development path for the season. The findings also indicate the importance of core values, coaching philosophy, and communication in coaching process.</p> <p>This thesis has a short-term emphasis on the beginning of the coaching process in pre-season. Therefore, future research may shed the light on the effectiveness of the profiling tool on the psychological attributes of athletes over longer periods of time (i.e., a complete season) and develop the tools for coaches that would focus on the monitoring of the development of psychological skills.</p>	
Keywords Athlete-centered coaching, athlete profiling, coaching philosophy, core values, ice hockey	

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1 Introduction

In the past decade, athlete-centered coaching has received a lot of attention in research literature in sports psychology. An athlete-centered approach actively involves the athlete in the process of his/her own development by encouraging athletes to set goals, monitor the progress, evaluate the process and introduce improvements if needed. Essentially, this approach is aiming to facilitate self-determined and self-regulated learning. In order to manage the athlete-centered approach, the coach has to create a profile for each of the athletes. Athlete-profiling is a tool that helps the coach to know the athletes and keep track of athletes' development (Gilbert 2017, 38).

Salavat Yulaev (SY) is a professional ice hockey team competing in the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL). The KHL is the biggest professional ice hockey league in Russia. (Bespomoshchnov & Mikhno, 2017, 91; Shevchenko, 2017) SY has employed Erkkä Westerlund as head coach starting from the spring of 2017. Previously, he has been the head coach of Jokerit (KHL) and has a long history of working with Finnish Ice Hockey National Teams.

Coach Westerlund believes that the primary responsibility of the head coach is to take care of the heart and the head of the athlete. In other words, such a description could be interpreted as psychological skills training or mental coaching. The remaining areas of athlete development including technical, tactical and physical are delegated to the assistant coaches, strength coach and medical staff. (Westerlund, 14 May 2016)

The philosophy of Coach Westerlund has a strong emphasis on the athlete-centered coaching approach. It requires an individual approach to every athlete on the team. Research literature in coaching suggests that athlete's individual tendencies such as background, views, motives, behaviors and habits have to be respected in order to identify effective coaching strategies and communication media (Gilbert 2017, 40-41). For that particular reason, athlete profiling is working as a supplementary tool in order to keep track of athlete's tendencies. On the other hand, every coach is different in terms of their coaching philosophy and/or methods. Therefore, the structure and the content of the profile will differ from one coach to another.

The aim of this thesis is to build a tailor-made athlete-profiling tool, which provides the head coach with information of each athlete's own insights and interpretations regarding the psychological components of the coaching philosophy. More specifically, the profiling tool spotlights the five cornerstones that are relevant to the philosophy of the coach. It

makes the product useful exclusively for the Coach Westerlund. Meanwhile, the architecting process that is going to be presented is applicable in a wide range of sports. Coaches from different disciplines will be able to apply the same process to allow them to create a profiling tool that would be relevant to their coaching philosophy.

At the beginning, theoretical concepts that are relevant to this project will be discussed. Those serve an informative role to provide an overview behind the product presented. Afterwards, it is important to shed light on the aims, limitations and constraints of this project. It is then followed by the project planning or methodology. More specifically, it will present the steps behind the architecting process of the profiling tool. The results section will reveal the views of the coach regarding the implementation and improvement of the tool. In addition, the results will uncover athletes' experiences regarding the tool and the implementation of it in the coaching process. Eventually, the discussion and conclusion section will provide readers with concluding thoughts, the ways of how the tool could be improved and the final remarks regarding the implementation of the profiling in the coaching process.

2 Theoretical Background

In this section, key theoretical concepts that underpin this thesis will be presented in a progressive manner. Core values and coaching philosophy are the two concepts that require synergy with the personality of the coach in order to be effective. At the same time, if the coach would like to increase buy-in for his/her methods he/she needs to effectively communicate those to the athletes. Nevertheless, every athlete is different and requires an individual approach to his/her development. Therefore, the profiling tool that I tailored to the coaching philosophy of the coach can have a beneficial impact on the coach-athlete relationship as it gives an opportunity for individual athletes to express themselves. The athlete-centered approach encourages athletes to be more open and have an impact on their own development, which has a beneficial impact on their self-determination and engagement in self-regulated learning.

2.1 Core Values

In the past decade coaching literature has increased the awareness of the need for a coaching philosophy with a vision of where you want to be and how you are going to get there. It serves as one of the cornerstones of successful coaching. Nevertheless, it is inevitable to neglect that before the coach can begin establishing the core values, he/she needs to indicate and communicate the reasons behind the initial engagement in coaching and what are the key beliefs that guide daily decision-making (Gilbert, 2017, 3-6).

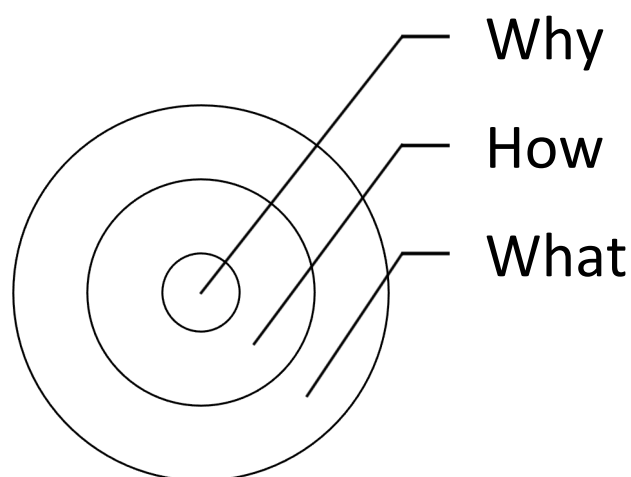


Figure1. The Golden Circle

A great concept that graphically represents core values is a Golden Circle (See Figure 1). Sinek (2009, 41-50) is referring to it when he describes successful leaders and companies. The Golden Circle consists of three successfully larger circles. The first circle stands for WHY or the beliefs that guide your actions. The next one is the HOW you do what you do or the methods. The third circle displays WHAT or the product.

In the coaching context, WHY is the purpose of your coaching, HOW refers to the coaching process or daily actions and WHAT are the outcomes including successful programs and athletes. This clear understanding of the purpose of coaching has helped many coaches to build successful teams/programs. Value-based and purpose-driven culture are the two key principles that were found to be the foundation that has led New Zealand's rugby team All Blacks to become one of the most successful teams in the history of sport. (Kerr 2013; 18, 34-39; Hodge, Graham and Smith, 2014; 60, 66) Another example would be the Mike Babcock's credo or the set of values, which were instilled and have led the athletes of the Men's Canadian Olympic ice hockey team to win the Olympic gold in 2010 (Babcock and Larsen, 2012, 3, 9-10). Gilbert (2017, 23) identifies core values very much like a compass that guides the journey and provides stability throughout the years. Almost everything else will be in a constant state of change and the coach would have to adapt coaching methods accordingly.

Values need to be supported with actions. It is best expressed by the Japanese proverb: "*Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is a nightmare*" (Kerr, 2013, 18). Therefore, coaching values (WHY) should always be complimented with coaching philosophy (HOW and WHAT).

2.2 Coaching Philosophy

Coaching philosophy could be defined as guidelines to the daily decision making of the coach where core values serve a role of the pillars that support it (Gilbert, 2017, 26-28). It is found to be one of the crucial elements of successful coaching. The work of Côté and Gilbert (2009) has a great contribution to our understanding of what successful coaching is through proposing a definition of coaching effectiveness. The authors have formulated the definition as follows:

The consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts" (Côté and Gilbert 2009, 316)

In order to better understand the definition of coaching effectiveness the following paragraphs will breakdown each of the components of the definition: Coaches' Knowledge, Athletes' Outcomes and Coaching Context. Finally, a light will be shed on the relationship between coaching effectiveness and coaching philosophy.

Côté and Gilbert (2009, 309-312) define the first component of the definition of coaching effectiveness as the Coaches' Knowledge. It is then separated into three distinct domains: professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Professional knowledge refers to knowledge of sport sciences and sport-specific knowledge (technical and tactical domains). Nevertheless, professional knowledge alone does not equip the coach with the skills needed to become an effective coach. Without a doubt, it may give a certain performance advantage but if professional knowledge is not adjusted to the coaching context, it loses its relevance. Moreover, the coaches' effectiveness depends on interactions with the individual and group interactions. Therefore, interpersonal knowledge or knowledge of effective human interaction plays a big role. In order to maximize athletes' outcomes, the coach has to have the ability to reflect and introspect their own coaching methods and practices. Understanding of oneself and capacity for self-development are the components that comprise intrapersonal knowledge. To sum up, the coach has to know the sport, be able to interact with athletes, officials, colleagues, parents, fans and many other groups of stakeholders, and be aware of their own strengths and needs for improvement.

The second component is Athletes' Outcomes. The outcomes are comprised of athletes' Competence (sport-specific knowledge including technical and tactical skills, performance skills, fitness and healthy training habits), Confidence (internal sense of overall positive self-worth), Connection (positive bonds and social relationships with peers inside and outside of sport) and Character (the respect for the sport and others, integrity, empathy and responsibility). More specifically, athletes' outcomes could be identified as the results of coaching. (Côté and Gilbert, 2009, 312-314).

The last component is the coaching contexts or the environment. (Côté and Gilbert, 2009, 309-315). The study by Trudel and Gilbert (2006, 516-539) has identified three distinct sports contexts: recreational sport, developmental sport and elite sport. It is critical for the coaches to be able to differentiate between those and recognize the differences in the

demands of each of the contexts. It is now important to transfer the model of the coaching effectiveness into the context of coaching philosophy.

The literature suggests for the philosophy to be effective the core values need to be a part of the personality of the coach. In order to define those, the coach has to have good self-awareness skills that could identify the beliefs that have an impact of him as a human being and as coach. (Gilbert, 2017, 27) Nevertheless, some of the coaching methods require adjustment over time according to the athletes that are coached and the coaching context (Gillham et al. 2016, 61; Nash, Sproule and Horton, 2008, 541). As the coaching methods are changing so do the beliefs. Thus, coaching philosophy has to be reviewed annually in order to fit the present coaching environment. As an example, let's recall that it took fourteen years for coach Wooden to finalize his coaching philosophy and eventually create the Pyramid of Success (Gilbert, 2010, 340). To sum up, the process of building and updating a coaching philosophy requires from the coach knowledge of self, knowledge of his/her athletes and knowledge of the sport – the same key attributes that characterize effective coaching.

In addition, Gilbert (2017, 44-48) points out that the coaches have to successfully communicate their coaching philosophy to their colleagues and athletes in order to increase buy-in to the program and, in turn, improve team cohesiveness. Pete Carroll recalls that when he was appointed as head coach of the Seattle Seahawks, the first thing that he did was a staff meeting where he introduced his coaching philosophy of Win Forever. When every member of the staff is aware of the philosophy and speaks the same language then the team would operate successfully. (Carroll, Roth and Garin, 2010, 219-221) As a result, communication becomes one of the components to be addressed in the theoretical part of this project.

2.3 Communication

Effective communication is vital to the success of any organization in any industry (Simpson and Smith, 2011, 120). The type of communication that is referred to in this paragraph is interpersonal communication when there are two or more people involved in the process of the exchange of information. First, the sender translates the thoughts into a message (encoding). The next step would be for the sender to choose an appropriate medium (method) for the communication, which would be the most effective in the particular case. When it is done, the message is being transmitted to the receiver. Then, the receiver processes and interprets the message (decoding). The last step in this process is either ex-

ternal or internal response of the receiver, which could be used as a measure of effective communication. (Gloud and Weinberg, 2015, 222-223; Simpson and Smith, 2011, 120) Nevertheless, there are barriers that prevent either the sending or receiving and communication breakdown that refers to the message being either misinterpreted or misdirected (Weinberg and Gloud, 2015, 232).

For a coach or a leader, it is important to address possible barriers, breakdowns and identify the most suitable communication media considering the existing coaching context that could inhibit communication. Different methods of communication (oral, written, visual, electronic, non-verbal, etc.) have different advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, those could be eliminated by a combination of those. (Simpson and Smith, 2011, 123-125) For example, when the coaching has established core values for the team and communicates those in the form of boards. After reading it, every player interprets it differently in their own way. Therefore, the coach needs to clarify meaning of each of those by discussing those in team or individual meetings.

In addition, it is important to consider another factor when it comes to the communication – the background of the receiver. Every athlete is different. Those differences may appear in prior knowledge, culture, language, experiences, motivation, and several other factors. Thus, his/her prior experiences shape the understanding of the present environment. If the coach relates to something, which is foreign for athlete's understanding or differs from the motivation, the communication is most likely to face the breakdown and increase the ambiguity in coach-athlete relationship. (Gilbert, 2017, 127-128, 130-131) In other words, communication requires an individualized approach that is shifting the focus from the coach towards the athlete. Athlete-centered coaching is a concept that has been actively discussed in the past decade.

2.4 Athlete-Centered Coaching

There are two distinct approaches to coaching which differ in the core of their philosophies. One is the coach-centered approach where the coach evaluates the learners and sets specific goals for them and provides advice on the right way of doing things, which leaves the athlete without any decision making. In contrast, the athlete-centered approach presents a greater involvement of the athlete into the decision making-process and the coach needs to encourage athletes through listening, questioning, challenging and re-framing ideas of the athlete without providing concrete answers (Nash, 2015, 316-317). The research has demonstrated that coaching philosophies of the successful coaches

regardless of the level of the competition are coming down to one common approach – athlete-centered coaching (Gilbert, 2017, 28-35; Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016, 224-226).

One of the most famous examples of athlete-centered coaching philosophies is the approach of the John Wooden and his Pyramid of Success that has served as a foundation for The Pyramid of Teaching Success in Sport where the development of the learner is the central theme (Gilbert 2017, 33; Gilbert, Nater, Siwik, & Gallimore 2010, 87-88). “Win Forever” is the philosophy of Pete Carroll (Head Coach Seattle Seahawks, NFL), which was inspired by Coach Wooden’s pyramid. The motto of the philosophy is: *“Doing things better than they have ever been done before”*. Coach Carroll believes that if the athlete will be developing his/her skills every training session, sooner or later he/she will reach the competitive edge by competing with self instead of trying to outplay the competition. (Carroll, Roth and Garin, 2010, 77-79, 85)

The athlete-centered coaching approach is recognized when the development of the athletes is put as a central theme of the coaching process. For the coach it is important to recognize the importance of the individualization in the coaching process in order to increase the effectiveness of the training, as every individual possesses different strengths and weaknesses in the technical, tactical, physical and psychological areas of the development. Research pinpoints the importance on the emphasis on the individual performance goals for each of the athletes in order to initiate and guide athletes and coaches toward a more process-oriented mind-set. (Milbrath, 2017, 6942; McGladrey, Murray & Hannon, 2010, 5-7; Bergeron, et al. 2015, 50-51)

Milbrath (2017, 6940) states that athletes tend to prefer athlete-centered coaching as this approach empowers athletes and puts athletes’ personal goals over winning. If the coach wants to learn about his athletes more, he or she has to have a profiling method in place in order to effectively identify differences between individual athletes. A work by Vallée & Bloom (2005) has investigated how expert university coaches build successful programs. The participants were five Canadian female university coaches. The findings indicate that the expert coaches possess a genuine desire for facilitating their players’ individual growth as coaches believe that it leads to better long-term results than exclusively aiming to win at all cost.

Another study by Vallée & Bloom (2016) presents a case of Chantal Vallée who became a head coach of Women’s Basketball team of University of Windsor (Canada). She has led the team to a winning percentage over 80% and five consecutive Canadian national championships. The authors define one of the keys to her success as “Athlete Empower-

ment". Coach Vallée highlights that teaching athletes how to make decisions has fostered positive teaching outcomes and has strengthened her relationship with her athletes. (Vallée & Bloom, 2016, 173-174) The results from this research strongly correlate with the findings of the other studies mentioned above.

All in all, an extensive amount of research demonstrates that world's most successful coaches tend to adopt an athlete-centered coaching philosophy with an emphasis on individual development of their athletes that provides them with tools necessary to succeed on and off the field.

2.5 Athlete-Profiling

Gilbert (2017, 38-41) identifies athlete-profiling as the primary tool of athlete-centered coaching. Coaches need to respect individual tendencies of the athletes in order to identify effective coaching strategies that would work for certain type of athletes. Therefore, athlete-profiling is working as a tool in order to keep the coach in perspective of who his/her athletes are and what are their cultural, demographic, and ethnic behavioural tendencies and needs.

Jones (1993, 171) and Doyle and Parfitt (1999, 115-116) have identified the benefits of performance profiling in cognitive-behavioural interventions. Performance profiling helps to identify specific individual needs of the athlete which provides a coach with valuable information that could potentially be used as supplementary data to daily coaching decisions. Involvement of the individual into the decision-making maintains a high level of motivation of the individual to take active part in the process and facilitates self-determined learning. In addition, performance profiling could be used as a monitoring and feedback tool as it provides athletes with data of their starting point, mid-term results and long-term final goal. Self-awareness is the first very important skill to take on in the development of self-regulation by identifying the need for the development of a certain quality. Kirschenbaum (1984, 161) defines this first step as a problem identification. Then it is followed by the commitment and execution stages that then require monitoring.

Performance profiling is not only beneficial when it comes to the technical or tactical development, but also in the development of psychological skills. Weinberg and Gould (2015, 262-265) identify athlete profiling as an initial step in psychological skills training. The basic 360-circle performance profile could be done by an athlete by first identifying qualities that are important in the sport or those could be imposed by a coach, then identi-

fy the athlete's measure of own performance compared to the best performer in sport (Butler and Hardy, 1992, 262-263). As an outcome, graphical results will allow athletes to improve performance, self-reflection and self-evaluation skills that eventually contribute to the development of meta-cognitive skills which eventually have a positive impact on athlete's engagement in self-regulated learning with self-determined motives (Kitsantas, & Zimmerman, 2006, 211).

2.6 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has emerged as an important theoretical approach in exercise psychology and sports coaching. SDT is a socio-cognitive motivational theory that focuses on the social factors (e.g. coaching behaviors) and their influence on the motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) of the individual through the impact on the three basic psychological needs. (Mallet, 2005, 417, Deci and Ryan, 1985, 130-133) The psychological needs are universal across all culture: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Researchers identify psychological needs as essential components to be satisfied for one to strive to attain individual goals regardless of the field of interest (Deci and Ryan 2000, 74-76; Gangé et al. 2014, 189)

Ryan and Deci (1985, 111-112) define autonomy as a degree to which one has a choice in regard of initiation and regulation of own behavior. Competence is referred as ability to regulate one's own behavior to achieve a desired outcome. Relatedness is defined as ones feeling of belonging to a certain group. Deci and Ryan (2000, 75) highlight that each individual may differ in extent to which each of the needs has to be satisfied to facilitate self-determined motivation. Sociocultural factors, individual events across lifespan, environmental affordances and personal values are amongst the factors that have an impact on individual's perception of the expression of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Therefore, the differences in expression of may occur across various cultures. Nevertheless, Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) by Gangé et al. (2014, 188) presents data that demonstrates slight deviation in expression of psychological needs in nine countries but at the same time the data has a strong correlation of need satisfaction with greater work performance, less turnover intentions and perceived stress.

Intrinsic motivation refers to the inner drive for self-determination, autonomy, genuine interest in the task and enjoyment. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is commonly referred to the engagement of the activity for some sort of the external reward or praise from the superior. (Mallet, 2005, 417-418) In addition, extrinsic motivation could be separated

into the non-self-determined extrinsic motivation (Non-SDET), which has two sub-categories external (coerced by the superior) and introjected (feel of guilt). Another type is self-determined extrinsic motivation (SDET), which refers to the process when an athlete realizes the value of the training and accepts it as a part of the process, which will potentially lead toward the desired inner goal. (Mallet, 2005, 418, Ryan and Deci, 2000, 71-74) A study by Mallet & Hanrahan (2004, 197-198) has found that elite athletes are highly driven by personal goals and achievements rather than financial incentives.

Regardless of the age or gender, athletes tend to have higher levels of motivation if their coaches demonstrate autonomy-supportive behaviors (Amorose and Anderson-Butcher, 2007, 664-668; Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura, & Blades, 2010, 159). Examples of autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors include: (1) Provide choice within specific rules and limits, (2) provide a rationale for tasks and limits, (3) acknowledge the other person's feelings and perspectives, (4) provide athletes with opportunities for initiative taking and independent work, (5) provide non-controlling competence feedback (6) avoid controlling behaviors and (7) prevent ego-involvement in athletes (Mageau & Vallerand 2003, 887). Athlete empowerment allows the coach to provide autonomy to his/her athletes, give opportunities to demonstrate their competence and by demonstrating genuine care for their development, the coach strengthens the coach-athlete relationship (Mageau & Vallerand 2003, 886-892; Vallée & Bloom, 2005, 194-195). The study of Howard et al. (2016, 87-85) has studied the motivation profiles of employees by adopting person-centered approach. The researchers have found that autonomous motivated profiles have demonstrated higher levels of well-being and superior work performance compared to the amotivated profiles. Furthermore, previous person-centered studies Van den Broeck et al. (2013, 77) and Moran et al. (2012, 361) have put forward similar conclusions and found that autonomous driven profiles are associated with positive work outcomes.

In summary, research literature above provides support for autonomy-supportive coaching to be an approach that ensures well-being of the athletes, facilitates trust in coach-athlete relationship and leads to a higher level of performance.

3 Aims, Objectives, Constraints and Limitations

The aim of this project, as it was stated previously, is to build a tailor-made athlete-profiling tool, which provides a head coach with information on an athlete's own insights and interpretations regarding the psychological components of the coaching philosophy. Considering the context of a professional ice hockey team, the tool needs to be short and concise in order to eliminate the possibility of being an additional stressor for the athletes during the pre-season preparation process.

Views on coaching differ from one coach to another. Thus, the tool needs to be made specifically to fit this particular coach and his/her coaching philosophy. The profiling tool is going to be structured under the supervision of the head coach in order to ensure common understanding and interpretation of the items. It should be emphasized early on that this particular profiling tool is not presented as the ultimate tool as it may not be as useful for other coaches as it potentially might differ from their views on coaching and, therefore, limit its effectiveness.

On the other hand, the thesis presents the process and the example product that could potentially be created by every coach regardless of the sport. In other words, coaches may benefit from this thesis by following the same procedure to allow them to create their own profiling tool that would fit their philosophy. There is a need for every coach, who wants to carry out a successful athlete-centered coaching process, to have a profiling system in place. Profiling would eventually benefit the coach in many areas and will allow establishment of a more effective coaching process.

In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the psychological profiling methods, existing assessment scales were analyzed (E.g. Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, 1995; Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Duckworth and Quinn, 2009; MacNamara and Collins, 2011; Pelletier, Rocchi, Vallerand, Deci & Ryan, 2013). Nevertheless, those were not able to satisfy some of the psychological characteristics needed to be investigated. It required adjusting the wording and assessment scale in order to create the profiling tool that would be tailored for this particular coach and his environment. To increase trustworthiness and validity of the measurements, the profiling tool requires further studies for validation with larger participant samples and different populations that vary in gender, level of performance and cultures. Nevertheless, the thesis demonstrates the need for the assessment scales to be adapted for the coach and his/her coaching environment in order to be effective.

Another constraint of the profile is the translation of the material. Some of the expressions were modified and adapted to fit the Russian language as well as the Russian culture to allow ease of understanding. The athletes were offered assistance throughout the training camp in case there were any challenges in comprehending the material of the questionnaire. The translation of the content required an addition clarification to avoid ambiguity and double meaning of the content. Athletes were presented with their original answers and translations to verify the validity of the translation.

4 Project Planning

This section will provide the reader with the methodology of the project to illustrate the process behind the tool. It will present a step-by-step progression from the first meeting with the coach and the selection of the most effective timeline until the ready-made product that was used with the athletes of Salvat Yulaev.

4.1 Understanding the philosophy

The process of architecting the profiling tool began by meeting Coach Westerlund and conducting an interview to gain an in-depth understanding of his philosophy. The next steps were the choice of the method of implementation and the development of the timeline. The final steps in this process were to outline the structure and the contents of the questionnaire together with the translation into the Russian language.

Another source that played an informative role in the process of understanding Coach Westerlund's coaching philosophy was his speech at the Coaching Symposium in Moscow 2016 hosted by the International Ice Hockey Federation (Westerlund, 14 May 2016). The title of his presentation was "Coaching the Human Being". Coach Westerlund discussed the shift in his philosophy from teaching his athletes exclusively hockey skills to teaching his athletes how to learn.

Coach Westerlund's coaching philosophy has an athlete-centered approach with an emphasis on the individual (See Figure 2). It considers strengths and the development needs of a human being, an athlete and a hockey player. Coach Westerlund believes that every human being has a set of strengths that are unique. Then the individual is becoming an athlete and eventually specializes in the sport. In this particular case, the sport is ice hockey. From his point of view, the future of coaching is when the head coach takes care of the head and the heart of the athletes and assistants are responsible for the development of the technical, tactical, physical and psychological elements. The key mental qualities that serve as the cornerstones of Coach Westerlund's philosophy are motivation, attitude, self-awareness/confidence, sense of responsibility and emotional drive. Finally, the hockey player is becoming a part of the team which requires successful management of group cohesion and development of team tactics. Coach Westerlund has defined coaching as the process of helping an athlete to find one's internal resources and developing those in order to achieve high-performance.



Figure 2. Coach Westerlund's Coaching Framework

4.2 Adjust and Apply

The next step was the adjustment of the minor details of the philosophy to the coaching context as the differences in the cultural background of the athletes needs to be taken into the account to increase the efficiency of the communication of the philosophy. Another very important step was the translation of the philosophy into the Russian language. Due to the constraints of the language some of the contents of the philosophy required further adjustment to create synergy between both versions of the philosophy (English & Russian). As a result, two identical versions were created and those were expressed in the form boards that were placed in the locker room and the headquarters of the club.

Traditionally, the earlier the head coach learns about his athletes, the sooner he will be able to identify the most effective coaching methods to be used. Therefore, the pre-season training camp at Vierumäki was chosen for player profiling. Coach Westerlund would hold an individual meeting with 3-4 players on daily basis. At the end of the meeting, the coach would hand every athlete a paper copy of the profile to be filled in by the next day. Then the results were transcribed into the electronic format to ease the data transfer and processing.

To increase trustworthiness of the results, the tool was translated into the Russian language. Another important part of the profile were open-ended questions that allowed athletes to express their own thoughts. It is important for the coaching to recognize and respect the interpretation of the key terms by the athletes in order to recognize and apply appropriate coaching methods that would be suitable for the athlete and accelerate their learning (Gilbert 2017, 127).

The contents of the profiling tool were outlined together with Coach Westerlund. The five qualities from the coaching philosophy were chosen to be assessed: Motivation, Attitude, Self-Confidence, Responsibility and Emotional Preparation (See Figure 3). The wording and the graphical design of the tool were developed to be identical to the philosophy boards that were mentioned previously.



Figure 3. Coaching the Human Being

The following sections of the methodology will include a brief outline of Coach Westerlund's interpretation of the psychological quality. It is then followed by the relevant theoretical concepts in the research literature. The last part of each of the sections presents the profile's items that were dedicated to a particular psychological quality. To see the full version of the profiling tool, see **Appendix 1**

4.3 Introduction

The introduction briefly presented the purpose of the profile and the parties who have access to the results to ensure the fulfilment of ethical guidelines. It consists of the athlete's first and last name, date of birth and the amount of years of professional ice hockey experience (See Figure 4). "1st Step Towards the Next Level" is a motto that is originally coming from the Coach Westerlund's philosophy that is located on the boards at the facilities of SY. It was included in order to communicate it as one of the central themes of the philosophy which is athlete development.

1st Step Towards the Next Level

The profile aims to help athletes to take the first step toward developing psychological preparation for practices and games. Please read every question carefully. The data from the profile will be used within Salavat Ulaev's Coaching Staff. In addition, the results will be used in the research process of Haaga-Helia UAS. Personal details will remain confidential and anonymous for the public.

* Required

1. Name *

2.

3. Date of birth

Example: December 15, 2012

4. Number of years of experience in professional ice hockey

Figure 4. Introduction Component

4.4 Motivation

4.4.1 Coach

Coach Westerlund has defined motivation as an answer for these questions: “*What do you want from the sport and life? Why do you come to the ice rink?*” Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the sources of motivation are changing over time and are unique for each individual. In these questions Coach Westerlund aims to identify the motivation of an athlete as a human being, athlete and hockey player as it was described in the initial interview regarding coaching philosophy.

4.4.2 Literature

One of the most referred definitions of motivation is “direction and intensity of one’s effort” by Sage (1977 in Weinberg and Gould, 2015, 51-52) in which direction refers to whether one is attracted to, seeks out or approaches certain situations. On the other hand, intensity refers to how much effort was put forth in the particular situation. SDT by Ryan and Deci (2000) is another commonly referred concept in the literature on motivation. As it was discussed previously, there are three distinct needs that need to be fulfilled for one to feel motivated. The continuum of motivation (see Figure 5) according to the authors begins with amotivation (no motivation) to extrinsic motivation (external rewards) to intrinsic motivation (connection to the self-interest and enjoyment of the process) (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 72).

Yet, it is important to remember that people tend to participate in sport for more than one reason. Group of athletes tend to express common and unique motives for the engagement in sport, sex differences, cultural differences and past experience may have an influence on one’s motives (Weinberg and Gould, 2015, 55-56; Gilbert, 127-131).

The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation With Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, and Corresponding Processes

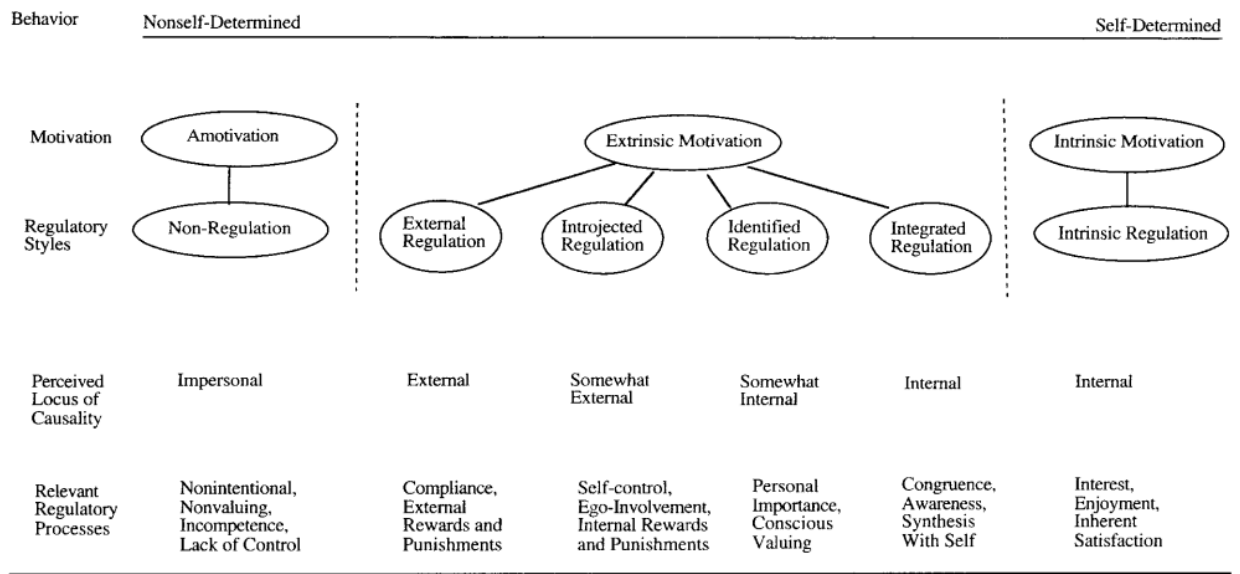


Figure 5. Self-Determination continuum (Ryan and Deci, 2000)

The last motivational theory that is going to be discussed in this paragraph is Need Achievement theory by McClelland (1961, in Weinberg and Gould, 2015, 61-62), which could be described as a disposition of the strive for success, persistence in the face of failure and pride in the accomplishment.

Due to the rich insights from the theories of motivation above, the profile has to have a section on identifying multiple reasons for one's engagement in ice hockey. At the same time, there is a need for items where athletes have to identify and rate their behavior regarding the motivation during training process.

4.4.3 Profile

MOTIVATION

5. Describe what MOTIVATION means to you (2-3 sentences).

6. Name three reasons that motivate you to continue participation in ice hockey

7. Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side
Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I don't have to be pushed to practice or play hard; I give 100%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I fail to reach my goals, it makes me try even harder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me, every training is an opportunity to take one step closer toward mastery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 6. Motivation Component

Item 5 encourages athletes to interpret the term in their own words to provide a coach an insight into the athletes' understanding of the term (See Figure 6). As it was discussed previously, one has multiple reasons for sports participation; with that in mind, **Item 6** was designed to identify several motives for one to be engaged in ice hockey. The responses from the items above will be analyzed with the use of the revised Sports Motivation Scale (SMS-II), which will identify the position of the athlete's motives on the motivation continuum (Pelletier, Rocchi, Vallerand, Deci & Ryan, 2013, 339) The last part of the questionnaire consists of a series of statements in which athletes were asked to rate how often they have experienced the same thing using the scale *almost never, sometimes, often,*

almost always. **Item 7.1** and **7.2** were adopted from the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory by Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995, 385) under the subscales of Confidence and Achievement Motivation. In addition, those correlated with items from the factor of Ability to Organize and Engage in Quality Practice of MacNamara and Collins (2011, 1286). **Item 7.3** was designed together with the head coach as a potential landmark that aimed to assess the athletes' desire to learn.

4.5 Attitude

4.5.1 Coach

Coach Westerlund has brought a few important questions that for him describe attitude: *“Do you respect time and life? Do you see situations as a problem or a challenge? How do you treat people around you?”* (Westerlund, 14 May 2016) In other words, athletes have to respect the opportunity of playing ice hockey, be resistant to hardship, look at situations with a process-oriented mindset and treat people around them with respect.

4.5.2 Literature

The questions that are characterized above could be summarized by the term grit. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly (2007, 1087 - 1088) major themes that underpin grit are perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Additionally, the authors have identified grit as one of the crucial ingredients for success regardless of the field of interest. (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007, 1100).

Dweck (2006, 7; 2009, 4) defines a growth mindset as one's belief that traits are not fixed but instead, are prone to improvement and change through one's efforts and experience. In other words, one has a growth mindset when he/she interprets development as a continuous learning experience that eventually leads to an improved performance. Some of the most successful coaches tend to share the same view on learning and athlete development (Bespomoshchnov & Caron, 2017, 307; Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016, 225; Carroll, Roth, & Garin 2010, 85 - 87).

4.5.3 Profile

ATTITUDE

8. Describe what ATTITUDE means to you (2-3 sentences).

9. What are your expectations from the camp in Vierumäki?

10. Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side
Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
The more pressure there is during a game, the more I enjoy it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I experience a setback, it does not discourage me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have high standards to myself and tend to fulfill them every practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I remain positive and enthusiastic during competition, no matter how badly things are going	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 7. Attitude Component

In Figure 7, **Item 8** asks athletes to describe what attitude means to them. The following **Item 9** was created in order to grasp the athletes' view on the pre-season preparation process. **Items 10.1** and **10.2** were retrieved from the subscale of Peaking Under Pressure and **Item 10.5** from Coping With Adversity in Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995,

384 - 385) which was included into the profile to identify whether the athlete's attitude changed under pressure. **Item 10.3** refers to the assessment of the perseverance of effort and was moderated from Duckworth and Quinn (2009, 167) and Coping with Performance and Developmental Pressures factor from MacNamara and Collins (2011, 1286). **Item 10.4** was created together with the head coach in order to measure the eagerness of athletes to perform at their best every training session and/or game.

4.6 Self-Confidence

4.6.1 Coach

Coach Westerlund: "Do you know/admit strengths and weaknesses?" For Coach Westerlund the term self-confidence lays at the foundation of the concept of self-awareness. Coach Westerlund believes that the first step towards self-confidence is the recognition of your strengths and weaknesses. The next step would be the acceptance of those characteristics. Which in turn, guides the behavior of the individual to become more authentic. To sum up, Coach Westerlund's view on confidence could be described in the following statements: know your strengths, accept them and act accordingly.

4.6.2 Literature

Weinberg & Gould (2015, 324) define self-confidence as the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behaviour. Vealey, Hayashi, Garner-Holman & Giacobbi (1998, 72) has identified sources of self-confidence including mastery, social support, physical/mental preparation, coaches' leadership and demonstration of ability. Machida, Marie Ward & Vealey (2012, 172, 183) suggest that a well-integrated and balanced combination between those factors allows athletes to establish and maintain a stable level of confidence. In addition, researchers suggest that athletes can regulate their confidence by focusing on controllable sources of self-confidence that are related to the task orientation and adaptive perfectionism.

Yet an athlete needs to find an optimal self-confidence level which serves as the best state for the athlete's performance as the states of under/over-confidence showed to have a negative impact on the performance of the athlete. Nonetheless, the optimal state differs for every athlete. (Weinberg & Gould, 2015, 327-326)

When an athlete recognizes his/her own strengths, the next step for him/her would be to actually believe that when the strength is used, good things will follow. In other words, this phenomenon could be described as self-fulfilling prophecy. In Weinberg & Gould (2015, 325) the term is defined as the expectation of something to happen actually increases the likelihood of it happening. One of the best examples that helps to illustrate the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy is the story when the 4-minute mile record was broken by Roger Bannister in 1954. Before that the vast the majority believed that it was impossible to run the mile in less than 4 minutes. The interesting fact is that in the next year there were several runners who did the same. The reason for such a break-through is that many of the runners have begun to believe that it is actually possible and stopped placing psychological limits on themselves. (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 325)

4.6.3 Profile

SELF-CONFIDENCE

11. Describe what SELF-CONFIDENCE means to you (2-3 sentences).

12. What are the strong sides of your character? (describe at least 3)

13. Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
I tend to doubt that I have what it takes to play at KHL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get the most out of my talent and skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I handle unexpected situations in my sport very well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident that I will play well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 8. Self-Confidence Component

Item 11 is similar to the previous section and asks athletes to interpret the central term in their own words. **Item 12** is related to self-awareness in regard to the strengths of an athlete in the “human being” domain. **Item 13.1** is structured in reverse (with a negative emphasis) and was proposed by the head coach (See Figure 8). **Item 13.2** and **13.4** are part of the Self-Confidence and Achievement Motivation subscale in Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995, 384 - 385). **Items 13.3** was a part of Campbell-Sills & Stein (2007, 1025)

and **13.5** was retrieved from the same inventory yet from a Freedom From Worry subscale of Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995, 384-385).

4.7 Responsibility

4.7.1 Coach

Coach Westerlund (Westerlund 14 May 2016) begins his discussion on the topic of responsibility by identifying leadership as being a key underlying principle. He claims that before you can lead others you need to learn how to lead yourself. It is important for the athlete to be responsible for the actions on/off the rink as those have an enormous impact on the athlete's own performance and the performance of the team. In addition, Coach Westerlund is using the term self-acting athlete in order to characterize responsibility. Following the physical preparation routines and recovery protocols are all under the primary responsibilities of the athletes. In other words, Coach Westerlund emphasizes the importance of the readiness to perform at the very best of your ability both physically and mentally.

4.7.2 Literature

Starting from the middle of the 20th century until nowadays, psychological domain in high-performance was thoroughly studied and characteristics that would help individuals to reach high-performance were attempted to be identified. The research demonstrates that psychology plays a big role in talent development and identification regardless of the field of occupation including sports, music and academia (Abbot & Collins, 2004, 403 - 405). In sports, MacNamara, Button & Collins (2010, 1, 71) in their first study have identified eight psychological characteristics of developing excellence (PCDEs) including the following: competitiveness, commitment, vision of what it takes to succeed, imagery, importance of working on weaknesses, coping under pressure, game awareness and self-belief. The second study by the authors has demonstrated that the development of those takes time. At the beginning of the pathway there is always someone that helps the athlete to instill those values and develop them. Nevertheless, over time the performer has to take more control over his or her own development in order to become more self-regulated learner. (MacNamara, Button & Collins, 2010, 2, 93 - 94). However, monitoring of the development

of the PCDEs needs to be in place to track the development of the individual and prevent development of negative psychological qualities that may contribute to the talent wastage and other maladaptive behaviours (MacNamara and Collins, 2015, 77 - 78).

The description of the responsibility by the head coach has a strong correlation with the term self-regulation. When it comes to the research literature on learning, Zimmerman (1989, 329-330, 1990, 4-6) identifies self-regulated learners by the establishment of a self-regulated development plan, utilization of self-monitoring and self-analysis strategies with the support of self-feedback and the tendency to set challenging new goals when earlier ones were achieved, which helps them to stay self-motivated throughout the process. The meta-cognitive skills are graphically represented in a framework below (See Figure 9).

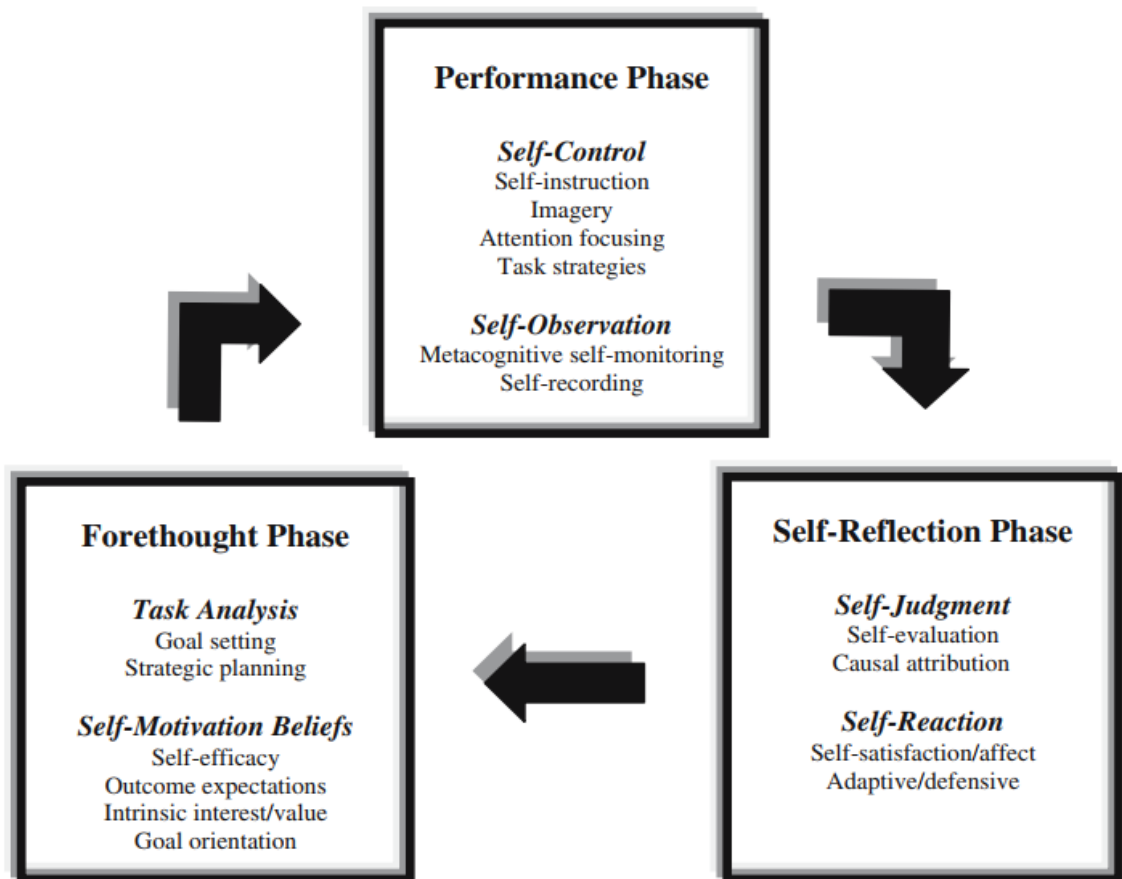


Figure 9. Meta-cognitive skills (Retrieved from Kitsantas & Zimmerman, 2006, 202)

Research literature points out that self-regulation is the skill that differentiates expert performers from non-experts and junior elite athletes from their peers. In other words, expert performance requires expert learning (Jonker, Elferink-Gemser, & Visscher, 2010, 906-907; Ertmer, & Newby, 1996, 9-11; Cleary and Zimmerman, 2001, 206). Self-regulation skills that were mentioned above play a big role in athlete's preparation and those are synonyms for what Coach Westerlund refers as self-leadership (Westerlund 14 May 2016)

4.7.3 Profile

RESPONSIBILITY

14. Describe what RESPONSIBILITY as an athlete means to you (2-3 sentences).

15. Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side
Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to follow sports regime on regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 10. Responsibility

Item 14, as in other parts, aims to grasp the athletes' understanding of responsibility (See Figure 10). In this particular item, the specification "as an athlete" aims to clarify to participants the context in which the term "responsibility" is going to be applied. **Item 15.1** is adopted from the Concentration subscale of Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995, 385) and Coping with performance and developmental pressures subscale of MacNamara and Collins (2011, 1286). The head coach has proposed **Item 15.2** as a supplementary question and tailored it to the topic of "responsibility of an athlete".

4.8 Emotional Preparation

4.8.1 Coach

Coach Westerlund believes that there is a lot of strength in emotions and that it can bring the performance to the next level. Nevertheless, if the athlete wants to utilize emotions as a supporting tool, he/she needs to recognize the emotions that were experienced during the best performance and identify strategies for reaching the best performance state dur-

ing the “bad day”. Coach sees his role as central to this process and having individual meetings with every athlete on a regular basis as the primary tool for helping his athletes to find ways to achieve their best performance states on a regular basis (Westerlund 14 May 2016).

4.8.2 Literature

This view on the utilization of emotions correlates with the model of Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF). In order to present a comprehensive overview of the model, every component of it needs to be discussed in detail. The model takes into account that every athlete is different. Therefore, it is important to consider individual dynamics of the subjective emotional experiences of the athlete. In the definition of IZOF, the “zones” are referred as ranges of the perceived optimal and dysfunctional states paired with the quality of the performance. Optimal emotions refer to the emotions that are the most relevant and suitable for the athlete depending on the context (training session or competition) and time (before and during the performance). The functioning concept is related to the emotion-performance relationship in which emotions can have an impact on the performance by either energizing or de-energizing the athlete. (Hanin, 2000, 66-68; 2004, 740-742; 2007, 49-57) In order to create an emotional profile for an athlete, the first step would be to identify the emotional states of the particular athlete that are related to the successful and poor performances. The next step is to create an emotion-performance relationship by identifying positive/negative emotions that have a beneficial impact on and positive/negative emotions that inhibit the performance together with the intensity of each of the emotions. To successfully apply IZOF, the last step would be to determine person- and task- relevant techniques by the athlete in order to regulate emotions for reaching the optimal functioning state. (Hanin, 2000, 301-316; 2007, 58-59; 2004; 748-749)

4.8.3 Profile

EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

16. Describe what EMOTIONAL PREPARATION means to you (2-3 sentences).

17. Describe your emotional state when you perform at your best (e.g I feel energized or I tend to experience anger)

18. Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side
Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My preparation routines helps me to achieve my best performance state on regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I feel myself getting too tense, I can quickly relax my body and calm myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 11. Emotional Preparation

In this particular case, the athletes were asked to share their views on emotional preparation (**Item 16**). In the next item, the athletes identify their own emotions when they have performed at their best (**Item 17**). In Figure 11, **Items 18.1** and **18.3** were retrieved from Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptacek, (1995, 385). **Item 18.1** was located under the factor of Goal setting/Mental Preparation which correlates with the theme of this particular section and **Item 18.3** is under the factor of Coping with Adversity which represents the assess-

ment self-regulation skills. **Item 18.2** was designed to ask athletes to rate the effectiveness of their preparation routines.

4.9 Self-Evaluation

The last part of the profile contained a self-evaluation grid (See Figure 12). The athletes had to rate themselves from 1 to 5. The self-evaluation by athletes provides the head coach with information on the athletes' own rating. As a result, the coach will be able to compare his own view and athlete's view regarding the assessment. Eventually, in further discussions, the coach and his athletes will be able to find a common language and from there begin developing a plan towards a common goal. In addition, the quote "WE ARE SLAVAT YULAEV" was taken directly from the board to match the coaching philosophy. More specifically, the aim of the quote was to communicate the key principles that underpin the team's culture.

19. Please rate yourself according to the characteristics below (1-Low; 5-High)
Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional Preparation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WE ARE SALAVAT ULAEV



Figure 12. Self-Evaluation Component

5 Results

To extend our understanding on the implementation of the profiling tool in the elite ice hockey environment, this project uses qualitative methods that involve an explorative approach to inquiry. This approach uses interviews which guide participants to provide in-depth information on subjective meaning in situations and contexts. (Fletcher & Arnold, 2011, 225-226; Smith, Young, Figgins & Arthur 2017, 3) Interviews were therefore selected to explore the application of the profiling tool in the coaching process.

The following parts of this section will discuss common themes that emerged during the interviews. The interviews were conducted with the head coach and three athletes. Athletes represented three distinct categories in terms of experience. **Athlete 1** was a first-year athlete (1 year of professional experience), **Athlete 2** was an experienced athlete (7 years of professional experience) and **Athlete 3** was a veteran ($x > 10$ years of professional experience). The interviews with the athletes were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews were translated later into English. The interviews were conducted in Russian in order to allow athletes to express themselves more openly.

At first, the results will discuss the benefits of the profiling that were perceived by the coach and the athletes. In addition, the interviewees will outline the suggested improvements for the profiling tool. The results were organized in the following four sections: first step towards the next level, graphical representation of the development path, mutual understanding and monitoring of the progress.

5.1 First step towards the next level

The title refers to the initial meeting between the coach and the athletes. Gilbert (2017, 73-79) has outlined pre-season as one of the most important periods when the coaches must learn about his athletes in order to successfully build a coaching process in-season and outline the most effective coaching methods with each individual. The **Coach** has pointed out that the profiling tool has helped him to kick-start his coaching process. In addition, he has outlined that the tool aids the process of communication through the encouragement of athlete input by clearly demonstrating it below:

“The profiling tool gives me a very good pace when I start working with a player. I know already a little bit about how he understands those psychological factors. Then it is much easier for me to start to discuss it with him and begin the coaching process... it gives good first information and a good starting point for mental coaching...”

All the participants have shed light on the importance of learning about each other during the initial meeting as it played a big role in developing trust in the coach-athlete relationship. Previously, **Coach** has described self-awareness as an important component to confidence. In this particular section, it is seen that self-awareness is one of the initial steps of the coaching process. **Coach** has pointed it out when he was talking about the coaching process: *“The first step is that player knows self and then leads self”*. In other words, a coach and an athlete have to be aware of where they are now, what they are doing and why they are doing it. **Athlete 1** has described the profiling as a tool that benefited him through the improvement of self-awareness: *“...profiling helped me to learn about myself...”* and *“... [profiling] helped [me] to identify areas for improvement.”*

5.2 Mutual Understanding

Mutual understanding and trust are crucial components to any successful program (Gilbert, 2017, 128). At the beginning of the interview, **Coach** expressed his opinion regarding the coaching process and the structure of it. He articulated clearly that mutual understanding and common goals are crucial pillars to the success of the coaching process by stating: *“I think what coaching practically is, is that we communicate with the player, then we have a common plan and we work to achieve it...”*

When **Coach** was asked for a more descriptive explanation of mutual understanding he revealed that it is important for him to hear athletes' own thoughts in order to be able to understand them and later find the most effective coaching approach. See his comment below: *“Communicate things like “Hey, why did you do this in this situation”? The profiling tool is a big help to get the first information out of the player. What is he thinking?”*

In addition, **Coach** finds profiling as an opportunity for self-reflection and emphasizes it as a part of the learning for athletes by stating:

“It [profiling] helps to find the meaning of words. There are over 30 players and they all think differently. So, it [profiling] helps to build a common language with a team...”
and “The first step is that player knows self and then leads self.”

Interestingly, **Athlete 2** mentioned that it is the first time playing under a foreign coach and being exposed to such individualization of the coaching process. In addition, athletes have shared that it was unusual for them to have such involvement in the coaching process. **Athlete 2** revealed that most of the coaching that he was exposed to was looking at the athlete as a working mechanism without involvement in decision-making: “...[previously] the coach has seen me as a working force. My job was to work but the coach was the one making decisions.” This approach may not benefit athletes’ development of meta-cognitive skills needed for self-regulated learning as it leaves the athlete just with doing and not planning or evaluating. Furthermore, it leaves all communication out of the process which eventually can create doubts and diminish the coach-athlete relationship.

5.3 Development path

Coach believes that it is very hard to develop something that you cannot measure. Therefore, one of the benefits that he sees in profiling is the opportunity of evaluation of the psychological characteristics and with the help of mutual understanding illustrate the present situation, establish goals with an athlete and outline the development pathway:

“The profiling tools allowed me to create my own grading system in which I can rate athletes against the factors. More specifically, it gives me an opportunity to compare my rating with the athlete’s own evaluation. We can find the common level like... Hey, you are thinking about motivation this and this. I am thinking this. How did I train last time? What was your motivation?...it is very helpful in that sense”

Athlete 1 mentioned that profiling and the individualized approach allowed him to set concrete goals that are measurable. In addition, he believes that it would greatly benefit him as a rookie by maintaining the focus on those throughout the season and in the future graphically map his further development in professional ice hockey. From the veteran’s point of view, **Athlete 3** spoke about profiling as a tool that allows him to “physically touch” his development: “... [profiling] helped me to put things in perspective” and “...after these many seasons it is great to [finally] touch my psychological and physical development.”

All athletes have highlighted the usefulness of the individual meetings with the head coach throughout the season. The major theme that emerged was the transparency and individualization of the coaching process.

5.4 Monitoring of the progress

When the **Coach** was asked to share his thoughts regarding the improvements of the tool, he spoke about the need for a monitoring component of it. In addition, **Coach** found it useful for the beginning of the season but he clearly stated that there is a need for something to be used daily to put greater emphasis on the follow up. He mentioned it at the very beginning of the interview: "...we have a common plan and we work to achieve it. My biggest job is to follow up on it". In the interview, **Coach** clearly illustrated the demand regarding the daily monitoring:

"This tool is useful for the beginning of the season but maybe in the future it would be good to have something daily...as a coach, you have to evaluate your players after every game. Something that would give the athlete a value in psychological, technical or tactical aspects. "Hey, how was your motivation in tonight's game?" "How was your attitude and self-confidence?" and also maybe "Why did you feel this way?" If you are working with an athlete's mental qualities you have to evaluate those as often as possible"

Later in the interview, **Coach** stated that he is using the data from the profiling tool daily because he holds individual meetings with players almost every training session. However, as it was mentioned before, there is a need for the tool that would supplement this project and progress from the pre-season to in-season. As stated above, **Coach** suggested including individual goals of the athlete for every game and even training sessions. In other words, when an athlete needs a value there is a need for an explicit measuring scale that would add a measuring value to the psychological development.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The following paragraphs will address the correlation of the results with the main goal of the project, outline suggestions for future research and will provide practical implications for coaches to take with them into their daily coaching. As a reminder, the purpose of this project was to build a tailor-made athlete-profiling tool, which provides a head coach with information on an athlete's own insights and interpretations regarding the psychological components of the coaching philosophy.

The findings from the interview reveal that the profiling tool was found to be useful by the coach in different aspects of his coaching process. Great emphasis was put on the use of the profiling as a part of the individual meetings and a starting point for the coaching process in the pre-season. Moreover, Coach Westerlund, pointed out that the use of profiling helped him to learn about his athletes, who they are and what they think about the psychological components of his philosophy. He further emphasized that individual profiling is beneficial to build a common language with the team. The profiling tool gathers everyone's opinions in one place so that differences and similarities are clearly articulated and can guide the coach to the most effective coaching methods to be used with this particular group.

As the interviews further uncovered, profiling gave an opportunity for the coach to create his own grading system. This particular aspect is exclusive for every coach as coaches differ in their views and daily practices. Nevertheless, the feedback that was received earlier was that the grading system helps to graphically illustrate the development. Later on, the athlete's own grading could be compared with the grading by the coach and with the use of individual meetings put the athlete and the coach on the same page.

Coach Westerlund's approach encourages athletes to become active mechanisms that can develop and independently adjust according to the environment. He first sees the human-being, then an athlete and only after that does he see a hockey player. This holistic approach to coaching builds an all-around framework to athlete development in the domains mentioned above. The tool has a great emphasis on the psychological aspect of coaching as it encourages the athlete to reflect on his own beliefs regarding the concepts of motivation, attitude, confidence, responsibility, and emotional preparation. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that a majority, if not all, the athletes in the team were passive mechanisms most of their career. The introduction to the "new approach" when they are becoming active may create doubts and ambiguity. In the case like this, individual

meetings are vital. The meetings would play an educational role where the head coach will be able to clarify the purpose and erase, or at least minimize, the doubts.

One of the suggestions for further research could be the validation of the scales that were used in current profiling tool. For instance, this tool could be used with bigger samples, in different levels of performance (elite/recreational) and different age groups (youth/adolescents/adults) or genders (male/female). As it was mentioned previously, the current profiling tool requires supplementing material in terms of monitoring the development of psychological qualities. Coach Westerlund has stated that the coach should be able to evaluate his athletes after every game and the psychological qualities must be monitored as often as possible. Moreover, the tool must be straight-forward with its use to avoid being an additional source of stress for the athletes and coaches.

To evaluate my own learning, I would like to highlight that throughout the process, exposure to such individualized approach to coaching was an enormous development opportunity for me as a young coach, who is just at the beginning of his career. The project has allowed me to question some of my own beliefs about coaching and athlete development. The experience of working with Coach Westerlund and his colleagues provided me with insights on how high-performance coaches interact with the athletes and behave in different situations. As a result, I have extended the scope of my knowledge when it comes to coaching and leadership.

From an academic standpoint, the process of writing undergraduate thesis with a diverse theoretical background and a wide variety of research methods was another chance for me to grow as a writer and a researcher. Such a unique nature of this project has challenged me to find practical solutions in order to bridge the gap from theory to practice in terms of individualization of the development of the athlete. At the same time, the project was aiming to benefit not only hockey coaches but at the same time the coaches from other team and individual sports.

All in all, the coach has clearly stated that this profiling tool was a great supplement for his coaching process by allowing him to get to know his athletes and their views regarding psychological components of his coaching philosophy. Moreover, athletes have perceived the profiling tool as a positive contribution to the individualization of the coaching process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Profiling tool

1st Step Towards the Next Level

The profile aims to help athletes to take the first step toward developing psychological preparation for practices and games. Please read every question carefully. The data from the profile will be used within Salavat Yulaev's Coaching Staff. In addition, the results will be used in the research process of Haaga-Helia UAS. Personal details will remain confidential and anonymous for the public.

* Required

Name *

Your answer _____

Date of birth

Date

mm/dd/yyyy _____

Number of years of experience in professional ice hockey

Your answer _____

MOTIVATION

Describe what MOTIVATION means to you (2-3 sentences).

Your answer _____

Name three reasons that motivate you to continue participation in ice hockey

Your answer _____

Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I don't have to be pushed to practice or play hard; I give 100%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I fail to reach my goals, it makes me try even harder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me, every training is an opportunity to take one step closer toward mastery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ATTITUDE

Describe what ATTITUDE means to you (2-3 sentences).

Your answer

What are your expectations from the camp in Vierumäki?

Your answer

Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
The more pressure there is during a game, the more I enjoy it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I experience a setback, it does not discourage me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have high standards to myself and tend to fulfill them every practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I remain positive and enthusiastic during competition, no matter how badly things are going	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Describe what SELF-CONFIDENCE means to you (2-3 sentences).

Your answer

What are the strong sides of your character? (describe at least 3)

Your answer

Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
I tend to doubt that I have what it takes to play at KHL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get the most out of my talent and skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I handle unexpected situations in my sport very well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident that I will play well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

RESPONSIBILITY

Describe what RESPONSIBILITY as an athlete means to you (2-3 sentences).

Your answer

Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to follow sports regime on regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

Describe what EMOTIONAL PREPARATION means to you (2-3 sentences).

Your answer

Describe your emotional state when you perform at your best (e.g I feel energized or I tend to experience anger)

Your answer

Please read the statement carefully and indicate how often you experience it by choosing an appropriate column on the side

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My preparation routines helps me to achieve my best performance state on regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I feel myself getting too tense, I can quickly relax my body and calm myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate yourself according to the characteristics below (1-Low; 5-High)

	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional Preparation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WE ARE SALAVAT YULAEV

