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**Russian State University Conference November 2011:  
Modern Use of Sports Science**

***VOICES FROM THE MARGINS: A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION  
OF THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF COACHING***

*Right boys this one's important. We're 1 – 0 down at half time and you lot are playing like muppets. There's no heart, no grit. You need to fly into tackles and let them know they're in a fight. You're just not competing with them, get stuck in and fight for this game, have you got no pride? You're letting me down, the club down and each other. This is just a load of rubbish, I thought you lot could play?*

There is an acceptance that sports coaching has as its primary focus, the improvement of individual and team performance (Jones, 2005) and that effective coaches are those that have progressed furthest in terms of formal hierarchical (National Governing Body) sporting qualifications and degrees in related subjects (Pullo, 1992). It is suggested that 'traditional views of coaching have located it [coaching] within a bio-scientific, product-oriented discourse' (Cassidy *et al.*, 2004:175). Coaching has been seen as unproblematic and straightforward and in fact coaches (and educators) are seen as being able to pass knowledge on to others (hence the notion that coaches are performance improvers).

It will be argued that the journey of *becoming a coach* is situated in formal, nonformal and informal contexts and that coaching and coach education literature must address and fully embrace the reality of sports coaching and how we become coaches. To do this, it is essential that we seek to (re)define what is at the ontological core of sports coaching if we can attempt to illuminate the reality of the practice. Coaching has emerged not only as a profession (Woodman, 1993) but also as a research field (Saury & Durand, 1998; Jones *et al.*, 2003) yet coaching practice remains close to the fictional auto-ethnographical account (Sparkes, 2002) of coaching in action that opens this abstract.

This fictional representation of an interface between an athlete and a coach is important, because this is often what practitioners are exposed to and consequentially regard as real coaching. This presentation will attempt to provide a critical overview of coaching literature, in relation to coaching (Jones *et al.*, 2004), coaches' knowledge (Cushion *et al.*, 2003), coach learning (Nelson *et al.*, 2006) and development of expert coaches (Schempp *et al.*, 2006). To do so, the presentation will take the place of 4 short stories (narratives) that are autoethnographical (Coffey, 1999; Markula & Denison, 2005; Okley & Callaway, 1992; Reed-Denehay, 1997; Sparkes, 2000; Van Maanen, 1995; Young, 1991) in nature making them accessible to coaches, but also framed theoretically in knowledge construction (Nelson *et al.*, 2006) to foster academic debate regarding how knowledge is constructed through the formal, nonformal and informal.