



Status of the Coach: Speed Skating

Preliminary Report & Emerging Findings

CANADA
CANADA

By

Mathew Dowling
Dr Ian Reade



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 RESEARCH & STUDY BACKGROUND	2
SECTION 2 METHODS, SAMPLING AND PROCEDURE	2
SECTION 2.1 SURVEY INSTRUMENTS	2
SECTION 2.2 SAMPLING	3
SECTION 2.3 DATA REPRESENTATION: PROVINCIAL COVERAGE	4
SECTION 3 EMERGING RESULTS	6
SECTION 3.1 SPEED SKATING COACHES & ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS	6
SECTION 3.2 THE GENERAL COACHING ENVIRONMENT	8
SECTION 3.3 THE LTPAD	10
SECTION 3.4. COACHES & ORGANIZATIONS' ATTITUDES & EXPECTATIONS	12
SECTION 3.5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS TO IMPROVE COACH EDUCATION	18
SECTION 4 CONCLUSIONS	19

PREFACE NOTIFICATIONS

- Please note that the data and figures presented hereafter are accurate as of 12th December 2011.
- Please note: all the views expressed within the report are derived from the data and the independent judgment of the research team..
- Emerging from the surveys are a number of useful indications for SSC and its future decision making. In particular, our initial examinations of the results indicate a strong consistency between the two surveys. As such, it was felt a combined report would hold more value to SSC than if done separately.
- These similarities increase our confidence in the data and findings.

1|ONE: RESEARCH & STUDY BACKGROUND

- In early 2011, Speed Skating Canada (SSC) and the University of Alberta teamed up to better understand the status of Speed Skating Coaches within Canada. Although much work has been done in this regard by SSC, little is known about the contemporary environment for speed skating coaches.
- The aim of this research was to determine, from a national sporting organization perspective, how SSC might improve the national co-ordination and delivery of speed skating coaching and coach education. As such this research sought to enhance SSC's understanding of speed skating coaches' quality of life and job satisfaction so that improvements can be made to organizational coaching delivery.
- As SSC looks towards the future, such research is critical to provide SSC with the necessary data in order to make well informed, evidence-based decisions.
- The data presented within this preliminary report comprises descriptive analysis and inferences made by the research team to date. As such, we must caveat the finding contained within as *only preliminary* until we have completed data collection and analyzed thoroughly. The purpose of this report is to provide an preliminary overview of the findings.

2|TWO: METHODS, SAMPLING AND PROCEDURE

2.1 SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

- Two survey instruments were developed and used to examine the Status of Speed Skating Coaches in Canada. These instruments are as follows:
 - 1) *The Status of the Organization: Speed Skating (44 items)*
 - 2) *The Status of the Coach: Speed Skating (30 items)*
- Developing these two surveys simultaneously allow comparisons to be made between the current status of coaches and the organizations of which coaches operate in.
- The surveys were adapted from a previous tested and verified survey entitled '*The Status of the Coach Employer*' which was used by the University of Alberta Coaching Research Group (UACRG) to survey high performance Canadian coaches.

- The surveys built for speed skating covered a number of topics derived both from the coaching academic literature as well as questions identified practically by the SSC administrative staff and coaching committee.
- Topic areas addressed within the survey include the following:
 - 1) Coach and Organizational Demographics
 - 2) Coach Education
 - 3) Long Term Athlete & Participant Development model (LTPAD)
 - 4) Success Measurement
 - 5) Organizational and Coach Expectations
 - 6) Coaches Working Environments
- Questions were a combination of both dichotomous and ordinal response formatted questions. The majority of questions comprised of multiple row matrices, formatted using a predominantly 7 point Likert scale question design.
- The instrument was also augmented with a number of unstructured response formats (comment boxes). These unstructured formats that preceded most questions were designed to elicit views and perspectives which may be useful for SSC. Some of the more pertinent views are presented alongside the data presented in *section 3* below.
- Both the Organization and Coaches surveys were bilingual (French and English).
- These surveys also accompany this report, should you wish to examine in detail the types of questions asked.

2.2. SAMPLING

- For the *Organization Survey* the population was derived from SSCs 'organization contact' lists including clubs, provincial, regional branches and national training centers.
- For the *Coaches Survey* the population was uncertain since we simply were not sure how many speed skating coaches are currently active within Canada.
- Coaches were therefore recruited through an 'open web link', whereby anyone could participate in the survey if they so choose to.
- Reminders were also sent by the U of A research team and SSC to provincial branches to enhance the response rate. Figure 2.1. highlights the response rate to date.

Figure 2.1: Status of the Coach Sample

	English	French	Totals
Coaches Survey*	128	68	196
Organization Survey**	54	20	74

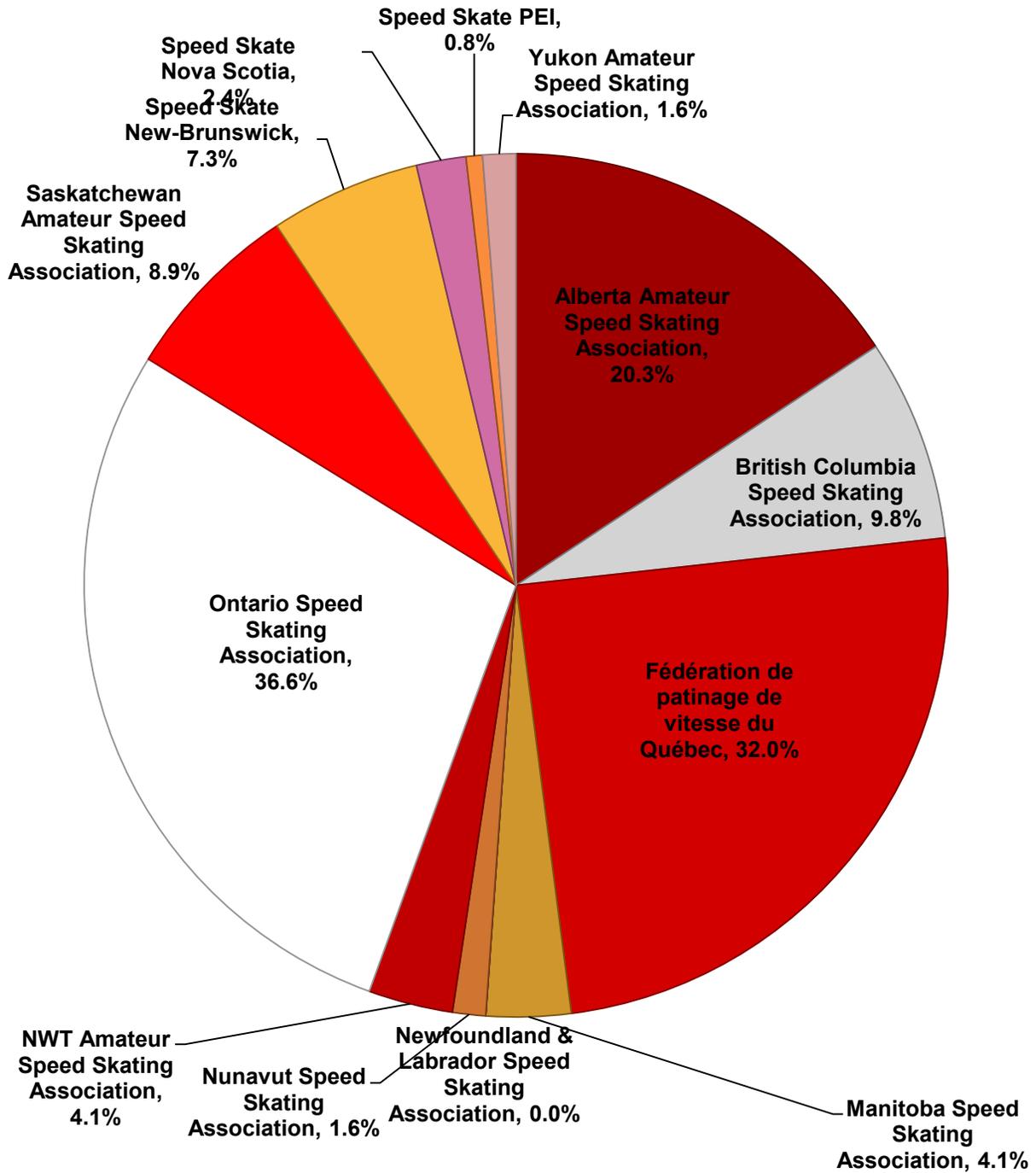
* Coaches Survey Completion rate 143/196 (73% completion)

** Organization Survey Completion rate 44/74 (60% completion)

2.3 DATA REPRESENTATION: PROVINCIAL COVERAGE

- From the sample response, the data indicate a fairly good regional coverage of speed skating across the country. The largest percentages covered are as expected: Ontario and Quebec; followed by Alberta.
- There are notable differences within the responses from provinces (primarily due to size) but the results are probably indicative of the development of speed skating in Canada. Given our lack of accurate data on the population of speed skating coaches in Canada, care should be taken when generalizing the findings to speed skating coaches across Canada.
- Similar provincial representation was exhibited within the organization survey.
- The figure below (*Figure 2.2*) indicates the provincial coverage of the coaches surveyed within the Status of the Coach survey.

Figure 2.2: *Provincial Representation of Sample.*



3|THREE: EMERGING RESULTS

3.1 SPEED SKATING COACHES & ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

COACH SEX

- 56% male; 44% female. Similar results were found in comparison of the French and English *Coach Surveys*

COACH QUALIFICATIONS

- From the coaches surveyed, discounting those who did not respond or record their qualification, the following statistics were derived:
 - The *mean* qualification of coaches was 1.8, with most coaches holding either level 1 or 2 qualifications and only seven coaches Level 4/5 qualified.
 - The most common qualification was level 1 with 56 coaches.

*Figure 3.1. Coach Qualification Level Figures**

Mean	1.8
Mode	1.0
STdev	1.1

* Data accurate to 1.d.p.

COACH AGE/EXPERIENCE

- The average age of speed skating coaches was 39 with the oldest being 83 years old and the youngest 16 years old (Accurate as of January 2012).
- Interestingly, separating French from the English surveys, the average age for a French coach was 30 (yr 1980), whereas the average age for an English coach was 40 (yr 1970). This suggests that on average speed skating coaches in Quebec are 10 years younger than other provinces.
- Speed Skating coaches on average have 9 years experience.

- The experience -in years- does not differ greatly between the French and English surveys, suggesting that despite French coaches being younger on average they have just as many years experience within the sport. In light of this, it can be argued that French coaches start coaching at a younger age.
- Of the coaches surveyed, only 6.8% of them were currently inactive. The findings presented herein therefore give indications of active coaches within speed skating. These results are summarized in Figure 3.2 below

Figure 3.2: Coaches Age & Experience Descriptive Statistics*

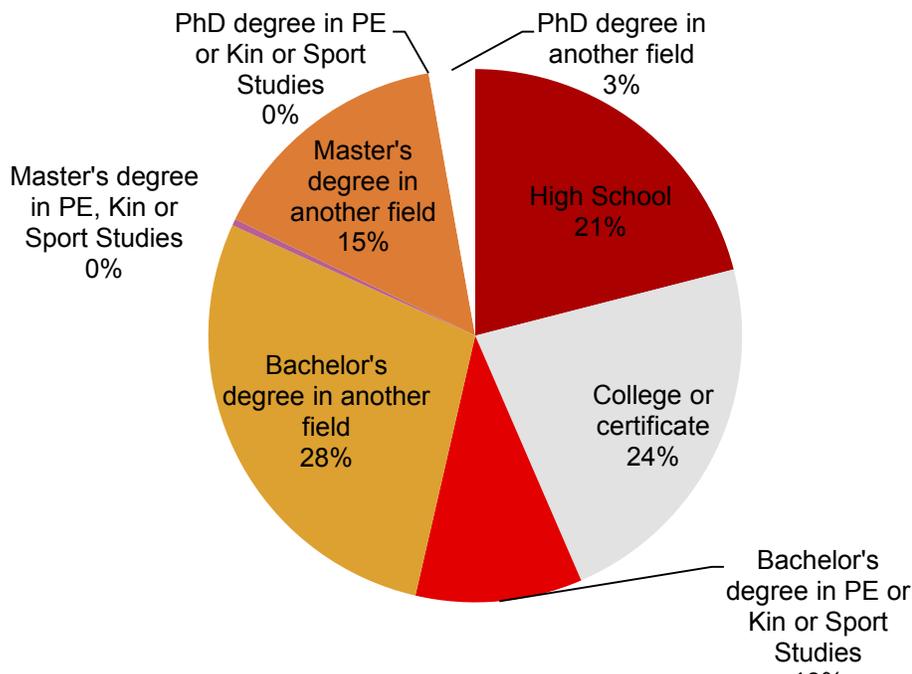
	Age	Experience
Mean	1973	9
Mode	1967	5
STdev	14	8
Range (Min)	1929	0
Range (Max)	1996	43
English Mean	1970	9
French Mean	1980	8

* Data accurate to 1.d.p.

COACH EDUCATION

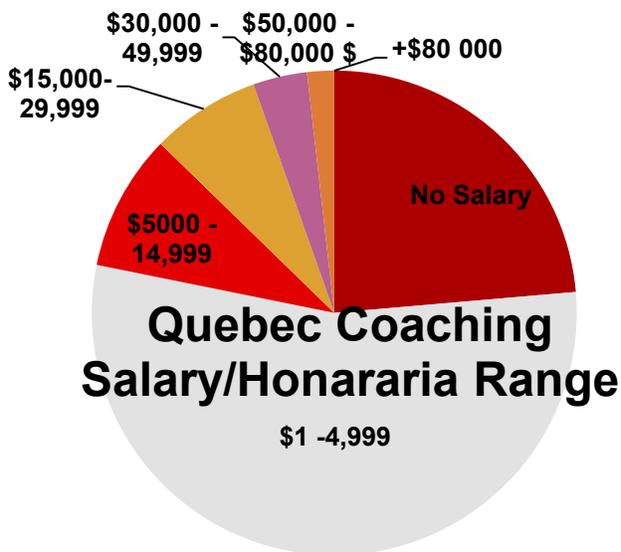
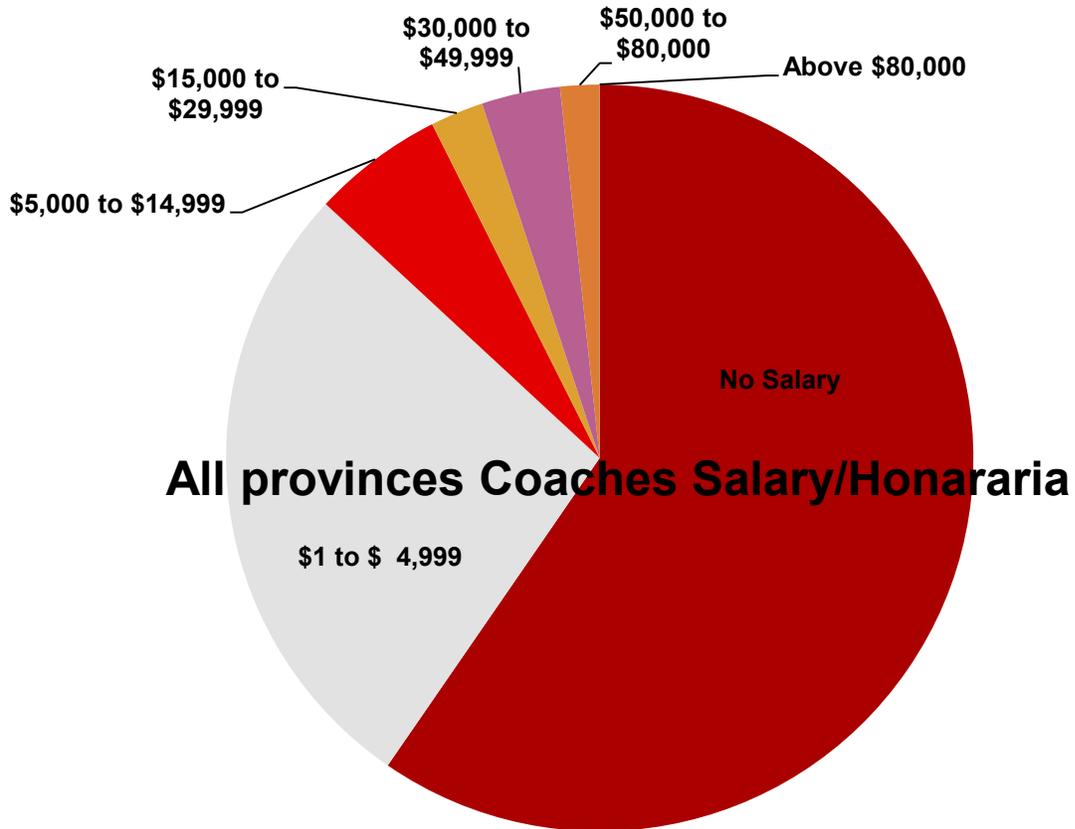
- Over half of the coaches surveyed had a Bachelor's degree or more (56.5%), and just less than one in five had a Master's degree or higher (18.2%)
- Degree specialization within PE/Kin/Sport Studies was limited: approximately 1/11 coaches (10.5%) having specialized in sport related studies of any kind. The data suggests that the vast majority of coaches within speed skating are not PE/Kin/Sport study educated.
- The general education status of speed skating coaches is outlined in *Figure 3.3.* below

Figure 3.3: Speed Skating Coach Education



3.2. THE GENERAL COACHING ENVIRONMENT

- Speed Skating Coaches are primarily volunteers with 86.9% of coaches surveyed receiving either no salary at all (59.6%), or between \$1-4,999 (27.3%). These findings were also consistent with the *Organization Survey*.
- However, these figures are skewed by the incorporation of Quebec who pays between \$1-4999 to just over half of its coaches.
- These figures are outlined in *Figure 3.4*. below. Quebec's figures are indicated separately to highlight the difference between Quebec compared to aggregate salary totals.
- Crucially, *our data indicates that speed skating coaches generally have very little in the way of job descriptions, contracts, coach evaluation processes (both written or verbal) or mentorship within their respective organizations.*
- Most speed skating organizations have somewhere between 1-9 coaches on average, with very few organizations outside this range.



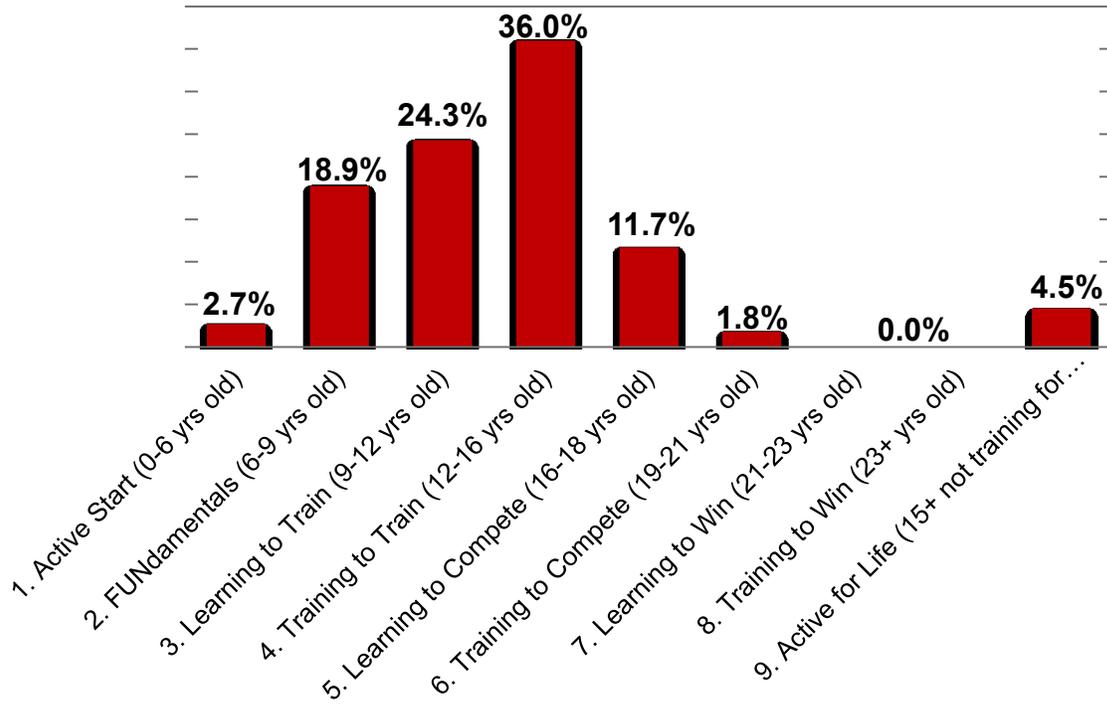
COMPETITION

- Coaches typically attend between 1-5 competitions a year. Similar findings were found in both the *Organization* and *Coaches* surveys.
- The *Organization Survey* also indicated that three quarters of organizations provided off-season training. Off-season training was defined for purposes of this research as the beginning of April-end of August.
- Attendance of coaches at competitions is primarily based upon *availability* of coaches to attend. This variable scored higher than athlete-coach pairing and the organization preference for which coach attends competitions.
- At competitions three quarters of coaches are covered for travel (76%) and accommodation (77%). Half of the coaches surveyed are given a per-diem to cover meals and 2 of every 5 coaches are given a daily honorarium.

3.3. THE LTPAD

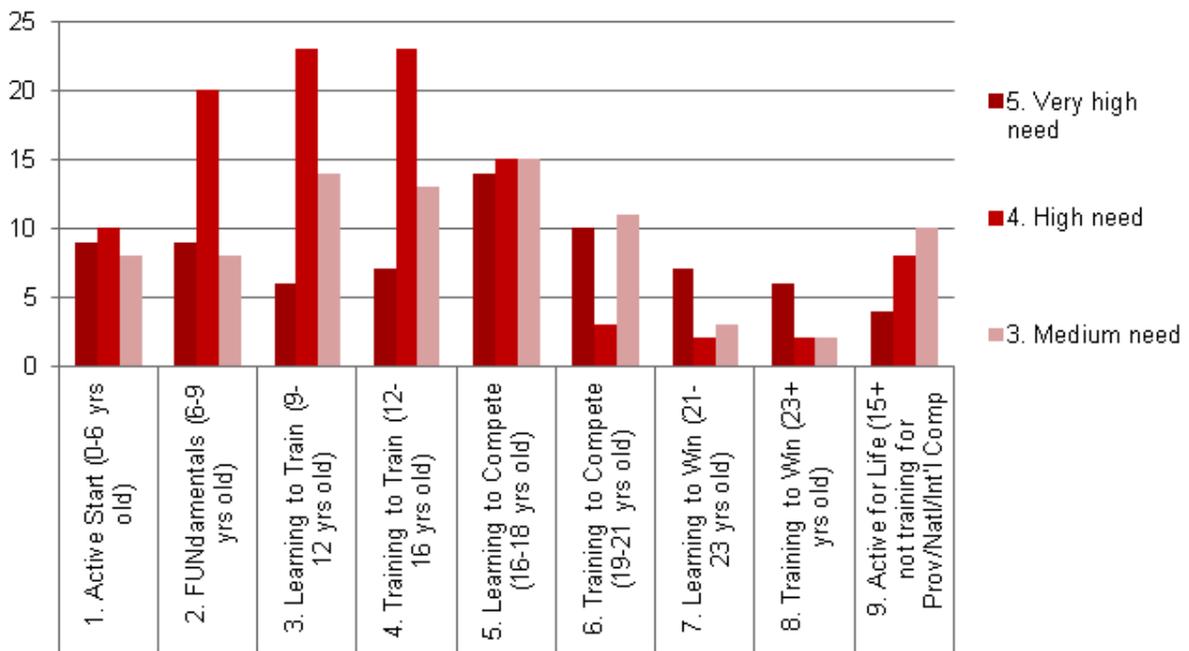
- The vast majority of coaches surveyed were primarily coaching within the 2nd, 3rd and 4th stages of the LTPAD (Fundamentals, L to T, T to T). See *figure 3.5*.

Figure 3.5. In which of the following Long Term Participant and Athlete Development (LTPAD) stages do you primarily coach?



- The need for coaches also mimicked this with the majority of speed skating organizational need for coaches within the 2nd, 3rd and 4th stages of the LTPAD (Fundamentals, L to T, T to T).

Figure 3.4. *Organizational need for coaches within LTPAD stages*



- Given these findings both within the *Coaches* and *Organization Survey*, SSC should be focusing on stages 2,3,4 in terms of trying to fulfill the organizational needs for coaching education as most coaches lie within these three stages.
- Much more cross-tabulations examining the LTPAD will be made available within the full report. We expect to find some variations amongst organizational need and quality and access to coaching education although these results are TBC.

3.4. COACHES & ORGANIZATIONS ATTITUDES/EXPECTATIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Linked to the above concerns over organizational need for more coaches and the LTPAD is the underlying concern over speed skating organizational capacity.
- Very few coaches were in the higher end LTPAD stages. A fundamental question here is whether these findings are due to a lack of athletes and therefore interest in coaching these athletes or capacity concerns.
- It is the view of the researchers that given the average coaching qualification being 1.8, it seems that even with athletes, these organizations would not be able to support athletes within the top stages of the LTPAD.
- When asked 'whether speed skating organizations felt their organization was 'actively' striving to create full-time coaching positions over half 'strongly disagreed' to this statement.
- In general, the organizational capacity of speed skating clubs can be viewed as minimal. Given the organization need, the attitudes of the administrators who run them and the qualification level combined, most speed skating clubs seem unable to facilitate high performance athletes even if they wanted to; which our findings suggest they currently do not.

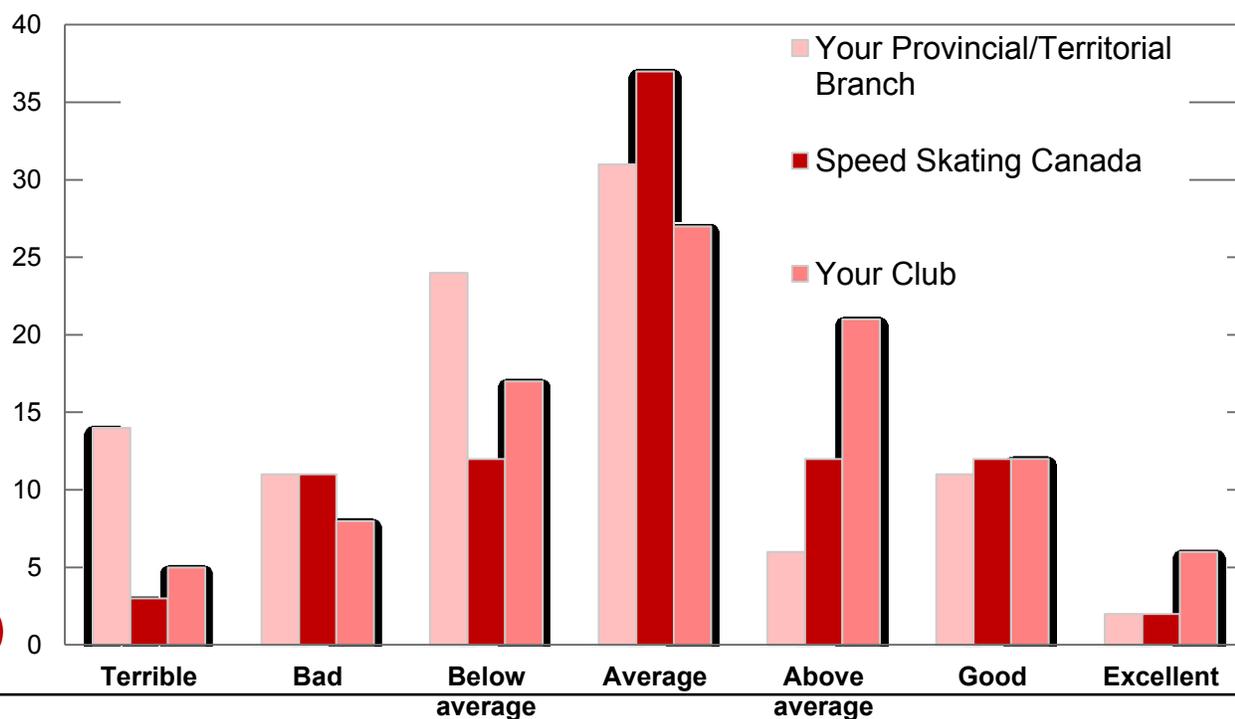
COACH EDUCATION INFORMATION, ACCESS AND QUALITY

- Coaches generally indicated that their knowledge within a host of areas (question 15) was fairly good (self-reported); the notable exception being within Speed, Strength and Endurance Training. Both the *Organization* and *Coaches'* survey

indicate these to be areas of which coaches feel knowledge could improve the most.

- **QUALITY**- The *Organization Survey* indicated that speed skating organizations were satisfied with the *quality* of coach education offered within Canada. In particular, the quality within LTPAD stages 1,2,3,4,5 and 9.
- **ACCESS**- The *Organization Survey* indicated that speed skating organizations were dissatisfied with the access of coach education offered within Canada. In particular, the access within stages LTPAD 1,2,3,4,5
- LTPAD stages 6,7 and 8 in terms of quality and access were generally considered as 'not applicable' to most speed skating organizations. This is likely due to no coaches working and therefore wishing to be qualified within these stages.
- *Figure 3.6*. Highlights how coaches rated the coach education information offered by SSC, PSOs and clubs. It is our view that self-reporting effects are apparent in the clubs rating of their own information as 'above average' (dark pink on the right hand side). Generally SSCs coaching education information was considered average with the PSOs considered the weaker of the organizations with regards to coaching education information.

Figure 3.6: How do you rate the following organizations' information regarding



coaching education?

- In summary, SSC should focus on ways to improve the access of coaching education over quality. What SSC offers is generally viewed positively. On the other hand the access to coach education provided by SSC is viewed as dissatisfactory. Much more work can be done to improve coach education access.

HOW COACHES MEASURE SUCCESS

- Our initial findings indicate that coaches measure success through the athlete themselves; indicated through the **skater satisfaction** and their **willingness to learn** as key measurements.
- Despite the majority of coaches surveyed in stages 2,3 & 4 and the LTPAD rhetoric, coaches still measure success based on the short and long term results of the skater at competitions. This remains a concern for the implementation of the LTPAD within speed skating
- Coaches do not measure success based upon administrative duties or tasks set by the organization. Success measurement and coach expectations findings are closely linked to each other.

COACH EXPECTATIONS

- Expectations of coaches are similar between the Organization and Coaches surveys indicating that organizations and coaches are generally in agreement with the expectations of the other. In other words, everyone 'is aware of their role'.
- Coach expectations are clearly skewed towards their 'core coaching tasks' such as *creating programs, supervising, athlete competition registration and preparing for competition* and NOT administrative 'peripheral tasks' such as *recruiting skaters, facility arrangement, budgeting, fundraising, etc.*
- Coaches are not expected by the organization, (nor do the coaches expect) to be involved in anything beyond the core coaching work. One coaches' comment summed up bluntly: "*Administrative tasks are not done by coaches...they are*

done by club executives". The coach volunteer ethos provides an 'us' and 'them' mentality between coaches and administrative staff.

COACHES DECISION MAKING AUTONOMY

- Linked to the above expectations and measurement of success is the decision making autonomy of coaches. In line with the findings indicated above, the findings of decision making autonomy suggest that coaches, in general, have a lot of autonomy over *daily tasks, meeting attendance* and the *creation of training groups*, but little autonomy over hours and day of working.
- That said, initial results indicate very little decision making autonomy outside their expectations and specific role within their organization. A majority of coaches felt they either had no decision making autonomy or considered a number of areas not applicable that were outside their core functions. These areas included: *budgeting, risk management and club equipment*.

HOW COACHES SHOULD BE REWARDED

- The speed skating coaches surveyed are not motivated financially. They are volunteers and are by definition paid very little. Both surveys indicate that any incentives to reward coaches should not be financial but appreciative.
- Coaches indicated that reward through recognition of some kind was the preferred approach.

"Don't think that most coaches do it for the money, but some form of recognition is appreciated"

- The results indicate that coaches are generally self-rewarded and intrinsically motivated. They are not expecting the world, but small appreciation will go a long way. More could be done by SSC to encourage its organizations to reward coaches through written and verbal commendations.

HOW COACHES BELIEVE THEIR ENVIRONMENT CAN BE IMPROVED

- The variables somewhat speak for themselves here. Coaches want the environment to be enhanced. Enhancement for coaches is NOT more money in

their pocket, it's adding to what they already do. The variables showed either tendency towards not important or very important extremes indicated below:

Not important improvements: *Salary, Benefits, Time off, Lighten the work load*

Very important improvements: *Assistant coaches, more sport science, more financial resources available, more access to education, and more financial support to athletes*

VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

- Certification was generally valued by all stakeholders, although perhaps slightly more by some than others.
- Coaches felt that SSC valued certification more than any other stakeholder, with athletes and parents valuing certification least. That said, both athletes and parents still valued certification relatively highly, just less than most.

“Certification is a means of training and learning. It is not the outcome”

“Experience trumps certification”

- From the qualitative analysis of this question it coaches are still not entirely convinced of the new NCCP system and still view it as a bureaucratic and lengthy process.
- Although certification is valued highly, it is not considered a vital part of what constitutes a coach.

3.5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS OF HOW TO IMPROVE COACH EDUCATION

From the qualitative data analyzed from both the Coaches and Organizations Survey **four** major themes towards improving SSC coach education were identified:

1. Unease about the implementation of the LTPAD

Many coaches expressed concerns with the implementation process of the LTPAD. SSC should not be complacent that just because competition reviews and the sport

specific plan is in place that this will filter down organically. Coach education is a significant cog in the wheel of LTPAD implementation. Coaches express a clear concern of how this has been inserted into coaching education at present.

“SSC needs to take a more active role in coach engagement especially at the grassroots level. In my opinion, the implementation of LTPAD was extremely frustrating and has tainted my view of how SSC implements change.”

“The provincial organization should be required to have a LTAD Model in place and have an implementation plan in place to receive any funding from the province. There should be a check that money being delivered is fulfilling the mandate.”

“Better attention to the early stages of the LTAD. Less worry and resources to [competitions] and the politics of [competitions] where it pertains to children 12 and under.”

2. More use of online technology

Many of the qualitative comments indicate a desire for SSC to move towards more online coach education resources and opportunities. Although much has been done in this regard, there is an identified gap between what is currently offered to what coaches would like. The use of online resources and coach education is even more significant, given the geographical hurdle Canada faces. SSC should focus on ways to enhance its online programs.

“More computer-based ways to share knowledge”

“Online courses would be very helpful”

“More webinars, day/weekend programs on one subject, not trying to cover many subjects in one program”

“Home study sections with internet or blog interactive for part...then hands on for practical session. Also, I would give more online resources”

“I believe that in this day of technology, on-line access to learning opportunities for coaches of all levels would be of value”

3. More varied, timely and quantity of coach education courses

Coaches often suggested that there should be more coach education courses offered. Moreover, these courses should be more varied and not just constitute basic technical or core coach functions. Many coaches also indicated that

consideration of timing was important when running sessions. Providing more online access to coach education may be one avenue to expand on in order to facilitate this need.

“They need to offer more training courses...if they do not have the numbers to run courses then they need to start getting other provinces involved”

“I think that it would be nice if it is offered more than once a year”.

“I believe that organizing seminars and workshops regularly would help enormously our coaches to develop / improve their skills. The basic courses are great, but I think that the practical part needs to be improved (workshops, interaction, inter-club training, change of experience among coaches)”

“More frequently offered courses and multiple opportunities with which to complete the training”.

“A lot of the coaching education or clinics take place in Southern Ontario and it would be nice to have one once and a while in Northern Ontario”

4. Coaches perception of a bureaucratic and confusing NCCP system

Coaches commonly expressed a distain or frustration for the new NCCP system despite its implementation many years ago. Many still found the process confusing and ambiguous. Coaches often felt that the system was not efficient, with only few course offerings. For those who attend, their certification after which is seen as a bureaucratic and lengthy process. Improving this efficiency of certification and the perception of the new NCCP should be a focus for SSC in the future.

Very difficult to commit the time, travel, financial resources to the current system of education for coaches....very few local courses and often not realistic to expect from volunteers

CBET makes more demands of the facilitator time and energy so I dropped-out of the program after 15 years as an NCCP instructor. We have had fewer skaters or parents express interest in the courses since its implementation so less help is available

NCCP program is confusing to follow. Confusing to find the courses that would allow me to re-certify what I already have (Level 3 Theory, Technical & Practical) or at least get the courses that would "replace" the Level 3.

“For those of us who have coaching experience and competed nationally there should be an easier way to get our levels and support from our branch or SSC”

4| FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Organization Coach Education Capacity

One of the major findings of this report is the minimal organizational capacity of coach education characterizing most speed skating organizations. Our results indicate that speed skating organizations have limited capacity in terms of number of coaches, qualified coaches, and resources available to coaches. The extracts below summarize the organizational capacity concern:

- Our results indicated that very few coaches were in the higher end LTPAD stages with most coaches working on an entirely voluntary basis (paid nothing). The results of these surveys suggest that most speed skating organizations seem unable to facilitate high performance athletes even if they wanted to (which our findings suggest they currently do not want to).
- Speed Skating organizations are not actively striving to create full time coaching positions. When asked ‘whether speed skating organizations felt their organization was ‘actively’ striving to create full-time coaching positions over half ‘strongly disagreed’ to this particular statement. Organizations have no real interest or desire to expand and grow their programs. If expansion is likely, the organization administrative staff is seen to be the catalyst.
- SSC should consider ways to improve coach education capacity within its grass-roots organizations. The base which SSC currently sits on, according to our data is relatively stagnant. If the aim of SSC is to grow and develop the sport, it may consider ways to enhance capacity. If not, our data suggests that speed skating organizations will be happy to remain as they are.

Volunteer Ethos and Core Coaching Expectations

The second major finding of these surveys is the volunteer ethos and expectations of coaches within Speed Skating. The vast majority of speed skating coaches are not paid let alone full time professionals. Although these coaches put a considerable amount of effort and are the lifeblood of the sport, they are limited in terms of their

decision making abilities and expected duties within their organization. The below segments highlight the key takeaways from the data:

- The volunteer ethos that pervades most speed skating organizations means that expectations of coaches are clearly skewed towards their 'core coaching tasks' such as *creating programs, supervising, athlete competition registration and preparing for competition* and NOT administrative or 'peripheral tasks' such as *recruiting skaters, facility arrangement, budgeting, fundraising* and so on. In short, they do their job and go home.
- Coaches are not expected by the organization, (nor do the coaches expect) to be involved in anything beyond the core coaching work. As one coaches comment summed up bluntly "*Administrative tasks are not done by coaches...they are done by club executives*". The coach volunteer ethos provides an 'us' and 'them' mentality between coaches and administrative staff.
- Initial results indicate very little decision making autonomy outside their expectations and specific role within their organization. A majority of coaches felt they either had no decision making autonomy or considered a number of areas not applicable that were outside their core functions. These areas included: *budgeting, risk management and club equipment*.
- Coaches want the environment to be enhanced. Enhancement for coaches is NOT more money in their back pocket, its adding to what they already do. The variables showed either tendency towards not important or very important extremes indicated below:
 - Not important improvements: *Salary, Benefits, Time off, Lighten the work load*
 - Very important improvements: *Assistant coaches, more sport science, more financial resources available, more access to education, and more financial support to athletes*

END.