TITLE
An investigation of the cognitive processes underlying soccer coaches' decision-making during competition

AUTHOR
Roca, André; Gomes, Cláudio; Murphy, Colm P.

JOURNAL
Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology

DATE DEPOSITED
3 August 2021

This version available at
https://research.stmarys.ac.uk/id/eprint/4830/

COPYRIGHT AND REUSE
Open Research Archive makes this work available, in accordance with publisher policies, for research purposes.

VERSIONS
The version presented here may differ from the published version. For citation purposes, please consult the published version for pagination, volume/issue and date of publication.
An investigation of the cognitive processes underlying soccer coaches’ decision-making during competition

André Roca, St Mary’s University, Twickenham, London, UK / Fulham Football Club, London, UK; Cláudio Gomes, Colm P. Murphy, St Mary’s University, Twickenham, London, UK

The ability of coaches to make effective decisions that can impact positively on a team’s performance during competition is a fundamental skill in coaching, especially in fast, dynamic team sports such as soccer. Yet, there has been little research attention given to exploring the thought processes underpinning coaches’ decision-making during soccer match-play. We used a think-aloud protocol analysis to explore the cognitions of skilled (n = 10) and less-skilled (n = 10) adult soccer coaches while required to watch and coach one of the teams during a sequence of representative videos clips of a soccer match first-half. The clips offered a perspective view from the dugout and were played in chronological order to provide a realistic representation of the match context. At the end of the first-half, coaches were also asked to verbalize their thoughts about what they would say to the team at half-time. During first-half match-play, skilled coaches verbalized a greater percentage of thoughts related to performance and tactical evaluations, and the planning of actions, whereas less-skilled coaches mostly monitored the ongoing game actions or events (all ps < .05). Moreover, during half-time skilled soccer coaches generated a greater proportion of relevant planning strategies that aimed to improve team performance for the second half than less-skilled participants (p < .05). Our findings suggest that skilled soccer coaches’ more advanced memory representations of the game enable them to easily retrieve task-specific information in order to make more relevant evaluations and plan better strategic decisions compared with their less skilled counterparts.