

Lee Pooley 00:00:13

Hi everyone, and welcome to the British Canoeing Awarding Body Coaching Podcast. I'd like to say the award winning coaching podcast. My name's Lee Pooley and I'm the director of coaching and qualifications. Today, I'm joined by Tony, Tony from Teignbridge Canoe Club. So hi, Tony.

Tony Smith 00:00:28

Good morning Lee.

Lee Pooley 00:00:29

Well you've done this before and I know you do other podcasts as well. So you're very seasoned at doing these types of things but well first of all, I want to say congratulations for passing your performance coach.

Tony Smith 00:00:41

Thank you very much. Thank you indeed.

Lee Pooley 00:00:44

So can you tell the listeners what the performance coach specifically focused on. What discipline?

Tony Smith 00:00:49

So for me the discipline was white water kayaking in moderate water.

Lee Pooley 00:00:55

Fantastic. So today, what we're going to do is, we're just gonna dig into hopefully just you to talk about your experiences and other people's reactions and some highlights that you may want to share with the listeners as you went through this program.

Because what sort of timescale has been Tony?

Tony Smith 00:01:14

So it's been just about 15 months. So I started the journey in November, year before last, went through hoping of course to step through into the qualification stage quite quickly, but actually realizing that the lack of water last February, March was a

blessing in disguise because that created that 15-month journey which actually on reflection was a really, really important part of that growth for me, really important actually.

Lee Pooley 00:01:43

Brilliant, so what I'd like to do, let's go right back to the beginning, yeah, right back to the beginning and why did you choose to enrol on the performance coach program and within, we know you work within the club setting. Why did the club think it's important as well?

Tony Smith 00:01:59

So for me personally, I work as a business coach as well. Coaching people whether they're lawyers business people, leaders etc, but my sport, that's my time, that's when I escape from my day to day job and that's why I guess I spend so much time with the club. But why did I enroll it's because I just genuinely have a growth mindset. I just generally want to grow and be better at what I do. And for me, why did I step into performance coaches is because I'd done my level three kayak coach and I wanted to be more effective. I wanted to be able to do a better job when I'm coaching people on the water. And in that club environment that is being able to do a better job, both as club chair, which I currently am but also in creating those training plans, the program of events, such that I can create a better environment for everyone to be able to enjoy the sport to grow to participate all those things. So I wanted to be better at what I was currently doing. It's as simple as that really it's always interesting that in the business world, in my coaching, I wanted to bring that sophistication into that sporting environment into that outdoor environment, which is our kayaking. So the club, what was the value to the club. The value to the club and I hope they all agree when they listen to this is that hopefully I'm a better asset. I'm a better contributor, for them, and also hopefully creating a pathway that all those others fantastic leaders and coaches in our club and those that are starting that journey can also go well I can do that as well. I'm hoping that that also sets that pathway and I remember talking to you Lee and saying does this course fit for me in this club environment? Could it work, is it going to add value to the club? And we had that chat just for a few minutes back there. That would have been sort of September year before last, before I started the actual journey. So that's what I hope and I hope

the club will see that too. I hope that my fellow friends and paddlers will see that change in my ability to help them. I hope so.

Lee Pooley 00:04:14

So as a coach, obviously you've got experiences as coaching within business. And also you had your level three now gone on to Performance coach. How did this particular programme help you as a coach and in your practice as well.

Tony Smith 00:04:32

So it's really interesting because I think that's when we start to get into these, there's quite deep thinking actually because that's what I think performance coach brings. It brings in that deeper understanding of yourself as a coach, that coach philosophy. Really reflecting What do I offer? What am I about? What's my brand, when I get on the water or I'm talking to other paddlers. It also helps us or helped me understand that I have to also continue growing my personal technical skills as well. Those are the templates. I'm going to demonstrate and that people want to see me as that coach at that level. So for me, that's that balance that blend of my personal skills. And then also those technical skills. So for me it encouraged quite a deeper thinking, a deeper reflection of what I'm about and what can I do. Where do I need to be better. How do I need to be better equipped before I even start equipping myself in a better way. So there was that quite sort of, I think actually both you said it and also my mentor who was Darren Joy of Fluid Skills and both said it's a little bit uncomfortable when we start this journey because we're slightly deconstructing before we then go for that build.

Lee Pooley 00:05:47

Yeah, absolutely. and creates more questions.

Tony Smith 00:05:50

I mean absolutely. We want our, the people we're coaching to be reflecting and asking questions of themselves and how they're doing things. So actually as a coach shouldn't we be doing that ourselves. If we've got a growth mindset we should be asking questions of ourselves. We should be sometimes feeling a little bit uncomfortable when we reflect on how we could be better when we listen to

feedback. That okay, I could do that better. How am I gonna do that? It's a slightly uncomfortable but in a really enjoyable way because we know that we're growing and I know that with my coach philosophy when the great coaches up at Glenmore Lodge was so challenging me about what else could that mean for your coaches? You think, I thought I had that right? No, I need to rethink about that. And that's part of that journey. It's great. It's a good journey.

Lee Pooley 00:06:42

Would you mind sharing maybe some of the wrestles that you had, where you previously was coaching and delivering, to being challenged on some of your approaches. Was there anything that springs to mind that you don't mind sharing

Tony Smith 00:06:59

Yeah, I think the key one for me is that self-doubt. That imposter syndrome which, that's speaking honestly, am I good enough. Am I able to deliver a quality coaching experience for those people that have joined that session? Those challenges about why are you doing that course? Why you going all the way up to Scotland to start that journey? What's it going to give you. Can you qualify people in other qualifications? All those questions which are really valid. And their good questions but it also creates that self-doubt, well it can easily create that self doubt and it did in me at times. And that has been part of the journey is getting through that imposter syndrome and getting to that other side where I do have that confidence and I know that I'm better equipped to deliver those skills. I think the other challenge is of course finding time. It's finding time. we're all busy, everybody's busy but finding that time to properly immerse yourself in this process with which to do that homework that background reading that listening to podcasts that watching others going on those courses. So finding that time is a challenge, but you can do that in quite a clear way by just chunking it down and just going okay, so I've wrote myself programs as to what I was going to do each month and how I was going to step through that and sometimes I slip back from that and other times I was able to achieve that but it did give me that roadmap. So for me, I guess those two things are that self-doubt and that second thing is about well how am I going to find that time with which to invest and grow?

Lee Pooley 00:08:44

As a performance coach now, level four performance coach. Where do you see yourself using those skills? Where in the club are you using those skills, because the name in itself sometimes, almost may for some indicate that actually people need to be of an exceptional level for a performance coach to use those skills. So how are you using your skills that you've got now?

Tony Smith 00:09:08

Yeah, you're absolutely right. I think that the environment is very important, isn't it? So I used to compete in slalom for a short while and when I was coached by coaches at that time, of course, it's in that performance from a competitor's perspective. Here we're in a club environment, do Club paddlers want to become better performers on the water from a point of view of time and achieving the win at a race. So it's a different environment, isn't it? So how am I going to use it? I think the first thing is in that planning and setting up those training opportunities, those trips which improves participation and thinking about all the layers for every level of paddler ability in the club. So looking at it not just from a seasonal perspective but a 3 year plan, a five year plan perspective. So those layers, so looking at that, but also really been in that place that mindset where you're considering every person in terms of that place of where are they in terms of skills, that confidence and where's the adventure that's going to match that. So we've got the right equilibrium that right balance. So first of all from the performance coach, whilst it isn't specifically what for example I was assessed on, that is where I can add value in that club. So it's a sophistication in terms of that way in which we see that big Club bubble. The second thing then is well when we're on the water. that is where our hope I can also bring that performance coach in. So yes, in this case, we're in the white water environment, but that's where we can really help Individual paddlers to grow but also not just as individuals but as groups.

So I was really lucky that some superb Club paddlers supported me on the journey of allowing me to try out my coaching skills and grow but then also really helping me through the coach development day, as guinea pigs and then also through the assessment day and what I really saw is that as a group of paddlers. We were all growing together. It wasn't just me that was on my coach development day they in

turn were growing as well. And I've really noticed that, that those paddlers are willing to listen to some of those coaching ideas and concepts that I'm offering them, so that they in turn can grow. So I've seen that belief as well. So in answer to your question, what do I bring to the club I think is the overall view of club and all of the different paddlers. So that everybody grows together at the rate that they want to and the second thing then is when we're on the water, it's maybe to offer those other paddlers some really I hope valuable coaching that will really help them grow and become even better confident paddlers.

Lee Pooley 00:11:47

So really it's more about high performing coach, rather than a performance coach, isn't it? It's that concept of actually, you can use those skill sets, can be used, doesn't have to be used in advanced conditions with advanced paddlers. Actually those skill sets can be used right throughout, so it's more about high performing isn't it. You're a high performing coach. It doesn't matter on the environment or the ability level.

Tony Smith 00:12:14

I agree. I mean I think whilst the performance coach is very environment specific or discipline specific. I think the skills that it equips you with, the mindset that it equips you with can be used really with so many conversations. I'll give you an example. I was talking to somebody who is a racing car coach. He's a driving coach for race drivers and we were talking about techniques of measurement and assessing performance and using, actually in this case, we were going through the grow model about how do we look at that step change between discussing the goal that that person wants and the reality check of where they are? And in his racing world, it's very very similar to world of kayak coaching. If we look at the principles, but what we were able to have is a really really good conversation. I was able to learn from him in terms of what their approach and hopefully he was able to learn something from me, but we were able to have a really good conversation. So I think there is a real, we don't have to get stuck in that specific environment, we can use this mindset across different fields and that's what it's given me. I hope.

Lee Pooley 00:13:26

Thanks, Tony. So if I were to ask you what your highlights have been during this journey. What would they be?

Tony Smith 00:13:32

Highlights, for me, I said I'm at my growth mindset, is something I just love learning. I really do and am I looking to retire soon? No is just too much to learn and do so for me, that was a highlight, was just that learning that I got from that 15 month experience. Absolutely. The second thing was that stretch which is sometimes slightly uncomfortable but actually what you realize is that by stepping into a little bit of a place of challenge, where it's a safe environment. Yeah, you grow and I think that's what I love doing is being able to go on to that next step of my own personal journey in the sport. And I think the other highlight, is something that comes from all of the coaches that I met on this journey. So Laura Cooper, George Fell and Tom Sibbald from up there at Glenmore Lodge. I mean there was just so generous but also the other people that were on that coaching course. Really inspiring people with their own stories so that generosity of everybody working together, but I also experience this generosity throughout the whole program. So from your good self, but also Darren Joy, there's a different feel when you step into this qualification in performance coach. There is a real genuine generosity of people wanting to help you, people wanting to help you on your journey to grow. And so that would be, that would be that third real highlight. Yeah superb.

Lee Pooley 00:15:05

Yeah. There is obviously, hopefully a switch with yourself as well is actually that you will then start supporting and encouraging and guiding those people coming into the performance coach program. So, what advice would you give to someone considering the performance coach program. So, having a think, they're going I'd like to improve my coaching. I'd like to be better for those participants. What advice would you give?

Tony Smith 00:15:35

I would say, and I'm hesitating, but I was going to say don't hesitate. What I mean by that is and again that comes back to one of those challenges I faced was that self-doubt. Is that what I've got from the performance coach is that real true growth in my

skill set as a coach. It's given me that confidence. It's giving me that a better competence.

And to the person that's thinking should I do that course, I would say yes. If you have a growth mindset and you want to really go on that journey to be better equipped to be more sophisticated in your coaching. I would urge, that listener to go and embrace this program. It's really good. Experience that generosity from other coaches who are incredibly experienced in the industry and certainly from my point of view coming out that other end of that process you definitely grow. So yeah, I wouldn't hesitate. What I would do though is talk it through properly and clearly with yourself and your colleagues because actually that's part of the processes. Is it right for me? And that's obviously important.

But in terms hesitating or rather no hesitating about having that conversation. I would say step into the breach and consider it. It's very very worthwhile. I think it gives you more than just a high level of competence in your specific discipline. It gives you a high level of self-awareness, awareness of others and that ability to be better equipped wherever we are on the sport actually.

Lee Pooley 00:17:22

Okay, some really insightful areas there Tony. You use a term, and you've used the term several times now about growth mindset. So in terms of your coaching practice Tony, what's next. What are you focusing on because this isn't about you've got the qualification and right, I'll just, this is what I am now. There's obviously other areas that you're focused on. Is there anything in particular in your coaching practice that you want to explore further or understand better

Tony Smith 00:17:49

I was going to do that. I was just going to sit back on the sofa and have a cup of tea. And say I've got there. Yeah, I have already talked to a local provider, Lindsey McPhee, about okay, we're coming into the summer season now. So I'm going to embrace and embark on the level three sea kayak coach. You might say well why? Good question. Well because actually I just want to hone those technical coaching skills in that environment so that I can help and support those club paddlers there.

And my idea of the journey after that, is I have two thoughts, first of all is an advanced qualification in white water or sea. Purely because that will push me personally that's as much about for me as it would be for helping other paddlers, but pushing myself into those environments that I do paddle in but as from a leading perspective there. And I did think about well can I aspire to a level 5? What does that mean? I had some thoughts on a project or a dissertation I could look at and I thought is that where I could go? So I've got lots of thoughts that I haven't shaped it precisely. But it is going to be more of a journey and you probably think I don't think that's right for you Tony. Other listeners will be going what, what are you thinking of that's mad but yeah, I do need something. In fact last weekend, I'd sort of finished the qualification, done the assessment. I thought what do I do now? So maybe that's a problem I have Lee. It's like what's next but honestly there's lots of opportunity there and this qualifications one can step into think. I think one comment that was passed back to me, which is a really good comment is do I need to balance out that time for me and that time that's important for the club. And I think you and your podcast just before Christmas talked about Coach burnout and you talked about that balance really looking after ourselves and I do think that's a really important point. So I've got quite a lot of thinking to do, in terms of what's next. Do I need to balance that as I said that time in my paddling and developing maybe personal skills, or is it also what's next in terms of increasing or widening or making that envelope bigger in terms of my coaching capacity and coaching skills.

Lee Pooley 00:20:11

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's really important that you enjoy what you do, and it becomes really quite clear when someone may be delivering to you or coaching that actually isn't, isn't actually enjoying it anymore. And it's plainly obvious isn't it? And this sport is absolutely one of the reasons why I'm here is because I think it's just a fantastic sport for everyone to be involved with. Allowing people to thrive, but you can only allow people to thrive if you actually enjoy what you're doing as well, isn't it?

Tony Smith 00:20:40

Totally, absolutely right. If you're not in that place of powering that infectious energy. Then do we want people to step into that place as well? It doesn't happen if we're

down in the dumps, tired, really fatigued, it doesn't happen. So yeah, we've got to be a good place ourselves to really coach and lead effectively, haven't we? Yeah.

Lee Pooley 00:21:03

Yeah, absolutely. So Tony, before we sign off on this podcast, it's been absolutely fantastic to talk to you, but also listen about your journey, but listeners must just be able to just see, just hear in your voice how enthusiastic and committed you are to your development which is fantastic and it's great to have people like you within the sport. What's the next couple of months look like for you and your Club?

Tony Smith 00:21:31

So busy, we're just about the launch our summer program which it's just, it's amazing. It is utterly amazing. We've got pool sessions wrap up towards the end of March and then we've got a little bit of a gap before we start our summer sessions on the beach at Teignmouth. And in that time, we're going to do a little bit of preparation time. So we've got, we've got a few things there. We've got a sea kayak safety day. We've got our CPD points for our coaches and leaders. So that's open to all the club members. That's shore based. We've got a meet the provider and that's where people are going to meet Lindsey from LM Coaching in terms of thinking about okay, what skills sessions would they like to book in from sheltered water up to sea kayak award level? We've got a few people going through paddlesport leader, which we're really trying to help support them and also a couple of people starting on their sea kayak leader.

We're really focusing on our female paddlers. We've got 40% of our club are now ladies, we just got our #shepaddles. And so we're really trying to support those that are stepping into the leadership roles. Again paddlesport leader in sea kayak and then we've got some great trips. We've got a sea kayak trip to the Scilly Isles later in the year. Fantastic. We've got Whitewater trip, or a river trip to the allier in France in July. Yes, and there's more. We've got a trip to the river Tryweryn, up in North Wales. Fantastic always a staple in the club diary and we've also got a paddlesport adventure on the river Wye in May. So we've got some fantastic stuff all with different leaders going and organising those trips. Pretty exciting stuff over the next few months.

Lee Pooley 00:23:11

Absolutely, Tony, and I am a big supporter of paddling in the scillies. I think it's absolutely one of the world leading places to go and paddle. I think it's exceptional. So I hope you have a really good trip over there.

Tony Smith 00:23:24

I would invite you but I think it's is booked up I'm afraid Lee. I would, I know you keep saying I want to come along well, you know.

Lee Pooley 00:23:32

That was a bit of a nudge to get an invite really.

Tony Smith 00:23:35

The invites on the way but it's, honestly can't wait can't wait.

Lee Pooley 00:23:40

Absolutely, it's fantastic. Tony very much appreciate time from that Club calendar, I'm gonna allow you to go now because obviously you've got some planning and other bits and pieces, but thanks very much time today and you take care.

Tony Smith 00:23:54

Will do. Thank you.