



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Science

of

**STEVE SIMONSON**

BA (University of Victoria, 2000)

**“Creating the Climate for Success: Exploring Motivational Climate in  
Elite Youth Soccer Clubs”**

School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education

Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018

9:00 a.m.

McKinnon Building

Room 0025

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. PJ Naylor, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. John Meldrum, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:

Dr. Sharleen Hoar, Canadian Sport Institute

Chair of Oral Examination:

Prof. Kevin Kerr, Department of Writing, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

**Objectives:** The objectives of this research were to gain a detailed understanding of approaches, facilitators and constraints to creating an optimal motivational climate within elite youth soccer programs in North America by examining the insights of expert coaches in this field.

**Design and Method:** By using a case study design, six expert coaches were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format which explored perceptions about and key aspects of the optimal motivational climate and identified specific strategies while reporting challenges to the process of creating the desired climate. Inductive thematic analysis was used to identify major recurring themes that occurred amongst the participant responses and deductive analysis was used to examine the data from the perspective of existing motivational frameworks.

**Results:** Five dimensions of the desired motivational climate emerged from the theming: developing the autonomous player, connectedness, the opportunity for player advancement, failure as part of the process, and context may have an influence on the climate. Five specific strategies used in creating the desired motivational climate were identified: communication within the group, player advancement, modeling, selection/deselection, and communication with parents. Five challenges to creating the desired climate surfaced: contact time with the athletes, parents/parental involvement, consistency within club staff, player movement within the club, and mentality of the player coming into the club.

**Conclusion:** The findings of this study show that coaches tried to create a motivational climate that was autonomy supportive and task involving. Some aspects of the motivational climate were consistent however with facets of an ego-involving climate. It was also found that parents were believed to have an impact on the motivational environment surrounding the players. The research highlights the complexity of motivational climate in elite youth soccer programs and demonstrates the need for further exploration into education for coaches as well as observation and intervention-based research.