Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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“Reflections from the Lake:
An Account of Olympic-Level Coaching Expertise
in the Sport of Rowing”

School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education

Friday, Apr 24, 2020
1:00pm
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Geraldine van Gyn, School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
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Dr. Annalee Lepp, Department of History, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
The dissertation is comprised of two qualitative, exploratory studies with an overarching research goal to deepen understanding of Olympic level sport coaching expertise through the development of an in-depth case study. These studies take a constructivist view that emphasizes the active construction of knowledge with social boundaries in which meaning is constructed by the reasoning of the individuals who experience it (Rockmore, 2011). In this case, the individuals include an Olympic rowing coach and 18 of his athletes, from a particular period of his coaching career. With an emphasis on the context of Olympic level rowing, this dissertation followed ethnographic traditions in developing a case study of an Olympic level rowing coach within his coaching community in Canada during three Olympic quadrennials (from 2001 to 2012). Informed by the elements of the integrated definition of expert and effective coaching (Côté and Gilbert, 2009), the two distinct but interconnected studies in this dissertation contributed to a detailed examination of the Olympic coach and his philosophy, principles, knowledge and coaching practices and the impact of these elements on athlete outcomes within the specific context of Olympic level rowing. Outcomes from the two studies are indicative of the utility of the IDCEE knowledge framework and the integrated definition of coaching expertise and effectiveness (Côté & Gilbert, 2009) to guide this study of expert coaching. The extensiveness of this research goes beyond the question of which criteria determine whether a coach is be identified as an expert, to reveal the expert's coaching philosophy, his unique practices, and methods interwoven with clear linguistic and behavioural intentionality. The Olympic coach directed all of his efforts at striving for continued expertise for himself and his athletes. Mutuality of trust and respect was the basis of the athlete-coach effective and valued partnership, which supported their collective goal to achieve Olympic success. The findings identified that this productive relationship was supported by the integration of the Olympic coach’s professional, intra and interpersonal knowledge. In particular, the interpersonal knowledge of the Olympic coach was identified as essential to the commitment of the participant athletes to his training program and the shared goal of Olympic success. The Olympic coach’s expert practice was facilitated by his deliberate presence in the training venue, his transformative leadership and adaptive expertise, a form of expertise that provides clarity on specific features of the Olympic coach’s practice and accounts for his innovations in the sport of rowing. These explanatory constructs of deliberate presence, transformative leadership and adaptive expertise emerged from both studies. The findings also provide perspective on the lasting impact of his coaching on his athletes and the sport of rowing.

Keywords: Coaching expertise, coaching knowledge, deliberate presence, adaptive expertise, transformational leadership, athletes’ outcomes.