



VIRTUALLY YOURS

With technology, the concept of coaching has evolved tremendously with athletes being coached remotely

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Photos Elevate Performance Coaching, Coached

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e are seeing the rise in popularity for online coaching as technology advances. Online coaching, or virtual coaching, essentially allows the athlete to train at their own time and convenience. The training programme is given to athletes via a virtual platform which they can access with their phones or laptops, without needing a coach to verbally tell them what to do.



For example, a popular platform used by triathlon coaches is TrainingPeaks. Coaches will input the training programme into the app and athletes can easily refer to the app to get the plan. Upon completing the workout, the data from the smartwatch will automatically sync to TrainingPeaks for the coach to analyse after.

Within third party apps like that, there are also several tools to help analyse training data of the athletes to enhance the coaching. Arthur Tong, founder of Elevate

Performance Coaching uses TrainingPeaks for his athletes.

He said, "Online platforms such as TrainingPeaks allow coaches to leverage on technology to understand and train their athletes better. For instance, it allows me to develop a tailored training plan that is optimised and personal to each athlete's fitness, goals, schedule and personal lifestyle. The platform also allows me to regularly monitor and analyse my athlete's training performance and progression."



Fundamentals don't change

The foundation of coaching remains, whether it is traditional coaching (via face to face) or online coaching. There is a need to understand the athlete's weaknesses and strengths, identify opportunities to improve and make a plan with short-term and long-term goals to help the athlete prepare for their races.

The coach also has to take into consideration the athlete's commitments in life, availability to train and the number of hours for training. Time is a limited resource and there are only so many face-to-face sessions a coach can have with his or her athletes, thus online coaching allows a coach to reach out to more athletes.

In addition, online coaching platforms and smartwatches are getting more sophisticated. More metrics can be captured and analysed over time to identify trends of this athlete. These trends then helps the coach to understand if the particular training plan is working for the athlete.

Some people have the misconception that online coaching is simply just writing out a training plan. You can find generic training plans on the internet, but a coach's job is to customise the programme specifically for the athlete.

"Having a coach to analyse and review the data to track progress of the athlete is something that you don't get when you just pull off a generic plan from the internet. A personal coach takes into account an athlete's commitments, such as work travel or family time and figures out how to best optimise that limited time he or she has to make training purposeful and effective," Arthur added.

"Having these online coaching platforms enable coaches to do their job better; it's a tool for me to give real time feedback to my athletes and finetune their training plan to keep things sharp. The platform helps to automate a lot of data analysis, but ultimately the coach needs to know his athlete to make the analysis meaningful.

"I am in constant communication with my athletes and I conduct regular group training sessions so I can observe their training progression and provide face to face guidance. Ultimately, the platform is not the coach, I am still the coach." **R**

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