

The Role of Feedback

Within sport Feedback is an expression which is widely used, and often mis-used by coaches and instructors.

Often Feedback is thought of as being only to do with what the *coach* says to the skier at the end of their run. Whilst the coach-skier dialogue may be a part of giving feedback, to be effective the complete process is much more than this. Feedback is *for* and *about* the skier, not the coach.

In reality feedback is information received by the *skier*, both during and after 'the run'. This information is processed by the skier and helps in their development. For a skier to change and improve any information received by the skier needs to be as accurate and relevant as possible. Therefore, one of the most important roles of the coach is to "manage" feedback.

As feedback is intended to help the skier to improve, there is little value in giving them information if they are not receptive to it. Rather than trying to deal with inputs on a range of aspects of the performance, the coach and skier need to agree what it is that they will both focus on. One way of this is to ski a task that was profiled and used for goal setting. Looking back to the previous article we considered profiling in relation to a task.

The skier then sets off with an *Intention* (performing the task) and focuses their *Attention* (what are they going to notice whilst skiing). This is the basis of the 'IntAt' Feedback Loop coaching tool developed by John Shedden.

The coach can watch the performance and use what they see to support their feedback interventions. Things they might observe can include:

- the skis' interaction with the snow
- Noticing movements that the skier is making and their relationship to the skier's performance
- Creating links between effect and cause – what they *see* and *why* this is happening

Feedback is then used to:

- *regulate* what the skier does to achieve their intention
- *reinforcement* to strengthen an aspect of the performance to increase repeatability
though *not* at the same time
- *drive* behaviour through motivating the skier.

So whilst the skier-coach dialogue might be a part of Feedback, it's very much a part of a much bigger process.

Richard Barbour edited the UK Snowsports Development Coaches course resources. This article is developed from some of those resources and work by John Shedden. It was published in The Piste, the magazine of Snowsport England in January 2012. For more information about UK Snowsports courses see www.uksnowsports.co.uk.