

MSA Coaching

By Rory Bryant

MSA Level 2 Qualification

In August I was fortunate enough to go through the MSA's Level 2 Performance Coaching qualification. This experience was really useful for me as coaching features heavily in our strategic plan and it is therefore important for me to have a good understanding of the principles behind the qualification. In addition, having worked as a driver coach, I have a real personal interest in coaching and so I really enjoyed the opportunity to understand some of the theory behind the trade.

Before I started my role at SMS I did a lot of coaching work at various different levels, from voucher days in Ford Sierra Rally cars at Knockhill, to coaching my team mates in GT and endurance racing throughout the UK.

Having now gone through the Level 2, I have been left with a slightly frustrating feeling of; "I wish I knew all of that 10 years ago!"

This is not to say that I was doing it all wrong before, but the qualification has given me a much greater understanding of how to get the best out of different people in different situations. The qualification comprises of a number of modules covering a variety of subjects, such as; coaching styles & methods, psychology, the 'friction circle', safety, fitness, nutrition and hydration.

Whilst part of the Level 2 qualification includes an on track assessment and also learning about the 'friction circle' as a tool to help drivers understand how to get the most out of the tyres, it is not a qualification centred on your understanding of driving techniques. Indeed, the ethos behind the qualification is that it teaches you to become a 'reflective practitioner'. This means that as a coach, you should be able to judge whether or not you have sufficient technical knowledge and understanding to coach an activity in an effective and safe manner. In other words, whilst I have a recognised coaching qualification in motor sport, I would not feel comfortable coaching someone in a car trial as I do not have the technical knowledge of the techniques required to be successful in the discipline.

For me, the qualification has reinforced the theory behind the fact that people learn in different ways and that different learning situations require different coaching techniques. Through understanding the theory, I now feel I am able to take a much more structured and scientific approach to my coaching work.

I realise that many of you might be reading this and thinking; "all this is very well if you are coaching a career minded racing driver but what's the relevance to our club events where people come along for enjoyment and have no intentions of having a career in the sport?!"

For me, coaching can be beneficial to the whole sport at all levels. Not just in racing and rallying. If you go along to join your local tennis club then you will undoubtedly have the opportunity to be coached and the same goes for the vast majority of other sports. Given that there is also an element of risk involved in our sport, the lack of coaching has always seemed slightly odd to me.

I don't see any reason why a coach could not help a new competitor have a more fulfilling experience in their first venture into auto testing, for example. If a beginner comes along and they see experienced competitor's hand brake turning and J-turning, with great speed and precision around cones, then they could be forgiven for thinking "I'll never be able to do that!"

However, if they are given some guidance from someone that is knowledgeable in the sport and has an understanding of coaching practice and how people learn, then they will likely have a better experience and be more likely to continue their participation in motor sport... And continue paying their club membership!

It is important to point out that, there is a distinct difference between being a coach and being an 'expert practitioner'. Our sport is full of expert practitioners who have been successful in the past and are therefore assumed to be the best person to teach others on how 'they did it'. Whilst this approach may help provide some short term gains for competitors, it is not coaching and it will not provide a consistent solution to long term competitor development.

Admittedly, the level 2 qualification is a fairly sizeable commitment - it is a 4 day course and it costs £700. Whilst we are looking at avenues to subsidise the course for future coaches in Scotland, we realise that it is not a qualification for the masses. Our aim, over the coming months, is to have at least one qualified level 2 coach affiliated to every major championship in Scotland.

One of the things that I have found interesting about the qualification is that it has not only enhanced my coaching practice, I feel it has also armed me with a lot more knowledge to improve my own performance as a driver too. I therefore believe there is value in career minded competitors going through the qualification, even if it is only to understand the coaching process in order to make them more coachable themselves.

'Introduction To Coaching' Course

Whilst the level 2 qualification is a relatively niche programme, I think the MSA's 'Introduction To Coaching' course can be of benefit to a much wider audience. This is the first step on the MSA's coaching pathway but it is NOT a qualification. It is - as it says on the tin - an introduction to coaching.

It is aimed at a variety of individuals such as; officials, parents, event organisers and potential coaches. The course provides an understanding of the coaching process and why it is important.

This will enable people to make more informed choices about coaching going forward. For example, as a parent it may enable you to make a more informed choice about who coaches your child.

The Introduction to coaching course has not been officially rolled out yet. I attended the pilot of the course last month which went well and I believe it will be made available to the wider membership very soon. We intend to be in a position to deliver the Introduction to Coaching course throughout Scotland in 2016 and I will send out communications on this as soon as we have the details confirmed.

Summary

Overall, I believe effective coaching can be hugely beneficial to motor sport in Scotland. A strong coaching culture will help develop our talented competitors into world beaters— we're pretty good as it is but imagine how good we could be with a more scientific approach to talent development! In addition though, I believe coaching can be a tool used at grass roots level to help new participants enjoy a more fulfilling and enjoyable introduction into the sport. This can only be beneficial to our membership's growth and retention.

On the next page you will find some information about the MSA's Intro to coaching course and also some information about the MSA coaching pathway.

We will be looking to run both the Intro and level 2 courses in Scotland over the coming months and would urge you to get in touch (details below) if you are interested in either.

Rory Bryant

rory.bryant@scottishmotorsports.co.uk



MSA Introduction to Coaching

The first step of the ladder for the MSA Coaching pathway AND for clubs / associations / parents etc. who want an understanding of coaching practice

- Designed to provide an introduction to the coaching process exploring what good coaching is and why it is important
- This is not a course to qualify people as Coaches: the inherent risk and complexity of motorsport make it inappropriate to qualify somebody as a coach on less than a Level 2 award
- Six GLH (Guided Learning Hours) of delivery with further material available
- Course will explore:
 - o Roles and responsibilities of a coach
 - o Preparation and planning
 - o Underpinnings of sport skill
 - o Principles of the skill development process
 - o Coaching methods and simulated process
 - o Health and safety
 - o The sport sciences: hygiene and performance factors
 - o Where next: Improving / developing your coaching

For further information regarding the Introduction to Coaching Course or any other aspect of the MSA Coaching pathway please speak to Greg Symes: greg.symes@msauk.org / 07525236839

MSA Coaching Pathway

- The structure is made up of two main pathways, Participation and Performance, as demonstrated via the chart on the next page
- Participation: aimed at those working in 'schools' or who are working with clients for a short period of time and who are primarily looking to ensure safety for both driver and coach and achieve quick progress for customer satisfaction
- Performance: aimed at those who are more likely to be working with career-minded or serious competitors, normally over a longer period of time and looking to build long-term development as a driver
- The Level 2 programme consists of 2 blocks of 2 days each which includes pre course reading and some mid-block activity (materials provided): practical coaching is included within the delivery
- The cost for an individual to partake in the programme is £600 + VAT but there will be a discounted rate for existing Instructors who hold a current Association Instructors licence (ARDS, ARKS, BARS)
- The delivery centre for the course is at Mercedes Benz World, Surrey
- Additional to the level 2 programme we are also developing a Coaching Children course plus a Level 3 in both Participation and Performance

The MSA Coaching Certificate is in addition to ARDS and the other Associations (ARKS / BARS / AHASS), but this is not about adding layers of bureaucracy to the process. This is about raising standards across the board, having a recognised coaching structure, having an assessment of competency to be able to coach (competence to teach, not competency to race – these are very different), and most importantly to ensure that people being coached – whether driving school customers or career drivers – get the best possible coaching appropriate to their needs.

- Accreditation: the Level 2 is listed on the QCF framework. This is a framework which sits within (regulated by) OFQUAL (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations). This is a non-ministerial government department that regulates qualifications, exams and tests. The framework is awarded by 1st4Sport.

MSA Coaching Pathway

