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Assignment: Coaching Lessons from Athletes Breaking Menstrual Taboos

Purpose

Athletes around the world are breaking the silence around menstruation in sport—sharing stories about performance, stigma, and the need for more supportive environments. As future coaches, understanding these perspectives helps you become advocates for inclusion, empathy, and athlete well-being.

Learning

Examine how athletes' experiences with menstruation have influenced their performance, confidence, and visibility in sport.

- Compare and contrast how two athletes have used their voices to challenge menstrual stigma.
- Identify key takeaways for how coaches can foster open communication and create period-friendly environments for athletes.

Assignment

1. Select Two Athletes

- Choose *two athletes* who have publicly discussed menstruation and its impact on their athletic journey.
- Examples: Dina Asher-Smith, Paula Radcliffe, Lydia Ko, Emma Hayes, Fu Yuanhui, or others of your choice.

2. Research Their Stories

- Gather credible sources such as interviews, news articles, podcasts, or social media posts.
- Focus on their messages about:
 - Stigma or challenges they've faced.
 - How menstruation affected training, competition, or mindset.
 - Their role in promoting awareness or change in sport.

3. Compare and Contrast

- Identify similarities and differences in how each athlete approached the topic.
- Consider:
 - Tone and language (personal, educational, activist, etc.)
 - Public and media reactions
 - The impact of their stories on the conversation around women in sport

4. Connect to Coaching Practice

- Reflect on how these stories can shape your own approach as a coach.
- Consider:
 - How can you normalize conversations about menstrual health with your team?
 - What steps could you take to ensure athletes feel supported?
 - How can these athlete stories inspire your leadership or advocacy?

5. Final Product

- Format options:
 - Written analysis (2-3 pages)
 - Short presentation or video reflection (3–5 minutes)
 - Visual infographic or digital poster comparing the two athletes and key takeaways

Guiding Questions

Use these prompts to guide your analysis and reflection:

- How did each athlete's story challenge the stigma around menstruation in sport?
- What common barriers or misconceptions did they expose?

- How did their openness influence teammates, fans, or the wider sports community?
- What lessons can coaches take from these stories to create more period-inclusive environments?
- How will this learning influence the way you talk about and support menstrual health as a coach?