

Replacing the coach doesn't solve problems

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Bringing in a new coach rarely solves problems, regardless of when it is done. This is the conclusion of a study from Mid Sweden University about hiring and firing coaches in the Swedish Elite Series ice-hockey league during the period 1975/76-2005/06. Despite this fact, coaches are nevertheless very publicly fired. The study shows that it is a mistake to replace the coach.

The Swedish elite hockey season is getting underway, and people are already speculating about which coaches will be fired. Five were let go last season alone.

"The results of our study indicate rather clearly that it was a mistake to replace the coach in all of these cases," says Leif Arnesson at Mid Sweden University, one of the three researchers who carried out the study.

The researchers reviewed all game results and all coach replacements in the Elite Series during the period 1975/76-2005/06 using data retrieved from the Swedish Ice-Hockey Association database.

"The Study shows that replacing the coach seldom solves the problem, no matter when it is done," says Leif Arnesson. "If you're thinking about getting a new coach, you should at least avoid making your move while the season is underway. A word of advice to those who are in charge of recruiting coaches is therefore: 'Don't replace the coach, at any rate if you have a good coach, if you're in the middle of the season, or if the team is in trouble.'"

The findings are also generally applicable. The situation is roughly the same in all major team sports, including soccer.

The aim of the study was to identify the relationship between coach replacement and team performance and to investigate the effect of factors such as coaching ability, coaching experience, and time of replacement.

Source: Swedish Research Council

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