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Third Party Reports influence parents' perceptions of coaching ability: Implications for youth sport coaches

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According to Olson, Roese, and Zanna's (1996) Model of Expectancy Processes, information conveyed by others can determine our expectancies of people. Furthermore, Third Party Reports (TPRs) such as reputation may influence athletes' initial expectancies of coaches (e.g., Manley et al., 2008; 2010; Thelwell et al., 2013). Parents are believed to play a fundamental role in the development of coach-athlete relationships (e.g., Jowett & Katchis, 2005) and, in turn, athletic achievement in youth sport (Gould et al., 2008). However, person perception research has not yet examined the impact of cues such as TPRs on the initial impressions and expectancies that parents form of youth sport coaches. The current study addresses this gap in the literature. Athletes' parents viewed a hypothetical online report describing the appointment of a new coach at a local sports club. The report included a "comments" section, which consisted of "tweets" posted by the newly-appointed coach's former athletes. Four experimental conditions were created by manipulating the coach's level of warmth and competence (i.e., high vs. low) as reported through the "comments/tweets" (i.e., TPRs). After reading the online report, participants provided ratings of the coach's ability using the Coaching Competency Questionnaire (Myers et al., 2006). Participants are currently being recruited via gatekeepers at sports clubs/organisations, as well as through social media. However, based on an initial sample ($n = 83$), Kruskal-Wallis tests typically revealed that high-warmth/high-competence TPRs resulted in highest evaluations of overall coaching ability, while TPRs low in both warmth and competence received poorest ratings. Interestingly, perceptions of Character-building Competence were highest for high-

warmth/low-competence TPRs. These preliminary findings reveal that TPRs can influence parents' perceptions of coaching proficiency, but that parents may value warmth over competence when assessing a coach's ability to develop more holistic qualities in youth sport athletes.