

**A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF LIFESTYLE ORIENTED
AND NON-PERFORMANCE BASED EXPERIENCES OF
PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH COUNTY CRICKETERS. A CRITIQUE
OF EXISTING SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND PRACTITIONER
SUPPORT ROLES**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Throughout the duration of this research, the author worked as a full time practitioner within the England & Wales Cricket Board's Performance Lifestyle Programme. This role acted as the catalyst for the research. Despite a growing awareness that sports performance is affected by many personal, lifestyle, and environmental factors (Douglas & Carless, 2005; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) it appears little research exists to outline exactly what lifestyle needs athletes have, or in fact how to go about supporting them. Study 1 utilised in-depth, semi structured and flexible interviews (Scanlan et al., 1989b; Patton, 1990; Dale, 1996; Biddle et al., 2001) to explore the lifestyle based experiences of professional cricketers (n = 17) across professional county cricket clubs (n = 4) in England. Following a traditional approach to content analysis (Biddle et al., 2001) emerging themes offer a more complete understanding of the content, nature and *reality* of players' non-performance and lifestyle based experiences. Seven general dimensions emerged. These include 'Perceptions of a young player's lifestyle', which describes the issues, transitions and experiences of young and emerging professional cricketers. 'Reflections on professional cricket experiences', portrays some of the peripheral matters players might come to negotiate within an increasingly intense and consuming professional sport environment. It also exposes some of the more unknown and elusive lifestyle elements of some professionals in cricket. 'Personal relationships and performance', provides intimate detail in relation to players' private lives. This general dimension includes players' experiences of coping with their home lives and personal relationships alongside the unrelenting demands of the professional game. 'Communication', elaborates on professional cricketers wide-ranging experiences in communication. Results portrayed players' personal difficulties and uncertainties surrounding communication, and depict some of the uncommunicative environments that influence whether players *share* any of their lifestyle experiences. 'Lifestyle, well-being, welfare & performance', embraces broader perspectives on the potentially symbiotic relationships between a player's lifestyle and performance. It also offers guidance in supporting a player's lifestyle, well-being and welfare from the players' perspectives. 'Emotions, cognitions & performance' elaborates on the seemingly turbulent emotional and cognitive reality of life as a professional cricketer. Finally, 'Life after professional sport' explores players' perceptions about their future and their insecurities about life after professional sport.

Study 2 utilised focus groups (n = 2) (Basch, 1987; Lederman, 1990; Murphy et al., 1992; Kitzinger, 1994; Bloor et al., 2001) to engage coaches (n = 5) at Rinshire CCC and coaches (n = 3) at Woodshire CCC in debate regarding their perspectives on data from Study 1 and any ideas on improving lifestyle support. A process of interpretational analysis that stayed close to the data (Lederman, 1990; Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992; Janesick, 1994) provided thick description of dialogue and interactions that offer a real sense of live interpersonal coach relations and the extent and nature of lifestyle support that might be available to players within the idiosyncrasies and nuances of each club. More specifically, dialogues portrayed how some coaches' supported and understood players' lifestyle based experiences, and acknowledged lifestyle based issues and their potential influence on player performance. In contrast, dialogues also portrayed how some coaches seemed to dismiss and deny players' lifestyle experiences and their potential influence on performance. It appeared these coaches believed player's lifestyle experiences could be used as excuses for poor performance. Findings also explored the supportive or unsupportive role that coaches may or may not play in ameliorating players' issues. All coaches acknowledged their own ultimate and occupational accountability

to outcomes and performance. It appeared that a number of personal and situational variables might combine to influence coaches' relationships with players. Findings therefore emphasised the value of the lifestyle practitioner support role for players. The intricacies of these roles appeared to involve engaging in extensive reconnaissance to firstly understand coaches' perspectives and contextual realities, before providing any lifestyle oriented support. Issues of confidentiality during engagement appeared important to safeguard the future training and reputation of any practitioner or programme seeking to offer lifestyle support within the intensely competitive and results driven contexts of professional sport.

Study 3 embraced principals and processes associated with prolonged and embedded ethnographic engagement and creative writing (Tedlock, 2000; Foley, 2002; Tierney 2002; Krane & Baird 2005). This methodology recognised the need for this research to further explore and understand the *reality* of cricketers' non-performance and lifestyle based experiences in applied contexts, *as they happened*. The researcher immersed himself within the cricket environment following (second XI) teams involved in Study 2 throughout an entire 7 month competitive season. The resulting ethnographic data offered an extensive narrative that was reduced and reconstructed into an ethnographic timeline of the season. This timeline houses reflections and observations about players' experiences and about the contexts in which they reside. Initial ethnographic reflections centred on the idiosyncratic and unique contextual realities of professional cricket. Some of these contexts were found to be particularly masculine, unaccommodating, unwelcoming, unforgiving, intense, competitive, and abrasive and results / outcome oriented. It appeared that the demanding contextual realities of the sport and prolonged nature of the game often influenced the experiences of players. Players' experiences did not seem to occur within a vacuum or devoid of coaches' influences. The timeline also offers examples of shared dialogue from interpersonal exchanges with junior and senior professionals at both clubs. This dialogue highlighted the endlessly complex and intimate nature of players' experiences and offers a sense of the depths and breadths of their issues. It became clear that players experience a range of personal and professional issues that are often emotional, private, diverse and laden with history. Essentially, players' issues and difficulties seemed to relate to the combination of their experiences on the field, alongside their experiences within the life they were living off it. The timeline also retains the author's personal reflections as a practitioner-cum-researcher throughout the ethnographic engagement and offers implications and recommendations for future research, practitioner support roles and support structures. The author reflected on the process and dynamics of interactions with players' to draw out implications for future training and practice. Implications emphasised the value of and need for general counselling skills and specific elements of person centred counselling (Rogers, 1957; 1980). It appeared that lifestyle oriented support appeared in no way redundant or peripheral in terms of performance, and ultimately, mattered. Findings also highlighted the importance of adopting a more self-aware perspective as practitioner in building and maintaining supportive relationships with players. Reflections also highlighted the potential value of researcher and / or practitioner supervision, time and space for reflection, and balanced involvement. The author invites those in strategic positions (e.g., the ECB) to debate and reflect on implications regarding the future structure of lifestyle oriented and non-performance based support in place for players.

Key Words: Lifestyle, professional cricket, qualitative research, practitioner support roles

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 - Introduction & Literature Review

“...As they ran into bowl at me, I kept thinking about my private life, Nicky and the children, and how long I could cope. Sometimes I’d put a straight bat on one and think, ‘How the hell did I do that’, I wasn’t thinking about footmarks or how much the ball was turning, I was thinking, ‘my life’s a mess’...”

(Graham Thorpe. Rising from the ashes, 2005. p29)

“...Switching off consciously thinking about cricket is a survival strategy – it stops you going mad. But beneath the surface, the game is always there in your subconscious, this vast mass of unfinished business: politics unresolved, conversations unfinished, errors regretted, praise withheld... it’s the quiet spells that are the problem, the quiet spells with no battle to paper over the cracks and focus the mind. If I have one piece of advice to someone starting out, it would be ‘go quiet in the quiet spells’ because I never did...”

(Edd Smith, On and off the field, 2005. pxi)

“...What people sometimes don’t appreciate is that sportsmen have personal problems, like anyone else... sportsmen are not machines...”

(Nasser Hussain. Playing with fire, 2004. p264)

There is a growing awareness that sports performance, particularly at the elite level, is affected by many personal, lifestyle, and environmental factors (Douglas & Carless, 2005). Many of the issues faced by athletes relate not to specific performance challenges, but rather to general difficulties within their life (Nesti, 2006), yet little research has examined the lives of high performance athletes as a whole (Amirault & Orlick, 1989) or explored how, lifestyle and environmental factors impact on athletes performances (Douglas & Carless, 2005). Researchers and practitioners vary in their description of life issues affecting athletes, including personal reasons unrelated to ‘sport work’ (Neff, 1990), off-field personal factors (Dorfman, 1990), off-ice activities (Botterill, 1990), personal issues that interfere with performance (Ravizza, 1990), off-court stress (Loehr, 1990), athletes crises (Stambulova, 2000), critical life events (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993), non-athletic transitions that may affect the development of an athlete’s sport career (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004), non-sport performance items that affect performance (Orlick, 1989), issues of a more general nature related to athlete well-being (Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004), and issues that reside outside performance based topics, which are lifestyle in focus or personal in orientation (Gilbourne and Richardson, 2006).

Many athletes experience a range of ups and downs in their lives and they are expected to perform, regardless. However, personal achievement and success in sport is often ephemeral in nature, and success is sometimes thought only to be encountered through and alongside moments of discomfort, pain and even suffering (Nesti, 2006). Sport is indeed a hectic business, and athletes can be absorbed into an unrealistic lifestyle (Cockerill & Tribe, 2002). For example, athletes are often valued by others because of their athletic talent (Balague, 1999), experience difficulties through insecurities and a lack of control (Cockerill & Tribe, 2002) and at certain times and during certain years, training and competing may take up most of their life and lead to feeling inadequate or overwhelmed by too many demands (Balague, 1999). It seems reasonable to assume therefore that many fail to adapt adequately to such a rigorous and demanding lifestyle (Cockerill & Tribe, 2002). However, few practitioners and minimal literature is overtly aligned with notions of *lifestyle* oriented support.

Existing provision of lifestyle oriented support appears diverse, and includes programmes, for example Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in Olympic and Professional sports around the world (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Lifestyle support also involves the deployment of practitioners, including sport psychologists who allude to lifestyle oriented issues in their work (Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Botterill, 1990; Leohr, 1990; Dorfman, 1990; Anderson et al., 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006), or practitioners (not necessarily sport psychologists) associated with the welfare of the athlete, for example, Heads of Education & Welfare in English Football Academies (Richardson, Gilbourne & Littlewood, 2004). Each of these practitioners might also make up one part of a multidisciplinary sport science support team (Ried, Stewart & Thorne, 2004). The management of these systems also vary, and might stem from one source or a combination of sources, including the National Governing Body (NGB). For example, the England & Wales Cricket Board's Performance Lifestyle Programme, or from Olympic Organisations, for example the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre, or independent Professional Sport Teams, or Player Unions, for example the Professional Rugby Players Associations Player Development Programme.

Cockerill & Tribe, (2002) suggested that it was incumbent upon those who sought to promote excellence, to ensure that a system of support is in place to cater for *life* related issues that are specific to the elite athlete. The literature review that follows portrays how the provision of lifestyle related support continues to evolve, particularly with an emphasis on career and education for life after sport, but also with more recent and eclectic lifestyle oriented support elements. In terms of the latter and in seeking to help athletes cope with life at the elite level, it is thought that the first place to start looking for implications is from the athletes themselves, and how by observing athletes play and hearing them talk, essential information about their typical life-style can become available (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; Gould, Jackson & Finch, 1993). Indeed, the lifestyle experiences of athletes generally and professional cricketers specifically, both inside and outside sport are predominantly undiscovered details within literature. This assertion is perhaps supported by the lack of research documenting athletes' accounts of their own contextual experiences in *both* sport and life in general. Indeed athletes' contextual voices as they live

and perform on a daily, weekly and yearly basis are relatively, unheard. Whilst the literature acknowledges the likelihood of need for lifestyle oriented support (Orlick, 1989; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Douglas & Carless, 2005; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006), it appears little research exists to outline exactly what needs athletes and cricketers have when living their lifestyle, or in fact how to go about supporting them. It is hoped that in sketching out details of existing support systems, structures and practices, particularly in relation to lifestyle support in cricket, one can then critically explore and inform existing and future provision. Furthermore, this research seeks to articulate the extent, importance and role practitioners play, in addition to the skill base they require, in supporting the lifestyles of cricketers within any support structure. By focusing on one sport, it also explores the lives of professional players, the cultural nuances (e.g., of the sport), and the contextual (e.g., players and coaches voices) and environmental realities (e.g., day to day experiences) in which support is offered. It concludes with thoughts on where lifestyle support might head in the future.

Exploring the lifestyle based experiences of professional cricketers also presents a methodological challenge. Given the potentially complex and personal nature of trying to explore the lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers, qualitative methodologies were thought most appropriate to meet such a sensitive challenge. In this regard, researchers have argued that qualitative inquiry is gaining credibility (Dale, 1996). Having criticized methods of orthodox science for their inability to understand human behavior many authors have championed a variety of qualitative methodologies (Martens, 1987; Dewar & Horn, 1992; Dale, 1996; Tedlock, 2000; Bloor et al., 2001; Foley, 2002; Tierney 2002). Martens (1987) suggested research must challenge and stretch epistemological and methodological boundaries, and employ methods that integrate the practitioner and researcher within applied settings. More recently, Krane and Baird (2005) also endorsed greater flexibility and more latitude in research designs that encourage creativity in finding the best strategies to answer a myriad of questions. In employing qualitative methodologies, researchers use words as data (Jackson, 1995), immerse themselves in the groups or participants being studied, stress notions of longitudinal involvement,

collaboration and trust (Biddle et al., 2001) and are thought most appropriate when there is an interest in understanding subjective experience, where the individual matters, where depth and richness of data is a priority (Patton, 1980) and understanding the total picture counts (Jackson, 1995). There appears to remain a need to better understand the behaviours and experiences of people in sport (Gould et al., 1993; Jackson, 1996), a need to truly hear the voices of athletes and coaches (Krane and Baird, 2005) in the contexts and cultures in which they reside (Tedlock, 2000; Krane and Baird 2005; Brown, Gould & Foster, 2005) and for qualitative researchers to broaden narrative strategies used to achieve more protean and engaged portrayals of the lives we observe and live (Tierney, 2002).

The literature review that follows firstly clarifies for the reader the structure of cricket in England & Wales in which professional cricketers live and perform. The review then explains how the researcher acted as a practitioner throughout the research project, before clarifying the overall aim of the research. The literature review then explores the evolution of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and the ECB Performance Lifestyle Programme within cricket. The review then moves onto transitional research and its association with athlete lifestyle research, before sympathizing and aligning itself with literature associated with practitioners and research in sport psychology and (very briefly) reviews coaching practitioners roles in supporting athlete lifestyles. Chapter one concludes with a summary of the literature that contributed to the emergence of specific research aims, before mapping out the complete research journey and clarifying the structure of the research.

1.2 - Understanding the Structure of Cricket in England & Wales

This research relates to lifestyle experiences and accompanying notions of support of professional county cricketers. Therefore a brief overview and diagrammatic representation of the structure of cricket in England & Wales is provided in an effort to clarify from the outset at what levels cricketers lifestyles and performances occur (see Figure 1.1).

The structural nature of English cricket competitions means some players compete in various 'Player Pathways' as depicted in Figure 1.1. Professional Cricketers essentially compete in the 'County Programme' in which there are 18 'First Class Counties'. However, cricketers (men) may also be playing (or have played) in tiers above 'First Class Counties', including International Cricket for 'England', 'England Development Squads', and the 'National Academy'. Similarly, younger cricketers (boys) might also play for teams in tiers below 'First Class Counties' including 'England Age Groups', 'County Academies', 'Premier League Cricket' (played by boys and men) or 'England U19's' (but excluding 'Minor County Cricket', and 'UCCes'). Figure 1.1 also suggests that players aged from 18 to 35 predominantly occupy such teams which give an early indication of the age range of players in this research.

Figure 1.1 also illustrates how 'Age Group Cricket', made up of 'Districts, Countys, and Regions', alongside 'Schools' and 'Club' teams, mean cricketers can start from 11 years old and if successful, make their way through the 'Player Pathways' and potentially continue playing and living the lifestyle of a professional cricketer for another 25 years and more. Indeed, professional cricket is somewhat unique from some other professional sports in that professionals can continue playing well into their late 30's.

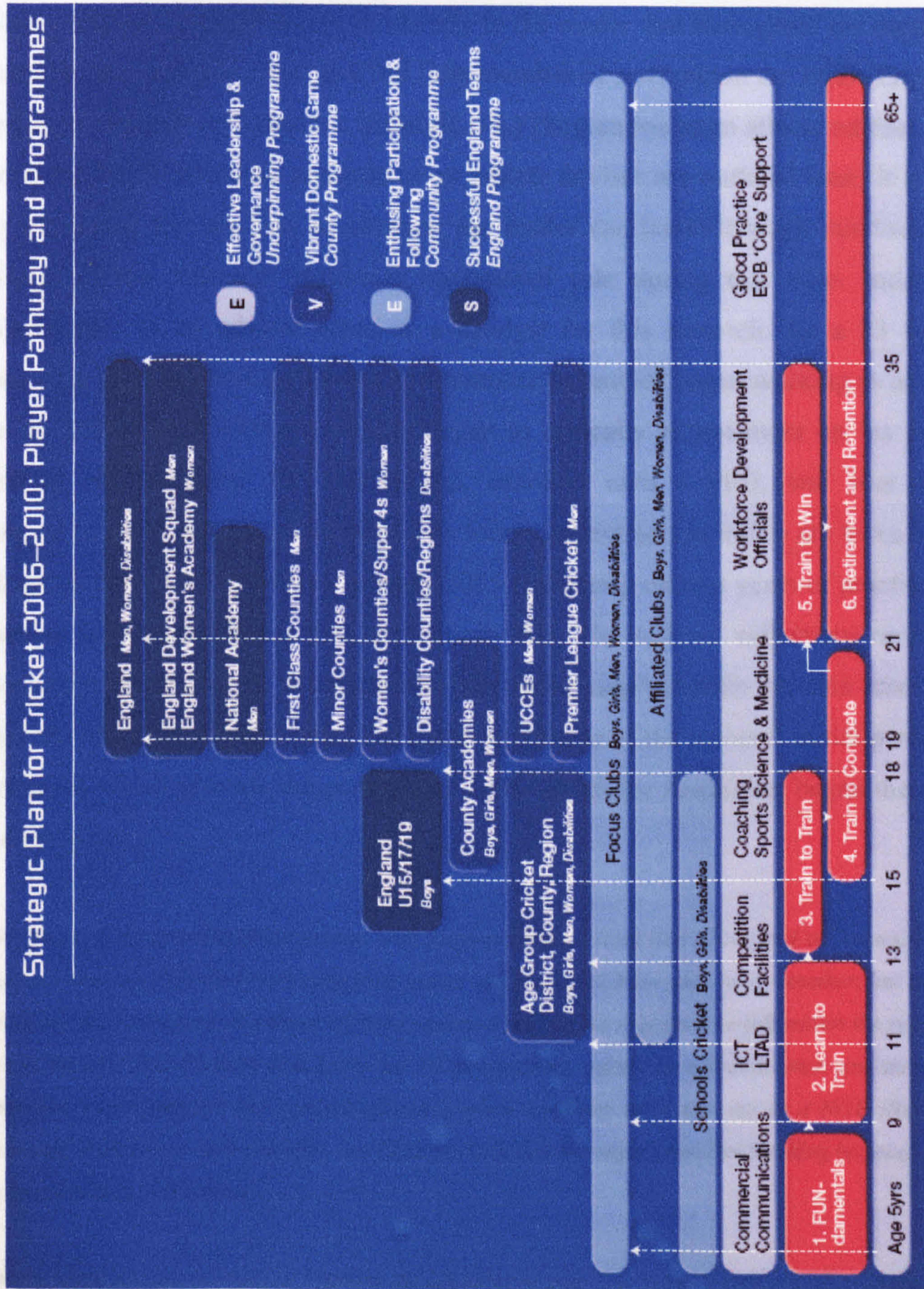


Figure 1.1 - Planning for Long Term Success: The Long Term Athlete Development Model For Cricket – Guidelines and Principals (ECB, 2005.p7)

1.3 - The Researcher as Practitioner

It appears pertinent at this juncture to identify to the reader that throughout the duration of this research, the author worked as a full time member of staff within the ECB (England & Wales Cricket Board) Performance Lifestyle (PL) Programme as an athlete adviser. While details of the PL Programme and role of an athlete adviser are outlined later, it is hoped that by clarifying this position in advance, the reader can travel through this thesis with knowledge of the author's additional operational role during this time. Indeed, the operational role as an adviser acted as a catalyst for this research. As a 23 year old graduate of a sport psychology masters programme the author began working as an athlete adviser in 2003. From 2004, the author began to critically reflect more on his practice, approached his employer for sponsorship, enrolled onto a PhD, and was initially encouraged to write autobiographically. The following extracts in *italics* are taken from an autobiographical narrative written in early 2005 (reflecting on two years of practice). The full version is available in the data authenticity file. The authors' reflections on practice hope to assist the reader in understanding the underlying rationale for this research. In addition the reflections aim to offer the reader a glimpse of the authors' initial perceptions and concerns which provide the perspective from which the researcher began the present research process.

... it's through my growing relationships with players within cricket that I hear and see issues. These issues are diverse, they obviously vary from player to player and from one club to another, but mostly include off field concerns. It's these off field concerns and issues that seem to fall within the realm of lifestyle support and it's here that I feel our PL programme, myself as a practitioner, and the clubs themselves might improve the support offered... when I started, most saw me as a NGB (National Governing Body) 'spy' and outsider, but I like to think that the reputation I'm building is going some way to correct such thoughts ...

... when plans are put in place to improve the lifestyles of academy players they are often in the form of a winter (not summer) workshop programme. In addition, one to one support is offered to players should they need it...the workshops have various strengths and are generally very well received and I personally enjoy the interaction and opportunity to help players learn...However, over the past 2 years within the role, and certainly throughout my own (ongoing) education, I have been dissatisfied, and although I'm rigorous in what I do, I'm not convinced that what I am (and we as advisers are)

doing is meeting the current and future lifestyle needs of all players... I am not convinced that workshops are always effective and feel nervous for example about our programmes model of me flying in every Thursday night after training for 2 hours and then flying out again until next week; like some kind of lifestyle superhero.

Nevertheless, although taking a very cynical view, the lifestyle criteria box is always ticked so the county, the NGB and I should all be happy. In defense of academy directors and the NGB they do recognize this model has its flaws and directors do support my efforts to integrate workshop messages and empower players within their everyday practice, but frustratingly I have little time or opportunity to manage, influence, monitor or evolve such efforts, that is until now...

... I believe these workshops are only the start and should act as the catalyst to see how we permeate the issues we discuss within the everyday culture of a club and everyday lifestyle of a player... sometimes the content doesn't seem right, I watch reactions of players... I can be up there wearing my ECB / England tracksuit, kitted out, having all the facilities I need at my fingertips to facilitate an interactive session, but still notice Swiresy (an emerging academy player) has other things on his mind...

...all the time there's my own critical viewpoint, this conscientious voice that's questioning what I do. Is what we are doing relevant to every player in the room?... When chewing over these workshops and the provision of one to one support on long drives home in my superhero car with the radio switched off, I decide that using my operational role means I can position myself within the playing environment as often as I like, so an opportunity presents itself...

... as I try to conclude what Lifestyle support is with a cricketer I struggle to articulate what it means. I have opinions which I hope are now becoming clearer, as do the governing body, county clubs, coaches, support staff and parents, but few are documented? What does lifestyle support involve as a player first walks through the doors until the day they leave (and beyond) whether that be 1 or 20 years later? I have experience and snapshots into off field player issues that seem to have a degree of consistency...but issues vary greatly and I believe that the PL programme, county cricket clubs, the game of cricket and I have much to do to improve lifestyle provision for cricketers...

...I don't see myself as a cricket man as the saying goes in the sport, I haven't had that implicit experience, and instead I see myself to be a person and practitioner intrigued and passionate about the development and support of people. On this notion of helping, I was asked once by a peer practicing his career development skills, which of the two cards in front of me I'd choose over the other. The cards had "sport" & "helping others" on them, I chose the latter.

....slowly as my role has been cemented, and my face become more recognised, I have started to hear more lifestyle oriented issues, as players have been willing to open up. The content of our shared dialogue fascinates me, and I hope would fascinate others concerned with the well being and performance of their players. It fascinates me that a player can be going through so much in their life / lifestyle off the field and little seems to be done about it...

In light of the literature *and* personal reflections above, it appears an appropriate juncture to clarify the need for further understanding and the *overall* aim of this research. The overall aim of this research is to explore the lifestyle oriented and non-performance based experiences of professional English county cricketers. In doing so it will offer a critique of existing support structures (e.g., the ECB's PL programme), comment on practitioner support roles, and present thoughts on where *lifestyle* support might head in the future. The following section aims to critically review literature related to the overall aim of this research.

1.4 - The Evolution of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes from Career Transition Research

This section outlines research that has led to the development and growth of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes (ALP) around the world. This section critically reflects on the application of ALP in sport, before briefly exploring the UK's Athlete Lifestyle Programme. The ECB's Athlete Lifestyle Programme and more specifically, existing lifestyle oriented support within cricket is then outlined in more detail.

With countries developing systems to identify talent early and nurture that talent through local, regional and national training programmes, elite athletes can spend anything from 10 to 25 or more years maintaining an intense focus on their career in sport to suddenly realise they are no longer involved at the elite level (Anderson & Morris, 2000). While the career transition process does not appear to be problematic to all retiring athletes (Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985) researchers have reported athletes experiencing uncertainty and difficulty during their career transitions out of sport (Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baille & Danish, 1992). Early studies expressed concern for those athletes who experienced traumatic effects, including alcohol and substance abuse, acute depression, eating disorders, identity confusion, decreased self confidence and even attempted suicide (Mihovilovic, 1968; Ogilvie, 1987; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). In addition to the studies above, Blann and Zaichkowsky (as cited in Anderson & Morris, 2000) also reported that performances of athletes during their career could be affected by concerns about what they do when they retire. Blann & Zaichkowsky's (as cited in Gordon, 1995) later study with American professional Hockey and major league Baseball players highlighted helpful career planning initiatives (e.g., individual counselling and career action plans). Wylleman and colleagues (1993) study with ex-Belgium Olympic athletes stressed how a lack of pre-retirement planning had the most influence on the way career termination and the following phase of post sport career adaptation was experienced by athletes. Gordon (1995) suggested all these studies contributed to and highlighted the perceived need of athletes for post-sport career planning programmes and support, and therefore go some way to explain why Sport Psychologists

began to develop interventions and generic schemes and programmes to better prepare athletes for 'life after sport'.

Before reviewing the development of more generic schemes and programmes of support in detail, a number of traditional therapeutic approaches and interventions have been proposed (somewhat alongside programmes as opposed to within programmes) to facilitate post retirement adjustment among elite athletes. Such approaches include cognitive restructuring, stress management and emotional expression (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Gordon, 1995). Other intervention strategies within the literature include projective techniques, a psycho-analytic approach, an information processing approach, mentoring, an existential approach and account making (Grove et al., 1998; Lavalley, et al., 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalley, 2004). However, alongside these interventions and strategies has been the development of programmes. The rationale and justification of such programmes was that their introduction to athletes early could protect them from anxiety about futures that focused performers often experience, while preparing them for a smoother, less traumatic transition out of elite sport when that time came (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Indeed, Whethner & Orlick (1986) specifically suggested that individuals with an alternative pursuit in which to commit and invest energy made smoother transitions out of the athlete role than those without such an alternative pursuit.

Anderson & Morris (2000) give the specific and early example of Danish et al. (1992), who were involved in the development of the Career Assistance Program for Athletes (CAPA). The CAPA program was based on extensive interviews with Olympic athletes in the United States. However the authors also explain that this programme was 'surprisingly terminated' before it had time to demonstrate its value, and although expanded on in more detail later, Danish and his colleagues' difficult experiences in establishing the CAPA programme, in many ways allude to and mirror the early and difficult developmental trends of such programmes across the globe (Given their extensive contribution to this area, Danish and Petitpas's research and work is also discussed in greater detail later, in

line with their LDI, human development and psycho educational-developmental perspective).

To summarise the above and aid the reader's passage through the coming sections, the author would like to briefly clarify what appear to be differing descriptions within the literature reviewed so far, and within the literature that follows. While all authors allude to the same need for support for athletes from career transition research (Mihovilovic, 1968; Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Ogilvie, 1987; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baille & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Anderson & Morris, 2000), their differing descriptions of that support include Athlete Lifestyle Programmes (Anderson & Morris, 2000), post sport-career planning programmes (Gorden, 1995), sport career transition programmes and interventions (Petitpas & Champagne, 2000), Athlete Career & Education Programmes (ACE) and Life Skill Programmes (Anderson & Morris, 2000). When not referring to others descriptions, the author will use Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in an effort to unite and clarify the many descriptions above.

To date a diverse number of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes have evolved all over the world. These include, but are not limited to, the UK's Performance Lifestyle Programme (formally known as the Athlete Career & Education (ACE) Programme, across Olympic and Professional Sports in the UK, including Cricket) (UK Sport), the Australian ACE programme (Australian Institute of Sport), the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre (COACC) (Canadian Olympic Committee), and the New Zealand ACE programme (New Zealand Academy of Sport). The National Football League (NFL) also possesses four programmes related to athlete career preparation, there is also the United States Olympic Education Centre (USOEC) (United States Olympic Committee), the Basketball League (NBL) in conjunction with the National Basketball Players Association's career and education programme (NBPA), and the CHAMPS/Life Skills programme (The National Collegiate Athletic Association). Given there are so many Athlete Lifestyle Programmes it is beyond the scope or focus of this review to address and outline every one in existence. Furthermore, while the author concedes how elusive and changeable the finer details of

these programme are likely to be, details relating to International Athlete Lifestyle Programmes are briefly reviewed and available to the reader in Appendix A. These details will occasionally be referred to in the sections that follow. Details relating to the ECB's Athlete Lifestyle programme are thought to be more pertinent to this research and so are directly included in later sections. Despite an increasing number of programmes, Petitpas & Champagne (2000) suggested that little had been written to address practical considerations in providing sport career transition programmes and so the following section offers reflections on such notions and on the application of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in sport settings.

1.4.1 - Reflections on the Development & Application of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in Sport Settings

According to the author's knowledge, Anderson & Morris's (2000) chapter on 'Athlete Lifestyle Programs' in Lavalley & Wylleman's (2000) book on 'Career Transitions in Sport', provides the most up to date overview of the development, growth and application of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes around the world. Their review was composed from personal contact, published literature at that time and a tour of countries during the mid 1990's, and for these reasons will be used here to reflect on the application of programmes in sport settings. Within their review Anderson & Morris (2000) described varying degrees of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes success, acceptance and progression.

Expanding on Danish's early difficulties in establishing the Career Assistance Program for Athletes (CAPA), Anderson and Morris (2000) suggested that whether in professional or Olympic sports, preparation for life after sport within the sporting profession was not perceived as an attractive way to use limited resources, and noted also how programmes (including many listed above and in Appendix A) were located on the periphery of the infrastructure of sport, given limited funds and not strongly promoted with athletes and coaches. To gain a more complete picture, visits were also taken by Anderson to examine many Athlete Lifestyle Programmes (or alternative descriptions outlined above) first hand

and interviews conducted with the 3 main international researchers in the areas of athlete support services at that time.

The first interview questioned Danish himself, a sound enough choice given that he had written extensively on the need for life skill programmes (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; 1995) and had developed numerous support programmes that had been used within the college system in the United States. While further attention will be given later to the LDI perspective which informed his work, Anderson and Morris (2000) report how Danish had diverted most of his energy away from elite sport. Danish was critical of elite sports non acceptance of the need to support life skill programmes, going as far as to suggest that at that time nothing of depth was happening in the area of life-skill programmes despite evidence supporting a need to help athletes (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993). Danish believed that if life skill programmes were to continually operate in elite sport, they would need clear policies and be integrated with other athlete support programmes. Danish also specifically suggested that some coaches would need to be made aware that athletes are *people* who have lives outside and beyond sport (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Anderson and Morris (2000) reported that Danish believed people in sports administration within elite sport in America focused on the profile of the game, that coaches were concerned about their personal survival, that colleges prioritised the performance of the team, that athletes were not interested in the service, and that ‘no one really cared about the athlete’.

Anderson & Morris (2000) secondly interviewed Professor Albert Petitpas who explained that he had also gone through a ‘torrid time’ trying to convince USA sport that life skill programmes were necessary. Their third consultation was with Professor Wayne Blann, who had also researched career transition issues of professional athletes. It appeared he also shared similar thoughts, expressing that some professional sports had totally ignored his findings, where as others had introduced life skill programmes that required on going development. Anderson and Morris (2000) described Blann, seemingly in agreement with Danish, depicting a system so tied up in billions of dollars that those involved found it hard to see the basic needs of athletes, and that the limited success of programmes in the

US was due in part to a reluctance to understand, or fully appreciate the need to assist athletes with life-skill programmes. Blann also concluded that the problem would remain as long as administrators and coaches perceived life skill programmes to be a peripheral need in developing athletic performance.

Anderson and Morris (2000) concluded that despite research supporting the need for Life Skill programmes (or alternative descriptions), sport saw such programmes as an adjunct or peripheral to other services for athletes rather than an essential service to enhance both the current performance and the long term development of the athletes. The authors explained that many countries that had established large, full time elite athlete training programmes during the last 20 years had been slow to develop life skill programmes, and once developed, had failed to implement them with the conviction necessary to create a positive impact. In addition they described how the development of such programmes had been sporadic, and suggested that if sport (and organisations) took a more responsible approach to developing athletes as people; young aspiring athletes might be more receptive to re-consider the need to maintain a well balanced approach to their sport. In this regard, Pearson & Petitpas (1990) had earlier reported that it was not surprising many athletes, especially those at collegiate and professional levels, saw little need to engage in exploratory behaviour that would help extend and flesh out their personal and social identities. The authors described how athletes had an identity on the playing surface, had busy regulated lives and in many cases enjoyed a variety of privileges that accompanied their athletic status. Unfortunately, Pearson & Petitpas (1990) also believed this focus on athletics might also inhibit the development of important life skills and the acquisition of varied life experiences that could be useful in career and personal planning.

Given the above criticisms, Petitpas & Champagne (2000) made the valuable suggestions that many sport career transition programmes (or alternative descriptions) and systems would have to be delivered sensitively and in less than ideal circumstances because of the unique nature of sport (e.g., professional or amateur, individual or team based) and the needs of the participants (e.g., male or female). They concluded that it is often the case that convenience and accessibility would supersede preferred workshop formats

(workshops being common methods employed) in terms of both contact time and depth of topic coverage offered. The authors also suggested that professionals must consider the complex nature of today's sport systems, because each sport has its own timelines, culture, governing body, and operating procedures, so the first step in programme planning is to become well versed in the idiosyncratic nature of the targeted sport or sport groups (Petitpas & Champagne, 2000). Reflecting further on the criticisms above, it appears that Anderson and Morris (2000) concentrate almost exclusively on those endorsing (e.g., administrations) or receiving the support (e.g., different sports), and not on those delivering it. The professionals or practitioners delivering the programmes and support services under review, therefore appear a somewhat significant omission given that they ultimately design, deliver and are conceivably fundamental to the success of any programme or support. This review will later attend to practitioners associated with and implicated in the support of athletes' lifestyles. Indeed, this research hopes to explore such an omission, in particular the extent, importance and role practitioners play, in addition to the skill base they require, to support the lifestyles of cricketers within any support structure or programme in professional cricket.

Whilst Anderson & Morris (2000) also suggested that there may never be an ideal system in place to support athletes in transition, they also concluded that no sporting body had questioned where such a programme should head in the future. Everything appeared to focus on patching up problems rather than creating an environment to alleviate them. Whilst Anderson & Morris (2000) appear to have provided the most comprehensive review of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes around the world, the author believes there is a need for additional understanding. Whilst acknowledging Anderson & Morris's (2000) skeptical conclusions and assertions towards sports, administrators, coaches and various nations in their support of such programmes, this research, although only focused in one sport, also seeks to further understand reasons as to why a programme, or in fact the area of lifestyle support itself, may succeed in supporting athletes experiences, or equally struggle for acceptance, integration and remain on the periphery of support. Aside from their general disappointment and critical descriptions, Anderson & Morris (2000) were unable to expand on the cultural nuances (e.g., of the sport), or the contextual (e.g.,

coaches voices) and environmental realities (e.g., day to day experiences) in which such programmes and practitioners operate, nor expand on where support might head in the future. These are areas explored extensively in the present thesis.

Whilst not exploring Athlete Lifestyle Programmes directly, Henry et al. (2004) were commissioned more recently by the European Commission Sports Unit along with the Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy at Loughborough University to explore the *education* of young sports performers. The authors focused their research on the educational and vocational support for *young* elite athletes (through compulsory education years, further education, higher education, and within professional sport organisations) across 25 ‘Member States’ of Europe (including the UK). Section 4 of the report addressed the question of how the educational needs of young elite athletes were met by their employers and/or serviced by their agents in the professional sporting system. Approximately 60% of the Member States had specialised professional academies for elite sportspersons (as is the case in cricket where players attend academies alongside educational commitments at schools or colleges). These academies were typically sport specific and enabled programmes to be tailored for both the athletes’ educational and sporting needs. However, in some Member States there was thought to be a greater weighting towards sporting performance at some sports academies, and without naming specific academies, there was thought to be a high level of flexibility within their curricula to encourage sporting performance. Interestingly, this contrasted with other Member States, where the emphasis was thought to focus more evenly on educational development. Henry et al. (2004) suggested that given that a very high percentage of student-athletes at sports academies would not secure professional contracts, there was increasing concern that for many of these young people the main priority was sport rather than education.

Section 5 of the report explored the role of universities and higher education institutes in balancing athletic performance and the education of elite athletes. It was reported that there was greater flexibility to combine a sporting and academic career at this later stage of education, compared to earlier stages. Over 50% of Member States offered sports scholarships, including individual tutor support and monitoring, personalised study

programmes, distance learning, e-learning programmes, unrestricted transferring between departments, unlimited student status and permission for absence at training camps/competitions. However, achieving a suitable balance between education and sports development was still thought to be a significant challenge for young elite sportspersons at university.

In recognition of the increasing support structures for elite athletes' educational development whilst pursuing an athletic career, section 6 of the report went on to examine the nature of vocational advice and *lifestyle* management support for young elite athletes. In this context, Henry et al. (2004) reported that over 70% of Member States had policies or *programmes* (similar in composition and focus to Athlete Lifestyle Programmes reviewed earlier) in place to support athletes *during* their career and help them to prepare for, and secure, employment after their sporting careers ended. Examples of policies and programmes included advice and support, careers counselling, employment opportunities, financial loans and incentives to return to education. Henry et al. (2004) suggested that some Member States, and in particular the UK, also offered a wider spectrum of advice and support. This spectrum of educational, vocational and (in particular) *lifestyle* oriented support, is explored in the following section. Whilst Henry et al's (2004) research offered a detailed description of structures and systems in place to support the *education* of young sports performers; it does not seem to illuminate the delivery and / or effectiveness of such provision.

1.4.2 - The Current Applied Landscape of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes & Lifestyle Support

The following section offers a brief overview of the Athlete Lifestyle Programme in the UK, and then more specifically the ECB's Performance Lifestyle Programme. Prior to the review of these two programmes (but also in relation to those reviewed in Appendix A), it seems important to reiterate the aim of such a review. Firstly the aim here is not to provide as extensive summary of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in the same vein of Anderson and Morris (2000), nor is it to focus solely on the mainstay of such programmes, namely the

career and educational support services available to athletes. The aim is to sketch out the current applied landscape of *lifestyle* support in the UK and particularly in Professional Cricket, and also sketch out how such programmes are attempting to support the *lifestyles* of athletes. Such information should then provide a basis from which to later align the nature of support with the ‘real’ lifestyle experiences of those that such programmes (and practitioners) are seeking to support.

1.4.2.1 - The United Kingdom – The Performance Lifestyle (PL) Programme

During their review Anderson & Morris (2000) reported that a UK programme would be formally based on the Australian ACE programme, and that there was little to learn from the UK system at that time. Indeed the UK programme did begin as an Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Programme in 1999, but has since evolved into the ‘Performance Lifestyle’ (PL) programme. Again, minimal literature exists in terms of its operations, but some of the finer details outlined below can be found on their website (UK Sport, 2007):

There are currently 46 advisers and a national Co-ordinator liaising with seven delivery organizations comprising of the English Institute of Sport & UK Sport, Scottish Institute of Sport, Sports Institute of Northern Ireland, Welsh Institute of Sport, Professional Rugby Players Association, Welsh Rugby Union, and the England & Wales Cricket Board. It is beyond the scope here to review each programme in detail; instead the overarching principals of the programme within the English Institute of Sport & UK Sport will be explored, followed by those most relevant to this thesis, namely those within the England & Wales Cricket Board. The above UK Sport website describes the UK PL programme;

A Performance Lifestyle is for high achievers – those people who want to get the most out of life and produce their best in everything that they do!

It's for people who know that the many aspects of their life impact on each other and that each one needs to be carefully planned and managed if all their goals and aspirations are to be achieved.

For elite athletes to maintain a performance lifestyle they have to fit many aspects of their life into their intensive training programme.

The approach is to work closely with coaches and support specialists as part of an integrated team to minimise potential concerns, conflicts and distractions, all of which can be detrimental to performance, and at worst, may end a career prematurely.

(UK Sport, 2007)

PL is described as an ‘individualised support service’, where trained advisers ‘provide guidance on how to maximise focus while still fulfilling other important commitments such as career, family, social, financial’. Similar to those programmes outlined in Appendix A, the main areas of support are comprised of ‘career and employment advice’ (i.e., to gain a job to supplement income and fit around training demands, work placements to give a taste of possible careers options and planning for a second career after sport) and ‘education advice’ (including advice on part-time or professional courses, gaining flexibility in an existing study programme and making the right educational choices to fit into sporting demands). The UK programme, similar to the Australian ACE programme (see Appendix A), also offers a third tier of ‘lifestyle support’ through one to one and workshop based delivery, with areas of support including, time management, budgeting & finance, dealing with the media, sponsorship & promotion activities, drug free sport education, negotiation and conflict management. Having suggested earlier how the lifestyle experiences of athletes both inside and outside sport were predominantly undiscovered details within the literature, one might therefore question whether this third tier of ‘lifestyle support’ actually meets the complete lifestyle needs of those it seeks to support, or whether further reconnaissance might be required to inform such support processes.

1.4.2.2 - The ECB PL Programme & Lifestyle Support in Cricket

Given that this research was sponsored by the ECB and conducted by the author whilst operating as an athlete adviser for the ECB PL programme, the following section offers more detail to help the reader understand the contextual backdrop to this research. First the

reader is offered an understanding of the PL Programme's location within multidisciplinary sport science support teams, followed by finer details of the ECB PL Programme and lifestyle support within Cricket.

1.4.2.3 - Performance Lifestyle within Multidisciplinary Support Teams in Cricket

Given that PL and sport psychology services historically developed out of the same service of athlete welfare (Ried, Stewart and Thorne 2004), it is not surprising that lifestyle programmes and notions of lifestyle oriented support have been aligned with literature and the profession of sport psychology (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; 1995; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee 2004). However, sport psychology is a separate support strand from PL within a multidisciplinary support team in cricket. At the time of writing, sport psychologists working in cricket do not operate in such programmes but operate *alongside* them as part of a multidisciplinary team. Whilst the qualifications and background of practitioners are unclear in relation to Athlete Lifestyle Programmes (e.g., UK Sport PL advisers), within the ECB PL team, no athlete advisor is a qualified sport psychologist, though two, including the researcher do have an educational background in sport psychology. For further clarity, at the time of writing, consultant sport psychologists (none full time) also operate in some, but not all counties, alongside PL athlete advisers (5 full time across counties) and other sport science support services (predominantly full time). This situation is also thought to reflect the applied landscape across the seven delivery organisations of the UK. Figure 1.2 offers a diagrammatical representation depicting the typical multidisciplinary sport science support teams in county academy cricket, which is similar to that at County and National Levels, and illustrates the separation of PL from sport psychology.

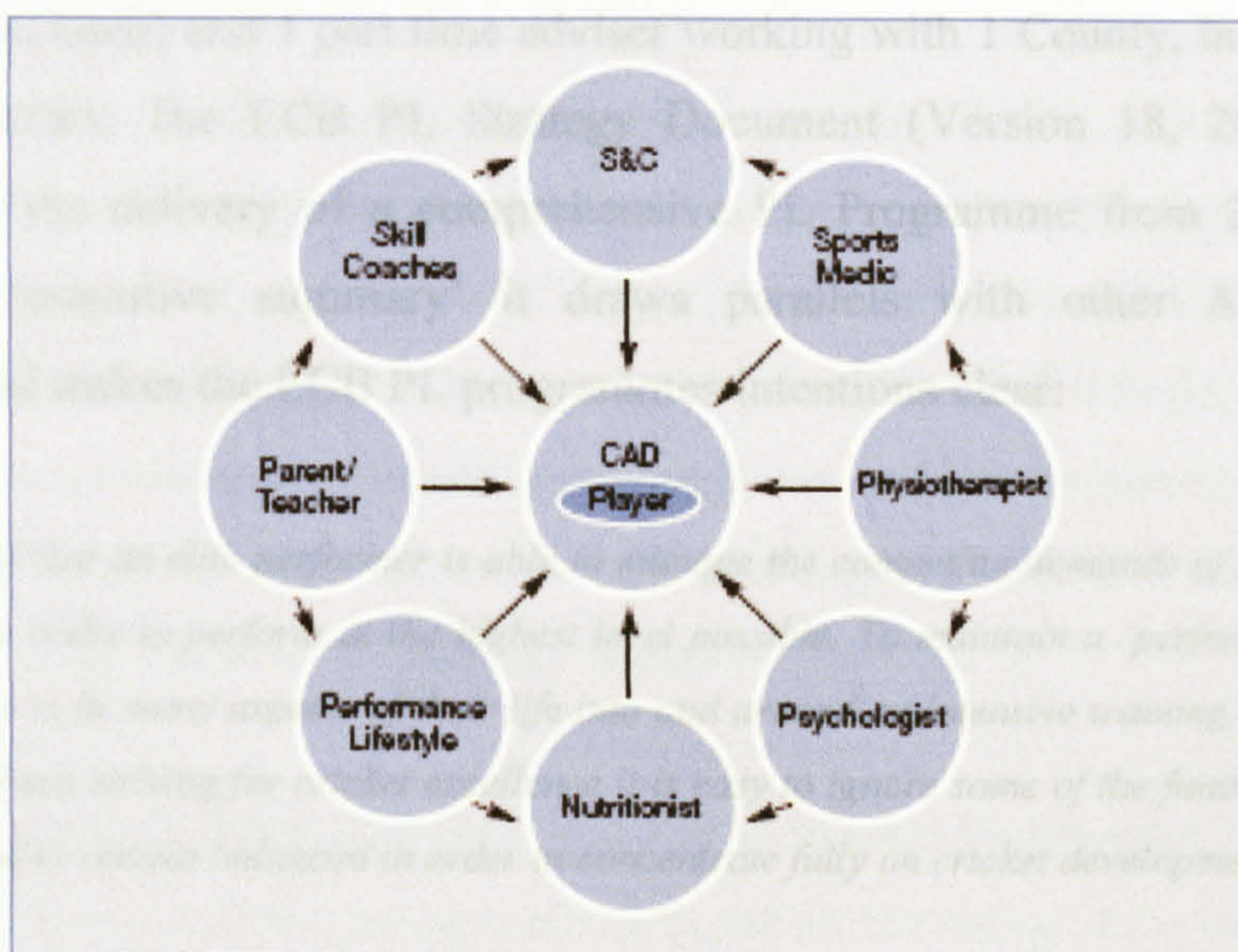


Figure 1.2 - A diagrammatical representation depicting the multidisciplinary sport science teams in county academy cricket (taken from the ECB's, County Academy Directors - Science and medicine handbook, 2006. page 27)

The current separation between PL and sport psychology within the applied landscape may seem clear (or perhaps somewhat convoluted depending on the readers interpretation) given that the development of PL and Athlete Lifestyle Programmes in general stemmed from work by sport psychologists and sport psychology researchers. Given the similar aspirations of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes to those of sport psychology, cross over of services and support also appears somewhat inevitable. These notions are discussed later when the review embraces literature from the field of sport psychology.

1.4.2.4 - The ECB PL Programme

The ECB was one of the first professional sports to launch a PL Programme in May 2001 and has bought a license to deliver the programme (formally known as ACE) alongside UK Sport. The Programme was developed by a part time co-ordinator, who was joined in January 2003 by three regional Advisers to service 18 first class counties. At the time of writing, the ECB PL Programme is led by a National Lead Adviser / co-ordinator (who also supports 2 counties and the 'England Programme', see Figure 1.1). The Lead Adviser is supported by 4 full time regional advisers, including the researcher, (supporting 3-4

Cricket Counties each) and 1 part time adviser working with 1 County, in servicing all 18 first class counties. The ECB PL Strategy Document (Version 18, 2005) sets out a framework for the delivery of a comprehensive PL Programme from 2006 through to 2010. In its ‘executive summary’ it draws parallels with other Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and makes the ECB PL programmes intentions clear:

“...It is crucial that an elite performer is able to manage the competing demands of life both on and off the pitch in order to perform at the highest level possible. To maintain a ‘performance lifestyle’ cricketers have to fit many aspects of their life into and around an intensive training and competitive programme. When striving for cricket excellence it is easy to ignore some of the fundamental aspects of life that need to remain balanced in order to concentrate fully on cricket development...”

(ECB PL Strategy Document, Version 18, 2005; Executive Summary; p.3)

With the aim of establishing a PL programme that enables cricketers to fulfill their performance potential on and off the pitch, the strategy document and website communication (ECB, 2007) outline three specific objectives which also draw parallels with many of the International Athlete Lifestyle Programmes outlined in Appendix A:

1. ***Lifestyle Support:** To ensure that players are combining the demands of cricket with all other personal aspirations and support them in becoming self managed professionals.*
2. ***Education Guidance:** To provide guidance and support for those players that are currently studying or those that wish to do so.*
3. ***Employment & Career Advice:** To enable a cricketer to explore career aspirations alongside the game*

Unlike other programmes, because of the authors association with the ECB PL programme, finer details of delivery are easier to come by, though still remain unavailable in the public domain. The following section sketches out the details of existing support structures and practices related to lifestyle support within the ECB. This section offers the reader some foundational knowledge in order to enable a more critical exploration of practice to evolve throughout the researcher’s engagement.

It may be helpful for the reader to briefly refer back to Figure 1.1 at times in understanding the layers of teams and players serviced by PL. PL makes up an essential part of the player development programme in each of the 18 First Class County Academies, where a core programme of support is agreed between the County Academy Director and the athlete adviser based on the needs of the individuals in the academy. Typically this programme consists of an introductory session for parents and players, a core programme of group based PL workshops (see Appendix B), and one to one support throughout the year (The ECB PL strategy document, 2005).

The strategy document (2005) describes how the Workshop Programme has evolved, with the advisers designing and delivering sessions based on the needs of the cricketers but also the philosophy of the individual Academy and the perceptions of other, multidisciplinary support staff (see Figure 1.2). Topics, learning outcomes and session contents covered in the original County Academy Workshop programme are provided in Appendix B. They include:

- Parent and Player Induction
- Personal Image and Presentation
- Requirements of an Elite Cricketer
- Effective Self Organization and Time Management
- Communication Skills
- Public Speaking
- Media Training
- Drugs in Sport
- Nutritional Cooking
- Negotiation Skills
- Negotiating Contracts
- Budgeting and Finance
- Preparing to Travel and Train Overseas
- Study Skills
- Applying to University

Where the Adviser is thought not to be the appropriate individual to deliver a workshop, specialist facilitators are often recruited (e.g., a financial adviser for 'Budgeting and

Finance’). Moving up in age and competition level, in terms of professional players, the PL programme is currently available to all professional cricketers on a non-compulsory basis, and in a recent survey completed by the Professional Cricketers Association (PCA) the cricket players union, 179 players had seen a PL adviser at least once since the programmes inception (PCA Questionnaire, 2007). The PCA have also subsidised a number of ‘Personal Development Courses’ for their members over the past few winters; including sales & marketing, property development, setting up your own business, IT skills, punditry & the media, personal training, public speaking and media training (The PCA, 2007). Analogous to initiatives in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the seven delivery organisations of the UK (see Appendix A), the PCA also provides links to prospective employers seeking work experience or permanent vacancies for players, via an initiative entitled the ‘Placement and Learning Access Network’, P.L.A.N (The PCA, 2007). Similar to the development of the Australian ‘Athlete Counselling Services’ (see Appendix A), the PCA have also recently established a confidential helpline for players who would like to talk to a professional counsellor and or therapist, if they are ‘struggling with a personal problem such as drink, drugs or gambling dependency, family issues, bereavement, depression or anything else’ (The PCA, 2007).

Professional and Academy players also feed into The ‘National Academy’ programme which was launched in October 2001 and after two transient years in Adelaide has become established at Loughborough University. PL has been included in the Programme by providing one on one support with players, followed by group workshops. In the third year (2003-2004) a more progressive and comprehensive programme was delivered and included workshops on:

- Establishing a support network (1 session unless otherwise stated)
- Requirements of an elite cricketer (cross over with psychology)
- Self organisation and diary development
- Presentations skills (5 sessions) – Public speaking (2 sessions)
- Media training (7 sessions)
- Drugs in sport
- Anti-corruption training
- Nutritional cooking

- IT training (4 sessions)
- Financial planning (individual choice)
- Personal image
- Individual development sessions (3 sessions)
- Research skills (3 sessions)
- Preparation for travel (2 sessions)

The national squad and England players are not serviced in the same way as described in the tiers above, unless they access the PL programme through their county adviser. The level of service provided to the 'England Programme' (see Figure 1.1) is currently being addressed. Similar to services at County and National Academy levels, comprehensive programmes are being created at England U19 / U17 / U15 levels (The ECB PL strategy document, 2005).

1.5 - Understanding Lifestyle Oriented Support

Having sketched out the details of existing support structures and practices related to lifestyle support specifically within the ECB and generally in relation to International Athlete Lifestyle Programmes (see Appendix A), the author would like to reflect on this existing provision. It seems reasonable to suggest that the processes and descriptions of education, personal development and career oriented support across all Athlete Lifestyle Programmes are relatively clear and consistent. However, many terms, sentences, definitions and descriptions throughout the review (and in Appendix A) appear more ambiguous around notions of supporting an athlete's *lifestyle*. For example, somewhat equivocal terms and statements in existing programmes include, 'aspects relevant to a balanced style of living', 'the need to maintain a well balanced approach to sport', 'lifestyle management', 'assisting athletes to balance the demands of their sporting careers', 'integrating both sporting and non-sporting components' (see the Australian ACE programme in Appendix A), 'a balanced approach to sporting excellence', 'helping athletes integrate the sport and non-sport aspects of life', 'identify and seek to maximise opportunities and minimise constraints that influence sporting performance', and support for 'time management, goal setting, decision making, integrating support networks, financial planning, and living / relocation' (see the New Zealand ACE programme in

Appendix A), ‘assistance in non-football matters’ (see the NFL in Appendix A), ‘guidance on how to maximise focus while still fulfilling other important commitments such as career, family, social, financial’, ‘working closely with coaches and support specialists as part of an integrated team to minimise potential concerns, conflicts and distractions, all of which can be detrimental to performance’, and support for ‘time management, budgeting & finance, dealing with the media, sponsorship and promotion, drug free sport education, negotiation and conflict management’ (see the UK PL programme). The ECB’s PL programme similarly purports to help players ‘manage the competing demands of life both on and off the pitch in order to perform at the highest level’, ‘ensure that players are combining the demands of cricket with all other personal aspirations’, ‘support them in becoming self managed professionals’ and ‘support to ensure players are attending to ‘some of the fundamental aspects of life’ (ECB PL Programme). The suggestion that the above terminology and any accompanying notions of support appears vague, stems from the lack of explanation as to what, for example, the ‘competing demands of life both on and off the pitch’ actually are. There also appears to be a lack of research that explains the *need* for specific areas of lifestyle support, and secondly how those areas are then realised through one to one meetings and / or workshop formats. For example, while one might acknowledge that athletes would benefit from knowledge of budgeting and finance or dealing with the media, there does not appear to be a research base from which workshops emanate or upon which the practice of lifestyle support is based. While lifestyle support appears to be interrelated with those of career and education support, it also seems to have become an additional (to the mainstay of career and education services), increasingly popular, ill defined and somewhat eclectic notion of support in many programmes. It appears evident that much crossover exists with some aspects of support in sport psychology literature (reviewed later) in that they seem to be trying to support issues that athletes experience when not performing and generally within their life, to in turn, support their performance.

As will be portrayed throughout this review, the lifestyle experiences of athletes, and certainly those of cricketers, in different contexts, cultures and environments, are predominantly undiscovered details at this time, not to mention ways in which support processes (including programmes and practitioners) beyond those outlined above might

tend to athletes' needs. The review now moves from Athlete Lifestyle Programmes to transitional literature as another perspective from which to explore both the lifestyle experiences of athletes and accompanying notions of support.

1.6 - Transitional Research and its Association with Athletes Lifestyle Research

Throughout this section transitional literature is (generally) perceived as a unifying perspective from which to explore both the lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers and accompanying support processes. This is based on the rationale and assumption that all cricketers will experience transitions throughout their career and life, both within and outside sport. This section initially reviews major developments in relation to career transitions, moves onto models of transitions and finally the emergence of holistic and life span perspectives on transitions. The transitional research acts as a base and framework from which to initially understand the developmental pathway of athletes, and also to explore the nature of life as a professional cricketer.

Lavallee & Wylleman (2000) bring together a comprehensive collection of career transitional literature in sport. They also provided a foundation for further research on sport career transitions and a greater understanding of the transition experience itself. In their more recent review of the major developments of career transitions, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) reported that the concept of transition has become a well-delineated topic of study among the sport psychology community. The authors describe how the concept is currently viewed in holistic life-span terms spanning athletic and post athletic career phases, whilst recognising other transitions occurring in other domains of athletes lives. Indeed capturing the actual transitions and experiences that occur 'in' a cricketer's career as well as those occurring in other domains of their lives are central to the aims of this research.

Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, (2004) described how the concept of transition was initially introduced following psychologists and social scientists interest in how former athletes coped with retirement from high-level competitive or professional sports as delineated in the opening phase of this review. After initially viewing athletic retirement as a singular, all-ending event, researchers then reappraised the termination of an athletic career as a transitional process (Lavallee & Wylleman 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004). This transitional as opposed to singular perspective was then implemented to other phases and events occurring *during* the athletic career and resulted

in the current holistic, life span perspective of athletic as well as non athletic transitions faced by athletes (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004). Starting with models of transitions in the athletic career a brief overview of this progression is outlined below.

1.6.1 - Models of Transitions in the Athletic Career

Transition theory in sport psychology sympathises with elements of social gerontology and thanatology (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004). Social gerontology, or the study of the aging process, aligned post sport career transitions to the general process of retirement from the labour force, whilst thanatology, the study of the dying process, aligned post sport career transitions to that of bereavement or social death (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004). Although instrumental in stimulating research on career transition issues, social gerontology and thanatology models were thought to be limited in explaining sports career termination due to their non-sport specific character, their presumption of career termination as being an inherently negative event, requiring considerable adjustment and their neglect of life after athletic retirement (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004).

While researchers reported the traumatic character of career transitions out of sport (Mihovilovic, 1968; Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Ogilvie, 1987; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baille & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993), additional research findings offer a more balanced perspective to career termination (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004) by suggesting that the career transition process did not appear to be problematic to all retiring athletes (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985) and could even serve as an opportunity for social rebirth rather than social death (Coakley, 1983). This led researchers to suggest that athletic career termination should be seen as a transitional process rather than a singular event. Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, (2004) explained how sport psychologists therefore looked outside of the athletic domain for further conceptual frameworks and focussed on transition models, in which a transition was defined as:

“...an event or non event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in ones behaviour and relationships...” (Schlossberg, 1981. p5)

Transition models and frameworks used in research with athletes include Schlossberg and colleagues (Schlossberg 1981; Charner & Schlossberg 1986) model for analyzing human adaptation to transition, in which the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition, the perception of the particular transition and the characteristics of the pre and post transition environments were all thought to interact during a transition. While a number of researchers used this model to understand the career transition process of athletes (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Parker, 1994), they were still found to lack operational detail of the specific components related to the adjustment process among athletes (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), and while beyond the scope here, this led to more comprehensive conceptual models of adaptation to career transition (see Gordon, 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie 1998).

Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalley, (2004) explained how during the 1990's, attention then shifted from career termination transitions towards a more life span perspective of athletic involvement. Such a perspective runs parallel with research from the fields of talent development, deliberate practice and career development. In terms of talent development, Bloom's (1985) research with 120 talented individuals (in science, art and sport) identified 3 (potential) phases of development experienced by talented individuals. Such developmental phases offer distinct transitional moments for athletic development. These include the *initiation stage*, in which young athletes are introduced to organised sports and during which they are identified as talented; the *development stage*, where athletes become more dedicated to their sport and the amount of training and level of specialisation is increased; and the *mastery or perfection stage* in which athletes reach their highest level of athletic proficiency. These stages are illustrated in figure 1.3.

Individual	Career Progression		
	Initiation	Development	Perfection
Player	Joyful, playful, excited, special	Hooked, Committed	Obsessed, responsible
Coach	Kind, cheerful, caring, process-centred	Strong, respecting, skilled, demanding	Successful, respected, feared, emotionally bonded
Parents	Shared excitement, supportive, sought mentors, positive	Made sacrifices, restricted activity	

Figure 1.3 - Characteristics of talented individuals (coaches and parents) at various stages of their careers (adapted from Bloom, 1985).

Bloom (1985) suggested that the social context / environment helps to shape young talented individuals across the early, middle and latter phases of their careers, and that situational factors including the role of family members and mentors (tend to) override natural abilities. van Rossum (2001) researched professional dance students' histories with results offering support for Bloom's staged model. Interestingly, van Rossum (2001) reported how on entering 'the later years' (using Blooms terminology), dance students everyday life became completely filled with dance. The dance teacher stressed discipline, was very critical and became increasingly interested in the dancer training for a professional career, as opposed to an interest in the individual who dances. While pleasure was not thought to completely disappear in 'the later years', results appear to suggest it had been 'defeated' by more functional and result oriented qualities (van Rossum, 2001).

Côté (1999) described patterns in the dynamics of four families of talented athletes (in rowing and swimming) throughout their development in sport. He identified the *sampling years* (6-13 years of age) where the main emphasis was to experience fun and excitement, the *specialising years* (13-15 years of age) where sport specific skill development emerged, and *investment years* (15 and over) where strategic, competitive, and skill development characteristics emerged as being important. Côté (1999) reported that during the *investment years* (which differ according to the sports, where for example the investment of training time needs to be made early in sports like gymnastics and figure skating) parental involvement, support and interest can increase. During the investment

years athletes themselves developed an extreme intensity of commitment to one sport resulting in play activities being replaced by a tremendous amount of increasingly intense (daily) practice. Similarly, Stambulova (1994; 2000) developed a staged model based on research with Russian athletes, depicting that the athletic career consisted of six predictable stages and transitions, including (1) the beginning of sport specialisation, (2) to intensive training in the chosen sport, (3) to high achievement sports and adult sports (perceived to be most difficult), (4) from amateur to pro sports, (5) from culmination to the end of the sports career, and (6) finally the end of the sport career. Stambulova (2000) reported how each one of these transitions is a turning point in the athletes development, and is characterised by the emergence of new contradictions (or inner conflict) and transitional problems which athletes have to resolve. In terms of problems at stages (3) and (4), Stambulova reported that potential transitional problems might include ‘adaptation to higher level of physical loads’, ‘difficulties in combining sports and studies’, ‘introduction of self restrictions’, ‘life subordinated to sport’, ‘searching for individual path in sport’, ‘pressure of selection to main competitions’, ‘deterioration in relations with coach’ and ‘family concerns’. Stambulova (2000) suggested that while athletes were not often aware of transitional problems, *during* any times of crisis, they *‘do feel that they are not okay’* (p.592)

Bloom’s (1985) staged model, Côté’s (1999) three phases and Stambulova’s (2000) predictable stages and transitions begin to explain developmental pathways of talented individuals and some associated complexities that accompany an athletes development in sport. It appears that as athletes develop and change, so do physical demands, performance challenges, pressures, expectations, coaching styles, coach relationships, support networks, personal relationships, environments, contexts and undoubtedly many more interrelating and somewhat elusive variables worthy of further exploration.

1.6.2 - Life Span Perspectives on Transitions Faced by Athletes

As research findings in talent development tend to confirm that athletes encounter different stages and transitions throughout their athletic career, appreciation widened and a

more holistic approach to the study of transitions faced by athletes was advocated (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004). Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) took a life span perspective, spanning the athletic and post athletic career, and deemed important those transitions faced by athletes in other domains of development, based on the strong concurrent, interactive and reciprocal nature of transitions occurring in the athletic career and those transitions occurring in other domains of athletes' lives (e.g., academic, psychosocial, professional) (Petitpas et al., 1997; Wylleman et al., 2000). The emergence of more holistic and life span perspectives, incorporating other domains of an athletes' development and life, lay further foundation for this research, in that they suggest the need to look at, but also beyond, the athletic experience and developmental pathways, and into their more complete experiences as people, and not just athletes .

As an example, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) believed that their model provided sport psychologists (and talent development research) with a framework to situate and reflect upon the developmental, interactive and interdependent nature of transitions and stages faced by an athlete. Wylleman & Lavallee (2003) presented a developmental model which included normative transitions faced by athletes at athletic (including the three stages identified by Bloom, 1985, and an additional discontinuation stage), but also psychological, psychosocial, and academic / vocational levels, as illustrated in figure 1.4.

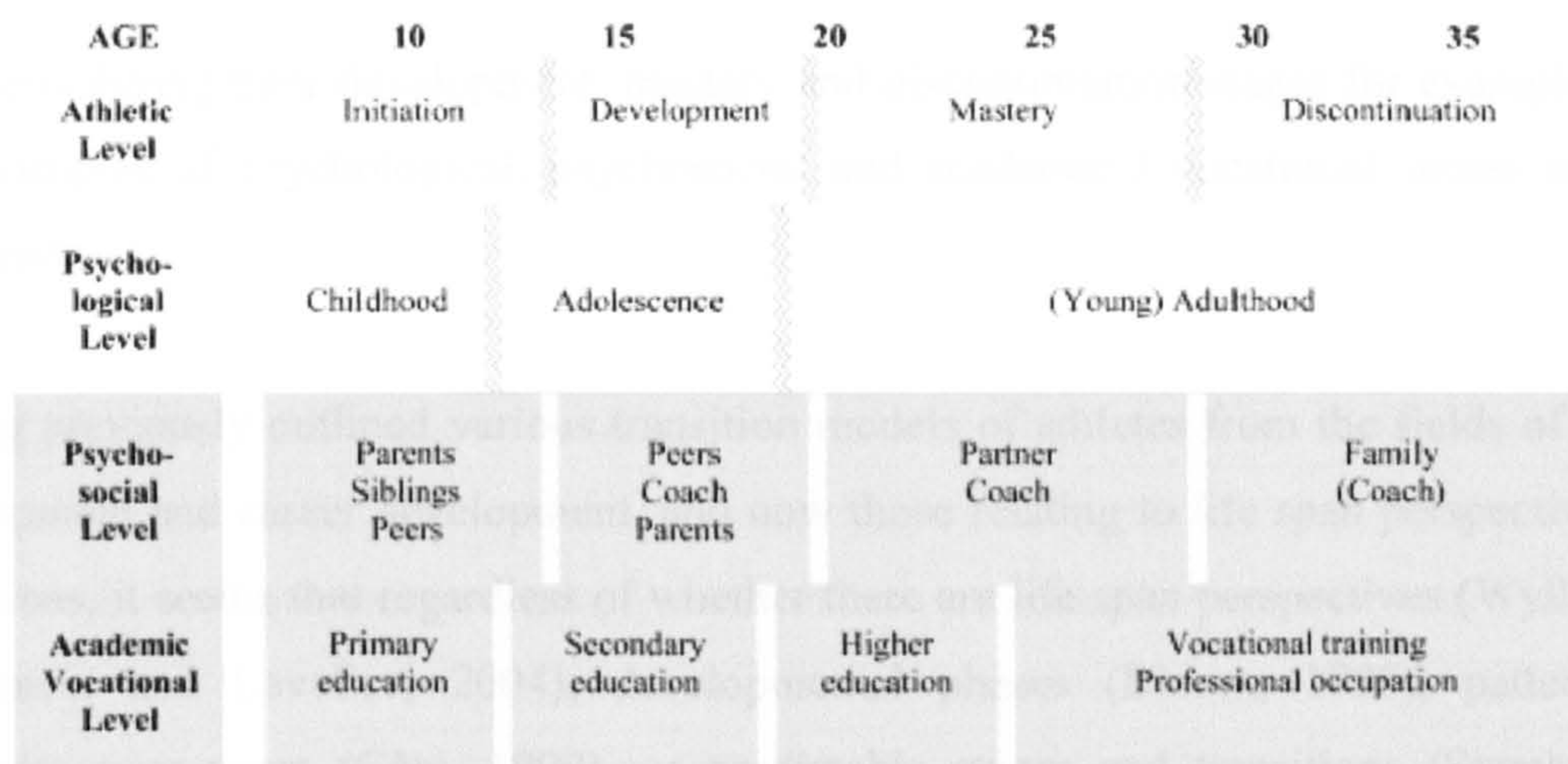


Figure 1.4 - A developmental model on transitions faced by athletes (from Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004, p.11; cited as Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003).

The top layer reflects the stages and transitions faced during athletic development and a lengthy discontinuation stage, the second layer represents the developmental stages and transitions at the psychological level (including young adulthood), and the third represents changes which occur in the athletes psychosocial development relative to his or her athletic involvement, including the athletic family, peer relationships, coach-athlete relationships, marital relationships and other interpersonal relationships significant to athletes. The last layer reflects stages and transitions at academic and vocational levels including primary or secondary educational and or a professional occupation.

The model underlines the interactive nature of transitions in different domains of athletes' lives and that non-athletic transitions may affect the development of an athletes' sport career. Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) explained that as young talented athletes try to transit into the mastery or perfection stage in their athletic career, where they need to perform to their highest level, as consistently and for as long as possible, they may also have to cope with transitional changes at a psychological level (from adolescence into young adulthood) at a psychosocial level (development of temporary / stable relationships with a partner), and at academic or vocational levels (transiting into higher education or into a professional occupation). In line with their holistic and more complete appreciation of an athletes experience, while transitional experiences are not the primary focus of this research, it is hoped that in exploring the lifestyle experiences of professional

cricketers during their development, mastery and discontinuation stages for example, real life examples of psychological, psychosocial and academic / vocational issues will be uncovered.

Having previously outlined various transition models of athletes from the fields of talent development and career development, and now those relating to life span perspectives on transitions, it seems that regardless of whether there are life span perspectives (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée, 2004), developmental phases (Bloom, 1980), patterns in dynamics over years (Côté, 1999), or predictable stages and transitions (Stambulova, 1994; 2000), rarely are the voices of athletes presented or realities of their environmental context described within these models. Indeed while all of these models offer excellent linear frameworks from which to understand the various transitions of (talented individuals, dancers, rowers, swimmers and (Russian) athletes, research seems to offer somewhat distant and clean observations of athlete's experiences and transitions. It appears that research has yet to employ methodologies that go even further and highlight the reality of what athletes experiences are actually and *really* like throughout and during their development. These assertions are perhaps supported by the lack of longitudinal research documenting athletes' accounts of their own experiences in sport and life in general. Indeed athlete's (contextual) voices as they mature and perform on a daily, seasonally and yearly basis are rarely heard. At this time, research also fails to elaborate on what and / or how contextual, cultural and environmental factors may influence an athlete's experience for the better or worse, and above all, how an athlete might be best supported during these realities and transitions / experiences. In line with these observations, van Rossum (2001) suggested that findings presented by Bloom (1985) must not be taken for granted but tested in different contexts, different cultures, and in different talent domains. Whilst these different contexts, cultures and domains might be sympathetic to the notion of development, each will undoubtedly carry their own peculiar and specific characteristics. One might therefore suggest that there is a need to better understand the transitions, lifestyle experiences and existence of cricketers, within the specific and peculiar context, culture and environment of professional cricket.

In support of the above, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) also outlined the need for mutual methodological developments, and specifically a methodology to evaluate athlete's perceptions of transitions occurring throughout their sports career. Perhaps the value, sensitivity and appropriateness of qualitative approaches briefly outlined earlier offer a methodological approach with the flexibility and creativity (Krane and Baird, 2005) required to best answer such questions, capture contextual voices and offer more engaged and detailed observations of their environments, contexts and cultures.

In terms of improving support and the contextual, cultural and environmental factors noted above, the physical and social settings within which transitions take place can, for good or ill, exert a tremendous effect on the experience of individuals making them (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The characteristics of the social context can influence the degree of difficulty that a sport related transition poses. Whilst the presence of responsive, resource-rich supportive relationships can provide individuals with the emotional, material, and informational support needed to ease impact of anticipated or unanticipated transitions and experiences (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Research has also generally focussed on the identification of transitions which are normative in nature, and researchers have paid less attention to the occurrence of 'non-normative' transitions or 'non events' (Schlossberg, 1984). The former are idiosyncratic transitions, that are generally unpredicted, unanticipated, and involuntary, and do not occur in a set plan or schedule but are the result of important events that take place in an individuals life to which one responds (e.g., season or career ending injury, a change of personal coach, or an unanticipated transfer to another team). For example, Wylleman & Lavallee's (2003) model does not include 'non events', which are those transitions which were expected or hoped for but which do not happen (e.g., not making a professional team) which can also affect the quality of an athlete's experience. While the experiences of athletes cannot be predicted, given the intense, interchangeable and competitive nature of professional sport, such non-normative transitions or non events seem somewhat inevitable in the lives of professional sportsmen and women. Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) contend that the unpredictable and involuntary nature of both these transitions will require researchers to develop

conceptual models which include the mechanisms required by athletes to cope successfully with these types of transitions.

1.6.3 - Reflections on Transitional Research

Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée (2004) suggested that the focus of research had shifted from the development of programmes to the evaluation of intervention strategies, career transition programmes and services. Furthermore they ask ‘where can we go from here?’ In light of this shift, and in terms of where one might go from here, the author briefly questions the speed of this shift and its focus on evaluating intervention. Indeed, whilst the literature outlined to date offers understanding on the development of programmes including their modes of intervention, and offers increasing understanding of athletes’ transitions, the author believes research and literature is still seeking to fully understand the complex lives of athletes, and has yet to offer or articulate in cultural and contextual terms nuances of life as a professional athlete, so questions the basis and speed of such a shift. Perhaps further reconnaissance is therefore warranted to inform any generalisations and further understand the lifestyle and transitional experiences of athletes, in context, and as they happen, in an effort to inform where (general and specific) programmes and support might go in the future.

In this regard, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée (2004) also believed that it remains a must for researchers to provide ways in which *practitioners* can apply research findings in their applied work with athletes, and that whilst models provide a theoretical framework, it is important that the demands of particular stages and transitions are linked to the resources available to athletes and their surroundings to make each transition more successful. In this way, *practitioners* working with athletes could assist them in structuring optimal transition experiences throughout their sport career. Using the model, Wylleman (cited in Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée 2004) has already paid attention to the way in which talented young athletes may be assisted in successfully moving from junior to senior levels by acknowledging non-athletic transitions occurring in the same period. In line with the need for further reconnaissance and embracing the need for practitioner

involvement, it is hoped that by gaining a more holistic understanding of the predominantly unknown lifestyle (and therefore subsequent transitional) experiences of professional cricketers, one might then be in a more informed position from which to explore and evaluate existing lifestyle support (including practitioner involvement) available throughout their career.

This review now moves from a transitional literature base to focus on the *practitioners* in support of athletes' transitions, athletes' development and athletes' lifestyle oriented experiences. In this regard, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) believed it was important to acknowledge the development of the athletic career with the role practitioners and significant others play. The authors also suggested that coaches and managers seemed somewhat removed from transitional research at this time, which conceivably also advocates a need for their involvement in this research.

1.7 - From Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and Life Span Perspectives to Life Development Interventions (LDI)

Transitional research offered insights and further understanding in relation to the developmental phases, pathways and experiences of athletes. This review continues to build on this understanding by exploring the role and involvement of supportive *practitioners* within the developmental phases of athletes' careers. The literature base from which practitioner role and involvement are explored draws heavily from the field of sport psychology. A framework by Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) begins this section before leading onto broader reflections relating to the practice of sport psychology support. Similar to the developmental life span perspective from transitional research, LDI developed out of a life-span human development framework that emphasizes continuous growth and change (Baltes, Reese & Lipsett, 1980). Such a life span perspective requires a multidisciplinary study of behavior, development and change (Danish, Petitpas and Hale, 1992).

1.7.1 - LDI - A Developmental-Educational Intervention Model of Sport Psychology

Danish & Hale (1981) and Danish, Petitpas & Hale (1992; 1993; 1995) initiated a discussion hoping to open dialogues about models of practice in sport psychology. The authors implied there should not be one accepted model of practice; but several models and each should provide a coherent umbrella under which practitioners who have cross-trained in the disciplines of psychology and the sport sciences can serve a diverse client population. However, Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) reported disappointment at reactions and dialogues to their discussion which they felt were more about licensure; and focused on the disciplines in which practitioners (i.e., psychologists) were trained rather than on the framework adopted and the strategies and techniques learned. In a series of papers Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992; 1993; 1995) outlined their educational developmental framework for the practice of sport psychology to enhance athlete's performance both inside and outside sports.

Within their framework Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992; 1993; 1995) perceived change as sequential and believed it necessary to consider any stage of life within the context of what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. Within the framework change resulting from life situations is called a ‘critical life event’, and given the authors belief that everyone experiences many critical life events throughout their lives, the concept serves as a structure for understanding the life course of an athlete (Danish et al. 1995). Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) suggested several (but perhaps not all) critical life events that athletes may experience including adjusting to higher levels of competition, coping with injuries, being transferred, getting married, becoming a parent and retirement from sport (Danish Petitpas & Hale, 1992). As with transitional research, it appears that the LDI framework is also seeking to fully understand the complete complexity of athlete development.

1.7.2 - Characteristics of Life Events

Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1992) propose that the timing of the event, the duration of the event, and the contextual purity of the event may affect the impact life events have on an individual. Timing refers to the congruence between the actual timing of the event and either personal or societal expectations of when the event should occur, which draw parallels with unpredicted, unanticipated and involuntary ‘non normative’ transitions or ‘non events’ outlined earlier (Schlossberg, 1984). Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) explain that when we experience events that are ‘on time’, we usually have the support of informal and formal networks to help us through the transition, but when they are ‘off time’, it is deemed harder to cope with them. The duration of the event relates to whether life events are perceived as temporary, permanent, or uncertain and whether they are evaluated as positive, negative, or mixed (Schlossberg, 1984). Contextual purity refers to the number of events being experienced at one time given that events do not usually occur in isolation and even within a single event, other issues will intercede. The more events being experienced simultaneously, the more difficult the adjustment is thought to be. Much like the interactive nature of athletic and non-athletic transitions outlined in different domains (e.g., psychological and psycho-social) of athletes’ lives by Wylleman,

Alfermann and Lavallee (2004), Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1992) also suggest events can be divided into many domains (e.g., family, career, biological, and psychosocial) and that successful coping involves dealing with these other issues as well as the event itself.

Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1992) suggest that a critical life event may result in decreased functioning; in little change, or in increased opportunities for growth, and that what occurs is often dependant on the resources the individual has prior to the event. In part, resources depend on the level of preparation for critical life events and on past history in dealing with similar events successfully or unsuccessfully. In many ways the details already discussed above, in relation to the preparation for, and support of, critical life events, perhaps partly explain the emergence of one on one and workshop based initiatives (e.g., career planning) outlined earlier in relation to Athlete Lifestyle Programmes. However, Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) suggest that because athletes are sometimes pampered, and difficult decisions are sometimes made for them, their opportunities to solve problems (and so become empowered and / or responsible) and benefit from past events may be lessened. Such suggestions again allude to the nature of support in place for athletes and the environments in which they reside.

1.7.3 - Strategies & Techniques in LDI

Essentially, within the framework change is viewed as a challenge as opposed to a threat with emphasis placed on optimizing rather than remediating performance. The central strategy of the LDI approach is the teaching of goal setting as a means of empowerment to enhance or enrich the individual's ability to deal constructively with the experience (Danish & Hale, 1981). Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992; 1995) believed that when individuals can set and attain goals, they are able to gain control over their lives because they feel able to direct their future and acquire the necessary interpersonal and intrapersonal skills which are all thought to enable improved performance. However, the authors also suggest that whether they are athletic, academic or personal goals, there may be many roadblocks to reaching them. So the approach of LDI is to teach others, individually or in groups, to set goals, identify and overcome roadblocks, and reach for

their goals by developing new skills, acquiring new knowledge, learning to take risks, and developing effective social support.

Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) explained that all skills whether physical or mental, that are acquired in the athletic domain are not seen to be strictly athletic related, but are seen as life skills that have value to athletes in and out of sports and can help them manage present life situations and successfully encounter future critical life events. The authors describe how LDI specialists therefore teach life skills and through self exploration assist athletes in identifying, using, and transferring life skills they already possess. In doing so, they also implicate the role of practitioners in support of athletes.

In outlining the above strategies Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) suggest they are also dependant on when the intervention is implemented in relationship to when the critical life event occurred. Interventions occurring before an event are deemed 'Enhancement strategies', which help athletes, prepare and anticipate normative events, assist them in recognizing skills they retain in one domain apply to other life areas and teach skills that enhance abilities to cope with future events. Because some people require social support that extends beyond the capabilities of their natural system of family and friends, interventions during an event are called 'Supportive strategies' that assist individuals in developing social support to help them cope with the current situation. Finally, 'Counselling strategies' take place after the life event to help athletes cope with difficulties confronting the impact or aftermath of a life event. The goal of counselling is to understand the problem from the athlete's perspective and assess their coping resources, sources of support, and domain specific variables to help the individuals grow from their experience (Danish, Petitpas & Hale 1992). Figure 1.5 illustrates these timings and interventions.

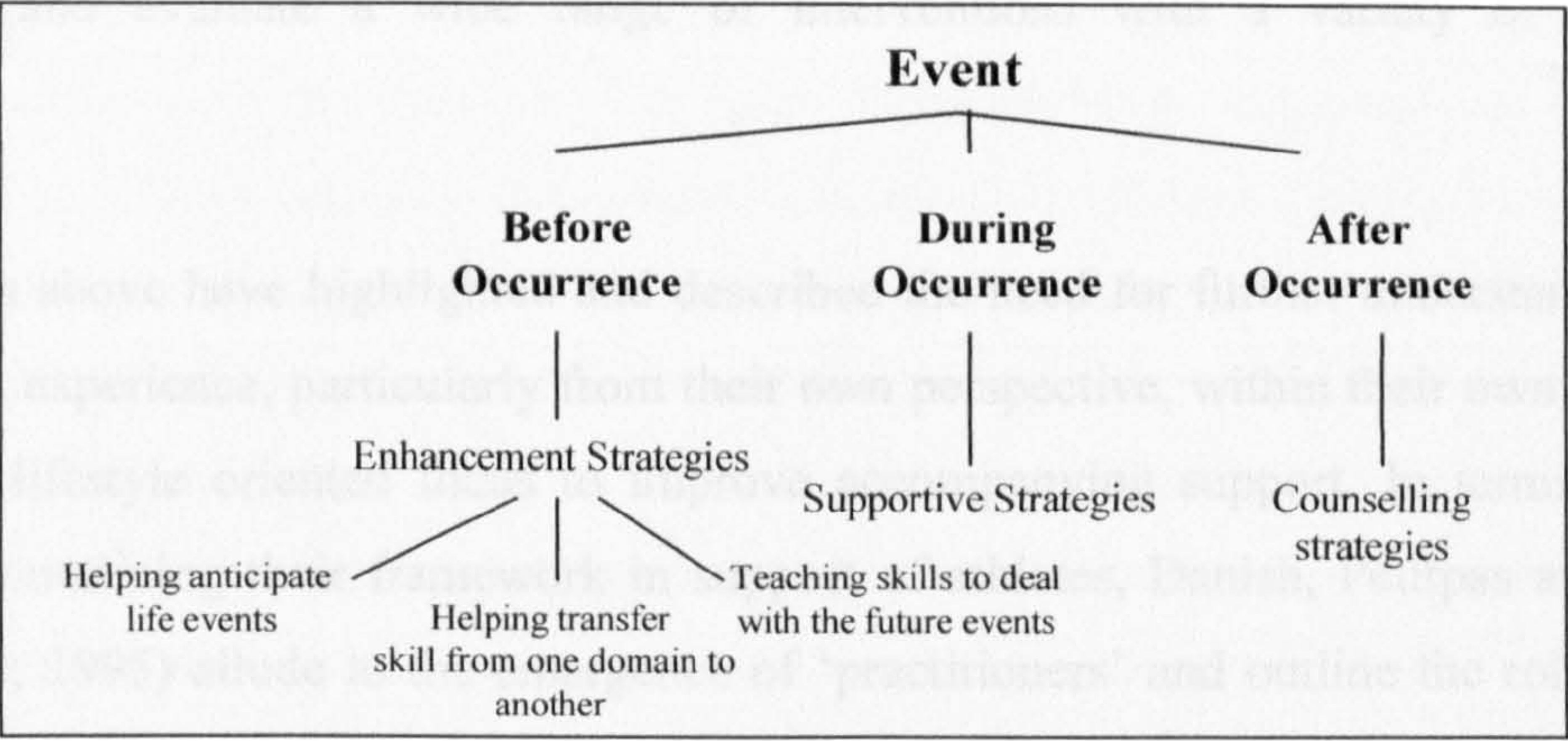


Figure 1.5 -Categories and timing of LDI nterventions
(adapted from Danish et al. (1995); cited in Martens, 1995).

1.7.4 - The Role of the LDI Specialist in the Sport Setting

Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1992) explained that the training necessary to become an ‘LDI specialist’ is multidisciplinary, with primary roots in counselling, psychology, and the sport sciences. They explained that although LDI specialists may differ, they should all possess counselling skills, the ability to assist individuals in setting and attaining goals, proficiency in identifying and transferring acquired physical and mental skills from one domain to another, and develop an understanding of the person or persons receiving the intervention.

Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) suggested that understanding the critical life event from the perspective of another is a difficult but necessary prerequisite to ‘helping’. They suggested that too often helpers only have a few skills, tend to force them on their clients, and assume they understand others and their problems and rapidly begin to try and ‘fix’ the situation. The authors also believed that listening to and understanding others is the first essential phase of counselling and stress the importance of knowledge about the general nature of sport and counselling to enable them to understand the unique dynamics presented by many athletes. In summary, research on LDI offers a framework in which

practitioners trained in both psychology, counselling and physical education can design, implement, and evaluate a wide range of interventions with a variety of athletic populations.

The sections above have highlighted and described the need for further understanding of the athlete's experience, particularly from their own perspective, within their own context and with a lifestyle oriented focus to improve accompanying support. In terms of the latter, while outlining their framework in support of athletes, Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992; 1993; 1995) allude to the emergence of 'practitioners' and outline the role, skills and training of the 'LDI Specialist'. In doing so they go beyond their own descriptions of models and techniques to describe the skill base required of people / practitioners in support. The authors describe pre-requisites to helping, the need for counselling skills and knowledge of sport, developing an understanding of the person, building rapport, the therapeutic relationship and listening. Danish et al. (1992) also outlined some common mistakes made all too often by ineffective helpers (e.g., rapidly trying to 'fix' a situation). While these notions are expanded on in the following section, most UK practitioners are not qualified to provide a counselling service to athletes (Anderson & Clarke, 2002), and interestingly, whilst Danish, Petitpas & Hale's (1992; 1993; 1995) ideas do appear to align themselves with the counselling *skill base* typically required and developed by UK sport psychologists, counselling *qualifications* do not appear to be a pre-requisite for accredited status as a sport psychologist (BASES, 2007). Furthermore, by describing the humanistic side of support personnel, the authors also provide a great opportunity to explore and reflect on the role allied practitioners (e.g., sport psychologists, PL advisers and even coaches) might play in supporting athletes' lifestyle experiences.

1.8 - Reflections on Support in Sport Psychology

The LDI framework and Danish, Petitpas and Hale's (1992) request for further discussion on models and approaches to practice (in sport psychology) lead the reader into the next section of this review. With PL and sport psychology services historically developed out of athlete welfare (Ried, Stewart & Thorne 2004), the following section naturally houses

and sympathises with literature closely associated with sport psychology research and practice. Indeed the potential skill set of a lifestyle practitioner appears closely aligned and might sympathise with the skill set of a sport psychologist in supporting an athlete's lifestyle. What follows therefore is a concise overview of relevant developments in the practice of sport psychology. As previously explained, the nature of literature in relation to lifestyle oriented support remains scarce and literature fails to articulate any detailed experiences of lifestyle practitioners working in such areas. The aim here is to associate this thesis alongside sport psychology literature to understand the content, processes and practitioners themselves in support of athletes' lifestyle experiences.

With its early roots in physical education, traditional sport psychology has been seen as offering performance enhancement through the teaching of psychological skills, like relaxation, mental rehearsal, positive self talk and goal setting, (Andersen, Van Raalte and Brewer, 2001). Mental skills training (MST) appears to be recognised as the most widely practiced approach to performance enhancement in sport psychology (Morris & Thomas, 1995). However, the activities that practicing applied sport psychologists should be involved in is subject to continued debate. Whilst some practitioners primarily focus on performance enhancement issues through MST, others appear to adopt more holistic approaches addressing the overall well-being of the athlete (Andersen, 2000; Petitpas, 1996). Despite several and repeated calls for sport psychologists to consider the importance of other skills aside from MST (Andersen, Van Raalte and Brewer 2001; Andersen, 2000; Nesti, 2006; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) little seems to have happened (Nesti, 2006). It appears that techniques and interventions remain the mainstay of sport psychology and performance enhancement service delivery (Andersen, 2000). Nesti (2006) stated that the cognitive behavioural approach has been dominant in applied sport psychology for the last 25 years, as seen in the plethora of publications, articles, books, and conference presentations that consider the efficacy of different MST techniques. Nesti (2006) also cites a case whereby a full time sport psychologist working at the highest level has claimed that MST represents no more than 5-10 per cent of his role and that many applied sport psychologists have to deal with a myriad of issues unlikely to be successfully addressed by MST.

In this regard, sport psychologists are becoming increasingly interested in the theory and practice of counselling (Lavalley & Cockerill 2002) and the greater willingness to utilise counselling at the elite levels, is helping to reveal the weaknesses of traditional approaches and making a useful and innovative contribution to the well-being of athletes and coaches (Cockerill & Tribe 2002). Equally the growth of interest in counselling in sport contexts (Lavalley & Cockerill, 2002) and a greater acceptance that there are a wide range of approaches beyond the cognitive behavioural model is adding much needed depth to applied sport psychology work. As the field of sport psychology progresses beyond a narrow definition of performance enhancement (Andersen, Van Raalte and Brewer 2001), the author believes that a number of voices within papers arguably stand alone within the midst of the MST dominant worldview. These papers, whilst written independently, articulate alternative applied paradigms to sport psychology support and performance enhancement and collectively challenge the dominance of MST. While these papers take centre stage in the sections that follow, they also seem somewhat different from the predominantly technically driven and intervention testing nature of those associated with MST. Within these papers the authors appear to consolidate, and give the impression that they have engaged in extensive critical personal reflection, not only about the process of support but also about the very essence of their work, and that of the profession itself.

The following section opens with a review of sport psychology support from a philosophical perspective, and continues with an overview of papers from authors in volume 4 of 'The Sport Psychologist' (1990) journal, who expand and reflect on the content and process of delivering sport psychology in professional sports and in doing so also shed light on the reality of athletes' experiences. It then continues by drawing on more contemporary literature related to applied practice and concludes by exploring the processes, characteristics and operational roles of practitioners in support. Whilst this review cannot accommodate all messages from all literature outlined below, some of those most relevant to the lifestyle experiences and accompanying support roles in this thesis are extrapolated.

1.8.1 - Philosophical Reflections on Sport Psychology Support

The professional philosophy of a consultant is thought to be the driving force behind the technical aspects of the consulting process in that their philosophy guides practice (Corlett, 1996; Poczwardowski, Sherman & Henschen, 1998; Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza; 2004). These authors suggest understanding ones personal and professional philosophy is among the essential prerequisites to an effective consulting practice and drives the entire helping process. Corlett (1996) contrasted sophist and socratic ideas from Athens, dating back to the 5th Century BC to demonstrate the contribution a sound philosophical foundation can make upon professional practice and the potential role of philosophy and the humanities in sport psychology. Corlett (1996) described sophist practitioners as technique driven, where any action that serves the practical and immediate needs of an athlete or gains control over anything interfering with performance is of value, and where concern lies solely with specific skills that produce successful performance. As a result sophists tend to rely on mental training techniques (MST) to make symptoms go away. Corlett (1996) believed athletes nurtured and practitioners operating in this way may become solely dependent upon technique, calling on mental training transcripts and protocols, leaving athletes one step removed from the potential flow in sport (Corlett, 1996). He also believed a sophist philosophy fails to appreciate that the way to change is not solely through technical advice but through the athletes themselves (i.e., knowledge of self), and by concentrating on immediate results, sport psychologists may define the limitations of sport and not its potential; not the possibilities of individual players but their boundaries (Corlett, 1996).

In outlining an alternative philosophy and framework for a different kind of sport psychology, Corlett (1996) described socratic counselling which considers a deficiency of knowledge of self as the origin of many problems athletes experience, rather than a deficiency of knowledge of technical, physical or mental skill. For socratic practitioners technique based symptom relief would never be a sufficient solution for a presenting problem. Socratic practitioners place emphasis on developing athlete education to enable them to look after themselves, not with symptom relieving answers but cause illuminating

questions that stem from the athlete. Corlett (1996) acknowledged that sport psychologists are often able to work as mental skill coaches instilling psychological skills and that athletes should also never apologize for learning skills that lead to the achievement of some end nor should sport psychologists apologize for instilling such skills (Corlett, 1996). However, he also believed the easiest route is to remain the sophist and “*patch em up and send em back out there*” (p.90), to satisfy coaches and parents, and within a lucrative and time demanding market such as professional sport, that may be the main requirement of the organisation and the athlete themselves. However, Corlett concluded that sophistry is not a philosophical mode to which sport psychologists aspire, rather a trap into which they can fall. The challenge for sport psychologists and associated practitioners is to form a philosophical basis that offers guidance when tests and techniques are not appropriate, and to recognise that there are times when a sophist won’t do – and only a socratic will (Corlett, 1996).

Two papers that arguably demonstrate a socratic philosophy are those by Balague (1999) and Ravizza (2002). Balague (1999) wrote about her conceivably socratic experiences working with and trying to understand elite athletes by attending to the *person* behind the elite performance. Balague (1999) describes trying to find out as much as she can about the whole person, that athletes resent being seen as uni-dimensional, and if only the athlete is performing, it will not be as strong of a performance as when the whole person performs. Balagues approach to support appears in contrast to those of some dance coaches as reported by van Rossum (2001). van Rossum (2001) reported how some coaches of dance students, during their later years, were reported to be more interested in the person as a performer, as opposed to the performer as a *person*. Reflecting on her experiences, Balague (1999) also asked whether sport psychologists, should attempt to better grasp the wide range of issues affecting our elite athletes and expand on the standard set of interventions. Balague (1999) appeared to recognise that athletes face several personal issues beside those related to performance. Balague (1999) also endorsed detailed, intimate, and long term case studies of elite athletes to expand scope of practice and understanding of the identities, meanings, and values of these rare individuals. She

believes the goal remains, as always, about delivering a better service to ‘those we care for: our athletes’ (p.97).

Later Ravizza (2002) shared how various philosophical constructs have influenced his work and explained that when he began working with athletes whatever the performance problem, he had a technique to help take care of the issue, and that his primary, conceivably sophist philosophy, was to focus on teaching mental skills including goal setting, relaxation, imagery, and concentration training. However, he then reported a more socratic shift in his approach, having realised he was only ever taking care of symptoms. Ravizza (2002) described how before he could have an impact in the sport domain, a personal relationship had to be established; where he must earn the athletes trust and respect as a person. He also believed concern for the athlete as a *person* is unique in the sport culture and often gets lost in the multitude of issues a coach must deal with. In essence, the coaches’ priority tends to be concerned with (and subsequently judged by) actual performance, because at some level; job security may depend on it.

In Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza’s (2004) more recent review of the most widely used models of practice, within the Psychological Skills Training (PST) model, they purport that the terms of psychological skills training (Vealey, 1988) and mental training or MST (Thompson, 1998) have long since been equated with sport psychology practice. Arguably in agreement with Corlett (1996), Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza (2004) believed that sport psychologists concerned with performance related issues need sophist expertise in the PST area, but also suggested that limiting sport psychology services to just PST may be a dangerously narrow philosophy or even a disservice to a client. Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza (2004) also concluded that a reflective consulting approach regarding professional philosophy has the potential to increase the effectiveness of sport psychology practice. While the papers reviewed above profess the value of a holistic, person centred and conceivably more socratic philosophical approach, few are able to provide data related to such engagement or through the athletes own voices in context as they negotiate together the issues that seem to have informed these approaches. This thesis hopes to capture these contextual voices in an effort to illuminate existence as a

cricketer and practitioner. Predating these philosophical papers, but accommodating similar messages that are drawn out below, authors in volume 4 of 'The Sport Psychologist' (1990) journal expanded and reflected on the content and process of delivering sport psychology in professional sports.

1.8.2 - Reviewing the Content & Processes of Sport Psychology Support

Neff (1990) reflected on delivering sport psychology services to a professional sport organization and initially believed MST (or conceivably a sophist philosophy) would be the area where the organisation would use him most. Instead he reports that it was 'personal counselling' where he was used the most and where he felt most affective. He explains that personal counselling referred to any concerns a player had which were discussed in private. This process was also frequently believed to be the stepping stone to enhanced sports performance. Specifically Neff (1990) suggested that by talking about a concern the athlete may have been better able to focus on his or her 'sport-work'. Neff (1990) also reported how athletes simply wished to talk with someone who they felt understood the nature of being a professional athlete, and that given players carry most of the load to win, it seems reasonable they have available to them someone, without concern for negative repercussions, who will listen, support, and assist them in their pursuit of personal excellence.

Dorfman (1990) reflected on providing personal and performance enhancement services in professional baseball, and believed that a clinical approach was often required if it was evident that some off field personal factor was inhibiting performance. He reported that over the years whilst athletes may have initiated a discussion about acquiring a MST technique to help them (e.g., relaxation), rather than accommodate players immediately, he would (seemingly adopt a more socratic philosophy and) ask further questions to further identify the problems they faced. Dorfman (1990) explained that these problems included marriage difficulties, family pressures, and trait anxieties. However, in support of Neff (1990), Dorfman (1990) believed that in only addressing the symptoms, (e.g., an inability to relax while performing) he would not have had any significant or enduring

affect on the player. Dorfman (1990) outlined that time spent on non-performance services was considerable and, like Balague (1999) and Ravizza (2002), he would adopt an approach that attempted to let players know he was concerned for them as *people* as well as *athletes*. However, Dorfman (1990) fails to explain how this was done. In shedding light on professional players experiences, he also described professional baseball players' major fear of personal and professional weaknesses being shared with management and used against them or affecting their status within the team. Botterill (1990) described 3 years consulting in professional hockey and highlighted that pressure felt by professional athletes can be immense. He stated that due to the many pressures and fluctuations of professional hockey, it was often satisfaction and effectiveness in 'off ice' activities that enabled players to start to approach their potential on the ice. He also believed that wives, families and friends were usually the most important people in the lives of professional hockey players. In this regard, what was happening away from the rink could be every bit as important as what was happening in training, preparation and competition (Botterill, 1990).

Predating his later and more philosophical paper in (2002), Ravizza, (1990) also reflected on consultation issues in professional baseball and focused on teaching athletes to deal with performance pressures, personal issues that interfere with performance, and how to separate personal issues from performance issues. Interestingly, he stated that being a minor league player was a 'lonely existence', but that one cannot assume a player who was having performance difficulties would reach out for assistance. According to Ravizza (1990) these players were essentially very proud young men whom may have found it difficult to seek help. Loehr (1990) reflected on working with professional tennis players and how he helped clients deal more effectively with both on court and off court stress. He reported that off court conflicts arose from travel, time zone changes, food changes, time away from family, finances, injuries, and how parental pressures were common. His 'non performance services' included marital and family work, eating disorders, drug counselling, and non sport situational stress problems.

1.8.3 - Understanding Non-Performing & Lifestyle Oriented Issues

It seems fair to suggest that the papers outlined in the section above highlight the diverse needs of athletes and advocate a philosophy, knowledge and skill base beyond that required to deliver sophist oriented MST techniques and interventions. In terms of these, conceivably more lifestyle oriented needs, and using the terminology of these practitioners, personal counselling related to personal reasons unrelated to sport work (Neff, 1990), some off field personal factors may have required non-performance services (Dorfman, 1990), off-ice activities and what was happening away from the rink was important (Botterill, 1990), personal issues interfered with performance (Ravizza, 1990), and off court stress and non-sport situational stress problems required non-performance services (Loehr, 1990). In addition and around the same time, counselling psychologists working with student athletes in America also indicated how athletes sought therapeutic assistance for general life issues (Parham 1993; Petrie, Diehl & Watkins, 1995). Indeed, in a volume of its 1993 journal, *The Counselling Psychologist*, published a series of papers exploring the potential role counselling psychology, and associated practitioners might play in sport and supporting athletes. Parham (1993) concluded that intercollegiate athletes were a very different breed from those of ten to twenty years earlier and function within a very complex and sometimes overwhelming environment.

Also around the same time as the papers above, Orlick (1989) reflected on consulting with individual and team sport athletes at summer and winter Olympic games outlining non-sport performance items that affected performance including boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, education, retirement concerns, injuries, or coping with new demands. More recently and seemingly in agreement with the papers above, Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza (2004) believed consulting can address issues of a more general nature related to the athlete's well-being, including his or her interpersonal relationships, and academic life. Furthermore, Anderson et al. (2004) evaluated 30 elite UK athletes' perceptions of sport psychologists' effectiveness to extend understanding of factors pertinent to effective practice, and described 'counselling related activities' and 'addressing issues outside sport psychology' to recognise all the demands in an athletes' life. In their study athletes

themselves also reported spending time chatting about general issues to the sport psychologist, who was someone the athletes felt they could chat to about their problems, 'off-load onto', use as a sounding board, and who would seek to empower them. Gilbourne and Richardson (2006) also reported how football players may talk to psychologists about issues that reside outside performance based topics, and how psychologists rarely reported the need to undertake applied work based on MST interventions (no matter what the level of engagement). They also described how practitioners' one to one work was often more 'lifestyle' in focus or personal in orientation.

Collective messages from these papers appear to be about recognising issues in an athlete's life and not just their sport, about the limitations of MST, the need for counselling skills, knowledge and training, and how seeing an athlete as a *person*, and not just as an athlete, appears to be the cornerstone of providing an alternative and holistic approach to performance enhancement and lifestyle support.

At this juncture the author would like to momentarily return to earlier suggestions in which notions of 'lifestyle' support had seemingly become additional, ill defined, increasingly popular and somewhat eclectic notions of support in many Athlete Lifestyle Programmes. The author also suggested that there appeared to be much crossover with some aspects of support in sport psychology literature (as outlined above) in that lifestyle support (e.g., helping players 'manage the competing demands of life both on and off the pitch in order to perform at the highest level', ECB PL Programme) seemed to be trying to support issues that athletes experienced when not performing, to in turn support their performance. Equally, further parallels can be draw with the emergence of more holistic and life span perspectives from transitional literature (Lavallee & Wyllemans 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004), which incorporated other domains of an athletes development and life and suggested the need to look at, but also beyond, the athletic experience of athletes, and into their more complete experiences as people. On reflection, the similar aspirations of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and some Sport Psychology practitioners appear to stem from any approach to practice that is interested in

the *person* and *any* issues (including non-performance based issues) in their life. One might therefore argue that practitioners from both Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and Sport Psychology are seeking to support a similar niche, namely, *the support of people's lives in sport*.

1.8.4 - Reflections on Practitioners in Support

What follows is a concise amalgamation of literature that continues to describe content and process, but also the *practitioners* involved in sport psychology support. The intention here is to review literature that sympathises with the practice of sport psychology which can be used later in comparing the processes and characteristics of allied practitioners involved in supporting cricketers' lifestyle experiences.

1.8.5 - Practitioner-Athlete Relationships in Sport Psychology

Gelso & Fretz (1992) outlined that to become an effective counsellor; it was not simply a matter of applying a set of techniques, but learning a great deal about oneself. In line with this and notions of client-practitioner relationships, Simons and Andersen (1995) offer some personal perspectives from 11 consultants who had practiced 'in the field' of sport psychology over many years. The most common theme emerging from interviews was that practitioners needed to have a better self awareness, an understanding of themselves, and of why they want to be involved with sport psychology service delivery. Furthermore practitioners were asked to challenge or examine what *they* bring to the consulting relationship. All consultants appeared to make an appeal for rigorous self examination and appraisal, and the need for practitioner knowledge and practice to be recorded for the benefit of the field.

Following the papers above, Petitpas, Danish & Giges (1999) suggested it may have been time for a paradigm shift in sport psychology training models from an emphasis on skill based instruction (sophist instruction) to greater awareness of self and the process involved in the sport psychologist-athlete interaction. Having evaluated programmes and

their technical aspects, evaluating the sport psychologist is also thought useful because the knowledge, delivery style and characteristics of the individual practitioner can have a central influence on the overall effectiveness of the service (Partington & Orlick, 1991; Anderson et al., 2004; Nesti 2006). Indeed, Petitpas, Danish & Giges (1999) paper on implications for training in the sport-psychologist-athlete relationship contended that practitioners' skills in developing a working alliance, characterised by trust, openness and collaboration, are effectual in establishing the necessary conditions for successful psychological practice. Building on this premise, it is thought that sport psychology can gain considerable knowledge from counselling psychology, where of all techniques and variables examined, only one, the client-counsellor relationship, has been related to positive therapeutic outcomes (Sexton & Whiston, 1994; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002). In this sense, authors have also argued that developing trust with athletes is one of the most important characteristics of an effective sport psychologist (Dorfman, 1990; Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006).

Arguably then the practitioner-athlete relationship is of great importance in the practice and support of athletes. Indeed, authors have called for research with different populations to extend knowledge on the attributes and activities related to effective practice (Gould et al., 1991; Anderson et al., 2004). Whilst this research does not seek to directly evaluate the effectiveness of sport psychology in cricket or the PL programme in cricket, it is hoped this thesis can inform the practice of practitioners providing lifestyle support (whether sport psychologist or PL adviser) through interpretation of its data.

1.8.6 - Practitioners Characteristics & an Immersed Role as Practitioner

Building on practitioner-athlete relationships and the qualities of practitioners providing support, Anderson et al. (2004) described desirable characteristics for effective practice like being personable (friendly and easy going, fun and someone who fits in with the athletes and other team members), a good communicator, a provider of a good practical service, knowledgeable and experienced in sport and sport psychology. Petitpas et al. (1999) identified the importance of empathic listening in developing an effective working

relationship with athletes, while the attribute of being a good listener and the value of being someone easy to talk to and someone to whom athletes feel they can off-load concerns is regularly emphasised (Orlick & Partington 1987; Neff, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Anderson et al., 2004).

In Orlick's (1989) paper he explained his 'On site... non intrusive background role (p.362)' with individual and team sport athletes at summer and winter Olympic Games. In terms of role, many studies have reported the value of having a sport psychologist, as a neutral person between athletes and coaches, and someone who bridges the gap, mediates, and provides an objective viewpoint on issues without a vested interest in either side (Partington & Orlick, 1991; Hardy & Parfitt, 1994; Terry, 1997; Anderson et al., 2004). More recently, Gilbourne (2006) also reflected on the reflexive texts of other practitioners 'Reflections on Athens' from the 2006 Olympic games in the Sport and Exercise Psychology Review. He critically commented on an absence of personal reflections within these reflexive texts that related to the very nature of *their* existence and experiences as practitioners. In doing so Gilbourne (2006) went on to advocate an elusive nature of 'being' a psychologist as in filling a physical space in a way that does not draw undue attention whilst always appearing available, and how this is an intuitive skill and part of 'just being there'. In this sense Rotella (1990) similarly described waiting patiently for months until athletes were ready to talk, and his willingness to talk and listen all day and night, whenever athletes were ready. Rotella (1990) also stressed how this process could not be forced or wished, and the papers above do seem to allude to a particular skill base and philosophy to operate in a perceptive and available, but unobtrusive way. Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) also earlier described the difficulty of such a role, suggesting that whatever the ethical framework surrounding matters of engagement, disclosure and confidentiality, it is likely that, for the psychologist, this will be demanding work. Research suggests practitioners must also establish credibility with coaches, recognise their role on the team, learn lines of authority and develop open lines of coach communication (Partington & Orlick, 1987; Ravizza, 1998). In this regard, Gould et al. (1989) examined the services of U.S. Olympic Sport Psychology consultants and

suggested that sport psychologists would be most effective when they worked *with* coaches, not in isolation from them.

In terms of the extent of a practitioner's involvement and the degree to which they are immersed, Neff (1990) accompanied a professional team on road trips, feeling the need to learn more about the lifestyle of a professional athlete and get better acquainted with the players personally. Similarly, Orlicks (1989) paper and Partington and Orlick's, (1991) depiction of the best ever consulting experiences of 19 Olympic Sport Psychology consultants emphasised the value of attending some major competitions with athletes, particularly in team sports, to witness firsthand the real demands placed on athletes, and how they and coaches coped with them. Bull (1997) also suggested that practitioners should immerse themselves in the sport in order to be optimally available. Many studies have reported athletes and coaches advocating the importance of the Sport Psychologist getting to know them by spending time with and observing them, and being available to them when they felt they needed help (Danish et al., 1993; Weigand et al., 1999; Anderson et al., 2004).

In line with the above, interviewees in Simons and Andersen's (1995) paper encouraged practitioners to become part of the sport environment. Specifically practitioners were encouraged to be at early or late practices, be there at difficult times, and work to understand the sport to tailor consultations to specific individuals, groups and situations. Whilst opposing but in support of these suggestions, Gould et al. (1989) reported how consultants were most disappointed with not having enough time to work with athletes or opportunities to build trust. When asked how they could better satisfy their NGB's, one response, clearly identified by 27 consultants was to individualise and spend more time with athletes. In line with the interests of this research, the authors stressed that NGB personnel would not be well served via one shot lectures and / or sporadic consultations, and that consultants must move beyond group lectures and workshops, and spend time in individual sessions with athletes and coaches.

1.8.7 - Concluding Reflections on Practitioners & Practice in Sport Psychology

It appears that personal characteristics and qualities are important to practitioners and their role in supporting athletes. These arguably include being aware of practitioner-client relationships, amiable, open, approachable, trusting and patient, empathic, a good listener, unobtrusively available, perceptive and there for the person, self aware and when necessary, able to collaborate with coaches whilst remaining neutral in supporting athletes. In this regard, Anderson et al. (2004) advocated research examining the perceptions of coaches, governing body representatives and sport psychologists themselves regarding consultation effectiveness which they felt would also be invaluable, and perhaps help to determine whether the clients preferred characteristics and activities of practitioners are actually associated with improvements in performance.

In conclusion, it appears that many papers and practitioners warn against pre-packaged programmes and technical interventions that are not appropriate (Orlick 1989; Ravizza 1990; Simons & Andersen 1995; Corlett, 1996; Ravizza, 2002; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004). As an example, Orlick (1989) suggested that he never began an individual consultation session with a preconceived notion of what an athlete might want or need. Specifically, Orlick (1989) explained that each athlete has different needs, which differ at various times in his or her career, and to be effective practitioners have to adapt to these changing needs. He believed the problem with dropping preset packages on athletes is that practitioners may get through their curriculum without ever really addressing the specific curriculum that is most critical to the athlete. The needs and the curriculum of cricketers are of central importance to this study. Equally, while none of the practitioners in Simons and Andersens' (1995) paper endorsed a 'cookbook' approach to mental skills training, and none claimed to hold the one true method, several consultants discussed the gradual transition from early consulting styles that were largely technique oriented, to approaches that have become more athlete-centred and experiential.

Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) arguably build on these notions suggesting that applied work is a human activity, which is as much (if not more) about being spontaneous and

genuine in a skilled and consistent way as it is about having a theoretical answer to a practical problem. They describe how successful practice is 'held together' by a psychologist's capacity to care, and that a performance agenda and caring agenda are symbiotic, in that they possess congruent properties rather than divergent philosophy. Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) also foreground caring qualities and like many authors believed that rather than scientific knowledge being the key to successful practice, a more humanistic agenda, offering a holistic perspective on the human condition and comment on how people strive and survive in a challenging world, would be more fitting.

In more recent years there appears to be have been increasing debate related to previous, current and future practice of sport psychology. While early papers and research appeared to engage in technical debate and discuss the effectiveness of MST techniques and interventions and cognitive behavioural approaches in terms of performance enhancement (see Morris & Thomas, 1995; Andersen, Van Raalte and Brewer, 2001), more recent papers and authors appear to have stepped back from technique and intervention, perhaps even distanced themselves from a desire or rush to improve performance, and instead taken time to muse over and offer wider commentary on the very nature of the profession as it strives to better understand and meet the needs of athletes (see Orlick, 1989; Simons and Andersen, 1995; Corlett, 1996; Balague, 1999; Petitpas, Danish & Giges,1999; Andersen, 2000; Poczwardowski, 2001; Ravizza, 2002; Lavallee & Cockerill 2002; Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004; Anderson et al., 2004; Nesti, 2006; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Gilbourne, 2006).

1.9 - Coaching Practitioners Involvement and Role in Support of Athletes Lifestyles

This research seeks to explore the lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers and accompanying notions of support, including the extent, importance and role (allied) 'practitioners' play, in addition to the skill base they require, within the contexts, cultures and environments in which players reside. It would therefore seem appropriate at some point to involve and seek the opinions of coaches in such an investigation. The rationale behind such involvement lies with the fact that coaches are localised county 'practitioners' working with and alongside professional cricketers on a daily basis and essentially throughout their entire career. While this research certainly *does not* purport to be about coaching, it does seek to critically explore and inform existing support systems, structures and practices and therefore coaches' (as allied practitioners) roles in supporting the lifestyle experiences of players. While it is certainly beyond the scope of this review to offer extensive commentary on the coaching role, it does offer a brief theoretical synthesis in line with the lifestyle oriented interest of this research. In a recently published magazine, Gordon Lord, the ECB's Head of Elite Coaching and Development commented on modern day coaching and management skills, and suggested that:

"Certainly the 'science of coaching' has moved on apace... laptop computers, sophisticated video analysis software, long term, multiple periodised training programmes, coaches managing multidisciplinary support teams... I think perhaps the most significant developments, however, have been in the way in which we train coaches to work with people." (Lord, 2007; p.8-9).

Jones and Wallace (2005) recently discussed the ambiguity and complexity inherent in the coaching process, and while the day to day activities of coaches are known to consist of organising competitions and training sessions (Côté et al., 1995), it is thought that instruction alone is a necessary but insufficient condition to deal with the complex tasks involved in coaching because the sport environment is both complex and dynamic (Salmela, 1996). Indeed, modern day coaching practitioners are thought not only responsible for directing practice and training sessions but also for the overall social and psychological well-being of their athletes, both inside and outside of the sporting arena (Borrie & Knowles, 1998).

With regards to this modern day responsibility and in interpersonal terms, the humanistic side of coaching is thought to be associated with the display of a deep interest and emotional investment of care and concern regarding the welfare and development of an athlete (Vernacchia, 1995; Jowett & Cockerill 2003). Indeed a full time coach may even assume a counselling stance and use counselling type skills as a practitioner when listening to an athlete's problem (Cockerill & Tribe, 2002). In this regard, while investigating the organisational tasks of high performance gymnastic coaches, Côté, Salmela & Russell (1996) reported that part of such tasks involved dealing with young gymnasts personal concerns, including relationship with their families, personal and social lives, education, finances and retirement from sport. They also reported that expert gymnastic coaches favoured and structured a positive climate of open discussion with their elite gymnasts. However, Côté, Salmela & Russell (1996) suggested that while coaches showed concern, they were also tough on themselves and their gymnasts, tolerating no excuses or compromises and that when it was time to work (in the gymnasium), nothing else was more important. Côté, Salmela & Russell (1996) concluded that knowing when to be compassionate and understanding, and when to be tough, demanding and abrasive, was an important characteristic of expert coaches. These findings also appear to relate to those of van Rossum (2001), who reported how coaches' characteristics became (abruptly) more functional and result-oriented during the later years of a dance student's career.

More recently, Jowett & Cockerills (2003) study with Olympic athletes informed their belief that ultimately the ability of coaches to develop effective relationships with their athletes could have an impact on an athletes well-being, and in turn, performance accomplishments. The authors suggested that the nature of the athlete-coach relationship also had an important role to play in the athletes' development both as a performer and as a person, and how Olympic athletes frequently engaged with coaches in discussions about performance goals and training, but also engaged in discussions about life in general. Evidently then, by its very definition coaching involves performing multiple tasks that cut across disciplines (Brewer, 2000) which can often create a stress of being all things to all people (Venacchia, 1992). However, coaches may at times seek referrals for their athletes

to receive sport psychology and other services for a variety of reasons (Brewer, 2000). These are thought to include ethical and professional constraints (e.g., lacking knowledge to deal with the issue presented by the athlete), practical limitations (e.g., lacking sufficient time to work with the athlete on a particular issue), and personal preference (e.g., choosing not to work with an athlete on a given issue) that may prompt coaches to look to other practitioners to help their athletes address issues of concern (Brewer, 2000).

In this regard, while the literature review has elaborated on the role of *practitioners* in supporting the lifestyle oriented experiences of athletes, numerous authors in sport psychology have also commented on athlete-coach related issues in their consultancy, including improving communication problems (Gould et al., 1989; Gould et al., 1999; Andersen, 2000), the importance of maintaining athlete confidentiality as practitioner (Andersen, 2005; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002) and working in collaboration with as opposed to in isolation from coaches to support athletes development and performance (Orlick, 1989; Ravizza, 1990; Loehr 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004; Brown, Gould & Foster 2005). However, there appears to be little literature overtly aligned with coaches perceptions on the lifestyle experiences of athletes. Yet notions of humansistic coaching, athlete welfare, well-being, development as a person, and discussions about life in general mentioned above, resonate strongly with the lifestyle oriented interest of this thesis. Indeed, the following quote by rugby union coach Ian McGeehan, from work by Jones & Brewer (2005), emphasises the importance and value of exploring coaches' perceptions regarding their potential roles in supporting athletes' lifestyles:

"Something they have got to be completely at ease with is talking to me about anything, whether it is rugby or non-rugby... if they have fallen out with the girlfriend, or wife or whatever [laughs], mistress, you've got to take that in... and for some of them it's very important that you know a bit about their life, and their lifestyle, and what is happening, because if they are unhappy, they won't be playing good rugby"

(Jones& Brewer, 2005, p58)

1.9.1 - Seeking Contextual Understanding

Ivey (1980) suggested that persons do not exist outside the environment nor does the environment exist without persons. Coaches arguably contribute to and (partly) create the context, culture and environments in which players reside (see Knowles, Borrie & Telfer, 2005). Brown, Gould & Foster (2005) purport that successful performance enhancement consultation requires practitioners to understand the context in which one operates, including practical know how, knowing the language of the system and how it works, knowing the culture of the sport domain and also the culture and context of the specific setting. Brown, Gould & Foster (2005) also suggested that if a consultant hopes to have a long lasting impact, it is important to ‘join’ and enlist the support and endorsement of those at the top of the hierarchy. More specifically, if attempting to intervene with an athlete but the coach thinks efforts are foolish and a waste of time, impact will be minimal, where as with coaches’ support, success is more likely. Brown, Gould & Foster (2005) also widened a practitioners lens to include an even broader context, and believed that if a practitioner has gained the support of coaches, but not that of the national governing body (e.g., the ECB), efforts may be short lived due to funding limitations. Similarly, when discussing practical considerations in implementing sport career transition programmes, Petitpas & Champagne (2000) suggested that professionals must consider the complex and idiosyncratic nature of today’s sport systems, because each sport has its own timelines, culture, governing body and operating procedures. Brown, Gould & Foster (2005) believed that there were few, if any, models for actually navigating the vicissitudes of the context in which performance occurs and so offered a framework for developing contextually appropriate interventions. While this study does not make use of this framework, it does seek to further understand the contexts and contextual voices of coaches and cricketers to inform future notions of lifestyle support.

1.10 - A Summary of Literature & Clarification of Aims

The overall aim of this research is;

To explore the lifestyle oriented and non-performance based experiences of professional English county cricketers. In doing so it aims to offer a critique of existing support structures (e.g., the ECB's PL programme), comment on practitioner support roles, and present thoughts on where *lifestyle* support might head in the future.

Comments arising from the review of literature have also created a series of complimentary and more *specific* aims. These specific aims are clarified in the summary section below. The aims that emerge specifically relate to early sections of reviewed literature, but also to later discussions within the review. One aim may have therefore emerged early within the literature review, only to be re-emphasised by further literature within a later section.

The introduction to the literature review clarified a growing awareness that sports performance, particularly at the elite level, is seemingly affected by many lifestyle factors. It also suggested that few practitioners and minimal literature is overtly aligned with notions of *lifestyle* oriented support, but outlined how researchers and practitioners appeared to vary in their description of what appeared to be *lifestyle* oriented issues affecting athletes. This led to the suggestion that the contextual lifestyle experiences (and accompanying voices) of professional cricketers appeared to be predominantly undiscovered details within literature. Essentially, little research appears to exist to outline exactly what lifestyle experiences and needs athletes and cricketers have, or in fact how to go about supporting them. The first specific aim emerging from the literature review is therefore,

- A. To (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers.**

The literature review then moved on to critically explore the evolution of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes from career transition research and the application of these programmes in sport around the world. The review clarified how existing athlete lifestyle programmes place particular emphasis on career and education support elements to prepare athletes for life after sport. Within this section, the author acknowledged Anderson & Morris's (2000) skeptical conclusions with regards the practical application of athlete lifestyle programmes in sport, and how many have struggled for acceptance, integration and remained on the periphery of support. However, Anderson and Morris (2000) were unable to expand on the cultural nuances (e.g., of the sport), or the contextual (e.g., coaches voices) and environmental realities (e.g., day to day experiences) in which athlete lifestyle programmes (and their *practitioners*) operate. This observation also relates to a similar discussion that arises from a (later) review of transitional literature (outlined below). However, this discussion is the first to highlight the second specific aim of this research;

- B. To explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support.**

In addition, Anderson and Morris (2000) concentrated almost exclusively on those endorsing (e.g., administrations) or receiving athlete lifestyle programme support (e.g., different sports), and not on those delivering it. In this sense, the *practitioners* delivering the programmes and lifestyle oriented support services under review appeared a somewhat significant omission given that they might conceivably be fundamental to the success of any programme or support structure. This discussion highlights a further specific aim of this research. Given a lack of focus on practitioners delivering *lifestyle* support, this research specifically aims;

- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.**

Aim C also relates to discussions regarding sport psychology practitioners that emerge later in the literature review (also outlined below). In terms of the current applied landscape of athlete lifestyle programmes in the UK, and in professional cricket, the literature review offered a brief synopsis of the UK's Performance Lifestyle programme and the ECB's Performance Lifestyle Programme. Processes and descriptions of education and career oriented support services within these (and essentially across all) athlete lifestyle programmes appeared relatively clear and consistent. However, many terms, sentences, definitions and descriptions appeared more ambiguous around notions of specifically supporting an athlete's *lifestyle*. This ambiguity was also confused by notions of lifestyle support drawing parallels with some aspects of sport psychology support, in that *lifestyle* support seemed to be trying to support athletes issues when not performing and generally within their life, to in turn, and indirectly, support their performance. Essentially, there did not appear to be a research base from which lifestyle workshops emanate or upon which the general practice of lifestyle support is based. Instead, lifestyle support appeared interrelated with that of career and education support (within athlete lifestyle programmes) and drew parallels with aspects of sport psychology support. In this sense, lifestyle support appeared to be something of an additional, increasingly popular, ill defined and somewhat eclectic notion of athlete support. This ambiguity therefore adds further weight to aim (A) and aim (C), as it is hoped that a better understanding of players' lives and lifestyle experiences (i.e., aim A) will enable a more critical exploration of existing practice, practitioner skill base and practitioner support roles (i.e., aim C) to clarify and improve the global provision of lifestyle support.

The literature review then moved on to focus on transitional research and its association with athlete lifestyle research. A review of major developments in relation to career transitions, models of transitions (Bloom 1985; Côté, 1999; Stambulova; 2000) and the emergence of holistic and life span perspectives (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée, 2004) highlighted some of the associated complexities that appeared to accompany an athlete's development and life in sport. This literature also offered further support for aim (A), by stressing the need to look at, but also beyond, the athletic experience and into athletes more complete and ever changing experiences as people. However, it appeared that the (contextual) voices of athletes as they matured and performed on a daily,

seasonally and yearly basis were rarely heard, nor were the realities or potential influence of environmental and cultural contexts described within transitional research and models. In this sense transitional research had yet to employ methodologies that could highlight what athletes contextual lifestyle experiences were *really* like throughout and during their development. The author therefore advocated further reconnaissance, which resonates with aim (A) and aim (B), to better understand the transitions, lifestyle experiences and existence of cricketers, within the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support. Greater understanding from these aims might then inform existing transitional research and where (general and specific) lifestyle support might go in the future.

Whilst transitional research offered further understanding in relation to the developmental experiences of athletes, the review continued to build on this understanding by exploring the role and involvement of (allied) supportive *practitioners* within the developmental phases of athletes' careers. The nature of practitioner based literature in relation to overt lifestyle oriented support remained scarce and failed to articulate any detailed experiences of individuals working in such areas. However, the literature base from which practitioner role and involvement were explored could be drawn from the field of sport psychology as authors had appeared to allude to various elements of lifestyle oriented support. The concise overview of relevant developments in the practice of sport psychology reflected how the field had seemed to progress beyond a narrow definition of technical intervention and pre-packaged performance enhancement, towards a more holistic understanding and support of the athlete as a person. Indeed, a corpus of contemporary literature appeared to profess the value of a more holistic, person centred, socratic and counselling based approach to support the athlete as a person with their life in sport. At this juncture of the review the author also highlighted how *practitioners* from both Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and Sport Psychology appeared to be seeking to support a similar niche, namely, *the support of people's lives in sport*. The focus of the review then reflected more specifically on sport psychology practitioners as it seemed that the potential approach and skill set of a lifestyle practitioner might closely align and sympathise with the skill set of that of a sport psychologist. This specific literature base emphasized that athlete-

practitioner relationships, personal characteristics and qualities, and immersed operational roles were important to practitioners in terms of supporting athletes. This literature base compliments and re-emphasises the importance of aim (C), in exploring the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the *lifestyles* of professional cricketers.

The latter stages of the literature review (very briefly) reviewed coaching practitioners' roles in supporting athlete lifestyles. Literature briefly alluded to notions of humanistic coaching philosophy, a coach's architectural role in shaping and influencing athletic contexts, and coach's roles in supporting athlete welfare, athlete well-being and an athlete's development as a person. However, minimal literature overtly aligns itself with coaches' perceptions on the lifestyle experiences of athletes and their perceptions of associated support. This leads to the final specific aim (D) of this research, which also relates to aim (B) and aim (C);

- D. To explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support.**

1.11 - Mapping the Research Journey & Clarifying the Structure of the Research

The following section offers the reader a brief sense of the research journey and thesis structure. In Study 1 Professional cricketers (n = 17) were purposefully selected (Patton, 1990) to be interviewed from their respective county club (n = 4). A semi-structured and in-depth interview (see Fontana & Frey, 1994; Dale, 1996) was created in line with research aim A, and research aim C (outlined above and integrated into figure 1.6 below). Following a pilot interview (Janesick 1994) and having been granted ethical consent, contact was made directly with players by the researcher and interviews were conducted during the cricket season between May and September 2005. Sections entitled 'Researcher as Practitioner' in the literature review and autobiographical reflections (in the data authenticity file), depict how the researcher had previously established trust, rapport and was known (to varying degrees) by each player. Data analysis and representation

guidelines set out by previous interpretational (content analysis) studies with interviews were then adapted to create a series of summary content analysis tables amenable for peer dissemination (Biddle et al., 2001). Content analysis themes and raw data quotations were then discussed alongside relevant theoretical literature in order to present findings coherently and avoid repetition (Scanlan, Stein & Ravizza, 1989a; Smith, 1997).

Having interviewed players across four counties, Study 2 focused on two counties for the next phase of the research. These two counties were given the pseudonyms Rinshire and Woodshire County Cricket Clubs. All coaches representing the senior management team at Rinshire (n = 5) and the senior management team at Woodshire (n = 3) participated in their own (pre-season) focus group (n = 2) at their respective club, in April 2006. Contact was made by the researcher directly to coaches to participate in a focus group to feedback results from Study 1. The main aims of Study 2 related specifically to aim (B), aim (C) and aim (D) as illustrated in Figure 1.6. The extent of familiarization was as explained previously. The focus group framework was created alongside the researcher's supervisory team using comprehensive data from players interviewed in Study 1 to aid and guide discussion (Lederman, 1990). The objective was to stimulate discussion (Bloor et al., 2001) and provide the researcher with a privileged access to in-group discourse and data other methods could not generate (Kitzinger, 1994; Bloor et al. 2001). The open and flexible nature of the focus group allowed intensive exploration of opinions, feelings, attitudes and behaviors (Murphy et al., 1992), as well as vehement disagreements and different views (Basch, 1987). The data generated from focus group discussions are the words spoken (Lederman, 1990), and so focus groups were represented and discussed using coaches interactive dialogue (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992). The goal of analysis and representation was to provide a sense of the discussion, including the researcher's impressions and insights regarding group and individual interactions and the tone of discussion (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994). Study 1 themes were, where appropriate and relevant, were also integrated in the presentation of the focus group data, to ensure a synergy between the discussion of results from Study 1 and Study 2.

Up to this point of the research, Study 1 and Study 2 had been unable to explore the non-performance and lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers within the contexts in which they occurred, *as they happened*. A bespoke research aim (E) was therefore created for Study 3 to undertake prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement and further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer *during* an entire cricket season. In Study 3 embedded and prolonged ethnographic engagement (Tedlock, 2000; Krane & Baird, 2005) was thought an appropriate method to further explore research aim (A), aim (B) aim (C) aim (D) and the bespoke research aim (E), as indicted in figure 1.6. The ethnographic process sought to understand the culture within the Rinshire and Woodshire from the perspective of the players and coaches (Wolcott, 1995; Tedlock, 2000). The process of entering the setting involved gaining support from coaches (see Sands, 2002). Engagement was limited to second team games at Rinshire and Woodshire. The researcher's previous relationships and growing relationships with players and coaches from more intense involvement in Study 3 were thought a major strength of this phase of the research. Intense and protracted engagement involved 7 months observing, following and interacting with players and coaches over the entire 2006 county cricket season.

Observation provided the backbone to the ethnographic process (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) and involved the researcher creating a comprehensive, descriptively detailed, and conceptually framed understanding of players' and coaches (and my own) experiences as they happened (Lofland, 1996; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; Tedlock, 2000). The researcher participated in the daily activities of the social group while conducting these observations (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1995). This generated rich data through taking detailed notes at the end of (but not during) each day within an (electronic) ethnographic source document (Ely et al. 1991). Representation of the ethnographic data involved the 'researcher-cum-author' becoming actively engaged in the text as a way to make meaning and capture the critical relationship between the researched, the researcher and the reader (Tierney, 2002). This process enabled a multiple voice dialogue (i.e., of myself and others) to occur within the text. Representations of the players, coaches and my own experiences are presented together and provide a narrative that attempts to capture

the vividness of a scene and the unique voices and lives of individuals in ways that normal social science texts cannot (see Tierney, 2002). The inner feelings and reflections of the researcher-cum-author (myself) are therefore presented in, and are part of, the results of Study 3. The narrative presented in the results section of Study 3 went through a reworking of observations and experiences (Okely, 1994; Davis, 2000) that resulted in a more concise and edited version of the original 'Ethnographic source document'. The final version took the form of a *timeline* of the entire season. This timeline was thought to be the best means of portraying an accurate, *faithful, believable, credible* and *authentic* representation (Lincoln, 1993; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Ellis, 1995; Schwandt, 1997; Sparkes, 2000) of players' experiences and the season itself. Within the final ethnographic timeline there are also four reflective stop offs. Given the extensive nature of the narrative, natural and appropriate breaks (stop offs) from the timeline help the reader digest large amounts of data. Stop offs also provide the perfect platform from which to engage in inductive and deductive discussion (Krane et al., 1997) on the preceding narrative (Basch, 1980; Andersen, 2000). The four stop offs also naturally accommodate the integration of relevant data from Study 1 and Study 2. This process has resulted in four (multilayered) reflective stop offs that discuss and comment on the reflective narrative of Study 3 alongside the perspectives of coaches in Study 2 and thoughts of players in Study 1.

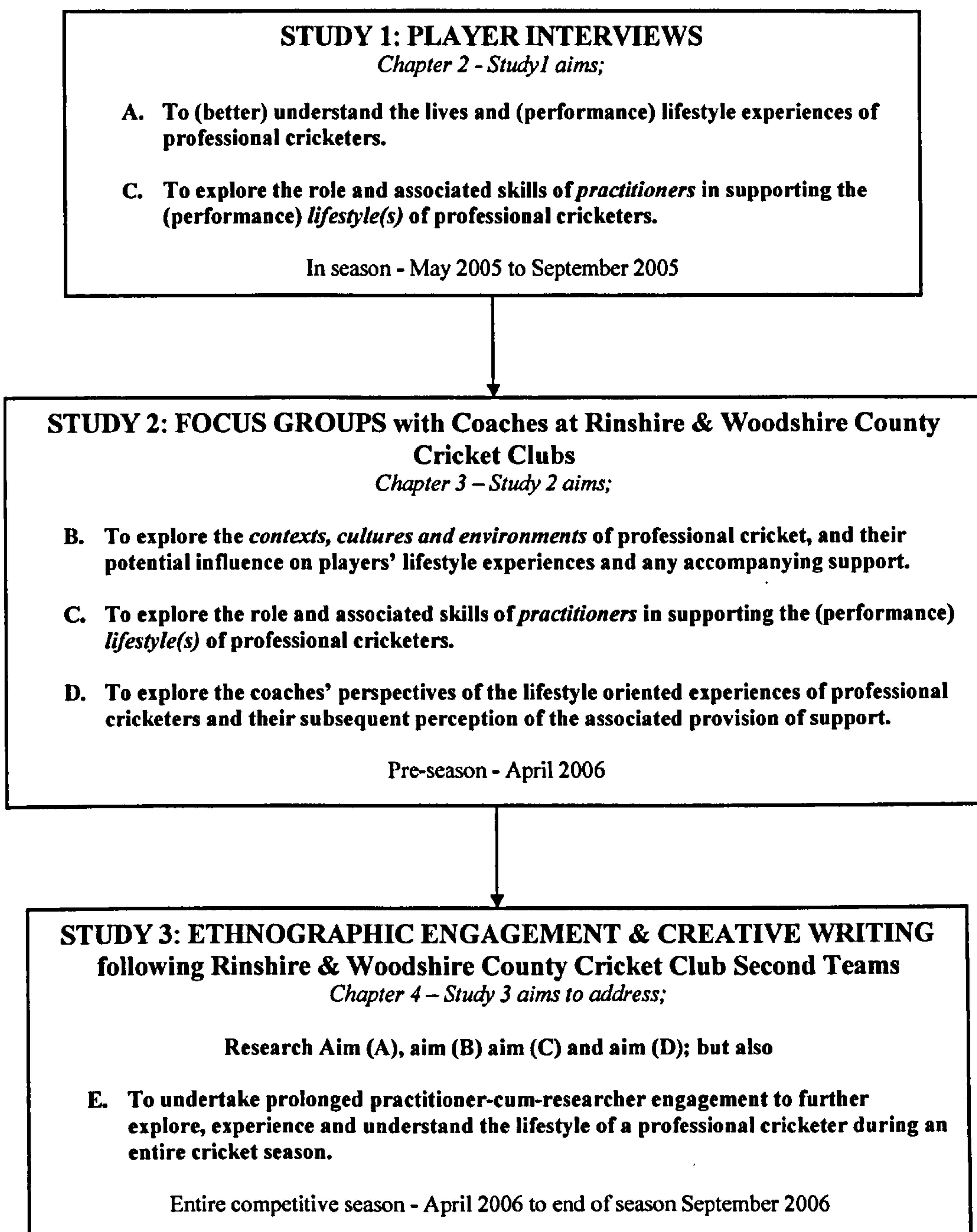


Figure 1.6 - The Research Journey and Structure

CHAPTER TWO

STUDY 1: PLAYER INTERVIEWS

Chapter 2 - Study 1 aims;

- A. To (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.

In season - May 2005 to September 2005



STUDY 2: FOCUS GROUPS with Coaches at Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Clubs

Chapter 3 – Study 2 aims;

- B. To explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.
- D. To explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support.

Pre-season - April 2006



STUDY 3: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT & CREATIVE WRITING following Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Club Second Teams

Chapter 4 – Study 3 aims to address;

Research Aim (A), aim (B) aim (C) and aim (D); but also

- E. To undertake prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement to further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer during an entire cricket season.

Entire competitive season - April 2006 to end of season September 2006

2.1 - Study 1 – Aims & Methodology - Interviews

Study 1 incorporated the following research aims;

- A. To (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers, and;**
- C. Explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.**

Study 1 aims to better understand the lives and existence of cricketers given that they are predominantly undiscovered details within literature at this time. The literature review highlighted how little research actually exists to define what needs cricketers' have in terms of their lifestyle, or in fact how to go about supporting them. More specifically this Study also aims to capture, in context, some of the actual transitions and experiences that occur 'in' a cricketer's career as well as those occurring in other domains of their life.

2.2 - Sample Selection and Composition

As previously explained, at the time of the research the researcher worked as a PL adviser across four first class county cricket clubs. Four Players were selected to be interviewed from each county. While random sampling might avoid bias, players in this Study were purposefully selected to obtain information rich cases and an in-depth understanding of their experience (Patton, 1990). Players within each county were categorized as either junior professional (aged 18 to 25) or senior professional (25 and above) in order that a broad age range could be interviewed. All players were on a professional contract with the county, and amongst the group at that time, were 3 ex-England Internationals, and 4 ex-England U19 representatives. One additional senior player was interviewed from one county, making the total number of players interviewed 17 with a mean age of 28 years ($n = 8$ junior professionals mean 22 years, and $n = 9$ senior professionals mean 33 years). Interviews were conducted between May and September 2005, and lasted an average of 89 minutes, with the longest being 1 hour 58 minutes and the shortest being 50 minutes.

Contact was made by the researcher directly with players, initially over the phone and then through a letter sent to their known address (refer to appendix C) explaining the rationale for the research; the date, time, venue and approximate duration. Players were made aware that interviews would be taped and videoed but they had the right to withdraw at any point. Following guidelines set out by Gould et al. (1993) all players were offered a brief description of the purpose of the interview so that they could collect their thoughts, in order to express themselves more clearly and aid the recall of their experiences. A quiet room at each county was booked by the researcher with a suitable arrangement of two chairs, with a Dictaphone close by and a camera positioned behind the researcher.

2.3 - Familiarization

Understanding is central within qualitative research and it is therefore essential that the researcher can establish rapport (Patton, 1990). The section entitled 'Researcher as Practitioner' in the literature review and autobiographical reflections in the data authenticity file, hopefully go some way to depict how the researcher had established trust, rapport and was known (to varying degrees) by each player through either working together within the PL programme, or simply through contact whilst attending various training sessions and games. The researcher felt well positioned to capture the nuances and perspectives of participants in that it was more likely they would disclose their experiences to a 'trusted' (researcher) other (Janesick, 1994).

2.4 - Pilot Interview & Ethics

As advocated by Janesick (1994), before committing the interview for data collection, a pilot was conducted with one ex player from one of the four counties to modify over elaborate wording, and appreciate the maturing shape and timing of the interview. Minor adjustments were made to the delivery and order of questions and the researcher felt more at ease with the interview.

Prior to the data collection ethical consent was sought and granted by Liverpool John Moores University’s ethics board. Prior to each interview, each player signed consent forms and were given the opportunity to read a participant information sheet (refer to appendix D).

2.5 - Construction of the Interview

While qualitative researchers have adopted varying approaches when designing an interview, the general consensus is that the authors offer some evidence of structure (Biddle et al., 2001). Figure 1.7 summarizes the content and structure of the player interview schedule while the complete interview schedule can be seen in Appendix E.

Introduction and familiarisation (inc confidentiality)
Personal Perceptions of others
Lifestyles of player’s you have looked up to within the game? And off field issues these players experienced?
Individual issues through academy, 2nd and 1st team cricket
Life as an academy or junior cricketer? During the season and off season? Moving onto the academy (the transition)? Goings on in life away from cricket? Biggest worries? Who played significant supporting roles during this time? Life when you turned a professional cricketer and what current life is like?
The Programme Format
How to support the lifestyles of cricketers? Developing skills and characteristics Thoughts on existing workshop titles?
Lifestyle and Performance
The potential link between lifestyle and performance?
Clarification and elaboration

Figure 1.7 Summary of player interview schedule

The structure of the interview above embraced the aims of the research (i.e., aim A and aim C) outlined at the start of this section. These included exploring holistic life-span perspectives akin with transitional literature (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee 2004)

including athletic and non athletic, or life transitions during the athletic career. The interview also embraced collective messages from papers within the literature review about the need to recognise issues in an athlete's life and not just their sport, and how seeing an athlete as a person, and not just as an athlete, appears to be offered as the cornerstone of providing a holistic service (Orlick 1989; Simons & Andersen 1995; Balague 1999; Ravizza, 2002). Essentially the interview tried to take the interviewee on a journey and encouraged them to describe their experiences throughout their life.

Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings (Fontana & Frey, 1994) and is the cornerstone of qualitative data collection in sport and exercise psychology (Biddle et al., 2001). Furthermore, it is (generally) difficult to observe feelings, thoughts and intentions or behaviours that took place at some previous point in time, however, interviewing allowed this research to enter into the player's unique perspective. As Dale (1996) points out,

"...we can learn a great deal about the experiences of athletes if we allow them the opportunity to tell us, via interviews, where they are free to describe their experiences"

(Dale, 1996; p308)

This methodology viewed the athlete and their world together both in practice and competition (Dale, 1996). In line with Fahlberg et al. (1992) its aim was to understand players' lifestyle experiences. In this sense, the researcher explored the lived experience of the players and granted them an opportunity to describe it. Unstructured in nature the interview encouraged players to reflect on their experiences and portray them in as much detail as possible (Dale, 1996). The interview was free to vary with the flow of the discussion, where related issues thought important by the participant were allowed to surface and appropriate probing explored (Scanlan et al., 1989b). The interview schedule maintained a degree of standardization (Patton, 1990) to ensure all topics were covered.

Open-ended questions allowed the interviewer to avoid stimulus-response interactions that tend to occur with restrictive interview guides (Dale, 1996). As advocated by Dale the

interviewer viewed the participant as an equal asking descriptive questions relevant to the dialogue set by the participant, rather than asking “why” questions that ask an individual to rationalize a response, or surpassing the level of the participant’s experience. Fontana and Frey (1994) believed a researcher must adapt to the world of the individuals studied and try to share their concerns and outlooks. Only by doing so can he or she learn anything at all. Dialogue within the interviews adopted an informal conversational style with spontaneous use of clarification and elaboration probes (Patton, 1990).

Open-ended, in-depth questions within the predetermined interview structure gained rich accounts of player’s experiences. As undertaken by Gould et al. (1993) and suggested by Patton (1990) standardized clarification and elaboration probes were utilized to minimize bias in the interview and to ensure responses from all participants were explored in equal complexity and depth. These probes included two clarification probes (...*‘I’m not that sure exactly what you mean, can you explain further’*... *‘Could you just go over that again so I know exactly what you mean?’*...) and two elaboration probes (...*‘Can you give me an example of that’*... *‘...Can you tell me more about that’*...).

2.6 - Data Analysis & Representation

Despite the popularity and trends in exploring athletes experiences using qualitative research methods, there remains a discernible importance to clearly outline its contents (Côté et al., 1993). Staying close to the data was the most powerful means of telling the story (Janesick, 1994) whilst interpreting data in the participant’s language, rather than that of the researcher (Dale, 1996). Guidelines set out by previous interpretational analysis studies with interviews (Scanlan et al., 1989b; Gould, Jackson and Finch, 1993; Gould, Eklund and Jackson 1993; Côté et al., 1993; Côté and Salmela, 1996) were adopted by the researcher that resulted in the process detailed below.

1. Initially the interviews were listened to by the researcher. Then content of the verbatim transcriptions typed from player interviews were then also read several times by the researcher and by the supervisory team to ensure familiarity was established with the transcriptions and the

participants. This yielded 210 pages (almost 180,000 words) of single spaced text that was transferred to the data authenticity file.

2. Initially content analysis helped organize the raw data into interpretable and meaningful themes and categories. However, it is unrealistic to expect any researcher to begin a study without the requisite knowledge to understand the phenomena under consideration (Krane et al., 1997). This acknowledges aspects of deductive analysis in this process (Meyer & Wenger, 1998). Indeed, the researcher did not pretend that presumptions did not exist, but acknowledges such bias (Krane et al., 1997).
3. The procedure coded large amounts of data into blocks that represented a common theme (Côté et al., 1996). The process began with identifying a basic unit of analysis (a raw data theme), namely a quote that clearly identified a subjective experience. First order themes were then identified by clustering (Biddle et al., 2001) the quotes around underlying uniformity's (common threads), which in turn became the emergent themes. This process entailed comparing and contrasting each quote with all other quotes and emergent themes to unite quotes with similar meanings and separate quotes with contrasting meanings (Biddle et al., 2001).
4. Nomothetic descriptions involved interpreting each participant's perspective in relation to all other perspectives. The intention was not to generalize across interviews but to explore how one experience resembled another (Dale, 1996) and to communicate various lifestyle experiences of players.
5. The process continued to build upon itself as the same comparing and contrasting procedures identified new, higher-level themes (2nd and 3rd order themes). Analysis continued building upward until it was not possible to locate further underlying uniformities (general dimensions) to create a higher theme level (Biddle et al., 2001).
6. Throughout the process above 'tags' (see Krane et al., 1997) were assigned to every quote and first order theme. This involved giving each player a pseudonym and recording the page number from which the raw data theme emerged (e.g., AT-103, depicting Anthony Taylor page 103). To distinguish the tags and players further, blue tags were assigned to junior professionals and red tags to senior professionals.
7. In accordance with procedures employed by Scanlan and colleagues (1989b), quotes vary in descriptiveness due to a participant's ability to articulate the sometimes-complex nature of their answers. Subsequently, some themes did not neatly pass through all the ordering levels but instead were carried directly through to become higher level themes.

8. A higher level of analysis captured most of or all the lower order themes, leaving as few as possible unclustered themes which were either disregarded if incomprehensible or retained if important (Patton, 1980). All clusters and themes were continually related back to the original transcript / data authenticity file to ensure they remained true to their context.
9. A combined process of inductive and deductive content analysis progressing from the initial quotes upward through each theme level was consensually validated (Scanlan et al., 1989a). Consensus validation was the agreement between the researcher and the supervisory team (comprising of experienced qualitative researchers), also known as the triangulation group, to reach agreement on the final form of each quote and theme (Scanlan et al., 1989b). In line with Côté et al., (1993) the researcher presented the final interpretational analysis to the triangulation group with rationales behind their structure. Any disagreement required a review of the transcript to agree upon repositioned or reworded themes. By providing more than one view of the data, the consensus validation (Scanlan et al., 1989b) or triangulation procedure (Côté et al., 1993) reduced the potential bias of the researcher, thus quotes identified and themes created were thought to be more accurate representations of the participant's experience.
10. Krane and colleagues (1997) critique of triangular consensus is that groups may become theoretically aligned and subsequently too socially and or conceptually comfortable. To overcome this the researcher ensured he fully understood the content and context of the interviews, and whether any suggestions made were appropriate to the findings.
11. The above process created a series of 'Complete Content Analysis Tables from Player Interviews' yielding 172 pages of data (refer to the data authenticity file). Given its extensive nature, 1st, 2nd, 3rd order and general dimensions were then extracted and united in a series of summary content analysis tables amenable for peer dissemination (Biddle et al., 2001) as illustrated in tables 2.1 to 2.12

2.7 - Study 1 – Player Interviews - Results and Discussion

The following section comprises of 12 content analysis tables and discussions following each one. Table 2.1 to Table 2.12 make up the 7 general dimensions (and 12 tables) resulting from content analysis procedures. The results and discussion of content analysis themes are discussed alongside relevant theoretical literature and presented together in order to present findings coherently and avoid repetition (Smith, 1997). As outlined within the preceding methodology, results relating to the lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers and accompanying notions of support are discussed using each of the 7 tables / general dimensions and their corresponding, 3rd, 2nd and 1st order themes. Raw data quotes are integrated into the following section to clarify categories and demonstrate the depth and richness of data (Scanlan, Stein & Ravizza, 1989a). The section concludes with a broader discussion in relation to the data as a whole and the overall aim of the research. Given the extensive nature of these results, only the most cited (i.e., with most frequent quotations as depicted by the number of corresponding tags) 1st order themes are extrapolated. These first order themes have varying numbers of tags that offer the reader a sense of the degree and frequency of the data. Every effort has been made to ensure that a variety of themes related to a professional cricketer's lifestyle and accompanying notions of support are discussed.

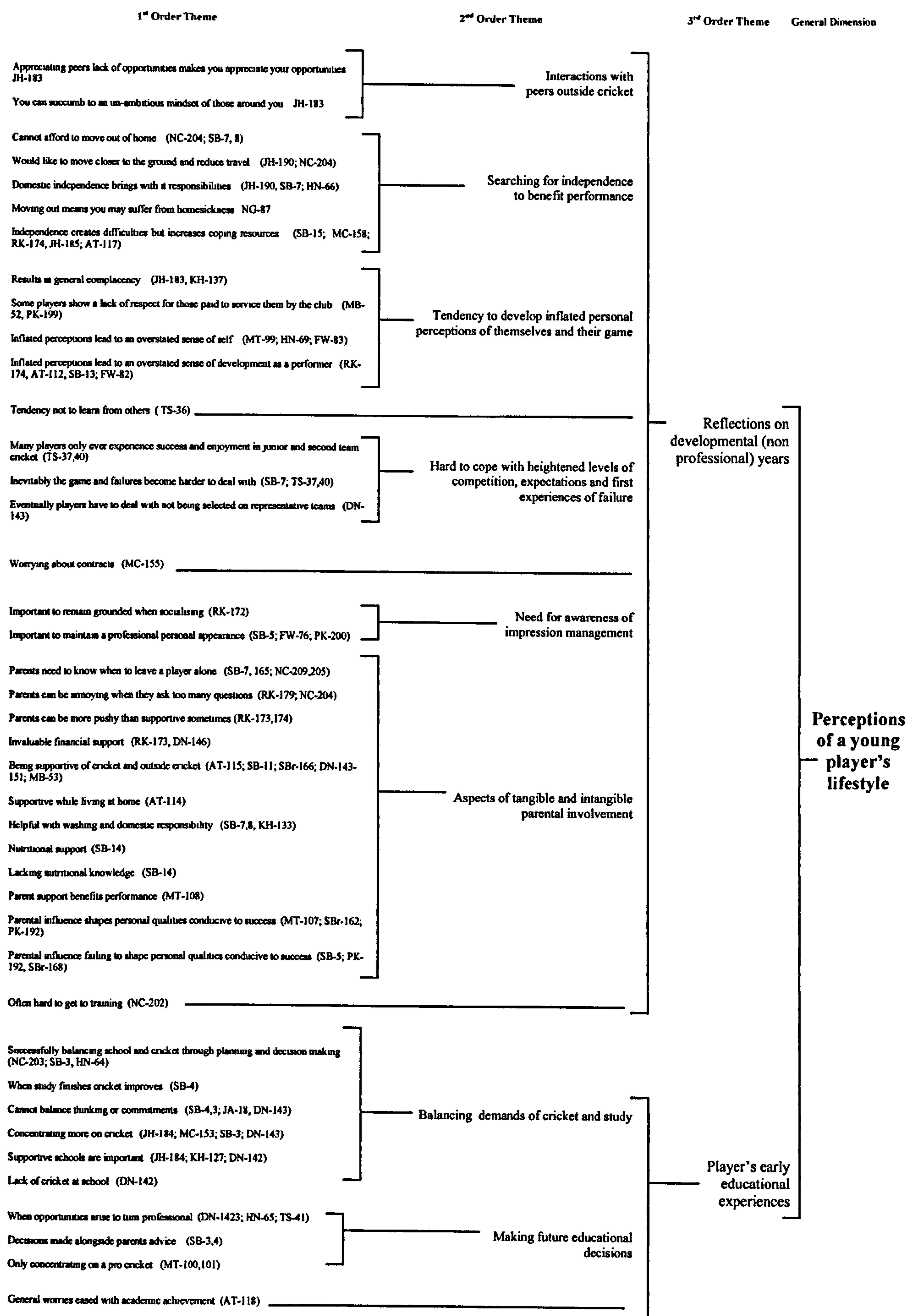
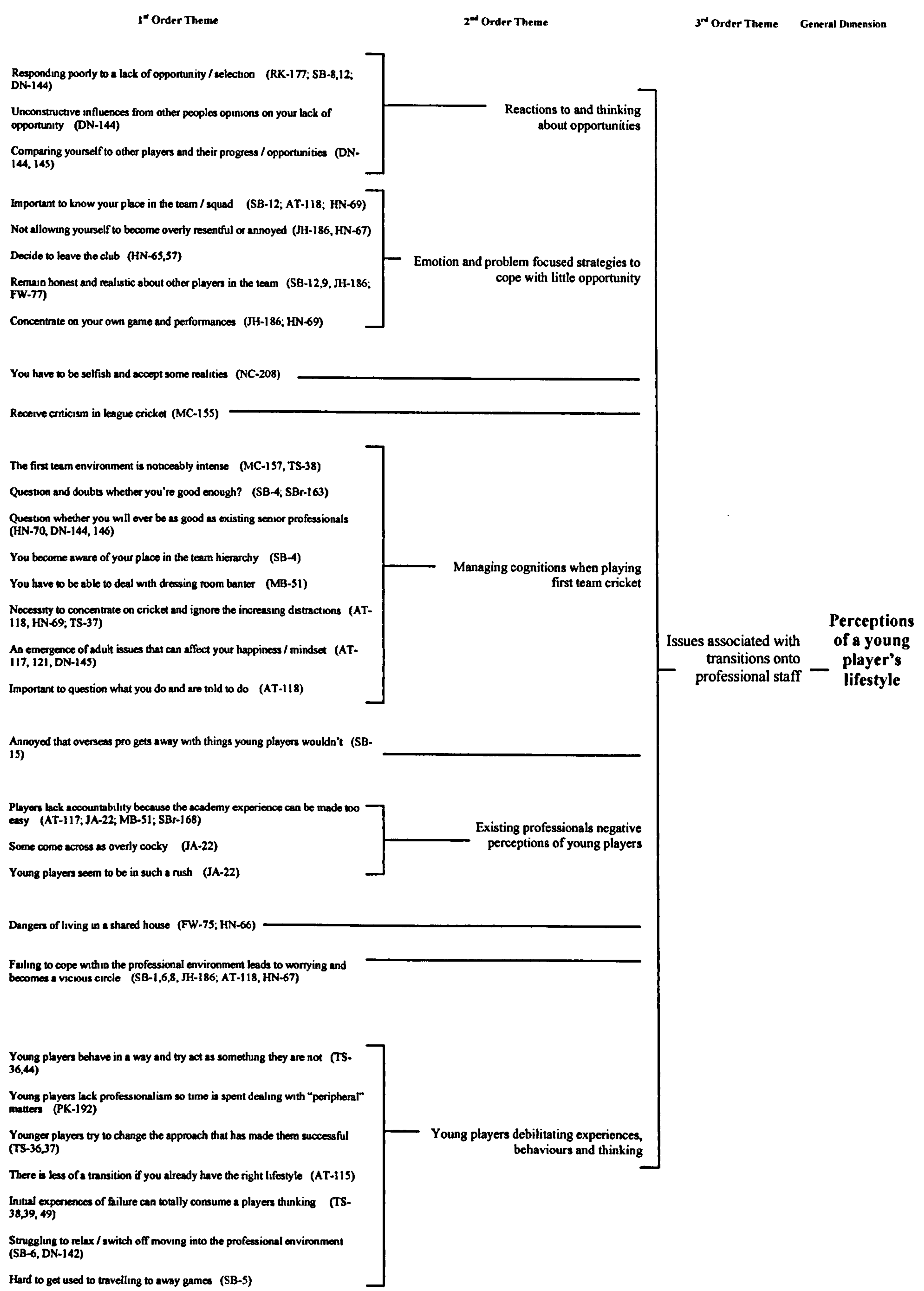


Table 2.1 - Summary content analysis table – Perceptions of a Young Players Lifestyle



2.7.1 - Tables 2.1 & 2.2 - General dimension: ‘Perceptions of a Young Cricketer’s Lifestyle’

These themes capture a series of issues and experiences as noted by young and emerging cricketers. The extended citations act to extrapolate data from the relative constraints of content analysis tables. In this second phase of data presentation deductive references also appear in brief terms.

2.7.1.1 - ‘Reflections on developmental (non professional) years’

As players recalled their early developmental experiences, junior professionals appeared to describe their experience of ‘Searching for independence to benefit performance’, and suggested that ‘Independence creates difficulties but increases coping resources’ (SB-15; MC-158; RK-174; JH-185; AT-117) as depicted in the quotes below:

Independence, knowing that you are left to your own devices sometimes to do what you need to do to prepare for cricket, and I think that has given me an independence in life as well as in cricket. Confidence as well, there is a lot of confidence in being a cricketer, there is no better feeling than scoring 100 and odd, you get confidence in that and you get confidence in life as well... Steve Bolland 12

...running alongside in my life, in a way I had got over things accepting my parents were separated... was living with my Dad, so it was another chapter and I had to start doing things for myself that I didn’t have to do while mum was around, to go home and dump all your clothes and your mum washes them... those things that make your life tick that your parents basically help you with, well I had to start doing my own washing and cooking and cleaning and things like that. So in a way it makes you a better person, it makes you a more mature person in being able to handle yourself in different ways... John Harrison 185

Reflecting on their own, but also on their perceptions of other players developmental years, interviewee’s also described a ‘Tendency to develop inflated personal perceptions of themselves and their game’ and suggested that ‘Inflated perceptions lead to an overstated sense of development as a performer’ (RK-174; AT-112; SB-13; FW-82). One junior professional described such an overstated sense as follows:

“...you come across a lot of guys that see the immediate attraction of being a professional sportsman. You get all the perks, getting free kit and being asked for autographs etc., the whole being a professional sportsman and being in the public eye... That can hit you when you are playing U15 [county club] cricket and once you get in the system and you are training pre-season with the likes of [snr Eng player] and [snr county player] you think “I’m quite close to being on track here”. It is amazing and I have come across guys in the past that have been led along by that and taken it for granted maybe. I think it is an easy trap to fall into...” Anthony Taylor 112

Three senior players also commented that it can be ‘Hard to cope with heightened levels of competition, expectations and first experiences of failure’, and one senior player noted:

...1st class cricket is hard, I do not know any player who has been successful from the age of 18 to 35 without having a rough trot, it is inevitable at some point you will struggle in and away from the game but it is about knowing how to deal with that... Tony Scott 40

Nine players commented extensively on, ‘Aspects of tangible and intangible parental involvement’, including references to both positive and negative aspects. In terms of the former, players felt a ‘Parental influence shapes personal qualities conducive to success’ (MT-107; SBr-162; PK-192), while the importance of ‘Being supportive of cricket and outside cricket’ (AT-115; SB-11; SBr-166; DN-143-151; MB-53) was cited most often. In support of these findings, VanYperen (1998) reported the buffering effect of parental support in his longitudinal study of interpersonal stress, performance level and parental support among highly skilled young soccer players. Indeed, anecdotal and empirical research has shown that parents are perceived as playing a significant role in an athlete’s development (Bloom, 1985; Van Yepern, 1995; Côté’, 1999) and can provide invaluable social support (Rosenfeld, Richman & Hardy, 1989; Rees & Hardy, 2000).

However, players in this study also reflected on parents ‘Failing to shape personal qualities conducive to success’ (SB-5; PK-192; SBr-168) alongside more unconstructive themes including how, ‘Parents need to know when to leave a player alone’ (SB-7, 165; NC-209,205) ‘Parents can be annoying when they ask too many questions’ (RK-179; NC-204) and how ‘Parents can be more pushy than supportive sometimes’ (RK-173,174). In

this regard and in line with the opening quotes of this theme relating to independence, Fisher et al. (1982) reported how adolescents whose autonomy is evolving may perceive support from parents with negative feelings, when perceived support of (over involved) parents is associated with intrusion and a threat to self-reliance and independence. In terms of 'Aspects of tangible and intangible parental involvement', researchers (Weiss, 1991; Van Yepern, 1998) have advocated programmes to educate parents about their children's participation in sports and their responsibilities as sports parents, which in line with these results implicates their involvement in the lifestyle oriented support processes of young cricketers.

In addition to parental involvement where facets of 'Player's early educational experiences' (3rd order) including themes of 'Balancing demands of cricket and study' and 'Making future educational decisions'. Miller & Wooten (1995) reported that the academic, social, and personal well-being of the student athlete is a growing concern for coaches, athletic support staff, and counsellors and that as athletic participation becomes a life focus, the growth and development of other areas, including educational development, may be neglected or inhibited. In this sense, three players described 'Successfully balancing school and cricket through planning and decision making' (NC-203; SB-3; HN-64), while others described more difficulty and how they 'Cannot balance thinking or commitments' (SB-4,3; JA-18; DN-143) and four players took the decision of 'Concentrating more on cricket' (JH-184; MC-153; SB-3; DN-143). Indeed, junior and senior players described the difficulty of 'Making future educational decisions', particularly 'When opportunities arise to turn professional' (DN-143; HN-65; TS-41), for example:

“...I was 17, during A levels I had had enough, my heart was not in it and [county club] offered me a 2 year deal, I kind of knew that was wrong, but I kind of knew that that was what I wanted to do...” Dave North 143

In line with these findings, Stambulova (2000) reported 'difficulties in combining sports and studies' during transitions to high achievement and adult sports (i.e., stage 3).

Wylleman et al. (2000) also explained how student athletes need to cope not only with transitions in their athletic career, but also with the basic transitions from secondary education to higher education level, as well as transitions inherent at each level of education. Given that the PL programme in cricket was not available to these players during their 'early educational experiences' the findings above seem understandable and arguably even contributed to the programmes very inception. However, with the PL programmes specific objective 'to provide guidance and support for those players that are currently studying or those that wish to do so' (ECB, 2007), it appears that players are now being supported during these early experiences and transitions. Indeed, as outlined within the literature review, workshops with academy players (e.g., 'Effective Self Organization and Time Management' see Appendix B) are also being offered alongside similar one to one based support. However, Douglas & Careless (2005) found that when clashes occurred between the demands of education and sport, athletes usually compromised education and foregrounded sport. As the themes outlined above and the last quote conveyed, 'Players early educational experiences' appear inevitably difficult due to the inherent demands (and potentially attractive outcomes) associated with the pursuit of a professional sports career.

The last 3rd order theme of this general dimension collates 'Issues associated with transitions onto professional staff' (i.e., as a player). This theme arguably correlates with transitions within Bloom's (1985) perfection stage / later years, Côté's (1999) investment years (15 and over) and Stambulova's (2000) transitions to high achievement and adult sports (i.e., stage 3) and transitions from amateur to pro sports (i.e., stage 4). Issues associated with this stage of a cricketers' career and their transitions onto the professional staff were particularly diverse, and largely related to opportunities (to play or become a professional). For example, findings included 'Reactions to and thinking about opportunities' and 'Emotion and problem focused strategies to cope with little opportunity'. In line with these findings, Stambulova (2000) reported athletes experiencing the pressure of being selected for main competitions, while Parham (1993) reported that chief among athletes concerns was whether or not they would be given the opportunity to prove to themselves and their coaches that they have what it takes. Players

readily described the finer details of their experiences of transitions into professional cricket. Eight players articulated the importance of ‘Managing cognitions when playing first team cricket’, despite the fact ‘The first team environment is noticeably intense’ (MC-157; TS-38) and that players may ‘Question and doubt whether you’re good enough?’ (SB-4; SBr-163) or ‘Question whether you will ever be as good as existing senior professionals’ (HN-70, DN-144, 146). While reflecting on their own experiences moving onto the professional playing staff, players seemed to be describing a potentially difficult cognitive balancing act on entering the professional environment, and stressed a ‘Necessity to concentrate on cricket and ignore the increasing distractions’ (AT-118; HN-69; TS-37) as described below:

... because when you get into the first team there is more spotlight on you and more press coverage, and more competition amongst the team, people moving onto England, there are 101 different stresses and strains when you come into the side as a youngster... Tony Scott 37

However, alongside these sentiments (and to a degree in contrast) the quotes below reflect how players acknowledge ‘An emergence of adult issues that can affect your happiness / mindset’ (AT-117, 121; DN-145):

You come to an age where you start thinking about living away from home so you think about those kind of plans, real life adult issues that previously you haven’t had to think about because you have been in this false world ... you are just going through the routine... only when that stage comes do you start to think about it. The idea of winter commitments, who is going to employ you and all those kind of things, real life adult issues, they are the things that come into your head... Anthony Taylor 117

... in professional cricket and all those adult issues can make it more difficult to be happy on the field and therefore to execute the skill you need to play your game. It’s quite a big deal, fairly ground breaking, and something that should be looked at a little bit more... Anthony Taylor 121

Wylleman et al. (2000) reported that transitions into high level competitive sports means young athletes may be confronted with the need to work towards attaining a professional status, thus focussing a period of their life almost exclusively to an all out involvement and preparation for training and competitions. In terms of this involvement, these findings

shed light on the diverse experiences associated with transitions onto a professional staff for some young players. Indeed, there appears an inherent contradiction here. In that findings so far suggest that as players mature and their lives become more independent (e.g., are less reliant on parents), they might also begin to experience challenging issues relating to their development as a person *and* success as a performer. These challenges might include one, or perhaps any number of issues, ranging from moving (or wanting to move) away from home, trying to balance study with cricket commitments, making significant educational decisions (e.g., to go to university or not), having to negotiate increasing press coverage whilst trying to deal with opportunities (or a lack thereof) in an increasingly intense, competitive and distracting sporting environment that can also contribute to self doubt and questioning.

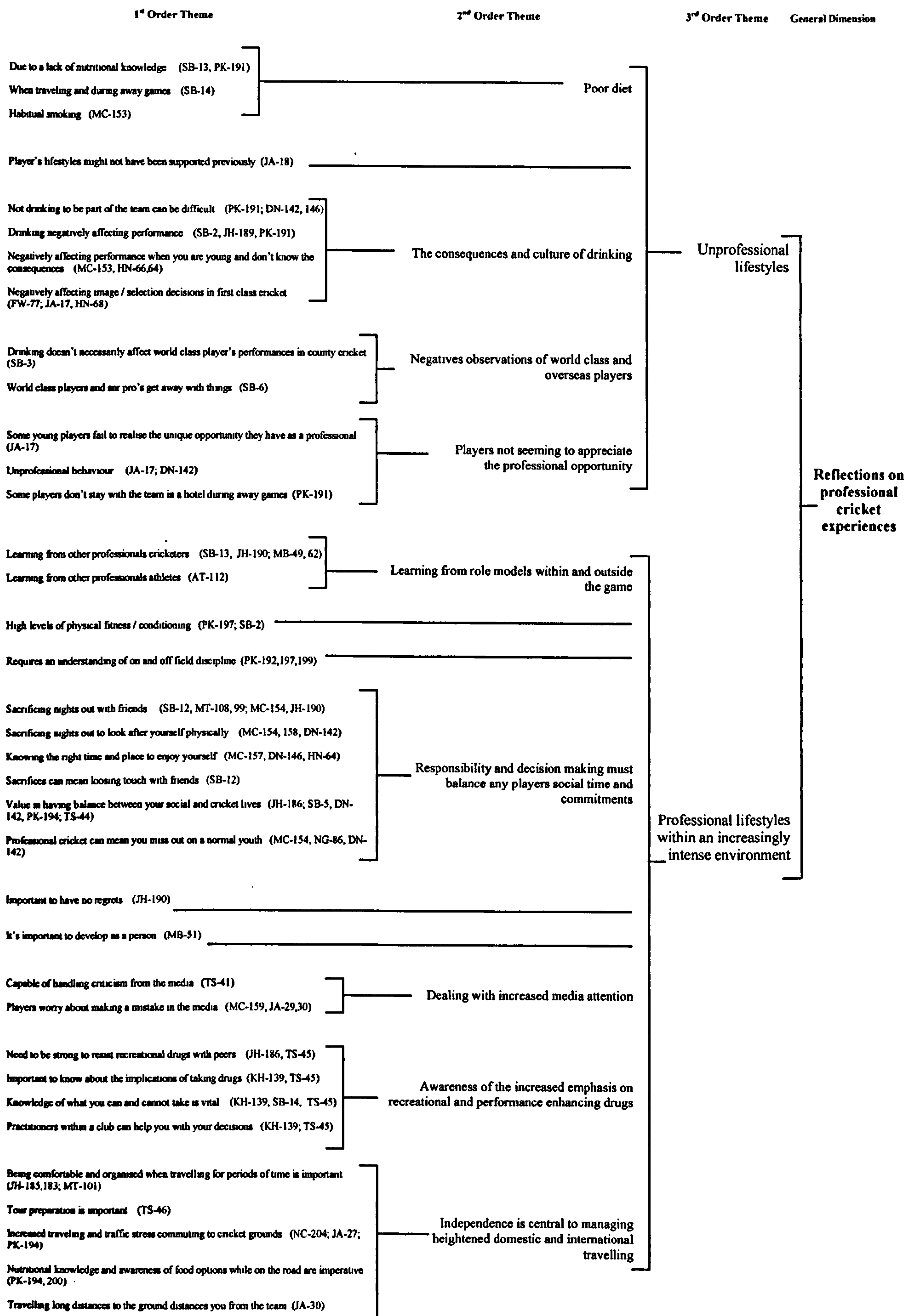


Table 2.3 - Summary content analysis table – Reflections on Professional Cricket Experiences

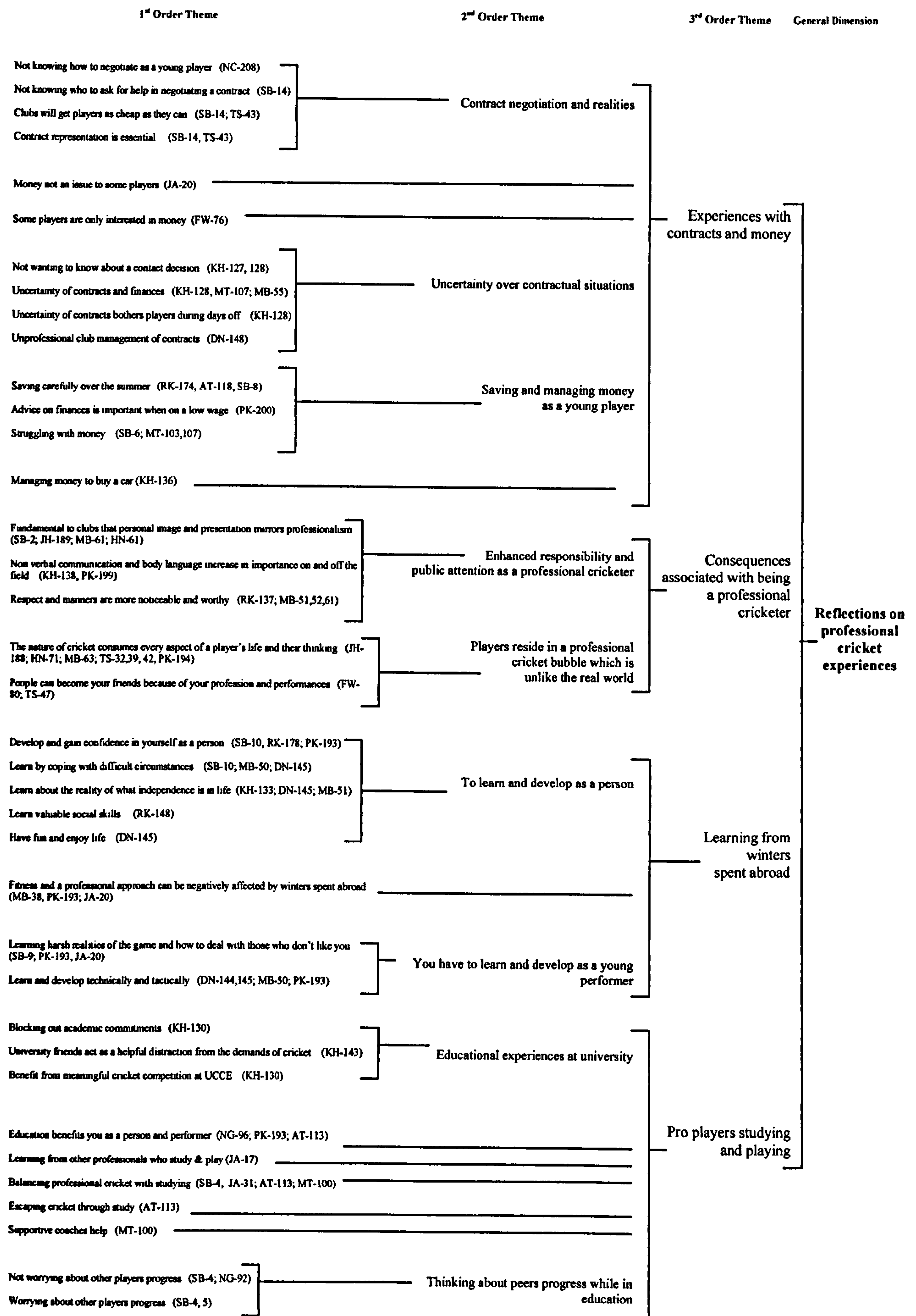


Table 2.4 - Summary content analysis table – Reflections on Professional Cricket Experiences (continued)

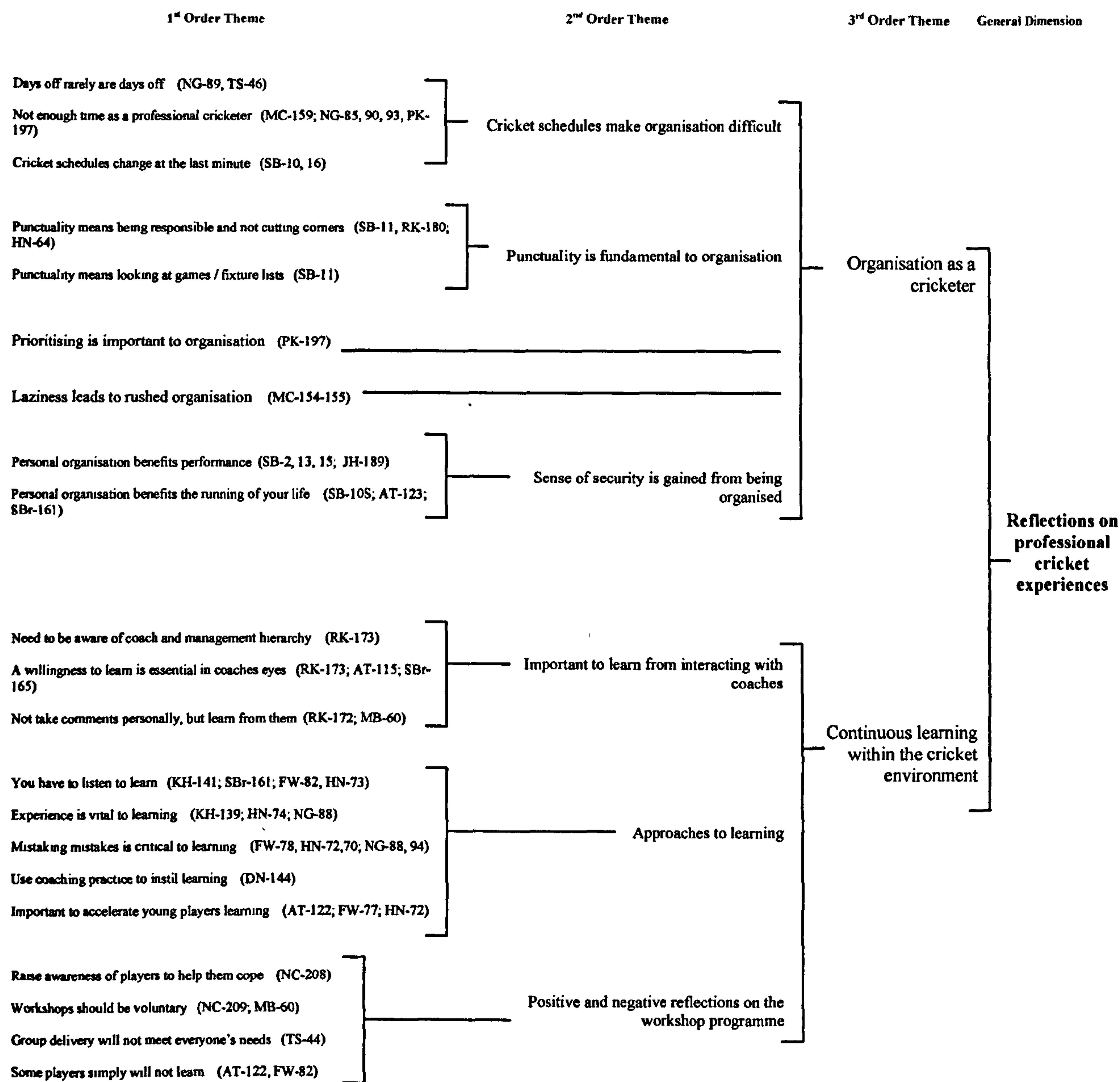


Table 2.5 - Summary content analysis table – Reflections on Professional Cricket Experiences (continued)

2.7.2. - Table 2.3 to 2.5 - General dimension: ‘Reflections on Professional Cricket Experiences’

Having gained an initial sense of the interconnecting nature of issues in a young player’s development, further insights are now presented that consider players’ experiences on becoming professional.

2.7.2.1 -‘Unprofessional Lifestyles’

Perhaps surprisingly, given the professional status of cricket, three players described ‘Poor Diets’ and eight players described ‘The consequences and culture of drinking’ in cricket. In terms of the latter, both junior, but predominantly senior professionals described, ‘Drinking negatively affecting performance’ (SB-2; JH-189; PK-191) how ‘Not drinking to be part of the team can be difficult’ (PK-191; DN-142, 146), the outcome of someone drinking ‘Negatively affecting image / selection decisions in first class cricket’ (FW-77; JA-17, HN-68), and more specifically, drinking ‘Negatively affecting performance when you are young and don’t know the consequences’ (MC-153; HN-66,64), as described by one senior player below:

... I was lucky, I once played a game after a night out, and I will admit this, I was not fit for cricket the day after, because we only needed three wickets and those three wickets took a lifetime, I was really struggling and after we got the wickets I soon realised that this life, this social life is not for me, [a senior player] came and sat next to me, and said sit in the corner keep your mouth shut and do not do it again. Basically trying to protect me from the coach and the captain, because he was aware of what I had done, I don’t think too many others were, but I was feeling bad about myself and had a good think... Harry Nicholas 66

...when you are 18 or 19 at that sort of age, you are in an environment, a social environment around your peers and you want to be going out and doing that because that is what you do, and it is easy to get caught up in alongside playing first class cricket... Harry Nicholas 64

While Carr & Murphy (1995) believed all drugs including alcohol represent a risk of danger for athletes, literature and research relating to these specific and conceivably more culturally oriented findings are not readily available or have perhaps remained beneath the

radar of previous research. Indeed the literature review explained how research had failed to elaborate on what contextual, cultural and environmental factors might influence an athlete's experience for better or worse. In this sense, findings here may accurately highlight some of the more unknown lifestyle elements of some professionals in cricket. Indeed these key findings may also hint at a possible culture in which some players lifestyles have developed and in which the lifestyles of future players might develop.

2.7.2.2 - 'Professional lifestyles within an increasingly intense environment'

In contrast to the above, a combination of 13 players also described 'Professional lifestyles within an increasingly intense environment'. Three players highlighted the importance of 'Dealing with increased media attention'; four players emphasized the need to have an 'Awareness of the increased emphasis on recreational and performance enhancing drugs' and six players suggested 'Independence is central to managing heightened domestic and international travelling'. In line with these findings Amirault & Orlick (1989) reported that in seeking to find balance within athletic excellence, extensive travel and media demands make such a balance more difficult. As with 'players' early educational experiences', the ECB PL programme also currently offers workshop (and one to one) based support for academy players in dealing with the areas above, including 'Media Training', 'Drugs in Sport' and 'Preparing to Travel and Train Overseas' (refer to workshop booklet in appendix B).

In line with negotiating these increasing commitments, but particularly in line with the culture of drinking mentioned above, twelve players also stressed how 'Responsibility and decision making must balance any players social time and commitments', which included 'Sacrificing nights out with friends' (SB-12; MT-108, 99; MC-154; JH-190), 'Sacrificing nights out to look after yourself physically' (MC-154, 158; DN-142), and 'Knowing the right time and place to enjoy yourself' (MC-157; DN-146; HN-64), as the same player quoted seemed to learn:

...I have seen people come and go because of that kind of lifestyle, and he [senior player] taught me early in my career, about the balance, that there is a time and a place... I think that if you can get that balance quickly, that will serve you well... Harry Nicholas 64

Indeed, having previously alluded to a potentially difficult cognitive balancing act for a young professional, the notion of 'balance' returns again here, but this time in terms of living a professional but not overly intense lifestyle, in that 2 junior and 3 senior players believed in the 'Value in having balance between your social and cricket lives' (JH-186; SB-5; DN-142; PK-194; TS-44). In support of this Amirault & Orlick (1989) also reported how every athlete in their research stressed the importance of 'joyful time' away from their sport. This *lifestyle balance* is suggested by one senior professional below:

... you have got to be disciplined as a sportsman but to know when to let off steam as well, because it's such an intense lifestyle, its probably different for each person knowing when to relax and when you need to be more intense... Tony Scott 44

Similarly, Douglass and Carless (2005) found that more experienced athletes believed balance was essential in regard to performance and life as a whole. In this study, it appears that *realizing* the potential value of social and physical balance is a self-selective and self-reinforcing topic that comes after learning from mistakes, through being responsible by making timely decisions and sacrifices, and through experience.

2.7.2.3 - 'Experiences with Contracts and Money'

Parham (1993) reported that athletes who struggle financially often report feeling frustrated, trapped, and even exploited. Within this 3rd order theme, three players also described 'Contract negotiation and realities' with five players explaining their 'Uncertainty over contractual situations' and dealing with the general 'Uncertainty of contracts and finances' (KH-128; MT-107; MB-55), as these two quotes reflect:

Maybe nervous is the wrong word... I'm only on a 1-year contract, next year I don't know what's happening... if it doesn't happen, I don't know what I'm gonna do. I've got options... I want to play cricket for a living, I

love playing, I want it so much, if it's not gonna happen, it's quite scary thinking what else am I gonna do? I don't want to do anything else... Karl Hall 128

... in a similar contract like this I don't think it would be feasible for the situation I'll be in next year because you know I won't be a kid and I'll be having to pay for things and grown-up things like bills and what have ya, you know, I'd just like to know where I stand really, it is on my mind... Mathew Tyson 107

2.7.2.4 -'Consequences associated with being a professional cricketer'

Themes outlined here, are also associated with 'Enhanced responsibility and public attention as a professional cricketer', which in turn can mean 'Players reside in a professional cricket bubble which is unlike the real world'. Interviewee's felt this bubble can mean that 'The nature of cricket consumes every aspect of a player's life and their thinking' (JH-188; HN-71; MB-63; TS-32, 39, 42; PK-194) as described below:

"... I have felt at times, its funny you notice at times you are in such a cricket bubble and such a cricket environment and even away from it, you go in a pub and everyone will talk to you about cricket, and even all my mates will talk to me about is my cricket and this and that and you get to the stage sometimes where you think is there anymore to life than this..." John Harrison 188

"...The thing I have found with cricket is that it is a bit of an institution, it is my life since I left school...so I find myself in environments where everything revolves around cricket, the way I socialise, the way I do everything basically, I won't know what kind of a person I will be until I probably finish cricket... I think the game looks after you, the game is responsible for shaping you as a person..." Harry Nicholas 71

"...It such an encompassing lifestyle, you're playing so often, playing everyday, the ups and downs, the emotions of it, every day, one day you get 100 and the next day you get 0 and you build yourself up to play, against the fastest bowlers in the world, so it's so encompassing that you're cocooned in the dressing room where there's 11 or 12 people where someday they'll be with you and someday they'll be against you, when you do well they'll be knockin' you down, when you're down they'll be picking you up..." Martin Black 63

In line with the potential for cricket to consume every aspect of a player's life and their thinking at the professional level, Stambulova (2000) reported how an athlete's life can become subordinated to sport. Similarly van Rossum (2001) reported how on entering 'the

later years' (using Blooms terminology) dance student's everyday lives became completely filled with dance. Furthermore, Cockerill & Tribe (2002) described sport as a hectic business where athletes can be absorbed into an unrealistic lifestyle. However, while the introduction and literature review suggested that research had yet to highlight what athletes' experiences and transitions are *really* like, this general dimension and the accompanying quotes portray the emergence of media, travel and financial commitments, and a need for a responsible knowledge of recreational and performance enhancing drugs, which all in turn, highlight some of the peripheral matters players may have to negotiate within an increasingly intense, and consuming bubble, unlike the real world.

In summary, the eclectic and interrelating themes and quotes extrapolated so far begin to address research aim (A); by highlighting the idiosyncratic nature of a professional cricketer's lifestyle. Some of the peripheral matters highlighted, relating to parental involvement, balancing study, making educational decisions, and managing media and finances amongst others, also relate to some of the areas the ECB's PL curriculum (and curriculum's of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes around the world) seeks to support athletes through workshops and one to one support (see Appendix B). However, more elusive areas, somewhat unaccounted for in such curricula, include issues relating to personal independence, personal perceptions, and a social, cognitive and physical lifestyle *balance* to cope with increasing demands, failures, and cultural influences within an increasingly challenging environment at the professional level. All these areas reflect the way in which peripheral, contextual and cultural matters might infiltrate a player's lifestyle, and while challenges within the game arguably remain constant (i.e., taking wickets, scoring runs, winning games); those surrounding it clearly have the potential to become increasingly convoluted.

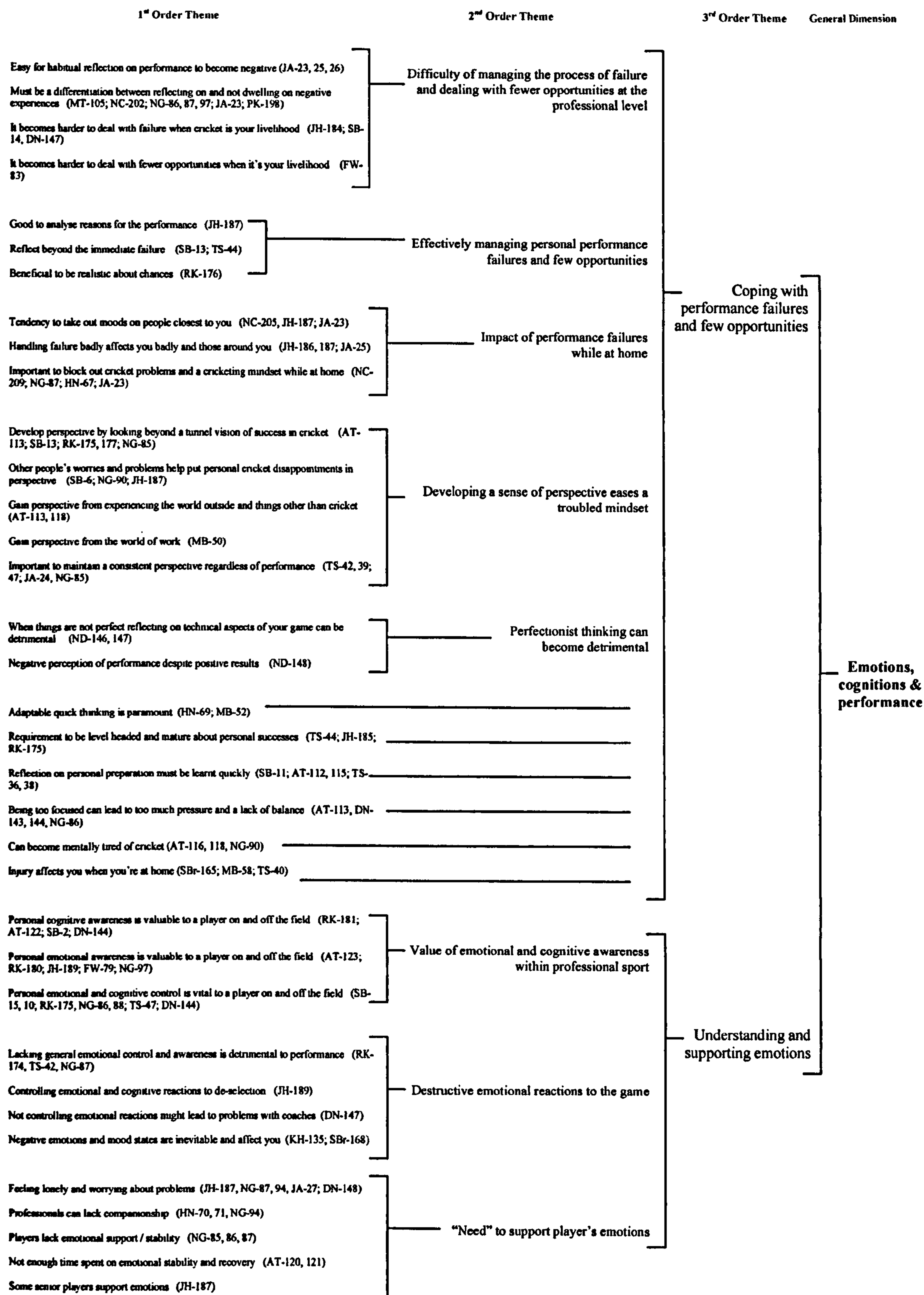


Table 2.6 - Summary content analysis table – Emotions, Cognitions & Performance

2.7.3 - Table 2.6 - General dimension: 'Emotions, Cognitions & Performance'

While some aspects of a player's lifestyle appeared more elusive in the previous dimensions, these findings arguably also go even further and manage to elaborate on the emotional and cognitive reality of life as a professional cricketer.

2.7.3.1 - 'Coping with performance failures and few opportunities'

While athletes are always required to perform and playing positions are always up for grabs in professional sport (Neff 1990; Botterill, 1990), they might still experience crises that adversely affect them cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally and socially (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Stambulova, 2000) while in the midst of, approaching, or at the end of their careers. In this regard and similar to the earlier themes related to perceptions of a young player's lifestyle, eight players described, and at times in great detail, the 'Difficulty of managing the process of failure and dealing with fewer opportunities at the professional level'. Specifically they described why 'It becomes harder to deal with failure when cricket is your livelihood' (JH-184; SB-14; DN-147), as the following quotes convey:

... whether you go out and get 5 at the weekend or a duck, there are different things, and you almost start to change the way you look at cricket and the way you deal with success and failure, and that's something you still have to come to terms with now as a professional cricketer because there are more pressures now because it is your livelihood, so it's a risky thing, it's not a secure job. So you can never estimate how that affects your performance... John Harrison 184

I have seen a lot of players that get totally wound up about if they are going to get released, are they going to be playing next year, why aren't they always playing and they get really frustrated with it. They throw their kit about and get really annoyed about it... it really affects them... Steve Bolland 13

...I think you will find this with every cricketer I think, it's the ones who can handle failure, and can handle lack of form, god, I got better... I mean you will always fail but this [his previous difficult experience] was a time when literally I had no hands, no idea what was going on, I literally had no idea... Dave North 147

Shedding further light on players 'Coping with performance failures and few opportunities', players felt there 'Must be a differentiation between reflecting on and not dwelling on negative experiences' (MT-105; NC-202; NG-86, 87, 97; JA-23; PK-198) while five players also described the 'Impact of performance failures while at home'. The first quote below relates to this theme and also reflects how there can be a 'Tendency to take out moods on people closest to you' (NC-205; JH-187; JA-23), while the second portrays how 'Handling failure badly, affects you badly and those around you' (JH-186, 187; JA-25):

I get a bit nasty, that's probably the word I would use, I get a bit moody, not, I don't know I'm trying to think of a word, I am a bit of a nasty sort of person, not in a physical way, but I get really pissed off, and you know someone might say something slightly wrong, we argue and I jump down their throat, you know I can say some nasty things sometimes... Neil Chester 205

... I don't pull myself away from it you know, give myself time to breathe and enjoy other things in life really. Had a good day out with my son yesterday, but then drivin' in this mornin' I was thinkin', am I gonna play Sunday...I've been through all that this week thinkin' I'm gonna play, no real need to be doing that. You don't really need to worry about that until when the team is announced.... You know I really need to pull myself away from that cause it does affect my focus at home perhaps. I don't concentrate as much at home... Jack Andrews 25

The themes and quotes above appear to convey latent emotional and cognitive difficulties inherent in some cricketers at the professional level. Throughout the interviews players also offered thoughts on how future players might cope with experiences throughout their life in sport and nine players suggested that 'Developing a sense of perspective eases a troubled mindset'. In this regard, following Brown, Cairns & Botterill's (2001) interviews with 11 elite athletes, they described the process of perspective and the art of living well in the world of elite sport, suggesting that through perspective, athletes seemed best able to survive and thrive in the demanding and often brutal environment of elite sport. In relation to these findings, players similarly advocated that future players should 'Develop perspective by looking beyond a tunnel vision of success in cricket' (AT-113; SB-13; RK-175, 177; NG-85) while senior players stressed how experience taught them that it is

‘Important to maintain a consistent perspective regardless of performance’ (TS-42, 39; 47; JA-24; NG-85). One senior player below explains this point of view based on his own acute experiences with failure:

I had gone full swing to someone who was just like a wall flower and was just hiding away, but you know when you are so down on yourself or you have a rough patch, or in the future I would know how to get out of it straight away, not in terms of maybe runs on the board straight away, but it was more like that in them days *[gestures a up and down wave using his arm]*, my mood swings, my lifestyle patterns, would be down and then up, there would be no real medium ground where as now I take success and failure on the same interpretation level... Tony Scott 39

In accordance with the theme and quote above, Brown, Cairns & Botterill (2001) also stressed the importance of athletes separating their value as a person from their results in the competitive arena, and that the individual should not be changed by success or failure. In line with this and notions of lifestyle and cognitive balance mentioned earlier, players also felt that ‘Being too focused can lead to too much pressure and a lack of balance’ (AT-113; DN-143, 144; NG-86) and how players ‘Can become mentally tired of cricket’ (AT-116, 118; NG-90).

2.7.3.2 - ‘Understanding and Supporting Emotions’

Twelve junior and senior players repeatedly returned to the importance of ‘Understanding and Supporting Emotions’ of players. Six players also championed the overall ‘Value of emotional and cognitive awareness within professional sport’, both on the field and off the field. Players believed that ‘Personal cognitive awareness is valuable to a player on and off the field’ (RK-181; AT-122; SB-2; DN-144), as described below;

I think self-awareness is building a series of questions about a person, what makes you tick, and an awareness of me and what I need to be happy is something that I need and have been curious about for quite some time... What it takes to make me happy and things that disappoint me or create any type of stress and going through them and overcoming challenges... Anthony Taylor 122

In addition to personal cognitive awareness, they also felt ‘Personal emotional awareness is valuable to a player on and off the field’ (AT-123; RK-180; JH-189; FW-79; NG-97); and described how a variety of circumstances in their own lives have encouraged such awareness:

... I know myself now when I wake in a morning how I feel, whether I feel miserable or happy and sometimes I just come into the ground and I just don’t want to be around anyone, I just want to be by myself, but I am normally happy go lucky...but I am just not like that I am totally different, and people can actually see the difference in me you know, and they say oh what’s up with you, I just say “I am alright man I am just tired” ...
Fran Warick 79

I think it is back to that emotion thing, being able to control your emotions about where you find yourself in your life in a way, control your feelings and take a second to step back and think and then act... and it helped me outside cricket in my life you see, I tried to help my mother by being strong when her parents died, so there was no point me being upset and hurt and being a wreck when all my cousins all were... I had to be some kind of rock for my mum, because my Dad was not great at handling grieving, and I tried to handle my emotions but even as a cricketer I get annoyed and get upset, and I almost had to learn that it doesn’t help me to act like that...
John Harrison 189

Definitely, I don’t think you can perform to your best unless you have everything in place, like your emotions etc, as I said I think that is the start of the process of being successful... Anthony Taylor 123

In addition to awareness, players in this study also emphasised the importance of control, believing that ‘Personal emotional and cognitive control is vital to a player on and off the field’ (SB-15, 10; RK-175; NG-86, 88; TS-47; DN-144).

... I now know that of I have had three noughts on the trot, that is no reason for me to be unhappy because I have prepared and tried my best and I don’t let that affect my mood swings, so now, because I understand, if I got out and get 6 hundreds on the trot I will be the same when I am at home and you know its taken me a bloody long time to get like that, and its been hard work personally ... cricket is with me every minute of the day, but my lifestyle previously, if I was doing well at cricket I’d be fine or if I was not doing well I would be unhappy, but now I don’t get too down with my failures and I have a better reality on that, and when I go home now, or when I am away from cricket I can be happy... Tony Scott 47

To put it simply about my emotions, when things are going well I don’t get too excited and when things are going bad I do not get too down, and I think that balances things out well, because you are always going to have bad games and if you get down in the dumps it’s a hell of a climb to get back out of that... Rob Kenny 175

Without such emotional and cognitive control or awareness seven players felt others could experience ‘Destructive emotional reactions to the game’. These suggestions also support the currency players put on the ‘Need to support player’s emotions’, given some players experiences, of ‘Feeling lonely and worrying about problems’ (JH-187; NG-87, 94; JA-27; DN-148), as the following quotes convey and perhaps also draw parallels with the ‘lonely existence’ of professional baseball players reported by Ravizza (1990);

The worst thing you can do as a human being is being lonely... Even now, when I come back home from cricket, I sometimes feel really alone and uh, there’s a lot of loneliness in cricket... I’ve had a problem in my life that I always took cricket with me. I care about what I do ... I’d worry about stuff.... But sometimes you find that you can like, eh, get too, um, a bit too worried about what’s actually happened today. I let it fester on my mind and that in itself can lead to a lot of emotions going through your head when you’re on your own... Nick Greswell 87

[Describing others perceptions of him]...I’m not just a cricketer, I’m highly important because I’m around this ground but people don’t know ya, don’t know what I’m about, I’m still the same bloke as what I were, whether I got 100, it doesn’t really matter, and I can feel less important when I don’t get 100... Nick Greswell 94

[Describing a difficult period of his career]... If I showed how I really deep down felt, I think everyone would hate me, so I, and I think everyone pretty much did hate me when it [leaving his first county] did happen, so I quickly recognised that... Dave North 148

Although elaborated on later, these findings offer insights but also implications for practitioners and support structures seeking to further understand and support players’ emotions and cognitions.

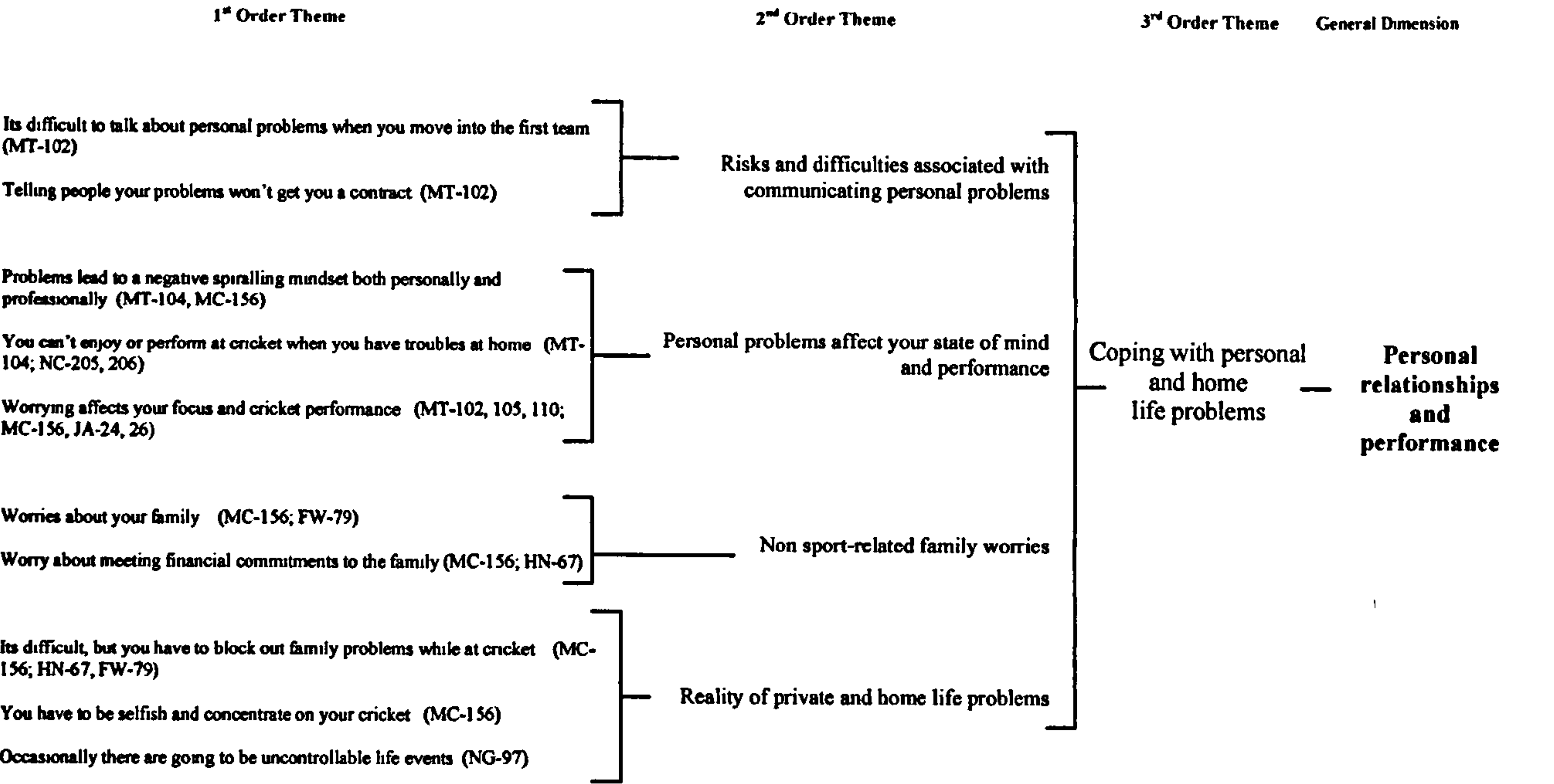


Table 2.8 - Summary content analysis table – Personal Relationships & Performance (continued)

2.7.4 - Table 2.7 & 2.8 - General dimension: 'Personal Relationships & Performance'

Having suggested that the 'Emotions, cognitions and performance' general dimension seemed to describe the psychological realities of life as a professional, the content of this general dimension also provides intimate detail from another perspective.

Despite the apparently significant role that interpersonal relationships play in the lives of sports performers, the existing knowledge and understanding of such relationships in sport have remained constrained (Coppel, 1995; Wylleman, 2000). However, Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee (2004) alluded to changes which occur in athletes' psychosocial development relative to their athletic involvement, including peer, marital and other interpersonal relationships. Authors reflecting on work with athletes have also alluded to marriage difficulties and family pressures (Dorfman, 1990), off court stress associated with time away from family (Loehr, 1990), how wives, families and friends are important in the lives of professional hockey players (Botterill, 1990), how boyfriends and girlfriends affect performance (Orlick, 1989) and how relationships and personal factors are closely related to sports performance (Douglas & Carless, 2005). In this study, generally, players felt that 'For a relationship in cricket to work it's likely to be hard' (KH-136; MC-154; NG-85; PK-194; DN-149), as described below:

...someone said the average is a 75% divorce rate amongst cricketers, and I always say to the young lads getting engaged or whatever, have you seen the ratio? They don't lie you know, and they call me an old cynical sod and what have you but its true... Dave North 149

I mean not many people can go away for six months and keep their girlfriend. I did and I was lucky enough to do that. Um, it's, I just say if you want it enough, is it worth sacrificing your girlfriend for your career? Some people think yeah, some people think no. That's, when they'll make it or they won't make it... Karl Hall 136

... the relationship is difficult for a cricketer to maintain and nurture because of the environment you're in and the time spent away from home and the things you do which are quite different six months of the year to us it's totally normal... and I think it might be interesting for you in your experience to have a look at the divorce rates, the suicide rates among cricketers, the breakdown rates... Nick Greswell 85

Furthermore, twelve players described in detail ‘Relationships influence on the performing mindset / the individual’, whilst four players noted how ‘Cricket demands detach you from your relationship and family’ and how ‘Cricket demands contributed to the break up of my relationship’ (NC-207; FW-78). Interestingly these findings seem to look at personal relationships from both angles, in that players described the affects of relationships on their sport as well as the affects of sport on their relationships. In terms of the latter, the following two quotes portray how for these players ‘Cricket demands took me away from my family’ (MB-54; JA-27; FW-78):

... we had a little boy, so I made the decision to move to [county club]... I would travel up and down for the family...but it ended up forging a wedge between the pair of us because I would be up here, and she would be back with the kids and she would just be at logger heads and thinking I was going out, well I had had a hard days cricket and could not be bothered to drive an hour back to drive another hour back in the morning, it would just be physically impossible, so I tried to do that for a year, but she got ambitious and I got ambitious and it's the same old story that happens to cricketers all the time... Fran Warick 78

I'm going through a divorce right now, which is tough, just over a year or getting on for it now, and ultimately the thing I think has caused our downfall is what we do, is cricket. There's stresses and strains and the devotion to playin' cricket to be as successful as I've been, I think have really taken its toll and have taken me away from the family, to such an extent, that one of the reasons, we've cited as one of the reasons our relationship has broken down is the fact that I'm so focused on playing cricket... Martin Black 54

Players felt the mercurial nature of the game of professional cricket can play a part in relationship difficulties. In line with the literature above, five players also described the potentially ‘Negative affects of relationships on a cricketer's mindset’, and more explicitly, how ‘Having a relationship can affect a performing mindset’ (MB-54; PK-198) and how ‘Having a relationship can be stressful and frustrating’ (MC-154; JH-186; FW-79, 81; PK-195). In support of these findings Noblet & Gifford (2002) reported relationship and lifestyle issues as being significant sources of stress for professional Australian Rules Footballers’, and Thelwell, Weston & Greenlees (2007) included issues at home and relationship problems as sources of stress for professional cricketers. The following two quotes from these findings actually describe these stresses and their perceived effects during these two players’ careers:

I have no doubt that it affected me big time and for two years I just about held my head up above water here, you know I was averaging 35, 36, which for me is not enough... but when you sort of weigh it down to the pressures we were under, I think I was just hanging in... last season I had an average of 60 or 70, this year I'm averaging 56, 57 and I think there's an answer in itself... probably the last two years of my cricket career, whilst we knew we were in trouble, as such, was very very difficult. You do and try and put everything out of your mind as much as you can, but ultimately there's so much going on in your head that I don't think you can be as relaxed, and as comfortable within the game, when you're playing... Martin Black 54

... one year, 1998 my benefit year, I got divorced ... work that one out! Looking back at that I don't know how I'm still alive... My divorce that was pretty messy anyway, my benefit, played cricket and because of what was going on with my relationship I was in rented accommodation. So I was moving from house to house, setting up an office, it was absolutely... I don't know how I got through that year... Paul Kelly 195

Conversely six players also reported the 'Positive affects of relationships on a cricketer's mindset'. These findings resonate with Parker's (2001) descriptions of how 'steady girlfriends' for football trainees were sometimes regarded as beneficial to the lives of young players in providing a calming social influence, and Douglas & Carless' (2005) findings where elite athletes believed support from family and personal relationships was critical to their success. Further supporting these notions, findings in this study suggested that 'Partners can be supportive' (SB-11; MC-157; MB-59; PK-195), and how relationships can 'Calm your social life and provide stability' (MC-157; HN-66, 73) as described below:

... when I was living with the lads, I had just started seeing Andrea, I was so mixed up about where I was, I didn't have a base... I lived in a suitcase in the back of my car... I lived my life for maybe three or four months doing that, probably longer and it was confusing, when we bought our house together, that was a real calming influence and it started to change things for the better in my life... ... I am now married too, and I have been with her 10 years now, and that was very much a calming influence and in the same year it was a big decision that we moved into a house together which we had rented for six months, we thought yes this is right ... so all of a sudden I had gone from, and this had all happened in 2 years, living at home, to going out with 4 lads in the middle of [the county], to living 40 mile away from the ground with a girl, you behave differently, you have got to, so that was a major change in my life...Harry Nicholas 66

2.7.4.1 - 'Coping with relationship problems and cricket performance'

The literature review suggested that research and literature was still seeking to fully understand the complex *reality* of athletes' lifestyles. Having articulated relationships and their potential influence on cricketers, interviews also captured five players thoughts on the '*Reality* of professional cricketers coping with relationship problems', as players described their experiences and how 'Bottling problems up mean it's harder to deal with' (PK-195; HN-73; MB-55), but 'You don't want to talk to people about your private life' (HN-73; MB-55), as reflected below:

... I didn't want to tell anybody what was going on. You just don't. You don't wanna tell people what's goin' on in your private life, you know, and then people are sittin' there sayin', well he's all grumpy, what's wrong with him, but people don't know what's going on... It's a very difficult one, because I say, I didn't want to talk to anybody about it. So how was anybody gonna get that out of me... Martin Black 55

...its quite a difficult subject relationships because nobody really likes to talk about what they are doing at home and I think we are all different like that... Harry Nicholas 73

These themes again implicate notions of support, and while authors have suggested sport psychologists pay attention to personal matters (Balague, 1999; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004), the same player quoted above also describes how in reality, it is 'Difficult to understand whose responsibility it is to help a player with their relationship' (MB-55):

...unless you've got close people in and around you literally comin' up to you and sayin' how are things, is everything all right, you know I'm here if you want to talk, and if you can get it out of people, then maybe you can talk to people and you can try and understand things...who does that, I mean, the captain is not gonna do it, he's got enough on his plate, the coach, maybe he could do it, ... ultimately he's the one who's hirin' and firin' and he's got a hard job to do... You could maybe say the senior players, but senior players are not always lookin' after everybody else... it's almost findin' a way that people can come to terms with these things, whether it be through a sports psychologist or someone in and around that's just a good man... Martin Black 55

In discussing lessons from their own relationship experiences, senior players also felt ‘You have to be honest about the commitments and likely difficulties in a relationship’ (JA-18, 19; PK-195) and ‘Communicate with partners the time demands of the game and it’s more likely to work’ (NC-208; HN-67, 73, JA-19; MB-53; DN-149).

Lastly, and in addition to coping with personal relationships, seven players also described ‘Coping with personal and home life problems’ and four players described how more generic and domestic ‘Personal problems affect your state of mind and performance’. Again, while literature outlined so far has (neatly) eluded to personal and home life problems of athletes and changes at the psychosocial level (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee 2004), it tends to fall short in offering the contextual voices and complexities of athletes’ experiences which they seem to be describing. In this regard, junior professionals in this study felt that ‘You can’t enjoy or perform at cricket when you have troubles at home’ (MT-104; NC-205, 206) because ‘Worrying affects your focus and cricket performance’ (MT-102, 105, 110; MC-156; JA-24, 26), and that ‘Problems lead to a negative spiralling mindset both personally and professionally’ (MT-104; MC-156), as described by this young professional:

... I’d be at home, be pretty down, go to cricket, and because I was down from home, I’d perform badly, feel worse, go home, feel bad again, you know, it was just a pretty crummy time to be honest... We didn’t have any money, that was pretty depressing, um, you know, people knocking on the door asking for money, things like this, it was just, it was just horrendous really.... I was doin’ my GCSE’s at the time, I was tryin’ to concentrate for them... you know my emotions at the time were I don’t know, I was probably depressed. And I’m sure I probably ticked all the right boxes for being a depressed lad ... Mathew Tyson 104

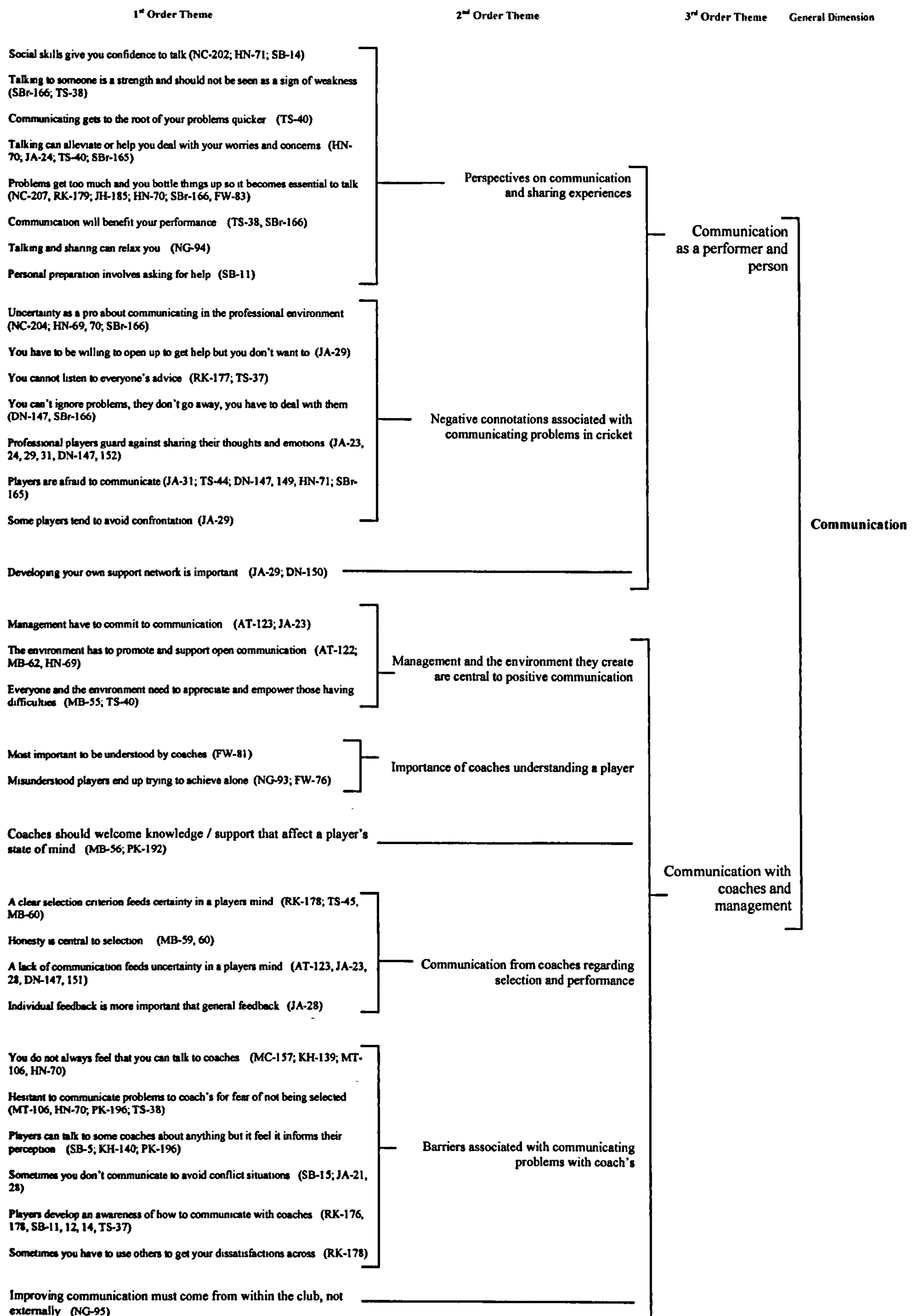


Table 2.9 - Summary content analysis table – Communication

2.7.5 - Table 2.9 General dimension: ‘Communication’

Alongside the previous general dimensions, ‘Communication’ issues also elaborate further on the nature and reality of professionals cricketers *sharing* any of their lifestyle experiences.

Eleven players described their experiences of ‘Communication as a performer and person’ and ten players (mostly senior), offered their personal ‘Perspectives on communication and sharing experiences’ throughout their career. These perspectives include players’ assertions that ‘Talking to someone is a strength and should not be seen as a sign of weakness’ (SBr-166; TS-38), and as the following two quotes convey, that ‘Talking can alleviate or help you deal with your worries and concerns’ (HN-70; JA-24; TS-40; SBr-165):

...my wife tries to get things out and she knows what I am thinking and what I am feeling, she knows when something is wrong and she encourages me to talk about it, and it is always good to have someone there to talk to, whether that person is your friend or your coach, it is good to talk... Harry Nicholas 70

...and the point I am trying to make is that there has got to be communication all the time, you know whether that’s a 16 year old lad who is just finding out about himself and his game or a 33 year old guy, everyone has feelings and experiences and everyone is complex in different ways... Tony Scott 40

In line with the above, Neff (1990) believed discussing concerns in private was frequently the stepping stone to enhanced sports performance for athletes, while Brown, Cairns & Botterill (2001) also reported that some elite athletes see expressing their emotions as healthy practice, good ‘economics of energy’, not a sign of weakness, and recognise the dangers of keeping emotions bottled up. In support of this, quotes below also illustrate how players sometimes feel ‘Problems get too much and you bottle things up so it becomes essential to talk’ (NC-207; RK-179; JH-185; HN-70; SBr-166; FW-83), which again sheds light on the reality and difficulty players sometimes feel in relation to sharing their experiences:

...there can be all sorts going on at home and with mum and Dad and whatever and your bird... the lads might be taking the piss out of you... sometimes someone will say something and you will just snap because you are taking yourself a little bit serious sometimes, and that's where you need to speak to people, not so much to get help, but to get a perspective to help you work around that so you don't have to put yourself in that position where your about to loose it, so you have to then work things out for yourself... Neil Chester 207

... to hold it in and not share the pressure just builds up and builds up... You have to just speak to someone, be it your mum, your dad, your girlfriend, there has to be some one you can open up to. Speak to quite openly and be quite honest... Shaun Brown 166

I get to a certain stage where if someone gets me going I am unable to shut up... So I might get on a role occasionally with my girlfriend or me Mam and Dad every now and again, or my team mate and it just happens it just comes out... Fran Warick 83

While these perspectives from senior players appear to have been learnt through experience, and in line with the literature above offers valuable advice, the *reality* shared by seven players appears far from simple given their perspectives on the 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket', including an 'Uncertainty as a pro about communicating in the professional environment' (NC-204; HN-69, 70; SBr-166), as the following quotes convey:

...the confusing things in this game and outside it that we have talked about, it is hard and it builds up inside you, you want to ask questions and eventually you can become confused. You are sometimes scared of asking the wrong questions to the wrong people, which does not do you any good, so knowing who to talk to and why is quite a hard skill and I do not think I have mastered it yet... Harry Nicholas 70

...when I started I did not speak for 2 years, because I was unsure what to say, who I was talking to and almost felt not worthy... Harry Nicholas 69

I don't know, I guess I didn't have the bottle to do it. At the age of 17, 18, 19 I thought it was a sign of weakness and I didn't have the balls to do it... Shaun Brown 166

While literature stresses the importance of understanding context (see Petitpas & Champagne 2000; van Rossum 2001; Brown, Gould & Foster 2005) research fails to elaborate on what contextual, cultural and environmental factors influence an athletes

experience for better or worse. In this regard, these results not only portray the personal difficulties surrounding communication, but also begin to address research aim (B) by depicting some of the communicative environments and climates in which players reside. Authors have also described how accepting vulnerability may be particularly challenging for males due to societal expectations (Ravizza, 1990; Brown, Cairns & Botterill, 2001) and how the athletic system often teaches athletes that they need to ‘tough it out’, which means athletes end up viewing the notion of asking for help as a sign of weakness and are uncomfortable sharing their emotional concerns (Pearson, & Petitpas, 1990; Danish et al., 1993). In support of these observations, interviewees suggested ‘Players are afraid to communicate’ (JA-31; TS-44; DN-147, 149; HN-71; SBr-165) and that ‘Professional players guard against sharing their thoughts and emotions’ (JA-23, 24, 29, 31; DN-147, 152). Unfortunately, these *realities* might therefore negate the advice given above, regarding the need to talk, and value of doing so, and in line with the quotes below, might also compound many of the problems players’ experience:

I certainly don’t do it as much, I don’t share things, I bottle things up far too much and then it might be a case where it all suddenly comes out and that’s one spell after you’ve been bubbling away... Jack Andrews 24

I broke up from a long term friend, my best friend in the world and I went to Australia at the end of the summer and spoke to no-one, never really spoke to my mum never my dad, not my best friend...so in the end I just cocooned myself, for 3 years, I was always one of the lads but in terms of my game, I probably cocooned myself, no, for four years... Dave North 147

I have been, I have been in a mess, but my private mess, no one knew the mess I was in, no one in this world, err, only me... Dave North 152

Further issues relating to players’ perspectives on communication and the environments in which they do, were fourteen players thoughts on ‘Communication with coaches and management’. Players felt ‘Coaches should welcome knowledge / support that affect a player’s state of mind’ (MB-56; PK-192) and five players suggested that ‘Management and the environment they create are central to positive communication’. These findings draw parallels with Côté & Salmela’s (1996) research in which expert gymnastic coaches favoured and structured a positive climate of open discussion with their elite gymnasts.

More specifically players felt ‘The environment has to promote and support open communication’ (AT-122; MB-62; HN-69), and that ‘Everyone and the environment need to appreciate and empower those having difficulties’ (MB-55; TS-40). In line with the need to appreciate and empower players, modern day coaching practitioners are thought not only responsible for directing practice and training sessions but also for the overall social and psychological well-being of their athletes, both inside and outside of the sporting arena (Borrie & Knowles, 1998). One player explains his perspective on the need to appreciate and empower players below:

...some how you’ve got to break down the barriers to go and see somebody to go and talk to somebody is for puffs basically, for want of a better word. It’s not the done thing, oh I can’t go and do that, people will think I’m weak ... that I think should be the goal, you know to be able to create an environment where people are gonna be comfortable to come and see ya and want to come and see ya because they want to learn and develop... Martin Black 62

It’s just probably an understanding of what people are going through, how people can deal with it. That’s the key and that’s your job. Well, it’s not your job, it’s everybody’s. We all have to think things out for ourselves, you can’t rely on other people...it would be lovely to be in a situation where, if you are thinkin’ about it yourself, and you do wanna do somethin’ about it, then there are people you can go and talk to... Martin Black 55

In line with these perspectives regarding the importance of an open, appreciative and empowering communicative environment, it has been suggested that the physical and social settings within which developmental transitions take place can, for good or ill, exert a tremendous effect on the experience of individuals making them (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990), and how more simply, if channels of communication are not running effectively within an organisation, performers are likely to feel despondent (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). Authors in sport psychology have commented on athlete-coach related issues in their consultancy which include improving communication problems (Gould et al., 1989; Gould et al., 1999; Andersen, 2000), and in this regard ten players also reported ‘Barriers associated with communicating problems with coaches’. Somewhat critically, junior and senior professionals reported how ‘You do not always feel that you can talk to coaches’ (MC-157; KH-139; MT-106; HN-70) as described by three players below;

... I don't like telling anyone my business, I keep it away from them, it's not that I don't trust the management staff or anything I just don't like telling them... I don't think they would understand, I don't know if they would or not but... it's not that I do not trust them... if you tell them that they might think, oh, that's a bit weird, why is he telling me that... Matt Cullen 157

... you never find a player going to one of our coaches, I don't know what it's like at other clubs, and talking about personal problems..., I just don't think that's necessarily their, what you would think their job was... they're after results and um I just don't think people would use that as an outlet really...Mathew Tyson 106

... in my younger days I did feel pretty much alone, it's alright having your coach, who is there for your cricket really, so the captain and the coach can say their door is always open you can come and talk to me about anything, well I don't think you can all the time... Harry Nicholas 70

In line with this uncertainty, but perhaps shedding light on its origin, players also reported feeling 'Hesitant to communicate problems to coaches for fear of not being selected' (MT-106; HN-70; PK-196; TS-38), as described by one junior and one senior professional below, whom also draw parallels with Ravizza's (1990) observation relating to professionals baseball players major fear of personal and professional weaknesses affecting their status within the team.

I couldn't actually see myself sitting down and talking to [coach] about this, to be honest, just, through no fault of his own... it wouldn't enter my mind really... he's a great bloke and I have a great crack with him and what have ya, but...no, I wouldn't do that, no, like you say, if I thought that he thought that I wasn't really 100% right, you know, he might not play me for another two weeks...Mathew Tyson 106

...I didn't know who to talk too... more the traditions of the club, well to tell somebody your problems was seen as a weakness, you know coach I'm struggling or coach I don't feel right, well the first thing that would happen would be that you are dropped from the side. So you are conscious that you don't want to say that because you want to stay in the side...it was something very hard to deal with and something I dealt with on my own... I didn't know who to talk to and I didn't know who to trust, because I was conscious I wanted to keep my place in the side, I didn't want to feel like I was struggling, I felt mentally wiped out you know, I felt like a freak, like I had a disease or something, and I thought I have to get through this myself... Tony Scott 38

Jowett & Cockerill (2003) have stressed that reliable interpersonal relationships between coach and athlete are important factors that contribute to athlete's development, and that any future research that aims to tease out the negative aspects of interpersonal relationships in sport may be particularly sensitive because the disclosure of such information is often embarrassing, threatening and undesirable for athletes and coaches. In this sense, data within this general dimension appears to tease out some of the negative communicative aspects of interpersonal relationships between some cricketers and coaches, and players broader perspectives on deciding whether to communicate or share their experiences' within the environments they have played in throughout their professional cricket career.

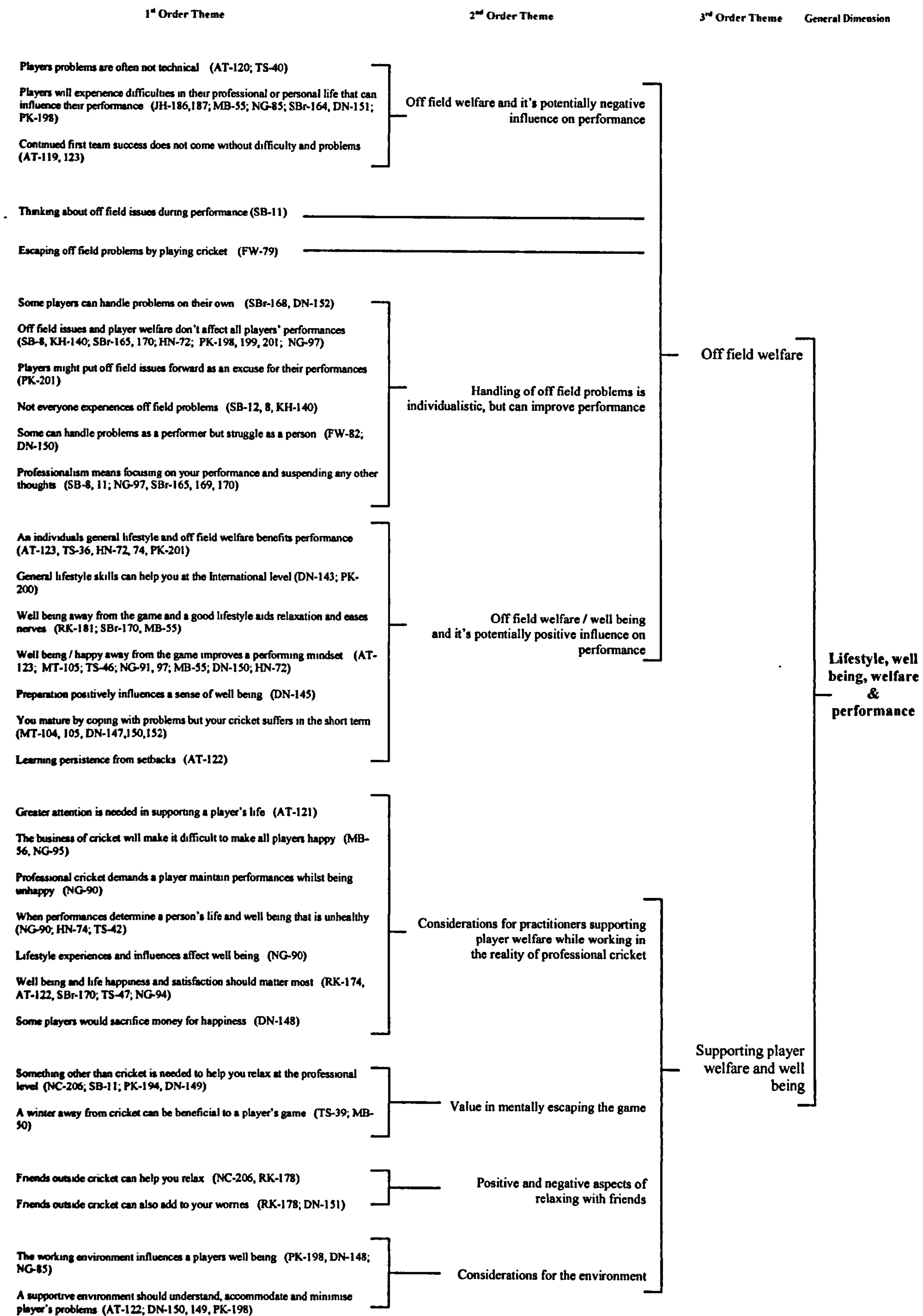


Table 2.10 - Summary content analysis table – Lifestyle, Well-being, Welfare & Performance

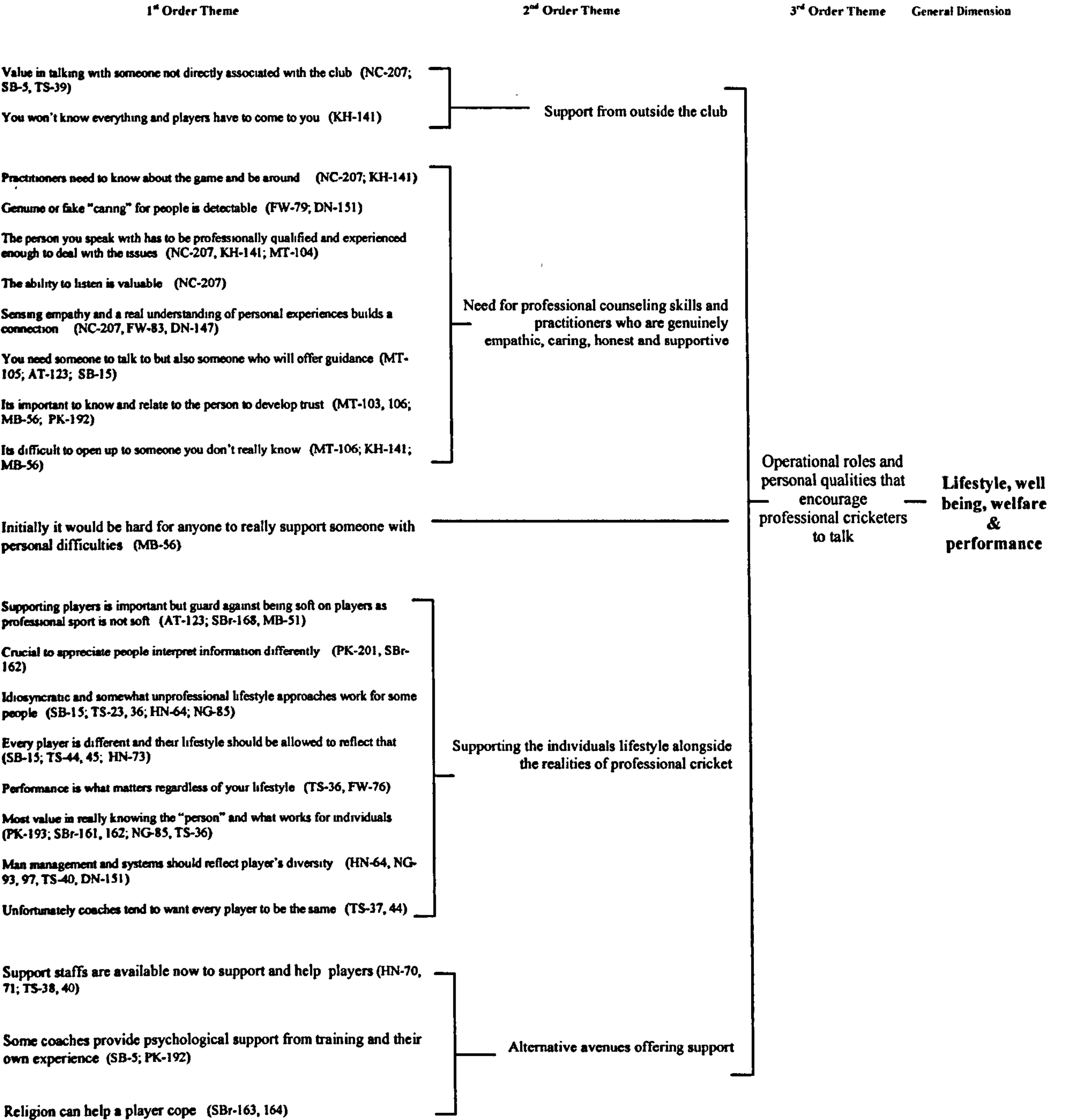


Table 2.11 - Summary content analysis table – Lifestyle, Well-being, Welfare & Performance (Continued)

2.7.6 - Tables 2.10 & 2.11 - General dimension: ‘Lifestyle, Well being, Welfare & Performance’

Having previously elaborated on the content and nature of professionals’ experiences in some of the environments in which they occur, this theme embraces broader perspectives on the potentially symbiotic relationships between a player’s lifestyle, well-being, welfare and ensuing performance. It also addresses research aim C by offering guidance in these matters from the perspectives of players.

Literature has alluded to the potential relationship between a player’s lifestyle, general well-being, welfare and performance, including a growing awareness of lifestyle and non performance based issues at the elite level (Loehr, 1990; Botterill, 1990; Orlick, 1999; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Douglas & Carless, 2005), critical life events and roadblocks (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992), athletes crises (Stambulova, 2000), non-athletic transitions (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004), and general difficulties within their life (Nesti, 2006). In discussing their own ‘Off field welfare’, eight players in this study supported literature by describing their own ‘Off field welfare and its potentially negative influence on performance’. The following quotes relay how interviewees felt ‘Players problems are often not technical’ (AT-120; TS-40) and that ‘Players will experience difficulties in their professional or personal life that can influence their performance’ (JH-186,187; MB-55; NG-85; SBr-164; DN-151; PK-198):

You still have problems and the easy thing is that people just look at statistics, but they fail to look at the reasons why, you know that annoys me, people say his cover drive had gone off a bit, but its nothing to do with cricket most of the time, 90% of the time its something happening off the field... Tony Scott 40

...there have been a few players that have been through that this year, there are also other players who have things outside of the game on their mind and its funny how that affects you at times, with your lifestyle, girlfriends and your family, and that can and does affect your performance to a degree, you have to learn a way of handling things yourself... John Harrison 186

But these things are always there, the worries are constant and it’s not just cricketers that go through those, it’s everybody, but a lot of things that apply to the outside world, would apply to cricket and vice versa, I’m sure... Martin Black 55

Balancing these suggestions somewhat, eight players also felt that the ‘Handling of off field problems is individualistic, but can improve performance’. More explicitly players also suggested that ‘Not everyone experiences off field problems’ (SB-12, 8; KH-140), and so question the literature to a degree, suggesting that ‘Off field issues and player welfare don’t affect all players’ performances’ (SB-8; KH-140; SBr-165, 170; HN-72; PK-198, 199, 201; NG-97), as described below:

There’s a contradiction here, because there have been problems and home and stuff at some stage, but then being able to go and play cricket... Harry Nicholas 72

... from a personal point of view, there have been times in my life when I haven’t been the happiest, but ultimately I have been able to maintain a level performance. I might not have been happy coming to work and I might not have been as up beat or as good company or whatever it may be but I still believe I was able to maintain a level performance... Paul Kelly 199

There are obviously things going on in your life, but as soon as I get my pads on I don’t think about things that are going on tomorrow or things I have to do. It is just me and the bowler and I am really switched onto what I have to do... Steve Bolland 8

Nevertheless, ten players supported the general premise of ‘Off field welfare / well being and it’s potentially positive influence on performance’. Indeed, players quoted below felt ‘An individuals general lifestyle and off field welfare benefits performance’ (AT-123; TS-36; HN-72, 74; PK-201):

I have to say the more I have played it’s more and more about the way you are off the pitch that helps you play on the pitch, because its such a mentally demanding game, and that’s down to lifestyle really... Tony Scott 36

You know we have sat for an hour and more now and not mentioned the physical game of cricket, which is what we do, the actual playing side of it, but there is everything that goes alongside it so it is important, like I said before, you spend more time not playing cricket... Harry Nicholas 74

...a person’s performance is a communication of their lifestyle, the way they appear and how they handle themselves on the field....Anthony Taylor 123

Building on this premise, and the outlined literature above, and in terms of ‘Off field welfare’ benefiting or having a positive influence on performance, players reflected on their own careers to describe how their general ‘Well being away from the game and a good lifestyle aids relaxation and eases nerves’ (RK-181; SBr-170; MB-55), and how having ‘Well being / happy away from the game improves a performing mindset’ (AT-123; MT-105; TS-46; NG-91, 97; MB-55; DN-150; HN-72); as depicted below:

...touch wood, my lifestyle is a happy one, I have got a house I am living with someone, it’s just steady away and it’s hard to say what I am getting across, it’s just a happy well-being really... Tony Scott 46

There’s no doubt, there’s no doubt that if players are happier, they will play better... Martin Black 55

...there is no denying the fact that since I have been happy at home, happy with my lifestyle, happy with my social life and everything that goes with it, there is no denying that my cricket has improved significantly... Harry Nicholas 72

...whereas this year I’ve been quite content and I really feel like you know I can express myself and perform when I’m playin’ cricket because you know that’s all I’m giving my thoughts to ...Mathew Tyson 105

Most people who just think that things away from cricket do not have an effect on the way you play, I’m not sure how I can’t relate to that. I don’t understand what they’re saying. Of course it does... Nick Greswell 97

The literature review and research aim C outlined how this research seeks to inform the practice of those providing lifestyle support, and articulate the extent, importance and role practitioners play, in addition to the skill base they require, in supporting the lifestyles of cricketers within any support programme or structure. In line with this, there also appeared to be a wealth of experience amongst the interviewees, and eleven players had ideas on ‘Supporting player welfare and well being’, including ‘Considerations for practitioners supporting player welfare while working in the reality of professional cricket’. In terms of these considerations, players felt ‘The business of cricket will make it difficult to make all players happy’ (MB-56; NG-95), as described below:

...it's just how to make the players happy. You could say, well, give them more money, but that's not gonna work, because people can only get so much money. You could employ a lifestyle guru in the dressing room, but that's not gonna happen because they couldn't afford to do that either ... Martin Black 56

In line with notions of supporting player welfare and well being, and again offering support for the very reasoning for the PL programme, six interviewees also described 'Value in mentally escaping the game' and that 'Something other than cricket is needed to help you relax at the professional level' (NC-206; SB-11; PK-194; DN-149). In line with these findings, elite athletes interviewed by Brown, Cairns & Botterill (2001) stressed the importance of experiences outside of sport which act as important buffers for setbacks, allowing athletes to step out of their sports worlds when frustrations and disappointments are overwhelming, and even alleviate a 'heaviness' associated with taking ones sport home.

As with the dimension of 'Communication', four players also described 'Considerations for the environment' and suggested that 'The working environment influences a players well being' (PK-198; DN-148; NG-85) and that 'A supportive environment should understand, accommodate and minimise player's problems' (AT-122; DN-150, 149; PK-198). Indeed, Cockerill & Tribe, (2002) had suggested that it was incumbent upon those who sought to promote excellence, to ensure that a system of support is in place to cater for *life* related issues that are specific to the elite athlete. The latter theme above is described by players below:

The skills we are after are the ability to walk on to the field and have nothing on your mind other than your cricket. The way to achieve that is to have everything sorted away from the cricket and have a security and purpose away form cricket... Anthony Taylor 122

I still enjoy myself, I really enjoy the place that I live at, I really enjoy the team, and I don't have any worries, I don't have to think about anything, other than what I do for a living, but that in the past was completely different, it was everything to think about and then the game sort of thing, there were so many things involved... Dave North 150

In addition to ‘Considerations for the environment’, and in line with research aim C and the discussion regarding support practitioners outlined within the literature review, when asked who might support them with their experiences, thirteen players also seemed to describe practitioners with ‘Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk’. More specifically nine players seemed to describe the ‘Need for professional counseling skills and practitioners who are genuinely empathic, caring, honest and supportive’. Within this theme players felt ‘Practitioners need to know about the game and be around’ (NC-207; KH-141), that ‘The person you speak with has to be professionally qualified and experienced enough to deal with the issues’ (NC-207; KH-141; MT-104) but also that ‘Genuine or fake “caring” for people is detectable’ (FW-79; DN-151), as described by two players below:

... but nobody actually knows what’s going on in my head, no-one actually knows the hurt I have got for certain things you know what I mean Dave, but I don’t let them see it, I cannot let them see it, there are only a few people I can talk too, because half the time people don’t worry about you and what’s going on really anyway do they, they just worry about themselves that’s what I find... Fran Warick 79

... ... you cannot care for people and players unless you actually care for what they are doing, you can spot them a mile as well, those that don’t care... Dave North 151

Elaborating further on practitioners, while one player felt ‘The ability to listen is valuable’ (NC-207), others described in more detail how ‘Sensing empathy and a real understanding of personal experiences builds a connection’ (NC-207; FW-83; DN-147) and how ‘It’s important to know and relate to the person to develop trust’ (MT-103, 106; MB-56; PK-192) because ‘It’s difficult to open up to someone you don’t really know’ (MT-106; KH-141; MB-56). The following quotes relay two of these themes above:

Boy we have got deep man. You know I actually like talking like this because nobody listens man, nobody really listens, and no one is interested...It makes me feel enlightened talking properly to someone, chatting away. You know that might not be a bad thing to do, once a month just get players down and let them talk and they might be like me, thinking shit, this that and the other. I can see that with pro players especially during the season ...but a lot of the time I do not get on that role, because basically, there is no one to talk too man... Fran Warick 83

I think it's hard to just introduce somebody and say, here I am, tell me your problems, you know, that's human nature...Mathew Tyson 106

If it's a stranger comin' in and sayin' look, come speak to me if you want to, you tend to sort of not go speak to him... Karl Hall 141

I think we've had it once or twice where the club has said look, you know there's a sports psychologist that you can go and see, but who is he, nobody knows him, so why you gonna go and see him? It's very difficult to trust in people you don't know... Martin Black 56

Findings here resonate strongly with the literature reviewed earlier in relation to the practice of sport psychology, including the value of and need for counselling skills (see Neff 1990; Danish, Petitpas & Hale 1992; Parham 1993; Petrie, Diehl & Watkins, 1995; Corlett, 1996; Lavalley & Cockerill 2002; Cockerill & Tribe 2002; Anderson et al., 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006), practitioners being around and immersed (see Neff, 1990; Partington and Orlick, 1991; Simons and Andersen, 1995; Bull, 1997; Gilbourne, 2006), showing a capacity to genuinely care (see Orlick, 1989; Dorfman 1990; Balague, 1999; Ravizza, 2002; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006), the ability to listen empathically (see Orlick & Partington 1987; Rotella, 1990; Neff, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Anderson et al., 2004) and build connections with, relate to and develop trusting relationships with athletes (see Partington & Orlick, 1991; Gelso & Fretz 1992; Sexton & Whiston, 1994; Petitpas, Danish & Giges 1999; Poczwardowski, 2001; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002; Nesti 2006;).

In addition to the skills and qualities of practitioners, ten players also seemed to describe a certain veracity in 'Supporting the individual's lifestyle alongside the realities of professional cricket'. Given everything outlined above, interviewees felt that 'Supporting players is important but guard against being soft on players as professional sport is not soft' (AT-123; SBr-168; MB-51). More specifically, senior players mostly seemed assured in their belief that 'Every player is different and their lifestyle should be allowed to reflect that' (SB-15; TS-44, 45; HN-73), that there is 'Most value in really knowing the "person" and what works for individuals' (PK-193; SBr-161, 162; NG-85; TS-36) and how

‘Idiosyncratic and somewhat unprofessional lifestyle approaches work for some people’ (SB-15; TS-23, 36; HN-64; NG-85), as describes below:

What is a good lifestyle and what is not a good lifestyle is entirely up to the individual in my eyes, but what’s good for me might not be good for somebody else and I think that’s important to understand as well....Nick Greswell 85

Performance lifestyle, there is no magic formula there, it varies from player to player... Tony Scott 23

Lastly, five interviewee’s again implicated a collective responsibility and individual emphasis when supporting players by suggesting ‘Alternative avenues offering support’, and more specifically that ‘Man management and systems should reflect player’s diversity’ (HN-64; NG-93, 97; TS-40; DN-151), as depicted below:

...people have different backgrounds you know, people have lost parents, people have got married early, some have been divorced, it could be anything that affects them, you know some guys here their mum has passed away and it must be an awful feeling, and its about talking through all these things and you know then circumstances change in life, drinking problems, gambling, just because you are a cricketer.... you still have problems... Tony Scott 40

It is hoped that through interpretation of such data, these themes and synthesised literature can in some way *begin* to inform research aim C and the practice of those providing lifestyle support (whether sport psychologist, PL adviser or service provider, i.e., NGB). Good practice from the perspective of players may therefore involve and require practitioners to respect and appreciate that, while off field issues and a player’s general welfare and well-being might not affect all performances all of the time, some players will experience difficulties in their professional and or personal life and a player’s general welfare, well-being and lifestyle can influence performances and a performing mindset. While practitioners working within the contextual reality of professional cricket might have to accept that the business of professional cricket may make it difficult to make all players happy, they might also specifically encourage and help players to find something

outside of cricket to help them relax and mentally escape the game. Players felt practitioners must consider and work to inform the contextual environment (of the sport and club) in any support offered, and suggested that given the environment's influence on a player's well-being, any environment should seek to understand, accommodate and minimise a player's problems'. In terms of practitioners' operational roles and personal qualities, players felt these must encourage professionals to talk, and requires genuinely empathic, caring, honest and supportive practitioners with professional counselling skills. They also placed great currency on practitioners being around with an ability to listen, build a connection, get to know them as a person and develop a trusting relationship that will allow them to open up. Players also described how every player and person is different, how idiosyncratic lifestyles might work for some and how management and systems should reflect such diversity. Indeed, one might return to the collective messages housed within the literature review here, which appeared to be about recognising issues in an athlete's life and not just their sport, about the limitations of MST, the need to understand and embrace context, the value of counselling skills, knowledge and training, and how seeing an athlete as a *person*, and not just as an athlete, appears to be the cornerstone of providing an alternative and holistic approach to performance enhancement and lifestyle support.

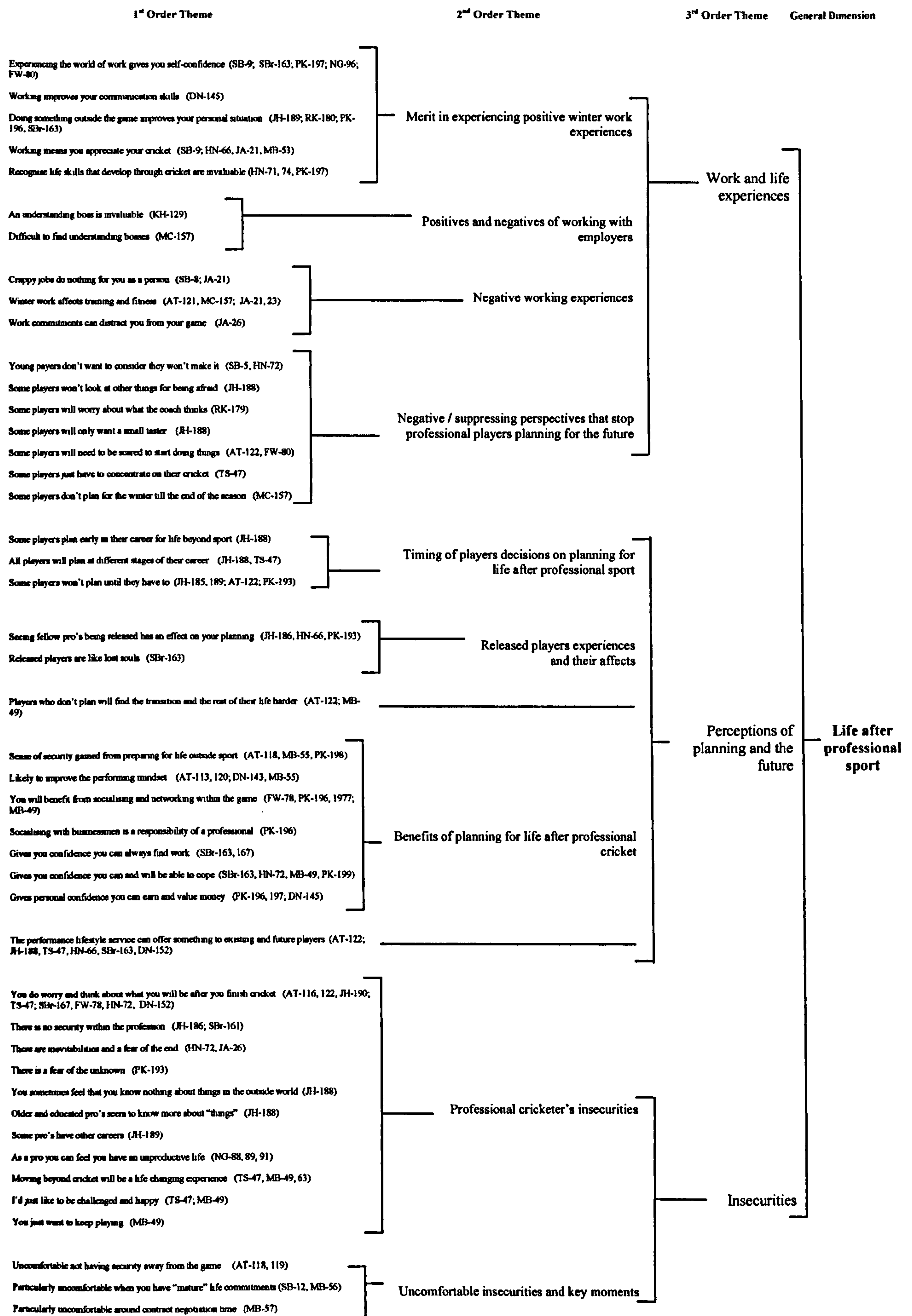


Table 2.12 - Summary content analysis table – Life After Professional Sport

2.7.8 -Table 2.12 - General dimension: ‘Life after Professional Sport’

This dimension collated fifteen players’ perceptions around ‘Life after professional sport’. The literature review outlined research that led to the development and growth of Athlete Lifestyle Programmes, and in line with that review the same fifteen players described their ‘Work and life experiences’, with ten suggesting there being ‘Merit in experiencing positive winter work experiences’ which appear to support the career and educational development incentives of the ECB’s PL programme. More specifically players felt that ‘Experiencing the world of work gives you self-confidence’ (SB-9; SBr-163; PK-197; NG-96; FW-80), ‘Working improves your communication skills’ (DN-145), ‘Doing something outside the game improves your personal situation’ (JH-189; RK-180; PK-196; SBr-163) and that ‘Working means you appreciate your cricket’ (SB-9; HN-66; JA-21; MB-53). Players also ‘Recognise life skills that develop through cricket are invaluable’ (HN-71, 74; PK-197) as explained by one player below:

... you know the life skills I have learnt from cricket are going to put me in good stead for the rest of my life but I don’t think you can develop these skills in a package when you are 18 years old, I think you have to learn as you go along... Harry Nicholas 74

... I look back over my career and think what have I learnt, not just how to bowl and stuff, but without knowing it you have learnt key skills which organisations require, communication, being able to work as part of a team, you look at prerequisites of all these companies and they want all these key skills and we do it for a living without even knowing it, you know, you’re a leader, well we all do that because we have to, I mean communication, we all talk to the coach and listen to the coach, just basic skills like that which you are finding every single day that you play... Harry Nicholas 71

Results from North & Lavalllee’s, (2004) investigation into users of career transition services in the UK suggested that *work* becomes increasingly important to athletes as they progress through their sporting careers, while Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1992) suggested that all skills whether physical or mental, acquired in the athletic domain, can be seen as life skills that have value to athletes in and out of sports and can help them manage present life situations and successfully encounter future critical life events.

However, it seems that not all players accrue the 'Work and life experiences' described above. Indeed, eight players described 'Negative / suppressing perspectives that stop professional players planning for the future' including perceptions that 'Young players don't want to consider they won't make it' (SB-5; HN-72), 'Some players will worry about what the coach thinks' (RK-179) and because 'Some players just have to concentrate on their cricket' (TS-47). In this regard, Pearson & Petitpas (1990) reported that it is not surprising many athletes see little need to engage in exploratory behaviour to help extend and flesh out their personal and social identities, given they have an identity on the playing surface, lead busy regulated lives and in many cases enjoy a variety of privileges that accompany their athletic status.

Research has highlighted how performance of athletes during their career could be affected by concerns about what they do when they retire and that individuals with an alternative pursuit in which to commit and invest energy make smoother transitions out of the athlete role than those without such an alternative pursuit (Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Lavalley, 2000). In line with this research, seven players described the potential 'Benefits of planning for life after professional cricket', believing there would be a 'Sense of security gained from preparing for life outside sport' (AT-118; MB-55; PK-198) and how it is 'Likely to improve the performing mindset' (AT-113, 120; DN-143; MB-55), as reflected below:

Having that commitment away from the game is fulfilling and will enhance my performance in the game...

Anthony Taylor 113

...being the individual that I am now it is all or nothing at one thing, which is a bad thing for me because I think later on having a degree or something like that, would have helped my cricket, knowing I had something behind me, just the confidence of knowing that I could do something after cricket, it would have helped my cricket ...

Dave North 143

... player X has a 3month contract and he doesn't know if he is going to get an extension to that or if he will need to go and find another job. He has to go out there and get everything right technically and mentally, but emotionally he is worried about his job, he has a mortgage to pay and he might be worried about if he has the friendships in place to feel secure in a new team. He might be having problems with his girlfriend or his mum might be ill... Anthony Taylor 120

... one of the things that make people unhappy, it's marital things, I guess, it's financial things I guess, an uncertainty of your life I think, those are the key things that I worry about, I worry about financially, I worry big time at the moment that what am I gonna do when I finish, so they're things that'll be playing on your mind, but if you've got a clue about them, you know where you're going, you know how you're dealing with things, then I think ultimately you've got a much much better chance of being happier in your own life... Martin Black 55

The above findings relate to players' perceptions of the potential benefits, sense of personal security, and likely improvements to a performing mindset from engaging in post-sport career planning activity. These findings draw parallels with research that explored the relationship between mood states among scholarship athletes from a number of sports and their participation in the Victorian Institute of Sport ACE Programme (Anderson, 1998 as cited in Gordon & Lavalley, 2004). In this research, reduction of negative mood states and self-reported stable consistent performances were reported among athletes engaged in the ACE program, compared with those not receiving ACE program support services. However, whilst articulating benefits of planning for life after professional sport, eleven players also described the 'Insecurities' that accompany their sports career. In this regard, authors have described how athletes can experience difficulty and vulnerability through insecurities and a lack of control during their intense and focused lives (Coppel, 1995; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002). In this study ten interviewees specifically described 'Professional cricketers' insecurities' with three describing more specific 'Uncomfortable insecurities and key moments'. These included players perceptions that 'There are inevitabilities and a fear of the end' (HN-72; JA-26), 'There is a fear of the unknown' (PK-193), how insecurities are 'Particularly uncomfortable when you have "mature" life commitments' (SB-12; MB-56) and that 'You do worry and think about what you will be after you finish cricket' (AT-116, 122; JH-190; TS-47; SBr-167; FW-78; HN-72; DN-152), as described below:

I really do not honestly know what I am going to do, I honestly don't, I have thought about it, got involved over the winter in a little business with my partner, my brother and sister in law, doing up properties and selling them on so in terms of a job I don't really know... Tony Scott 47

I mean you're not a doctor and thinking about what another career you might have, you're not a lawyer and considering other careers, it's a madness thing, I mean once you become a doctor you're a doctor, you're not worry about thinking about what you're going to do when you're not a doctor.... John Harrison 190

I tell you at this moment in time I am not panicking but because I am not playing cricket I am wondering what I am going to be doing you know... Fran Warick 78

...if you happen to have a good career and get to 34 / 35 and you choose to end it, then it's pretty scary thinking about what you are going to do for the next 30 years of your life... Harry Nicholas 72

... cricket for me was my confidence and take away that and who was I? I was no one and I honestly felt like no one, and the way I felt I just lost it completely, I was no one, from going from someone who had car stickers saying I should play for England to going to someone or no one... Dave North 152

The value of the PL programme in cricket and existing research (Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Ogilvie, 1987; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; 1995; Lavalley, 2000; Anderson & Morris, 2000) illustrating the need for Athlete Lifestyle programmes to support athletes in exploring, developing and balancing parallel careers and / or personal development opportunities, alongside their sport in preparation for their future, resonate with the findings in this dimension. Indeed, in terms of 'Life after professional sport' the following quotes convey how players felt 'The performance lifestyle service can offer something to existing and future players' (AT-122; JH-188; TS-47; HN-66; SBr-163; DN-152):

You offer people ways of seeing how they can lead a more fulfilling life ... Anthony Taylor 122

I think the role you play in getting across to the younger lads its important and the sooner you think about it the better... Tony Scott 47

...since the advent of 12 month contracts and people like yourselves giving us a little more direction with our lives, I think that is a key word, direction because I did not know which direction I was going, well now I do, I know exactly what I want to do and get out of the game, and I know what I want to do when I get out of the game but it has took a long time to realise that... Harry Nicholas 66

... when you come along Dave with your lifestyle and things outside of the game, to be able to look at other options or find out what you want to go into or even just learn about something else, or accounting or something, it can be such a spark to your brain and to you as a person because all your trapped in is a cricket bubble... John Harrison 188

I think that it will be different for the cricketers in 10years time because of things that are happening now and the things you are doing. Things will get passed on and it'll go on and on and on, people will know what they are going to do when they finish playing cricket. I think it is a step in the right direction... Shaun Brown 163

2.8 - Concluding Reflections on Study 1

This Study aimed to (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers (i.e., aim A), and explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers (i.e., aim C). Whilst this Study did not explicitly set out to address research aim (B), data did appear to (begin to) hint at some of the potential *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support. Each general dimension, lower order theme and raw data quote from Study 1, addresses research aim (A) by offering professional cricketers detailed perspectives on their own contextual lifestyle experiences in both sport and life in general. Specific general dimensions and data also address research aim (C), by offering implications from players regarding the associated skill base of supportive practitioners.

2.8.1 Understanding the Lifestyle Based Experiences of Professional Cricketers & Practitioner Support Roles – Extrapolating General Dimensions

The general dimensions 'Perceptions of a young cricketer's lifestyle' and 'Reflections on professional cricket experiences' seemed to describe some of the inevitable difficulties of growing up as a sportsman whilst maturing generally in life. Uniquely, it appears that cricketers have to do so within an often intense and extremely challenging professional sport environment. While searching for independence players also reflected on developing inflated personal perceptions, positive and negative aspects of parental involvement, balancing educational commitments and decisions, diverse issues associated with transitions on to the professional staff and notions of balance to cope with increasing demands and failures. They also described unprofessional lifestyles, including a culture of drinking, but also professional and (socially and physically) balanced lifestyles within an increasingly intense, consuming and bubble like environment, in which peripheral matters can increasingly *muscle in*. In describing these experiences players disclosed many of the more elusive, unspoken and personal experiences associated with these early, ever changing and fast paced transitional phases of a young cricketer's life and career. In

summary, these themes offer an initial sense of the interconnecting and complex nature of such a wide variety of potential issues in a young player's professional sporting development and life in general. The general dimension of 'Emotions, cognitions and performance' arguably reflected the lifestyle experiences of players from a psychological perspective. The dimension seemed to depict something of an emotional and mentally challenging (rollercoaster) ride through the unpredictable highs and inevitable lows that accompany performing and the profession of professional sport itself. In negotiating such a ride, players advocated the value of practitioners (in line with research aim C) understanding and supporting their every transient and unsettlingly emotions. Interviewees also championed the value of future players developing a sense of perspective (on failures and setbacks for example), and the self supporting benefits of emotional and cognitive awareness and control to a player, should, or perhaps when, they stumble upon turbulent times.

The general dimension 'Personal relationships and performance' alluded to the potentially positive and or negative affects and influences of relationships, and personal and home life problems on cricketers and their performance. It also described the uncertain and private *reality* of coping with these experiences and how they might negatively manifest themselves in players as they interact with the demands of the professional game. In describing these experiences, players specifically addressed research aim (C) by offering implications for practitioners seeking to support such areas. Whatever lifestyle issues players' experience, the general dimension 'Communication' revealed players' perspectives about whether they would *share* them, and in doing so, began to address research aim (B) by portraying the environments which seemed to influence whether they might choose too (or not). It appeared that senior players (predominantly) felt that talking about and sharing their problems and issues was a personal strength and could help someone negotiate or overcome concerns. However, they also described genuine uncertainty when deciding whether to do so, notably in relation to concerns over future selection, but generally within professional environments that did not always appear accommodating, which can all in turn compound players problems. In some way findings and quotes within this theme also hint at the potential and inherent loneliness seemingly

befitting some professional cricketers. Players also described potential barriers in communicating with some coaches, and stressed the importance and role of coaches in creating open, appreciative and empowering communicative environments.

The general dimension 'Lifestyle, well being, welfare and performance' embraced broad perspectives on the potentially symbiotic relationship between these notions and offered guidance for practitioners' from the perspectives of players. Themes supported the premise that players off field welfare and general well being can potentially influence their performance positively and or negatively, whilst also acknowledging that off field issues do not affect *all* players' performances *all* the time. By drawing on their own experiences players described benefits to their performance from their own positive experiences of off field welfare and well-being, and offered considerations for environments that endeavor to support such areas. Players also *began* to address research aim (C) by suggesting that supportive practitioners should see support as a *collective* responsibility and work to inform the wider contextual environment (of the sport and club) as part of any support agenda. Players also felt practitioners could specifically encourage and help them to find interests and avenues outside of cricket that could aid their mental relaxation and help them escape the inherent pressures of their profession. In terms of operational roles and personal qualities, players felt these must encourage professionals to talk openly, and would require *genuinely* empathic, caring, honest and supportive practitioners with professional counselling skills. They also stressed the importance of practitioners being *within* and *around* the environment with an ability to listen, build trusting interpersonal relationships and get to know players as people to *allow* them to disclose their difficulties. Players also described how every player and person is different, how idiosyncratic lifestyles might work for some and how management and systems should reflect such diversity. In the general dimension 'Life after professional sport' players described various benefits, lifeskills and an overall sense of security gained from their own work and life experiences outside the game. They also elaborated on what stops professional players planning for the future. While outlining the inherent insecurities of their profession, particularly during key moments within their sports career, players also felt the

Performance lifestyle service in cricket can offer support and benefits to existing and future players in terms of their preparation for life after professional sport.

2.8.2 - Informing Research and Lifestyle Oriented Support

The literature review suggested, for example, that during critical life events (Danish et al., 1992), or in terms of transitions ‘in’ a athlete’s career and those occurring in other domains of their lives (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004), that the contextual voices of athletes remained relatively unheard. In that sense, the results and discussion above (and those within the data authenticity file) offer players’ own narratives and undiscovered detail relating to their contextual lifestyle experiences (i.e. research aim A). More specifically, dialogue from interviews arguably also offers further substance to cricketers experiences during critical life events (Danish et al., 1992) (see ‘Coping with performance failures and few opportunities’ and ‘Cricket demands detach you from your relationship and family’) and transitions that occur ‘in’ a cricketers career as well as those occurring in other domains of their life. In terms of informing the latter, synthesizing the data from this study with layers within Wylleman & Lavallee’s (2003) developmental model, data portrays real life transitions faced by cricketers at the athletic level (see ‘Issues associated with transitions onto the professional staff’), psychological level (see ‘Emotions, cognitions and performance’), psychosocial level (see ‘Personal relationships and performance’), and academic / vocational level (see ‘Players early educational experiences’ and ‘Pro players studying and playing’). Transitional literature has also highlighted and commented on conceivably one of the biggest transitions within an athletes career, namely that of career termination and transitions out of elite sport (Mihovilovic, 1968; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Whethner & Orlick, 1986; Ogilvie, 1987; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baille & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Parker, 1994; Coakley, 1983; Gordon, 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie 1998; Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). However, findings within this Study also allude to the some of the more subtle, day-to-day, multilayered and ever changing personal transitions *during* a cricketer’s life and career (e.g., see ‘Issues associated with transitions onto the professional staff’, and ‘Professional lifestyles within an increasingly intense environment’).

While literature stresses the importance of understanding context (see Petitpas & Champagne 2000; van Rossum 2001; Brown, Gould & Foster 2005) research offers limited elaboration of the contextual, cultural and environmental factors influencing an athlete's experience for the better or worse. In parts data from Study 1 begins to address this limitation (and research aim B) by elaborating on the contextual, cultural and environmental realities in which athletes experiences occur (see 'The consequences and culture of drinking', 'Players reside in a professional cricket bubble that is unlike the real world', and 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket'). Data also offers broader environmental implications for practitioners seeking to improve lifestyle oriented support within any given context or club (see 'Considerations for the environment', 'The working environment influences a players well being' and 'Management and the environment they create are central to positive communication').

The literature review also suggested that despite the assortment of workshop titles and eclectic statements of lifestyle oriented support within Athlete Lifestyle Programmes, it appears little research actually exists to define what needs athletes have in terms of their lifestyle, or in fact how to go about supporting them. These results therefore offer further perspectives on the *needs* of cricketers (e.g., see 'Need to support players emotions', 'Understanding and supporting emotions' and 'Coping with performance failures and few opportunities') and how they might be supported (e.g., see 'Need for professional counseling skills and practitioners who are genuinely empathic, caring, honest and supportive' and 'Considerations for practitioners supporting player welfare while working in the reality of professional cricket'). Results did support some existing workshops and forms of one to one support for players regarding 'Education Guidance' and 'Employment and Careers Advice' (see 'Players early education experiences' and 'Professional cricketer's insecurities'), 'Media Training' (see 'Dealing with increased media attention') or 'Financial Management' (see 'Experiences with contracts and money'). However, results also appeared to reveal areas for improvement in terms of future lifestyle oriented support. For example, at the time of writing the PL programme literature and original county academy workshop programme documentation (see Appendix B) did not

accommodate or mention any aspects of parental involvement in the support and development of an elite cricketer. However, Study 1 findings offer the PL programme an opportunity to improve existing support structures through appropriate involvement and education of parents (through workshops or otherwise) regarding their potential role and influence in the sporting development of their offspring.

Data in Study 1 offers the reader a foundational understanding of the non-performance and lifestyle based experiences of professional cricketers and appears to inform existing transitional literature. It also begins to elaborate on the role and associated skills of practitioners in support of players' lifestyle experiences, whilst reinforcing certain existing practices of the PL programme in cricket. However, much of the data in Study 1 also appears extremely complex, and relates to some of the more elusive, convoluted, cultural, individual, interrelated, personal and private lifestyle needs of cricketers concerning their general emotional, cognitive and personal well-being, welfare and *life* in general.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY 1: PLAYER INTERVIEWS

Chapter 2 - Study 1 aims;

- A. To (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.

In season - May 2005 to September 2005



STUDY 2: FOCUS GROUPS with Coaches at Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Clubs

Chapter 3 – Study 2 aims;

- B. To explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.
- D. To explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support.

Pre-season - April 2006



STUDY 3: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT & CREATIVE WRITING following Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Club Second Teams

Chapter 4 – Study 3 aims to address;

Research Aim (A), aim (B) aim (C) and aim (D); but also

- E. To undertake prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement to further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer during an entire cricket season.

Entire competitive season - April 2006 to end of season September 2006

3.1 - Study 2 – Aims & Methodology - Focus Groups

Study 1 captured and elaborated on the content, nature and reality of a professional cricketer's non-performance and lifestyle oriented experiences, described some of the actual environments in which they occur and offered guidance and implications in terms of improving support from the player's perspective. Study 2 intends to supplement this understanding by adopting the following research aims;

- B. To explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support.**
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.**
- D. To explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support.**

Research aim (D) is unique to Study 2 and essentially aims to engage coaches in debate and capture their ideas on improving support. It was hoped that by doing so, the results would also further expand and explore the cultural nuances (i.e., of the sport), the contextual lens of others (i.e., coaches voices) and environmental realities (i.e., day to day experiences) in which players lifestyle experiences occur.

3.2 - Sample Selection and Composition

Having interviewed players from 4 counties in Study 1, the researcher and supervisory team took the decision to focus on two counties for the next phase (and the final phase) of the research. The two counties were given the pseudonyms Rinshire and Woodshire County Cricket Clubs.

Focus group texts have advised groups consisting of between six and eight participants as the optimum size for discussion (Krueger, 1988). Whilst Morgan (1992) also suggested groups of a small size are favourable when the topic is complex or when people might

respond negatively if they do not have enough time to express their view. Bloor et al. (2001) believed that the optimum size reflects the characteristics of participants and the topic discussed. In addition, homogeneity is an important pre-requisite for meaningful exploration of the topic upon which the group is focused (Lederman, 1990). Given the above, all coaches representing the senior management teams, who work with professional cricketers at each club, were invited to participate in the focus groups. A date was set by liaising with the Academy Director at each county whom knew of the coaches schedules and recommended an appropriate date, venue and time.

Contact was made by the researcher directly with each coach initially over the phone and then through a letter to their known addresses. The letter resembled that described in Study 1 for the players (refer to appendix F). In addition, a priming document (refer to appendix G) was created by the researcher alongside his supervisory team and sent in the same envelope. This document was provided one week prior to the arranged date, summarizing the slides and accompanying quotes to be used as stimulus within the focus group. Again, it was deemed important to provide coaches with a pre focus group stimulus and grant them the time and opportunity to collect their thoughts in preparation.

A quiet room was booked at each county by the researcher and prepared in the same way for each focus group, with a projector and screen behind the researchers seating position, laptop and speakers to relay the slides, pens and plain paper should anyone wish to write anything, and a table with a Dictaphone in the middle and chairs arranged in a circular fashion. To avoid what Stewart & Shamdasani (1990) described as a question and answer session, the physical arrangement was such that the researcher was part of the group, but not as a focal point for comments. It seemed appropriate that the focus groups were both conducted in settings that were private, but where the coaches felt comfortable. No time limit was given to the focus group though the researcher was aware of how 'busy' the coaches were. Prior to the focus groups ethical consent was attained from coaches who were given the opportunity to read a participant information sheet (refer to appendix H) and opt out of the focus group at any time. The extent of familiarization was as explained previously.

3.3 - Construction of the Focus Group

The focus group content / structure was created alongside the supervisory team using comprehensive data from players interviewed in Study 1 and was transferred to a PowerPoint presentation to aid and guide discussion. Each general dimension and selected 1st, 2nd and 3rd order themes provided different content to stimulate discussion. Raw data quotes and occasional video clips (i.e., of player interviews from Study 1) also provided the players perspectives on their lifestyle experiences firsthand. The video clips corresponded to quotes within the presentation and were created using Windows Movie Maker. Permission to use the clips had been granted by players, after asking them directly whether they would be prepared for the clip to be used as a means of relaying their lifestyle experiences, to other counties and coaches. Incidentally, no player refused.

The main aim of Study 2 was to explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle experiences of junior and senior professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support (i.e., research aim D). The themes generated from Study 1 acted as a framework for this discussion. The focus groups also attempted to provide a medium through which a sense could be gained for the different *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support (i.e., research aim B). Whilst not a rigid and restrictive agenda, the focus group framework summarised the issues to be discussed and provided a sequential agenda (Lederman, 1990). Figure 1.8, summarises the content and flow of the focus group. The complete focus group presentation is available to the reader in Appendix I.

Practitioner roles in the development and support of Academy and Professional cricketers: A lifestyle perspective
<p>Players experiences</p> <p>What do these quotes mean to you... Who should be involved in dealing with these issues... How do these issues interact with performance... What would you like to do based on what you see...</p>
Study 1 explanation and overview of General Dimensions to follow, Confidentiality explained & Video summarising content
Emotions, Cognitions & Performance
Coping with performance failures and few opportunities. Understanding and supporting emotions. Implications
Communication
Communication as a performer and person. Communication with coaches and management. Implications
Personal Relationships & Performance
Relationships influence on the performing mindset / the individual. Coping with relationships problems and cricket performance. Coping with personal and home life problems. Implications
Lifestyle, Well Being, Welfare & Performance
Off field Welfare. Supporting player welfare and well being. Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk. Implications
Life after professional sport
Perceptions of planning and the future. Professional cricketer's insecurities
<p>Players experiences</p> <p>What do these quotes mean to you... Who should be involved in dealing with these issues... How do these issues interact with performance... What would you like to do based on what you see...</p>
Clarification and elaboration

Figure 1.8 - Summary of Coaches’ focus group structure

The intention of the focus group was generation of information on collective views. To elicit collective and meaningful data, the setting / climate must promote freedom of expression and reduce inhibitions (Basch, 1987; Murphy et al., 1992). The objective was therefore not primarily to elicit the group’s answers but rather to stimulate discussion (Bloor et al., 2001) and thereby understand the meanings and norms, which underpinned coaches’ responses. Intent was also to try and yield uncertainties and ambiguities, and provide the researcher with privileged access to in-group discourse and data other methods cannot generate (Kitzinger, 1994; Bloor et al., 2001). In this sense, the open and flexible

nature of the focus group allowed intensive exploration of opinions, feelings, attitudes and behaviors (Murphy et al., 1992), as well as vehement disagreements and different views (Basch, 1987).

The position adopted by the researcher (facilitator) was one of a background figure, not leading or controlling the group (Basch, 1987; Bloor et al., 2001). The researcher role was also to avoid the domination of the group by particular members, whilst encouraging contributions from those seemingly more hesitant. To facilitate, one must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive and a good listener (Frey & Fontana, 1991). Indeed it is the skill, perceptiveness and sensitivity of the facilitator that ultimately determines the depth and relevance of the findings obtained (Murphy et al., 1992).

3.4 - Focus Group Data Analysis & Representation

Carey and Smith (1994) comment on the fact that methods of focus group data analysis are not well documented. As with player interviews, it was thought that staying close to the data was the most powerful means of telling the story (Janesick, 1994). The following offers a procedural summary of the interpretational analysis of the focus group data that follows.

1. The transcribed focus group data were read several times by the researcher, and by all members of the supervisory team in order to become and establish familiarity.
2. The researcher also listened to the focus groups on numerous occasions in an effort to get *closer* to the data, and remember and recognize moments of particular interest (Bloor et al., 2001).
3. Considering the extensive nature of each focus group, the researchers own interpretations and those of the supervisory team were discussed in meetings and used to guide the selection and extraction of dialogue from the start of the focus group to the end (Lederman, 1990).

4. The data generated from focus group discussions are the words spoken (Lederman, 1990), and so were presented using coaches dialogue (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992). The goal of analysis and representation was therefore to provide a sense of the discussion, including the facilitators' impressions and insights regarding group and individual interactions and the tone of discussion, which all act as additional sources of data (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994).
5. Given that one of the aims was to explore how content analysis themes from Study 1 resonated with the coaches, these themes were, where appropriate and relevant, also integrated in the presentation of the focus group data. This process also ensured a synergy between results from Study 1 and Study 2.

3.4.1 - Study 2 - Woodshire & Rinshire County Cricket Club Coaches Focus Groups

3.4.1.1 - Introduction to the Focus Groups

Rinshire's focus group lasted 3 hours and 12 minutes and Woodshires focus group lasted 3 hours and 27 minutes. What follow are representations of the two focus groups. Within these extracts, content analysis themes from Study 1, (including 1st, 2nd, 3rd order and general dimensions) will be integrated in order that the reader gains a feel for the themes picked up and discussed by coaches. All coaches have been assigned pseudonyms. Following these representations further and broader interpretational discussions of each focus group are provided alongside relevant theoretical literature.

For clarity, as in Study 1, 1st order themes will also have accompanying tags, for example, 'The first team environment is noticeably intense' (MC-157; TS-38), where the letters represent players initials and the numbers denoting the page number in the data authenticity file. Colours also differentiate further, in that blue represents junior professionals and red denotes senior. Many content analysis themes (from general dimensions to 1st order) could be deemed to relate to the discussions within the focus groups depending on the readers interpretation. However, in an effort to remain succinct, only those deemed most pertinent have been integrated here. In the absence of returning to each slide or every players quote presented to the coaches during the focus groups, the reader is also encouraged to refer to the framework of the slideshow to appreciate the context within which the dialogue occurred.

The use of the passive voice, the avoidance of employing the first person, and an emphasis on a disengaged narrative or 'author evacuated text' (Geertz, 1988) are hallmarks of positivist texts (Tierney, 2002). However, the break with positivism by qualitative researchers has seen a corresponding movement toward texts that use the active voice, utilise the first person, and aim for a more dramatic retelling of events (Tierney, 2002). The following section will therefore be written in the first person (i.e. 'I').

3.4.1.2 - Further Positioning of the Researcher

Within the literature review, the section entitled ‘The Researcher as Practitioner’, clarified that the researcher also worked as a full time athlete adviser for the ECB Performance Lifestyle (PL) Programme throughout this research. The intention was to allow the reader to travel through this thesis with knowledge of the author’s operational role during that time. In addition, the researcher would like to briefly elaborate further on his experiences as a PL practitioner working with Rinshire and Woodshire County Cricket Clubs since 2003. The role of an athlete adviser provided time and allowed varying degrees of rapport and relationships to develop with academy and professional players at both clubs, as well as with academy and second team coaches. As explained in the literature review, the core winter workshop programme delivered to academy players, as well as visits to games and training sessions during the season and off season, also provided further engagement and fostered many close relationships with players and coaches. It is hoped that by outlining these formative experiences a sense of the researchers positioning can be gained, but also a sense of his emergence as ‘ PL practitioner’ in the eyes of the coaches and within the dialogue that follows.

3.4.1.3 - Woodshire County Cricket Club - Focus Group Participants

Firstly, the reader is introduced to the characters, roles and backgrounds of those participating within the focus group itself.

Terry Stokes, the director of cricket and first team manager / coach of Woodshire, was unable to attend the focus group for reasons beyond his control. Terry was a professional for 17 years (at Woodshire) and played international cricket for England. Working under Terry was Geoff Randal, a player at the club for 12 years who initially moved into a coaching position four years ago, and had just this year been appointed assistant coach. Geoff’s role meant he floated between both first and (but predominantly) second team games during the season and worked with all players on the professional staff. Jack Harper’s professional career spanned nine years at the club playing just over forty first

team games. On his retirement from the game Jack initially acted as second team coach before becoming the Club's 'Player Development Manager' and 'Academy Director', and like Geoff, he primarily operated with the second team, but also with junior professionals and academy players at the club. Lastly Liam Morten played at another county cricket club and Woodshire over a period of eleven years, and had been a specialist batting coach for four years, mostly with the academy players, but increasingly with all players at the club as his role continued to expand. In addition to their coaching experience there were over 33 years of playing experience amongst Geoff, Jack and Liam, who were also either qualified or qualifying under the ECB coaching scheme at that time.

3.4.1.4 - Woodshire County Cricket Clubs Coaches Focus Group

The opening phase of the focus group centred on the theme (and general dimension from study 1) entitled 'Emotions, Cognitions and Performance'. As the (3rd order) headings ('Coping with performance failures and few opportunities', 'Understanding and supporting emotions') and accompanying quotes were presented to the coaches they seemed to immediately identify with them in a sensitive and supportive manner. I intend to draw heavily on coaches' interactions and dialogue from the 3 hours and 27 minutes in order that the reader gains a fuller account of the interaction.

As the first video clip of a senior player was shown, the coaches began to reflect on the overseas pre-season tour completed only a week or so ago:

Jack - Because that then, my mind was going back to what you (pointing at Geoff) told me about St Kits, that you've got, you've got girlfriend problems with 2 players, you've got an injury problem with Motty...

Geoff- ...and is it coincidental that all 3 are 'on-the-verge' players.

As the slides continued Jack, Geoff and Liam then began to settle into discussion, and below are their reflections on performance appraisals, contractual and general playing position uncertainties, and the scholarship process in place at the club.

[Quotes on Screen]

... you almost start to change the way you look at cricket, the way you deal with success and failure, and that's something you still have to come to terms with now as a professional because there are more pressures now, because it is your livelihood, so it's a risky thing, its not a secure job. So you can never estimate how that affects your performance...

...I think you will find this with every cricketer I think, it's the ones who can handle failure, and can handle lack of form, I got better, but there was a time when literally I had no hands, no idea what was going on...

Jack - It's (appraisals) more in your face than it ever has been so I think the insecurities and perhaps the inconsistencies of performance, it'd be interesting to see how those are affected compared with when we played when there wasn't this...

Liam - But surely you know where you stand better now in terms of where you stand in the game in your club? Rather than "I'm on the staff, I'm doing o.k.", I'm on the periphery perhaps but I might get another contract, where as now at least you know, you know you need to achieve that level, these performances and if you're not getting there you can make some plans rather than just be around for a length of time and then 'boomph' you're gone. You might think you're going to be involved for a long time but you're not

Geoff - (Speaking quickly) I remember when I was playing I didn't think about a club getting rid of me. You look at the club and how they treated players in the past and if you saw that they did the right thing and worked towards improving... there's no way they could get rid of you.

Jack - Well you thought that...

Geoff - ... That's what you believed, why would they when they were investing all this money in me to get rid of me before I have really been given a chance, so you knew you were going to get a long run. That's the way I felt... for me it was only really, it was only when the overseas international came round I felt insecure.

Liam -But would you feel like that or do you think you would have been a better player if it was different to the way it is now? You know where you stand Geoff Randel you know what you've got to do to get to the next level, you know you're competing with that guy rather than 'they invested all this money in me, I'm going to be o.k. for x amount of time'?

Geoff -I'd probably veer towards the first one.

Jack -Again it's individuals isn't it? Perhaps for you Liam it would have been advantageous?

Liam - (Purposefully) Yes, because then I would have made decisions based on knowledge that I know where I stand here, I know what I have to do this to get into the team and stay in it and if I don't then my options are going to be x, y, z. Rather than possibly this might happen, possibly that might happen. If he moves I'll be in the team for a length of time possibly, I just think it'd be a little bit...I don't know...

Geoff - It's the role you play as well, if you're a batter you say well I've got a one in five chance of getting in, then you might sort of, take away the captain that's one in four, take away Rico, that's one in three, you might take away the overseas and work it down....but it can depend what role you're in.

(Pause)

Jack - I mean one of the reasons I introduced the scholarship process... it wasn't the main reason, but one of them was because their desire to perform was affected by... the ultimate goal, which was a contract. So they were putting themselves... they weren't playing their natural game, they were batting for a contract. That's the issue that I have with the performance review process because it is a legal requirement based on employment law... not on professional sporting performance.

Geoff - (Softly) I've got a feeling that I'd feel more frightened of failure now than I would have done then

Jack - But that might be an age thing...

Geoff - It might be an age thing, it could well be...

Liam - I think what you're risking when you first come into the system, you possibly not in a relationship, marriage, who knows...you just come in and play your cricket. But like you say your initially playing because you enjoy yourself aren't you? But as things build up and this is a good living for you and you want to keep that living ... there's external pressures then. Like you say the best ones are the ones who can deal with that.

Interestingly, these issues seem to be discussed in relation to the coaches own experiences in trying to break into an established side (indeed at Woodshire itself) and become a professional cricketer, all of course alongside the need to perform. In line with the above, general dimensions from Study 1 of 'Perceptions of a young player's lifestyle', 'Reflections on professional cricket experiences', and 'Emotions, cognitions & performance' seemed to emanate during these discussions. Indeed (like the players interviewed earlier) the coaches discussed the 'Difficulty of managing the process of failure and dealing with fewer opportunities at the professional level' (2nd order).

Liam suggested that initially players just enjoy themselves as they come into the system, but '*as things build up and this is a good living for you and you want to keep that living... there's external pressures then*', which can be linked more specifically to how, 'It becomes harder to deal with failure when cricket is your livelihood' (JH-184; SB-14; DN-

147) and how, 'It becomes harder to deal with fewer opportunities when it's your livelihood' (FW-83). The coaches also touched on themes of 'Worrying about contracts' (MC-155) and the 'Uncertainty of contracts and finances' (KH-128; MT-107; MB-55) as a professional. The tempo of these contributions and the coaches general enthusiasm seemed to consolidate their personal connection with the themes presented in these early slides.

Having identified with the quotes, the group then moved onto discuss how players handle difficult experiences in their professional and personal lives in line with the quotes on view (under the 3rd order theme of 'Understanding and supporting players emotions'):

[Quotes on Screen]

...arguing with my mum and that sets that off, then arguing with my girlfriend, that has a knock on affect and then you start worrying about feeling bad because you have argued about x and y and you go into work the next day and you think oh god, she is on the phone again I can't be dealing with this...

...I get a bit nasty, that's probably the word I would use, I get a bit moody... I am a bit of a nasty sort of person, I get really pissed off, and you know someone might say something slightly wrong, we argue and I jump down their throat, I can say some nasty things sometimes... I struggle with that...

Geoff- I think it does affect certain people, I think they do take it into their games.

Liam- I think you get more time to think as well about things in cricket, you have 4 days and then you're away from home and you're driving to another venue. Where as in other sports you might be able to block it out for 90 minutes on the pitch. 80 minutes or so, just get out and do your job.

In these early interactions there is an ease, even politeness, amongst the group and much agreement was in evidence with regards to the truthfulness of the experiences being presented. This changes slightly as Jack is prepared to go beyond the presenting quotes; he speaks with occasional laughter here:

[Quotes on Screen]

... I don't pull myself away from it, give myself time to breathe and enjoy other things in life. Had a good day out with my son yesterday, but then drivin' in this mornin' I was thinkin' am I gonna play Sunday...I've been through all that this week... I really need to pull myself away from that cause it does affect my focus at home... I don't concentrate as much at home...

You basically have to switch away from everything, but it can be easier for different personalities, if things are going badly on a cricket field I tend to take them home ... and that has a knock on effect with everything in your life...

Liam – I am not sure how to address that... Everybody's different aren't they? Some people can go home and what's going on in their mind, and they can, pretend its not, some personalities just can't switch off...

Geoff – There must be triggers in life that you can take away from that person. There must be some form of training that says 'right, my day's finished now on Sunday at 6 o'clock or 6.30 I've played, or even 7 o'clock now on a cricket field, so they're must be some triggers so you can switch off at half past 6, 7 o'clock.

David - Is that something you can learn from experience, or something you can help players with or do you identify that with your players? or is that inaccurate to hear?

Jack – (Interrupting and laughing) We wouldn't know about some of that, I wouldn't know about some people taking their son out, but we would know about people who are uncomfortable about the possibility of selection or otherwise... (Pause)... I think that's where the work that you've (nodding at the researcher) done is powerful because it gives an insight into the players' emotional state which we're not aware of, because more often than not, we are not made aware of that, we just have a guess that people are not settled based on a number of factors: the way they look, the way they dress, how they conduct themselves, or a tetchy personality stuff like that, just little clues. It's only when you start to really get close to somebody that they'll even consider them areas but our respective jobs make that difficult, as you found out...

Although Jack initially interrupted my question above, he then slowed in his response and began to critically look at the role of the coach, and indeed his own role, in supporting players with the experiences, and specifically the emotions and cognitions being presented. Jack's use of the word '*powerful*', in some way, also seemed to deepen the nature of debate and at that point Liam and Geoff began to turn their heads to one another, then to me, and back to Jack, as the word seemed to emphasise just how important the quotes actually were. It was as if they came to see that what they were reading was not (merely) quotes on a screen perhaps, but players.

At this point Geoff then seemed to want to move on and break an uncomfortable silence that had developed. He wanted to clarify how players can cope with such experiences in their life as a cricketer, and stressed the need for a first team player to organise his life to help manage his family and relationships. This also supports the suggestion that 'Personal organization benefits the running of your life' (SB-10S; AT-123; SBr-161). Geoff also

sympathised specifically with the first / second team ‘fringe’ player who never really knows what team he’s in, and could be called into any team at any stage, again supporting players who suggested that ‘Cricket schedules make organisation difficult’ (2nd order).

In returning to the emotions and cognitions of players, Jack again then spoke with an honesty and openness that reflected his wealth of experience in working with players:

[Quotes on Screen]

... it’s impossible to keep it simple, but my emotional state of mind is what I can control...

... cricket is with me every minute of the day, but my lifestyle previously, if I was doing well at cricket I’d be fine or if I was not doing well I would be unhappy, but now I don’t get too down with my failures and I have a better reality on that, and when I go home now, or generally when I am away from cricket I can be happy...

Jack – (Inquisitively) ...because you cannot control your emotional state, because your emotional state by that dictionary definition is a spontaneous thing, so I don’t see how that can be the case, you can’t control your emotions if they are out of your control? But I think that a lifestyle does have an affect on your emotional state... and how people dealing with success and failure is one of the keys for us. Because it takes... it loses perspective, and I think the process we have talked about already, it takes it out of perspective... Like John Harrison yesterday and asked him ‘how did you go?’ and he said oh “I snicked off”, so I asked him, oh how are you playing, oh “I’m playing really well, I’m in really good nick but I’m really pissed off with myself because I know I’ve only got one more chance now”, and that, getting back to the scholarship process, that is what we want to try and avoid... We can’t make them too comfortable, but we can’t make it the be all and end all. If I fail in the next game I’m not going to get (a contract)...

Liam –(Interrupting) I watched people walking over today and you could just tell the ones who are secure in the team who are walking over and going to do their practice, and I was going to mention John Harrison then because his body language, to me, but to me he looked like somebody who’s not relaxed in the game.

Jack - But then you have also got the view of Terry Stokes, because he doesn’t know every player, and his body language will, so those are issues...significant issues...

John takes a critical look over existing support available here and specifically mentions John Harrison (with supporting observations from Liam), a young professional being given an early but perhaps short lived opportunity with the first team this year by Terry Stokes. Jack seemed to suggest that John was someone being affected by the insecurities and distractions of a professional contract and ‘everything else’ that accompanies such an

outcome. Jack and Liam's reasoning equally seemed to support a number of content analysis themes, specifically, 'Reflections on developmental years' and 'Issues associated with transitions onto professional staff' (both 3rd order), where 'The first team environment is noticeably intense' (MC-157; TS-38), 'Inevitably the game and failures become harder to deal with' (SB-7; TS-37, 40) and 'Initial experiences of failure can totally consume a players thinking' (TS-38, 39, 49).

Beyond these opening interactions coaches were not only identifying and empathising with the experiences of players (in light of their own experiences perhaps), but were also beginning to *critically* review support within the club.

[Same Quotes on Screen]

Geoff – That's pleasing because that's what we are saying the second one, someone's either had some training or they've got something that triggers them now to enable them to go home and be happy. They've either been told something or trained somehow...

Jack – (Interrupting) That's got to be a senior player though hasn't it....

Geoff- That has to be a senior player

David - Ok, but did his career suffer, big time, in the mean time?

Liam - Prior to that?

David - When he was going through that? Where he was previously and he couldn't handle it before?

Jack - That would have had an affect on his performance, no question.

Geoff - Probably could have done better... If someone's got problems and worries, if they have done well and they hadn't had their problems, they would have probably done even better without those problems. I think it does affect a lot of players.

...

Jack - And there will be, I'm sure, mindsets where you've got people with girlfriend problems and things like that etc, which does affect, not so much when they cross the white line because they might be able to blank it to a degree... but it affects your ability to concentrate because you're emotionally drained, it affects your desire to train, your ability to refuel and err hydrate properly. All knock-on effects of that which can affect performance and I think you are right, if you're lifestyle is poor it's not so much your performances that dramatically go off ... because he's still a player, he's been good enough to get through it to a degree, but it's how good he could have been if all that, and your best example of that is Gilly, because when he was pissing it up the wall with err...

Geoff – (Quick to agree) he was good but he could have been a lot better.

Jack- Yeah... he had a 7-year adolescence, from 17-24, where he just... and it was only when he got settled down and reality hit him right between the eyes...

The interaction above ended with coaches making links between a player's lifestyle (and accompanying emotional and cognitive states) and subsequent performances. Such links also support more specific content analysis themes of 'Off field welfare and it's potentially negative influence on performance' (2nd order) and that 'Players will experience difficulties in their professional or personal life that can influence their performance' (JH-186,187; MB-55; NG-85; SBr-164; DN-151; PK-198). Interestingly, Jack turned his attention to the players, and gave the example of Gilly, who at this time was an England International, and who in his opinion, had had a '7 year adolescence' which he was convinced, had affected his performances.

Geoff then takes up the discussion in line with the next quotes being presented.

[Quotes on Screen]

...awareness is building a series of questions about a person, what makes you tick, an awareness of a me and what I need to be happy ... things that disappoint, create any type of stress, going through them and overcoming challenges...

...before I was 25, my focus was a mental thing, I wasn't that intelligent towards my thinking and my planning...

I think it is back to that emotion thing, being able to control your emotions about where you find yourself in your life in a way, control your feelings...

I don't think you can perform to your best unless you have everything in place, like your emotions ... that is the start of the process of being successful...

Geoff - Is there a particular book you can force them to read as an academy player and test them on? When you go to school and you're being educated you have to read books to pass your English literature test. Is there a book they can read as a scholarship player or an academy player...? If we're saying lifestyle is important to peoples' progression, very important looking at these quotes, is there something like that that can be an option?

(Pause)

Jack – I don't know... It's interesting because we all have different views, yours is like... you'd want to test that wouldn't you? That's your style...

Liam- That isn't my style that... Everyone is different aren't they... and I think we're more aware now that people are different and need to be managed differently, it's not one fits all. That can be stressful for other people, because the people dealing with it, the coaches and the management should have more awareness now of how people are different and this is how we need to deal with this guy, rather than this is what we are doing, this is the process... and for that two or three performers could be a stressful situation but they won't want to come and tell you because they'll think well that's how they do it here at Woodshire or wherever.' But I actually think we're better now at identifying differences in people, managing people different and doing what's best for them rather than what's best for the whole group.

...

Jack- But that's where in the past we've been guilty in the past, in that we've given blanket.... Like you know, right... we need to improve our mental thought processes, get some psychologists in, "buff"...

(Geoff and Liam mumble in agreement)

Geoff- And two or three of them (players) have gone (said), I don't like that, it's not for me...

Liam appears to make some points here which support suggestions from (senior) players in Study 1, in that it's 'Crucial to appreciate people interpret information differently' (PK-201; SBr-162), that there is 'Most value in really knowing the "person" and what works for individuals' (PK-193; SBr-161, 162; NG-85; TS-36) and 'Man-management and systems should reflect players' diversity' (HN-64; NG-93, 97; TS-40; DN-151). Having discussed the idea of forcing a book on players, Geoff and Jack then debate another analogy, where Geoff suggests:

Geoff - If you drive a car you have to know the rules of driving so they force it upon you to read a book, and be tested...

Although the full debate is by passed here, Jack then tried to return to cricketing examples, and although arguments went back and forth about the value of '*knowing what's important*' in terms of a players lifestyle (or driving a car), Geoff, with a sense of finality in his tone, tried to return to his idea on how to support players with lifestyle issues (to my growing and until now muted frustration).

Geoff- This started off with me trying to give something deep to young players to really help them with their lifestyle. If we're saying lifestyle is affecting their play.

Jack - ... you can learn and have an ability, so I have been told, to deal with some of the cognitive thoughts like, how you deal with failure, how you deal with pressure, how you deal with success, how you deal with injury and what have you... There are certain psychological processes, that you can go through and learn to help you deal with those situations. But that's one thing which I think you can do, for that you can have a book...

Geoff- I am thinking of things like, in the book, it might say like cigarettes red light warning, drinking and drugs, girlfriends at 19/20, yellow light/green light...

(All Laughing)

David - That is so logical! That's fantastically logical... but that's you and your way of dealing with things... and it fascinates me talking with players and how they interpret things and how they cope...

Jack - If you give that to a number four he'd go 'fuck-off' Geoff...

Jack - ... how to deal with pressure, how to deal with failure, how to deal with losses of form and injury and what have you, those things you can learn. But these things you can't, the emotional things, which are... which come at you from out of nowhere in what you were saying... it's those things that I think we don't have an awareness of in the job that we're doing. So for example, Rob Kenny ringing up his girlfriend at four o'clock in the morning because that was the only time he could speak to her and what have you...

Geoff- She told him that... she told him she expected him to ring once a day.

Jack- Yeah, that's sort of an emotional, but you can't give someone a book on that... that's...

Geoff - (Speaking quickly) But what I am saying is, you have this format that's counseling them before they become a pro, it's giving them ideas, then what happened in that situation, Terry Stokes had to walk around the boundary and emphasise his experience of what's likely to happen when he becomes a first class cricketer, they're going to be away from home, you are going to do this, your going to experience that, he literally said you are going to have to set your rules down with this girl early doors, otherwise you're going to have to walk away as it'll effect your first-class cricket, we are seeing it now, and it's going to affect you more, he's had to be a bit black and white with it really...that to me is basic, but to someone like Rob it's not. As a cricketer you've got to get the rules down first in a relationship, you have got too.....otherwise don't get yourself too involved...

Geoff's reference to Terry Stokes and his guidance to Rob Kenny, seemed to strongly support players experiences in that players felt 'You have to be honest about the commitments and likely difficulties in a relationship' (JA-18, 19; PK-195), you need to 'Communicate with partners the time demands of the game and it's more likely to work'

(NC-208; HN-67, 73, JA-19; MB-53; DN-149) and that ‘When partners don’t understand or support the time demands of the game it’s less likely to work’ (MB-53; DN-149).

At this point, the coaches again started to reflect on their own careers, and Jack spoke with a softer tone:

[Quotes on Screen]

...The worst thing you can do as a human being is be lonely...

Yes, [big sigh] there are times when I have driven home and, [another sigh] you know motorways and cars are lonely places, and you find yourself thinking about all sorts of things and I tend to think about other things than my cricket, again...

... I make it hard for myself, I actually feel quite alone because I’d like to share problems or share thoughts share happiness, I’d like to share all them, my problems, my happiness, my joys, my sorrows, and that’s what I think bein’ in cricket we lose...

...If I showed how I really deep down felt, I think everyone would hate me...

Jack – But this is where you’re experiencing problems in established first team cricketers, where even though their results are strong, they’ve still got issues and, err... sort of getting away from it a little bit, that’s one reason why I reckon there’s so many suicides within our game... it’s a team sport with individual performances being judged. I’m not negative at all as a person... but as a player... I had that and...it’s frustrating for me...

(Silence)

Geoff- This page has surprised and shocked me really; I didn’t know players could be so lonely.

Jack seemed to step back from the quotes on view and reflect on wider issues within the game here, while Geoff used the term lonely and seemed to admit his surprise at some of the player’s perspectives. The discussion then moved on again, and now an hour into the focus group and having made links between a player’s lifestyle and performance, Jack (extremely contemplative in his manner) and Liam both reflect critically on support available to existing players:

[Quotes on Screen]

Ultimately, as a sportsman I do not think that you can perform properly if you are not happy and content. I don't think that there is a lot of time spent making sure that players are happy and emotionally stable. You can look at a player technically and say he is not doing this and this, but there is a reason for that and that is that there is something going on mentally. If I am nervous out in the middle I will make a technical error and I'm nervous because my mental approach should not be as it should be, and emotionally I may not as emotionally stable as I could be. I don't think there is a lot of time spent on that and Ken's job was to devote time to the idea of emotional recovery and emotional awareness rather than just physical awareness and mental strength

Jack - I think there's awareness from me in particular about, we don't spend enough time, effort and possibly money on dealing with what goes on between the players' ears, I know our academy don't, we play at it probably.

Liam- Umm...

Jack - ... you've got a different mental state when you perform at your best than you have when you're not performing... because all players have gone beyond an ability line... then you've got a chance. But the players who go over the next hurdle and play international cricket have got a mental approach which I think is better than the ones, they are maybe stronger, they deal with things in a different way and more effective way. And I don't know whether we spend enough time, our self, because we are not aware. I mean will all go back, "if I am nervous out in the middle and I make a technical error because my mental approach is wrong" (reading off the screen), but yet we as coaches are going to look, we'll say, you're playing away from your body"

Liam – (Loudly) Exactly, yes, what's the first process, you might have been nervous? Why is he nervous?

Jack - Those sorts of things I think are significant... how... we can't do it I don't think... it's... it needs some expertise in that area and then how do you make time to do it?

Liam - I think we identify certain areas, you know what I mean, we identify that's breaking down because...he's not coming to the session in the right frame of mind or... you know like with Teno, or he's getting really frustrated and he's over technical. We can identify them but we've not got the skills to put the next package into place for him...

Jack and Liam were critical of support available to existing players here, specifically within the academy structure, but also of the support they felt able to provide in terms of the areas being presented so far. They describe above how they often know players have 'issues' but perhaps need '*expertise in that area*' in addition to the technical advice (e.g., *playing away from your body*) they obviously offer to players. In line with this the (3rd order) themes 'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional

cricketers to talk', and 'Supporting player welfare and well being', seem to support their belief that support above and beyond their own technical guidance is needed at times.

At this stage of the focus group the 'Emotions, cognitions and performance' phase ended and the next series of quotes were under the (general dimension) heading 'Communication', but just prior to that, the coaches began to discuss everything they had read so far and whether they feel players at Woodshire actually communicate the problems they are experiencing.

Jack - Because all of us are in the business of getting people to improve their performance, you know by a small degree or percentage, but yet what you're finding is that there's a huge area which will affect performance that we are not aware of or it's hidden from us because of their sensitivities or what have you.

Liam - How do you break down them barriers so players will come to you and say 'look this isn't going quite right, I've got these issues' and the coaches can back that by saying look it's not going to affect your position in the team? You know that's a question that's difficult to answer...

...
Geoff - (Slowly) I think something that's noticeable to me, since my title's changed (to assistant coach) I find players are coming less to me... (Pause)... and I think I was an ear to them about 18 months ago, but I don't think I am now... (Looking around the room)...

Liam - Because they are frightened of saying things to you, of opening up a bit more?

Jack - They see Geoff Randel with Terry Stokes

Geoff - They see me as possibly selection, contracts, they see me...

Liam - But how do you break that down with the players, to create that environment where they can and possibly open up a little bit more for their own benefit and not been seen as a negative?

Jack - I think it's very difficult

Geoff - I can try get on their level a bit...

Jack - It difficult Geoff Randel, for you in that way because you know you're there as errm... a captain and coach, and ... Terry Stokes' assistant, so their perception of you, like you say, may have changed. But also because of your experiences over the last few years you're sort of moving away from being one of the lads and player... to being, and it does happen, it does. So you need somebody who is not, who they see, not being part of the process of affecting their careers...

Discussions here draw parallels with several content analysis themes, including ‘Communication as a person and performer’, ‘Communication with coaches and management’ (both 3rd order), and ‘Management and the environment they create are central to positive communication’ (indeed the word environment is mentioned above), amongst many more themes. Interestingly, up to this point Geoff had seemed to remain more distant (to me) than Jack and Liam (his seating position further away, and body position less involved than the others) and perhaps had not been prepared to be as critical of existing practice. At this juncture however, there is a slight disturbance in the room because of the game being played at the ground, which leads to Jack leaving the room for a few moments, and just before I also take the opportunity to offer a short break, I notice Geoff moves his seat forward and he and Liam continue their exchange:

Geoff – (Somewhat frustrated) I used to know everything about Rob Kenny, everything inside out, where he was going, who his girlfriend was, I used to know loads, and I don’t know half as much now.

Liam - Is it better that you know all these things?

Geoff - You could pick stuff up around the card tables. I thought it was miles easier to work with him and deal with him, now I find it harder knowing which buttons to press and at what times.

Liam - Does that affect your relationship working with him? Slightly...

Geoff - Slightly yeah

Liam - I thought of that...

(Jack and I return)

Geoff appeared to follow Jack and Liam’s lead here and started to reflect on his new position at the club and how it has already affected his relationship with one player (Rob Kenny, also interviewed in Study 1) and perhaps even his effectiveness in terms of coaching. Following the brief interruption, we are now over an hour and a half into discussions and the focus group is considering the theme of ‘Communication’ and its accompanying quotes:

[Quote on Screen]

I should imagine they would find it difficult to go to the man who hires and fires you or the man who selects the team sometimes, although that is me sometimes and I would like to think they can do that. There might be times when they think they are struggling with this but if I tell him he may not pick me type thing. If they need to get it out then they have to be big enough to do it. I'd like to think that there are some good people around here who are approachable and if the chips were down would help them out. Whether they would go right to the top I don't know.

Jack - I don't think you can give... I wouldn't want to give err... someone who had a direct bearing on my job... I wouldn't want to... I would find it difficult to open up to that person if I thought there was a possibility that it would be used against me.

Liam - You would go to another avenue wouldn't you?

(Significant pause for over a minute)

Jack - That's why you (nodding at the researcher) get the calls that you mentioned, because you are, a non threatening good ear... and a good listener...

David - I think about that a lot...

Geoff - How much can you change that? Do you think it needs to be changed?

Jack - Well I think there is enough evidence out there that people do have issues which we are not aware of, or are being made aware of now, and I think we do need to have some way of dealing with that... but it's...

David - What's your role in that, do you have a role?

Geoff - If I am not going to tell you anything and you are my coach, what can you do?

Jack - But there has to be some sort of facility known to our group of players that if they do have some issues they have someone to turn to... otherwise you get the 3-year bottling up thing...

Geoff - (Tentatively) We did sort of put Reverend Malcolm Warren around for a while.

Jack - But that's not appropriate I don't think, because again his title... I think is a potential barrier to a degree, he's there in a pastoral type way but he's not around enough. Where as there is continuity with David...

Geoff - Paul Littlewood? [consultant Sport Psychologist]... Really what he's in place, isn't that what we've, well my understanding of what his title is it to do part of this...

Jack - I don't know if people go to Paul enough...

Geoff - No I am not so sure he is used, he isn't around enough...

Jack - Because I think he, in a way... I think he's a little bit star-struck, you know what I mean...

Geoff - Yeah...

Liam – (Laughing)

Jack - Because he's a Woodshire fan and he's... and I think you need to be detached and I'm not sure that he is. He's o.k. with the academy... he's ok... but I don't think he really offers an outlet for our players...

...

(Pause)

Geoff - What do you think David? You have spoken to four Woodshire players, but do you have an answer for it?

Jack – (Teasingly) He has no answers

David -I don't have an answer but it amazed me what players have told me, and I don't know them, I didn't know many at all... but I think that's a good thing in a way.... And it was a good thing I am the education guy... I am 26... I'm nothing to do with the club; I don't walk around in any kit... I am around occasionally... they can tell me something personal one day and not have to worry about seeing me the next day...I am not a threat... no way on selection. But what's the use in that? But there is more that can be done...

Jack - But then I think then it's where you have to have this confidentiality between yourself and the player and ...Then... do you want me to have a word about this or..? If you think about it if you were in situ for say 10 years, I can't imagine it... you would be involved more significantly with professionals because you would have been involved with them in the academy process. It's very difficult to say, well if you have a... I think what we have to do perhaps is to say to a player, perhaps like a Rob Kenny, and say... Rob Kenny 'will you have a chat with David Priestley... just...or someone like Motty ... he's not the same Motty that he was a few years ago. And why is that?

Perhaps for the first time I became more involved here, moving temporarily beyond facilitating interaction, to engage via reference to my operational / support role. A critical eye was also again cast over the level of existing support and personnel available to players, including a Reverend and a Sport Psychologist associated in a consultative capacity with the club. It appears Jack, Geoff and Liam seem to appreciate (and were also not threatened by the fact) that there are 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket' (2nd order). Indeed, in the content analysis themes a number of associated factors had been highlighted. For example how there is (particularly amongst senior professionals) 'Uncertainty as a professional about communicating in the

professional environment' (NC-204; HN-69, 70; SBr-166), that 'Professional players guard against sharing their thoughts and emotions' (JA-23, 24, 29, 31; DN-147, 152), and 'Players are afraid to communicate' (JA-31; TS-44; DN-147, 149; HN-71; SBr-165). In fact having suggested that '*there has to be some sort of facility, known to our group of players*' (and not just a labeled or consultative facility), and their perception of the sport psychologist was that '*he isn't around enough*'. The coaches also appeared to draw parallels with themes in terms of better supporting players. Specifically, in relation to better support and under the (general dimension) 'Lifestyle, well-being, welfare and performance', and 'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk' (3rd order), players themselves explained how 'Practitioners need to know about the game and be around' (NC-207; KH-141), that 'It's important to know and relate to the person to develop trust' (MT-103, 106; MB-56; PK-192) and how 'It's difficult to open up to someone you don't really know' (MT-106; KH-141; MB-56).

Lastly then, and to further explain the references to myself as practitioner in the extract above, because of my involvement with the club I had been fortunate enough to build relationships with and support a number of academy players and some young (and occasionally, senior) professionals at Woodshire alongside Jack and Liam, and now Geoff. In light of this, and seemingly unthreatened by communication issues being presented, Jack advocated my own involvement in supporting players (as he does again and again).

Geoff and Jack's thoughts then return to the players:

Geoff - I want to know where he's getting his advice from...

Jack - Who?

Geoff - Motty, is he getting his advice from... is it his best mate, from his dad, someone in the club? Someone's giving him some bad advice.

Jack - It may not be advice. It might just be his lifestyle, mum's got breast cancer... mum and Dad split up... hanging with some low-lives, don't know.

Geoff - Where is he living now? At home?

Jack -I think he's living with someone else, not on his own, looked a dodgy place. I mean Rob Kenny left a shit hole...

Geoff - I know Rob Kenny left

Jack - People shagging round there every 5 minutes

Both specifically mention Rob Kenny and Motty (again) here, who are both young professionals playing some first team cricket at the time, who they have concerns over in terms of their current lifestyle. The 'Dangers of living in a shared house' (FW-75; HN-66) were voiced by the players themselves, and their discussion seems to reflect the notion of 'Off-field welfare and it's potentially negative influence on performance' (2nd order), which the coaches had again picked up on in their daily dealings with players.

Now having reflected on the material presented, the coaches yet again turn their attention to the players at Woodshire (something which continued to make an impression on me), and further discussions centred on another young professional at the club, namely Michael Quinn (Quinny).

[Quotes on Screen]

...unless you've got close people in and around you literally comin' up to you and sayin' how are things, is everything all right, you know I'm here if you want to talk... then maybe you can talk to people and you can try and understand things...

Jack – But you see there's some players that you can tell... Quinny is one of them, and Rob Kenny's is another... you can just tell in their eyes...

Liam- Quinny doesn't seem happy to me?

Jack – No he's not...

Liam – I mean I don't know whether it's his demeanor?

Geoff – No I don't think it is because he's not like that

(Pause... with Jack moving in his chair)

Jack - I feel like I want to go and do it now...

Liam – You do don't you...

Geoff – You feel like what?

Jack – I feel like I want to speak to him now, now this is sort of out...

Geoff – Speak to Quinny?

Jack- Yeah....because it's like he needs... something...

Liam – (Sympathetically) Perhaps he's waiting for someone to grab him... you know what I mean?

The atmosphere appears to deepen now, there are longer thoughtful gaps and pauses between everyone's contributions. Everybody seems to be speaking with a softer and what appears to me to be a very genuine tone. Interestingly fewer solutions are being argued; instead, more time is being devoted to just digesting the quotes. The changes in atmosphere appear important, we are now over two and a quarter hours into discussions, but the coaches still seemed engaged (to me) as I try to summarise what I had generally gained from Study 1:

[Quotes on Screen]

...You can look at a player technically and say he is not doing this and this, but there is sometimes another reason for that and that is that there is something going on in his life...

David -This is the stuff that I think it brings it together, players talked about their welfare, their off field welfare and well being and how to support it...

Geoff - This is going back to what we were saying earlier Jack, Anthony Taylor, when you might say you didn't time it right, your weight was back, but it could be something like this... and Anthony Taylor clearly says that...

...

David - When a cover drive is off, it's off, but it's what's contributing to it being off...

(Pause)

Jack – ... when somebody lets go of the ball, you can't be thinking about your girlfriend....so why would that affect your ability to play a cover drive? But I can see it having an effect on your ability to switch your concentration up and down and to blot everything out... and again I'm thinking about Quinny last year and... he played that ridiculous shot opening the batting and got out... He was going through a period when he was really... he was shit, he just couldn't string a score together and couldn't

bat...(Laughing)... and from somebody who's actually destroyed attacks and such a confident individual...it's not a technical issue...

Geoff – That talent we saw two years ago?

Jack – That's what I mean... it's not...

Geoff- (Confidently) It's not there...

Jack- So he's not doing anything technically much far removed from the way he was... So this is where this has been very very revealing...

(Pause)

Jack - Do you think it's appropriate then to say to a player, confront him with that...?

David -As a way in, to open up... yeah I do... only if you are genuinely interested though...

Jack - Genuinely interested in that person?

Liam – (Having been quiet for some time) Why will that put doubts in player's minds then? When you just dip in with it and leave it...

Jack - I mean we're talking about significant things aren't we, you're talking about a person's well-being aren't you... you could just go off the rails can't you, big time... You know if he's going out with this bird and she's fucked him about and this that and the other...

Liam - Things like that, they are wrecking his career and I mean, I reckon he might not get another shot at it.

Discussions here continually return to the notion of how to better support players, and Jack is again prepared to openly and honestly question how he might support Quinny (and others) with all the 'significant things' that he felt had been presented so far. It appears to the coaches that Quinny might be a player experiencing many of the issues being discussed, and that he represented a live case with which to highlight the kind of support needed at the club. The interaction continues below:

Jack - I can't see how you can separate personal issues, from a game like...

Liam - With things going on in your head...

David -But they don't affect all players and all performances...I just wanted to make that point, that it's not all going to be this, it's not going to be the most significant thing ever...

it's going to be a variety of things and some players can just handle it, but not every player will experience it... But interestingly was that 15 out of 17 players I interviewed suggested they had... 2 just said, look it didn't bother me, I was strong enough to handle it...

(Pause)

Liam - And the 15 players that opened up, would they have told that to someone anyway or unless you asked the questions?

David -I don't know, but it would have been a good question?

Jack - But how often have we said in the last 4 years, is everything alright... I've said it... I have said it...

Geoff - What to players? ...

Liam - We do say it... but...

Jack – (Interrupting) But do I really look bothered... they tell me and then I'm like... oh no... oh wait a minute I have a phone call...

(Pause)

David -But that is very honest of you...because other reactions to that have been totally different, I mean you have made yourself vulnerable there, where as others have said I ask them every day, I know everything...

Jack - But they don't though...

Liam - I don't think coaches are being totally honest if they say they ask them every day.

Jack - That's just a throw away line that...

*...
Liam – But even if you... how do you know that your performances will be better anyway? If everything's great in your life how you do know that your performances would be that much better? If everything was happy and harmonious, are you sure you'd be averaging 40 instead of 35? Or is that just a common trait? That's what I'm trying to get at.*

Again, potential links are made between lifestyle based issues and performance here, but Liam and Jack also offer two important and balanced perspectives. Firstly, Jack points out that as coaches, *'how often have we said in the last 4 years, is everything alright'* explaining that they do ask and do everything they can to support players with such experiences. However, he is again prepared to go further than Geoff and Liam, and I was struck by such candor from Jack at this moment, as he questions his own genuineness in supporting players with such personal issues, and indeed players had

pointed out that ‘Genuine or fake “caring” for people is detectable’ (FW-79; DN-151). Secondly, Liam importantly points out that ‘Some players can handle problems on their own’ (SBr-168; DN-152), that ‘Off-field issues and player welfare don’t affect all players’ performances’ (SB-8; KH-140; SBr-165, 170; HN-72; PK-198, 199, 201; NG-97), and ‘Not everyone experiences off field problems’ (SB-12, 8; KH-140). Again I also involve myself in the interaction above and offer some brief thoughts as to my own approach and experiences in supporting players, upon which Jack sits back in his chair and laughs affably at me, when I suggest Liam had made a very valuable last point.

[Quotes on Screen]

...when home life was not great, social activities were not great, my performances were not as good as they possibly should have been, since I have got my life in order and I am happy at home, happy with my training and I have got a direction in life, I know exactly what I want to do even when I finish playing cricket, the cricket has taken care of itself...

... I believe in the subconscious as well, when my cricketing performances have not been as good as they ought to be because of the things in the back of my mind and what’s going on elsewhere...

Jack – (Laughing at me) I am laughing at him saying that’s a good point...

David -It is though... Because I don’t want this to come across as players will always play better... and if I’m absolutely honest I’m not as bothered about that...

Jack – (Somewhat surprised and shocked) What, you’re not bothered about the players’ performance?

David -I am but...

Jack - See that’s what we’re judged on...

Liam - You see we are but there are obviously issues in their lives that need to be...

David -Because I’m not bothered about performance and I think that’s the reason.... and I think the players sense that. I’m not judging them about how well they are doing in their cricket...

Jack – Umm...And that’s why you’re being around is... but it doesn’t just happen, because the David Priestley that I first met wouldn’t be able to do that... as I keep reminding you (Laughing)...

Perhaps the ‘Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket’ and ‘Barriers associated with communicating problems with coaches’ (2nd order themes) discussed earlier in the focus group (notions which also echo throughout this thesis) relate to Jacks admission here, in that he, and coaches in general, have to make judgments of players, of their performances; and have to improve performance, as that is what they are ultimately ‘*judged on*’ themselves. That is also of course the nature of the industry itself.

Liam and Geoff had been particularly quiet during Jack’s personal reflections above, but they then relaxed again and began to discuss how they are perceived by the players and how they inevitably get closer to some players than others. Indeed the focus group became very reflective and arguably even more trusting here, which was perhaps an affect of the groups’ non judgmental reactions when someone had admitted something (as Jack had just done) which didn’t reflect well on their skills, role, style, or even themselves. Returning to the dialogue:

[Quotes on Screen]

...be able to listen as well as giving your advice and that you know you have to be able to listen as well, before you advise and not every two minutes like jump in, and it’s not someone being rude but its just being able to genuinely listen really...

(Pause)

Jack - You see that’s what you do really well (referring to the researcher)... and it’s what I don’t do really well... because I have got a solution within 2 minutes of listening to someone... (Pause)... I’d like to do more of that though, I do empathise well... but sometimes I don’t do, I am not genuine enough I don’t think... because deep down I’m thinking ‘you’re not bloody good enough’ (as a player)... and that is how I am judged... that’s where you (David) have a detachment

David -I am looking at the human being

Jack -... you’re looking at the person... but someone who is having you know, my mind is thinking I am selfish and I would be jumping in with a, not with an opinion perhaps... but with a... (aggressively) well fucking look after yourself... you know, what you doing that with her for... why you doing this... where as you are less...

...(Pause)...

...

David - What about you two, because Jack has been very honest there...

Geoff – (Reflective) I think I am a caring person and a good listener but... but I think I did more twelve months ago than I do now. I don't think I'm listening or caring as much as I did. I don't think I am getting as close to them as what I would have been? I was really caring for them... I saw that as a big part of my role... and I don't see that as a big part of my role anymore, so I think it's something I've got to revisit I think. I was really caring for those who can't get into the first team... but it doesn't seem to be my role as much now. Strange... Would you say the role's changed (looking at Jack)?

Jack - No I wouldn't, I think your experiences have changed you... because you've had people who've thrown you some shit back for the care and attention you've given them and it's not been properly rewarded and then, my view is that you think well 'why am I bothering?' ... and you get more into the role... thinking well that's the way I am going to be... because I have heard you say that, if you want to do that, well you do that, well as when you first started you were like, oh, ok...

Geoff- Yeah... maybe it's my experiences that have changed me?

...
Liam - I think you can be caring and be firm and straight with people, I don't see why you can't share, but you need to know when to be honest with them... I think...

David -So is caring seen as being soft?

Geoff - No not at all... but I think that the perception of the players is that we don't care.

Jack -Again that's a negative isn't it for this role... you think, I am not having this player taking the piss anymore I am going to do this in that way... and your experiences do change you to a degree, but that's not your way (Talking to Geoff)... not your strength... so that's why I would struggle with this whereas I don't think you would because you are more... you both are better at that than me. It's like a good cop, bad cop thing in a way.

Jack questioned here whether he has the 'necessary' skills and that 'it may not be appropriate' to support players with some of these issues being presented in that he is 'connected with things' (referring to selection and contractual issues). Indeed, in reading the quotes above he again mentions my own operational involvement, and while I specifically try and ask Liam and Geoff for their own perspectives (and Geoff again mentions his change of role and its affect on his involvement with players) even broader notions of 'caring' for players, beyond their own involvement, began to emerge. In response to Geoff and Jack's honesty, Liam also begins to reflect:

Liam- I think with the role I am in, I am just trying to...(Pause)... I do care for the players and I want the best for them but I don't think I know when's the right time to be honest with them and I'm not really experienced enough, I don't think, different situations to know how I might react to certain situations...

Jack – With pro's?

Liam- Well yeah... possibly, how I'd draw the right line with somebody or how I would deal with it... I'd probably just go with my gut instinct... at the time and then make a decision... but until you're there and it's thrust upon you I don't actually think I can say I would be like this or say that... Or take them to one side and deal with them that way... you've definitely experienced it a lot and Geoff recently haven't you... I am still in the more developing players to get to the next level... which always has that caring for them wanting the best for them, wanting to be the same with every individual you deal with...

Jack- I again I think you're doing yourself down a bit... but that's one thing you do really well, I think you build up trust with people because of your style... I don't know whether they are capable of coming out with some of the things that we have talked about today...but generally you are trusted and because your role at the moment doesn't involve you in any selectoral capacity ...you're just there to help them... it lends itself to that more.... And you are a good listener...

Here Liam offered his own thoughts, but appeared less confident in how he perceived he might work with more senior players, as most of his work up to now had been with young professional and academy players where development had been the emphasis.

In line with these reflections then, and of Jack's supportive reactions of Liam and Geoff, and the nature of the material being presented in the focus group itself, it seems right to me at this juncture that I also attempt to take some of the responsibility off the individual coaches here, in that they are not totally responsible for all players' problems nor would it be fair to suggest they have to solve them all either. Instead, perhaps it is fairer to return to some of the content analysis themes, in that the personal reflections above (and focus group in general) seem to reflect more broader notions of 'Supporting player welfare and well being' (3rd order) and more generically, 'Considerations for the environment' (both 2nd order). Indeed, in terms of the latter, players suggested that 'The working environment influences a players well-being' (PK-198; DN-148; NG-85) and 'A supportive environment should understand, accommodate and minimise player's problems' (AT-122; DN-150, 149; PK-198), which again emphasise that support cannot solely be any one person or coach's responsibility.

In addition, we also return to the themes of 'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk' (3rd order) and the 'Need for professional counseling skills and practitioners who are genuinely empathic, caring, honest and supportive' (2nd order), who can act as compliments (and not merely replacements) to existing provision.

The focus group is approaching three hours now and had covered the remaining themes from Study 1 of 'Personal relationships and performance' and 'Lifestyle, well-being, welfare and performance'. Having only had a short break and considering the depth and breath of the presented material and reflective moments, Jack, Liam and Geoff still seemed (to me) to want to know more, interested in each new quote that was shown and continued to try and draw implications for their own practice and that of the club. Having seemingly digested the quotes and experiences of players, Jack then offers more:

[Quotes on Screen]

...everyone is different, as long as you perform out there, all this bull shit your interested in helping players with Dave, doesn't really matter...

...try all you want but ultimately from a cricketer's perspective it's the way they perform that matters...

David -A lot of them just kept reminding me that performance is what matters...

Jack - ...What I'm saying is that professional cricketers will just see it as the runs they score, the wickets they take. But we're about improving their performance not just...I mean Terry is, Terry is more... the closer you get to the sharper end the more it's based on results, but we're about improving performance... Now if you improve a player's performance and the people who are around that performer... then by that process you can get results... So, it is about results...but also improving performance...and if somebody can't reproduce a skill because they've got issues which you've mentioned then it's our job to find out what they are... it's not somebody else's job. Because if we're involved in improving performance and things are contributing to that negatively then we're not doing our job if we don't identify it...

Liam - We need to try identifying a thing before it gets to a stage where it's...you can't claw it back too well...

Jack -Yes.

David - Anything else to add then or...

Liam – (Somewhat detached) My concern is that all these things that have come out when you've actually interviewed players that they may not have spoke about.... Or talked about... they might have done but...probably not... So how can we make it different? Or identify those areas' and I don't think it's easy to do...

Jack - I think we have to use our judgment of them as people and players and find the keys to unlocking what it is that's holding them back... I would say... I don't think we've got that many that are being negatively influenced by their home life... but you don't know do you? I would put down there is three, out of 20, 21 that we have got... those three I know quite well... where as with the players in the first team I don't know at all... and I wouldn't even begin to start talking about that...

Jack reflections on the reality of the professional game and the situation at the club itself, relate closely with the (2nd order) theme of 'Supporting the individual's lifestyle alongside the realities of professional cricket'. Indeed, as players had suggested themselves, 'Performance is what matters regardless of your lifestyle' (TS-36; FW-76), 'Supporting players is important but guard against being soft on players as professional sport is not soft' (AT-123; SBr-168; MB-51), and that 'The business of cricket will make it difficult to make all players happy' (MB-56; NG-95), which all reflect the '*reality*' Jack describes above, and perhaps, even that of professional sport itself. Results and performances are of course what he and others are ultimately judged upon (as Jack had already suggested), but the extract above seemed to me to reflect, quite well, the open minded and accepting take, these coaches had on the lifestyle based experiences of young and senior professionals, their links with performance and *the need* for additional support.

In line with this passage, content analysis themes stressed the 'Importance of coaches understanding a player' (2nd order) and more specifically suggested that 'Coaches should welcome knowledge / support that affect a player's state of mind' (MB-56; PK-192), and that it's 'Most important to be understood by coaches' (FW-81) as potentially 'Misunderstood players end up trying to achieve alone' (NG-93; FW-76). And although arguably to differing degrees, clearly responses like '*if somebody can't reproduce a skill because they've got issues*', and '*how can we make it different*' suggest that these three coaches appreciate 'Off-field welfare / well being and it's potentially positive influence on performance' (2nd order), and buy into notions of how 'An individual's general lifestyle

and off-field welfare benefits performance' (AT-123; TS-36; HN-72, 74; PK-201) and of course the opposite affects.

The dialogue continued:

David -I genuinely believe that there'll always be something going on, whether it's affecting them or not, there'll probably be a line that it crosses, its when and it's how many?

Jack - Yeah but that's going to be our judgment on whether we intervene...isn't it... otherwise you become too involved... too

Liam - You get too close to them...

Jack -Yeah... Yeah...

Liam – (Hesitant) Yeah, because then if you start getting involved and how far do you go with it?

Geoff - It's a good reminder for us to try and instigate something and I think opportunities will arise where we can instigate things over the next couple of weeks...

Liam - but where are the avenues once we do...

Jack - Like Dave said, it's a can of worms, it's a huge can of worms...

Liam- But if we identify something, I suppose you have to follow it up don't you?

Jack – Yeah , Yeah you have...

The uncertainty in who should support players was also mentioned by one senior player from Study 1, who stated that 'Initially it would be hard for anyone to really support someone with personal difficulties' (MB-56) and (with regard to personal relationship difficulties) how it is 'Difficult to understand whose responsibility it is to help a player with their relationship' (MB-55). Equally, the concerns above of '*becoming too involved*' and '*you get too close*' is something I also share concerns over in terms of my own support for players, which is another notion I would like to return to in the next chapter.

Geoff– What would you do David at second team games, hang around the dressing rooms?

Jack – (Frustrated) You see you'd end up doing then what Paul Littlewood does... it's like a...you don't really... where the contact is so minimal in terms of the actual time... if you don't come and you don't and you're not around then we're just going to be in this position next year, perhaps having spoken to players a little bit more... But I would come and see what happens... Maybe we could just drop your name into things...perhaps with Quinny... I don't know... The best thing is when we're away or something like that and the players will get to see you and meet you and quite quickly, as in within 2 nights they'd be like 'he's alright'... Where as you're not going to get that bobbing around a dressing room after a home game ... because it's a pressurized environment?

Jack - Do you want to liaise with me on this? (Directed at me)

David -Yes

Jack – ...and I'll dive into Quinny and ruin his fucking life...

Liam and Geoff – (Laughing)...

During these closing stages I finally asked 'what next' and proposed my own prolonged engagement over the season during which I would write reflections on my experiences and those of players (i.e. Study 3 data collection), upon which Jack suggested I 'come and see what happens' again somewhat supporting the premise that 'Practitioners need to know about the game and be around' (NC-207; KH-141). The text now focuses on Rinshire's focus group after which a summary of both focus groups is provided.

3.4.1.5 - Rinshire County Cricket Club Coaches Focus Group Participants

As with Woodshire, I would like to introduce you to those participating in the focus group and provide a little background on each. Firstly, there is Dean Mason, the Director of Cricket / first team manager who had also been a successful captain during his professional career with Rinshire. Then there is Simon Sheldon, the bowling coach at the club, whom had previously acted as the first team coach and academy director before his current specialist position within which he currently works with all players (predominantly bowlers) at the club. At the time of the focus group there had been structural changes at Rinshire and Ray Nolan had just been appointed second team manager at the start of this season. Ray's work would be with the second team, but he also acted as a specialist batting coach at the club.

In line with such changes Rob Keep had just retired from the professional game, been appointed assistant coach to Dean and so would be working with the first team, having previously acted as second team coach. Lastly, Tim Ryder is somewhat different to the others in that as Academy Director he never represented Rinshire, but had played a good standard of non-professional cricket. Tim principally worked with the academy and young professionals at Rinshire. Indeed, within the group were many years of coaching experience and over 60 years of playing experience including an ex England International. All coaches were also either qualified or qualifying under the ECB coaching scheme.

3.4.1.5 - Rinshire County Cricket Club Coaches Focus Group

The focus group had the same structure as that of Woodshire's.

[On screen]

...I think you will find this with every cricketer I think, it's the ones who can handle failure, and can handle lack of form, I got better, but there was a time when literally I had no hands, no idea what was going on...

Dean -Was that a general view Dave, the bottom one... I think it's the ones who can handle failure and handle a lack of form... was that a majority or minority that felt that?

David -I think everyone felt that, it just appeared that few felt they could handle that, or were being helped to handle failure?...

Rob -It's a maturity thing isn't it, it's the same in my career, it wasn't until the latter stages that I could take cricket for what it is, I think as a younger player you do tend to worry about things more, without a doubt.

David -I think the younger players seem to dwell on things a lot more...

Simon -Well that will be just insecurity Dave won't it, as a younger player, when you become more senior you think, well I have all that behind me so, you are not thinking I am going to be out of the door are you? When you have 5 or 6 years as a capped player...

Rob - (Interrupting) You're always under pressure to perform though aren't you?

Dean - I know what you are saying, there are 4 or 5 here now who are on the start of a one year contract, and it's fascinating sat here with the maturity and experience we have... you are looking at that as the first of 15 years, not looking at it as the first of one year and that's it...

Rob – (Interrupting and looking directly at Dean) But do you tell them that?

Dean – Of course you tell them that, I tell them that...this is the start of things, I thought to myself I am not making this the first of one year, this is the first of 15 years, but it would be very interesting...coming to the last 6 or 7 years of my career, that's, you know where you are at don't you... 4 or 5 lads here starting off as a junior pro hopefully setting off a 18, 19 year career, and I look at it as a first opportunity to base a judgement on the length of his next contract, on that one year...not whether he will or won't be there... that's the fascinating thing

David -I think the contract thing does ring true with a lot of players and they are always going on about those things, the insecurity as you said Simon. Is there more could be done to support players with that? or...

Simon -In my opinion Dave, the facts of it are, that to play cricket at the first class level, it takes 4 or 5 years... you might today start academy then move up to the second team and so on and so on, until you end up a first class player, and there's no yard stick... you can't

say he's going to do it, him who you fancy might drop off and someone out of blue goes like that... It's difficult, there is no set path it's going to take, Rob didn't play much seconds did you?

Rob - One year I think

Simon -The "Morts" of the world or the "Culkins" (current England Internationals) don't become test players overnight, they have to have an apprenticeship...

At this early stage the focus group appeared calm and thoughtful. Here the coaches began reflecting on how the 'maturity' of a player might explain the emotions and cognitions on view. Their reflections mirrored themes of Coping with performance failures and few opportunities (3rd order), and Reactions to and thinking about opportunities (2nd order) as a young player, for example, 'Responding poorly to a lack of opportunity / selection' (RK-177; SB-8, 12; DN-144), and in essence the general 'Difficulty of managing the process of failure and dealing with fewer opportunities at the professional level' (2nd order).

There are further links with content analysis themes above as Simon mentions insecurities (3rd order), which certainly reaffirm players perceptions in the way 'You do worry and think about what you will be after you finish cricket' (AT-116, 122; JH-190; TS-47; SBr-167; FW-78; HN-72; DN-152), because 'There is no security within the profession' (JH-186; SBr-161). However, and this was perhaps the first absorbing moment amongst the group itself, even at this very early stage, when discussing how to alleviate such insecurities, Rob abruptly interrupted and put a direct question to Dean, '*But do you tell them that*', which in some way seems to reflect a friction that slowly transpires (amongst everyone) during the rest of the focus group.

[Quotes on Screen]

...arguing with my mum and that sets that off, then arguing with my girlfriend, and other people and that has a knock on affect and then you start worrying about feeling bad because you have argued about x and y and you go into work the next day and you think oh god, she is on the phone again I can't be dealing with this.....I get a bit nasty, that's probably the word I would use, I get a bit moody... I am a bit of a nasty sort of person, not in a physical way, but I get really pissed off, and you know someone might say something slightly wrong, we argue and I jump down their throat, you know I can say some nasty things sometimes... I struggle with that...

David -A lot of players seemed to talk about this, how they take things home, things in their thinking.

(Pause)

Ray - Growing up in it, we have all been there haven't we, growing from boy into man, you know you might think you know a lot at 18, 19 or 20 year old, because you have not often been there or worn the T shirt of a 40 year old, we can all sit round this table and relate to this through our experiences.

Rob -I was just going to say though that would that happen if he was sat in an office and had a bad day on his computer, I reckon he would find that easier to cope with. I reckon it would be easier to switch off from that than from maybe sport, I don't know.

Simon – (Cutting into Rob talking) I have got a different theory

Dean -I can only relate to that and say that I have probably been more pissed off with the farming than with the cricket.

...

Simon -I think that today, whether we like it or not, we have gone younger again. For instance I made my debut at 22 year old, so they come from school college or whatever, we dovetail it in with education and that's all they know about life, they don't know about working in a factory... so to me cricket, was just, well fuck it I go and see how good I am, if I don't make it I will go make some money in the league and minor counties. I am an engineer...

...

Ray – (Quietly) Mine was the opposite, because cricket was everything to me, so I can relate to a lot of this because I have felt it, but that was what it was for me, and when it started going wrong, it was not just cricketing issues, it was growing up issues, life issues, which it affected me badly, and I struggled to cope with it, but I had a lot, we have talked about this before. I mean for me as a 16 or 17 year old, I was put on a bit of a pedestal really, this bloke is going to do it. But everything had been easy up to then, and then when life kicked in, I found it difficult to cope with. But at the time, there was not anyone really to communicate with or talk about the issues, it was more or less a sink or swim, or piss off and sort yourself out...

Simon – (Annoyed) You see I don't agree with them when they say it's just a job, it fucking isn't just a job, it's in you, when I lose at cricket, I am fucking pissed off for ages even now, I'll go home and she will go oh... can see it when I walk in, she can feel me coming in. If you have lost and played bad, especially if you have cost them, you are absolutely... for ages.

David -I think that is compounded when you were younger... and if you remember when you were younger, it's not that easy, you don't have that experience, a perspective on life, it's not as easy as sat round talking about it in a way is it...

Simon- But they have not got life experience, they come straight from school to cricket, I worked in a factory and I was just a number, and you get life experience, and I am sorry, whether you like it or not, they are pampered, best hotels, if someone worked in a engineering firm... they would shit their pants.

As the slides on screen gave an insight into the impact of performance failures at home, we gain our first insight from Ray (indeed, just prior to the focus group began, Ray approached me in person, away from the others as they settled in their seats, and gently said “*you know, you have to have experienced some of these things to really understand them Dave*”). I remember Ray’s comments above, ‘*there was not anyone really to communicate with or talk about the issues*’, moving me as they fundamentally draw parallels with players from Study 1, but were also spoken with real tenderness.

Reflecting further on the interaction above, Simon believed the lack of maturity in players is something that compounds players’ inability to ‘Cope with performance failures and few opportunities’ (3rd order); in that cricket is ‘*all they know about life*’. Content analysis themes might also be linked to Simon’s notions in that players felt you can ‘Gain perspective from experiencing the world outside and things other than cricket’ (AT-113, 118), ‘Gain perspective from the world of work’ (MB-50) and how such diversions might reinforce the ‘Importance of maintaining a consistent perspective regardless of performance’ (TS-42, 39; 47; JA-24; NG-85). Indeed work and life experiences (3rd order), including a ‘Merit in experiencing positive winter work experiences’ (2nd order) were strong themes emanating from players’ interviews, in that ‘Experiencing the world of work gives you self-confidence’ (SB-9; SBr-163; PK-197; NG-96; FW-80) and ‘Doing something outside the game improves your personal situation’ (JH-189; RK-180; PK-196; SBr-163). In summary then, Work and life experiences, as discussed by the coaches, might also go some way in alleviating some of the ‘Insecurities’ (3rd order), emotions and cognitions that come with the sporting profession itself. The group continued as the slides did:

[Quotes on Screen]

... I don’t pull myself away from it, give myself time to breathe and enjoy other things in life. Had a good day out with my son yesterday, but then drivin’ in this mornin’ I was thinkin’ am I gonna play Sunday...I’ve been through all that this week... I really need to pull myself away from that cause it does affect my focus at home... I don’t concentrate as much at home...You basically have to switch away from everything, but it can be easier for different personalities, if things are going badly on a cricket field I tend to take them home ... and that has a knock on effect with everything in your life...

Ray - The nature of the game of cricket, in an English cricket season you live eat and breathe it for 6 months, you do, you get out of bed on a morning and you go to cricket and you are there till 7 o'clock at night, and if you are away from home you are with your colleagues all evening...

Simon -Then you think, fuck it I am off for a pint and some cunt comes over and says you got beat today you twat.

Ray - So the nature of the game means that you are there nearly all day and all night and if you're not playing you still might be travelling?

David -Is that unhealthy?

Dean – (Speaking quickly) Do you think it is unhealthy? If you, lets say you were running your own business, you'd be doing that then wouldn't you? ... Eating, living it, the lot, I am not sure, I am asking the question, this is cricket and collectively we would say that come now till the end of September, we would be pretty much on the brink of that collectively...

Ray - I would say that the most successful ones are the ones who have got the more balanced lifestyle

Dean - Yeah

Simon - Me and all

Dean - I can see what Ray said, a lack of them having an ability to switch either off or down, I can see that yeah very much.

Simon - But you have to work at that, I can do that now, I can now, I couldn't then, I can get off, I have other things going on in my life.

Ray - I have got good at that now, 47 year old, but I was useless when I was 25, 47 now I am pretty good.

Simon - That is why I would think the divorce rate is massive, it's a fact in it, it's got to be a pretty outstanding women that puts up with what you do at cricket, year in year out, it's hopeless innit.

Ray - I guess a young guy who has just got married with a kid or something, you have a mortgage and bills to pay, you know if it's a young child looking after the kid so there might not be another income coming in, so it's on your shoulders isn't it to make the money and if it's not going well its easy to think, god it could be all over in three months time, thinking god what am I going to do then?

Having also suggested “*I can relate to a lot of this*”, Ray describes the nature of a cricket season here, proposes the value of a more balanced lifestyle and although Dean suggested cricketers are no different from someone running their own business, he agrees with

something Ray implies in line with the content analysis theme, that there are players likely to be ‘Struggling to relax / switch off moving into the professional environment’ (SB-6; DN-142). Interestingly the ‘*divorce rate*’ and complications of being ‘*married with a kid*’ are also mentioned above and ‘Personal relationships and performance’ (general dimension) are covered in more detail as the interaction and material unfolds. The season described by Ray and Dean above is one of the ‘Consequences associated with being a professional cricketer’ (3rd order) in that ‘The nature of cricket consumes every aspect of a player’s life and their thinking’ (JH-188; HN-71; MB-63; TS-32,39, 42; PK-194), and again, in contrast to Ray and players from study one views on the need for balance, an imbalance might occur ‘When performances determine a person’s life / well-being that is unhealthy’ (NG-90; HN-74; TS-42).

Thirty minutes into the focus group and although reactions are supporting many themes from Study 1, disagreements are beginning to surface. Indeed, discussions continue along a similar theme, with specific references to players in the squad and how they are encouraged to ‘*do something in the winter*’ in that ‘Something other than cricket is needed to help you relax at the professional level’ (NC-206; SB-11; PK-194; DN-149), which is of course one of the major reasons for the inception of the Performance Lifestyle Programme in cricket.

Having heard the logical and reasoned opinions to this point, I then became more engaged myself, but it is Ray who seems to take the focus group forward:

[Quote on Screen]

... when you are so down on yourself or you have a rough patch, in the future I would know how to get out of it straight away, not in terms of maybe runs on the board straight away, but it was more like that in them days [gestures a up and down wave using his arm], my mood swings, my lifestyle patterns, would be down and then up, there would be no real medium ground where as now I take success and failure on the same interpretation level...

David -I don’t see many players with that sense of perspective during troubled times, when things are not going well, they seem to lose it? So is there anything else that could be done to develop perspective...

...

Dean - Well you can just talk at the end of the day, I mean we have been there, and you can then put players experiences into perspective... but I would fall down on that when as Ray says, you have a new house, a new child, a mortgage and it’s not just a game to them

because they have the bills to pay and everything else, I go back to the comment before about balance.

Ray – (More animated) I see this is leading onto a coaches relationship with players, I guess, you have a section here on the coaches relationship with players, I don't think there is any doubt that players would communicate with coaches if they thought it would be helpful, but I guess us coaches, we are all different, and our skills are different, it might be easier for one coach to have that lending ear, it might not come naturally to someone else... what is difficult is for the blokes that picks the team, it would be difficult for players to go to them because players might think they might be perceived to be weak, and then they might think they might not get picked?

(Lengthy Pause)

My involvement perhaps reflected my own frustrations at the simplicity of the discussions so far and how dismissive coaches seemed to be with regards to certain quotes. Indeed Dean then mentioned that *'it's not just a game'* as you mature, and even though the Performance Lifestyle Programme is in place, and everything the coaches were saying was logical (*you can just talk at the end of the day*) and I agreed with, the reality (for players) often appears very different. Ray is one of the first to cast a more *critical* eye over existing support at the club here, by addressing his own and wider roles in supporting players with their actual experiences. Ray mentions communication and selection issues, and makes reference to it being difficult for *'the bloke that picks the team'* and went onto draw links between a player's mental state and their performance, which the others picked up on in their respective ways. At this point I felt the focus group was really beginning to gain pace.

[Quotes on Screen]

... it's impossible to keep it simple, but my emotional state of mind is what I can control. Even when I think things are against me, even work... there's only so much I can actually control. What I think of myself is what I can control, the way I conduct myself is what I can control and it's important to remember that...

... cricket is with me every minute of the day, but my lifestyle previously, if I was doing well at cricket I'd be fine or if I was not doing well I would be unhappy, but now I don't get too down with my failures and I have a better reality on that, and when I go home now, or generally when I am away from cricket I can be happy...

Ray - Can I just say that what we have talked about in this meeting is the mental side of life... but when you get to this level, of playing the game, because everyone can play, but it's probably 90% what's going through your head how successful you are, because if you are not right mentally it will affect you technically, it's alright a coach saying your front

foot's not right or whatever but is it purely a technical issue? It might be, but it might be a mental issue that they have something on their mind and they are not focussed properly and technically you are all over the place... Complex in't it

Rob - Top four inch (pointing to his head)

Ray - But all this relates to mental issues...

David -I think the thing that surprises me is that it wasn't just on field mental issues I was talking about, it was things away from the game, just generally in life and the things they had experienced there, like cognitions and emotions and they didn't seem to understand them away from the game, some had learnt but would younger players benefit from learning about those things?

Ray - How do you do it?

David -I am throwing it out, I am asking?

Tim - ...everyone has said they would deal with it eventually, is there a way we could help them deal with it earlier, is there a way we can assist them in doing it earlier... is there any way to prepare them because its going to happen?

Ray - To go through pain and anguish is what prepares you for the next bit, if you have felt it and been there, if you have been hurt, that is sometimes how you become sometimes stronger isn't it.

Dean – How often do you hear people say that you can't put an old head on young shoulders, you have to make the mistake and learn haven't you surely, logically... other than discussing and talking to them and passing on our experiences and knowledge that we have been faced with...

Simon – (Conclusively) I reckon when you have a bad trot when you are younger, your mindset is like, I am playing tomorrow, I am in shit form here, where as when you are older you think I will get out of that bad form tomorrow... because what you have done is realise that everyone has bad trots, and the more you have, you know how to handle it... but when you are younger you are shitting yourself...

Dean felt that 'Making mistakes is critical to learning' (FW-78; HN-72,70; NG-88, 94) and as academy director Tim wondered if 'we could help them deal with it earlier' in that it is 'Important to accelerate young players learning' (AT-122; FW-77; HN-72) while Simon reinforced how 'Experience is vital to learning' (KH-139; HN-74; NG-88) which all reinforce content analysis themes. Particularly here (but also as the focus group unfolds) there appeared to be general references made to the value of understanding your emotions and thoughts and difficult experiences within professional sport, and content

analysis themes had suggested that ‘Personal cognitive awareness is valuable to a player on and off the field’ (RK-181; AT-122; SB-2; DN-144) and ‘Personal emotional awareness is valuable to a player on and off the field’ (AT-123; RK-180; JH-189; FW-79; NG-97). However, despite such references to the need to learn and value of knowing how to think and feel, there appeared to be a lack of any ideas as to how to achieve or support such awareness in sport.

Up to this point (40 minutes in), the focus group had occasional moments during which challenging questioning on each others’ views would be offered (as pointed out how Rob had challenged Dean right at the start), but from here on in and for the remaining 2 hours and 40 minutes, a mixture of disagreements, tensions, and even personality clashes created an unpredictable, tense and (sometimes) intolerant atmosphere.

Rob - Well we give a decent amount of support to young players don't we?

Ray- I would hope so

Simon -So have we a massive role to play then? That's my next question

...
Rob - But your players have to know that your not just bull shitting them, you have to be genuine, not, you'll be alright, you will be alright whatever, there is a difference...

Ray - That comes over time, building relationships and trust that does not happen over night, it happens over a period of time...

Simon -That's why as a coach you can put yourself in that relationship, because the bottom line is that you could say, I haven't to make the decisions on you, if you wanted to, you can say I think you will be fine mate, you know what I mean...

(Pause)

Ray - I guess that's where in all our roles, myself and Simon, we don't select, so it might be easier for players sometimes to talk to us...

Simon -It is, and I have been through this and I couldn't understand it, they will come to me and say, I don't feel right, I feel crap, they won't go to him and say it (pointing at Dean) because they'll think fucking hell he'll drop me if I say that to him, and that's life, in it...

Dean - It is life... but I would still far rather have someone coming to me and saying that...

Simon – (Loudly) But they wouldn't do that Dean...

Dean - No but this goes back to my point, where invariably you would then be in a better position so they will have stopped someone going further down hill, and I relate that back to Nick last year, I wasn't going to mention names, but the times I went to him and said to him everything alright lad, and he would say "yeah, no problem", it just got worse and worse and I suspect by the end of it he maybe wasn't strong enough to say, no its not fucking right, but if you don't fucking speak to me... (Simon trying to butt in)...

...

Simon -What should we have been doing because he became very isolated and unless I have got this wrong... didn't he sort of cut himself off and started sitting in his room...

(Everyone looking at one another)

Dean - He did, but in effect I was the last person to find that out that he was isolated in his room, he wouldn't say it, but the number of times I said can I help you with anything, all I am saying is that if a player could do that and say something is not quite right... then that to me is a player of some strength and maturity...

Ray - You make it sound very clear cut Dean, in what you expect players to be like, and a lot of blokes wouldn't be able to do it (Pause)... do you consider that a lack of...

Dean – (Interrupting) A lack of strength no, no, not in a derogatory manner, but the point was made that a player might feel weak, errm, but I I, I don't see that, I think it's a player of strength, if a player doesn't come and they have a problem I don't see the point in them keeping it...

Ray - But a lot of people, and it's not just cricketers, wouldn't disclose anything personal, unless they really know the person and they really trust them...

Here Simon is prepared to question the support of players, and attention turns to Nick Gresswell (someone incidentally interviewed in Study 1), whom he felt had struggled and become very isolated last year with much of what had been presented thus far, while in the first team. The fact Ray and Simon are not directly involved in selection implies they hear and are able to build closer relationships and support more players than Dean because of the perceived power within his position. Although Dean seemed to suggest that 'Talking to someone is a strength and should not be seen as a sign of weakness' (SBr-166; TS-38) and that 'Communicating gets to the root of your problems quicker' (TS-40), Simon and Ray's contributions reflected the 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket' and 'Barriers associated with communicating problems with coach's' (both 2nd order), but perhaps more specifically, the barriers of communicating with Dean (and those responsible for selection) and the importance of really knowing and trusting the person.

It seems right to briefly remind the reader of the themes touched on above because they continue to hold relevance as the focus group evolves below, particularly as young and (more so) senior professionals described the ‘Uncertainty as a pro about communicating in the professional environment’ (NC-204; HN-69, 70; SBr-166), ‘Professional players guard against sharing their thoughts and emotions’ (JA-23, 24, 29, 31; DN-147, 152), ‘Players are afraid to communicate’ (JA-31; TS-44; DN-147, 149; HN-71; SBr-165) and specifically in relation to selection, players reported being ‘Hesitant to communicate problems to coach’s for fear of not being selected’ (MT-106; HN-70; PK-196; TS-38).

At this point the quotes and experiences of players appear to resonate further with Ray.

[Quotes on Screen]

...The worst thing you can do as a human being is be lonely...

Yes, [big sigh] there are times when I have driven home and, [another sigh] you know motorways and cars are lonely places, and you find yourself thinking about all sorts of things and I tend to think about other things than my cricket, again...

... I make it hard for myself, I actually feel quite alone because I’d like to share problems or share thoughts share happiness, I’d like to share all them, my problems, my happiness, my joys, my sorrows, and that’s what I think bein’ in cricket we lose...

...If I showed how I really deep down felt, I think everyone would hate me...

David -I think a lot of players do feel lonely? I am not saying that is your fault I am just saying players feel lonely?

Ray - I felt lonely for 15 years, from 20 year old to 35... (Pause)... I felt I was all on my own in life, I didn’t perform.... I did alright but I didn’t perform to what I know is my natural ability?

David -Why?

Ray – (Animated) Why? ... for a number of reasons, not just one reason, a whole host of reasons, its complex, things build up... you don’t put to sleep and you sweep them under the carpet...

Rob – People don’t talk, young males I would say, don’t talk about their issues, so that’s one of the biggest things you learn in life, to talk about these things, it’s beneficial, to talk about whatever your problems are, and you don’t have to have solved them, but the fact that you have talked about it?

(Pause)

David -Why do you think young players don't talk? And do you think young players don't talk here?

Rob - Well they may talk amongst themselves... it's just something you don't do as part of being a youngster and that's a simple skill isn't it, it's like coaching, it's simple. If you have a problem you talk about it... should we be telling them that?... is it as simple as that?

...

Ray - I think we are all more skilled having been through the coach education process we have been through, we are all on level 4, which includes all sorts have lifestyle elements, so the modern day coach is far more educated in dealing with the whole person if you like, the holistic side...I think we do pretty well, fucking hell it has changed dramatically over the last 15 years, I mean I was told to go away and fucking sort it out...

Rob - Without any tools to do it...

Ray - Just disappear and come back when you feel like it and you feel better...(Laughing)...

Ray seemed to reflect further than the others here, conceivably deeper (when saying '*I felt I was all on my own in life*'), and having previously suggested that '*people, not just cricketers, wouldn't disclose anything personal*', both he and Rob seem to agree and reflect further on their own careers. Interestingly though the discussion seems to be based predominantly around young professionals, which doesn't necessarily reflect the (red) senior players' contributions from Study 1 who also find difficulties in communicating. Again Ray's comments struck me, '*I felt lonely for 15 years, from 20 year old to 35*', and Rob's insights that '*People don't talk, young males I would say, don't talk about their issues*' were equally noticeable. I recall quite clearly at this time how delicate discussions around communication were becoming, in that moments of sensitive reflection would be followed by more aggressive responses, and as the coaches read one particular slide it seemed to spark further emotive debate. Although feeling apprehensive, given the increasingly edgy atmosphere, I was prepared to engage in this debate:

[Quotes on Screen]

...Comin' to see you (David), I didn't quite see what you could do for me. Which, it's your job, there's a lot you can do for me. I started thinking, do I need to see him, what can he help me with, maybe studying, but that's going OK, but then you opened me eyes to all the aspects you can help me with...

...If you think, I'm a man and I can't talk to any one about this, it gets worse...

...It's difficult to know who to talk to about what and when in fear...

Ray - That bottom line there is scary, that last word on it... Fear...

Dean - It's difficult to know who to talk to about what and when in fear (reading quietly off the screen)...

Simon -We won't be seeing much of him...

Ray - Well that's clearly someone who isn't enjoying going to work...

Dean - No we won't be seeing much of him?

Simon – (Laughing)

Ray - Fear of failure

Simon -It's like everyone is different aren't they, totally... everybody?

David -Do you think anyone is afraid to communicate here at this club?

Dean – (Abruptly) Do I what Dave?

David -Do you think any players would be afraid to communicate here, and I know that sounds bad?

ALL - (Everyone contributes speaking over one another)... I am sure there would be yeah... oh yeah... I'm sure...

Dean - I am sure there are some that would be afraid to speak to one of us but would prefer to speak with someone else?... I don't believe any player wouldn't be able to approach anyone of us 5? They might not approach four of us but they might be able to approach one? I believe...

Rob - So what about on personal issues then?

Dean - I would back that as well?

Simon – (Loudly) Some are fearful of your position man, that's one of the things... Oh they might be fearful of the chief exec or...?

Dean – (Turning to Simon) Well to answer Dave's question? I don't think anyone wouldn't be able to approach any one of the five of us?

Rob - I think on cricketing issues they would, but on personal issues I am not sure...

David - Why do you say that?

Dean - Say that again Rob? (Turning to Rob)

Rob - I think if someone had a problem cricket wise, they wouldn't have a problem

Dean – Right

Rob - ...like you said they would come to one of us, and like you said if they had a problem at home, then surely then a lot of the younger players might not be willing...

Simon -But you only find stuff like that when you are with them all the time...

My question of whether players at Rinshire ‘*are afraid to communicate*’ lead to Rob and Simon questioning Dean’s stance again (*Some are fearful of your position man... on personal issues I am not sure*), but on this occasion, with greater degrees of conviction. Tim, who had been very quite to this point, then shuffles in his seat:

Tim – (Tentatively) I would still say they would go to David with some things if that... and there is still.... The title that you have got I think is wrong, that words that they use, performance lifestyle, they thinks its just education and about drugs then, yeah ok, but if it said welfare, then I think one or two would, the situation, one or two might think, well hang on, he is away...

Rob - I don’t think welfare is right...

David -Well what do you think it is?

Rob - I don’t know... General...

Tim - Ears...

Ray - Guru? (Laughing)

Rob - Pairs of ears yeah... Pair of ears... go to the ears... go to a bit of a friend?

David -I am fascinated why you think some players couldn’t come to you with personal issues?

Ray – Well there might be someone who hasn’t spoken with anyone about personal issues? And I don’t think that would be unnatural either, they would think that it’s not macho, it’s not what you do when you are a bloke?

Perhaps sensing the tension here, Tim seemed to draw on his knowledge of my work with players and the relationships I have been fortunate to build since 2003 with the academy and young professionals at the club, also somewhat supporting Simon’s earlier comment

that *'you only find stuff like that when you are with them all the time'*. While suggesting the title of my present role is perhaps incorrect, Rob also seemed to agree without necessarily having an alternative. Although the terms 'Guru' and 'Pair of ears' were thrown in with a sense of amusement and are particularly vague, they conceivably also reflect players' sentiments, who felt that 'The ability to listen is valuable' (NC-207) and 'Sensing empathy and a real understanding of personal experiences builds a connection' (NC-207; FW-83; DN-147).

In light of Rob and Simon's challenges to Dean above, and the reminders which I offered earlier vis-à-vis players' perspectives on communicating, one young player also suggested that there are 'Risks and difficulties associated with communicating personal problems' (2nd order) in that 'It's difficult to talk about personal problems when you move into the first team' (MT-102). In addition, and to try and be more specific, on the subject of coping with relationship problems (examples of which are discussed in greater detail shortly) and as suggested by Ray earlier that *'there might be someone who hasn't spoken with anyone about personal issues'*, senior players also explained how 'You don't want to talk to people about your private life' (HN-73; MB-55). Lastly, with reference to my operational position it also seems to support suggestions from players that there is 'Value in talking with someone not directly associated with the club' (NC-207; SB-5; TS-39), who perhaps has greater objectivity, but certainly holds no connection with selection.

As the interaction continues to focus on communication issues and notions of greater support, a clip was shown which reinforced many of the 'Barriers associated with communicating problems with coaches' (2nd order), which I was tentatively prepared to add to, and then, more directly question Simon with.

[Video clip shown and quote below on Screen]

I should imagine they would find it difficult to go to the man who hires and fires you or the man who selects the team sometimes, although that is me sometimes and I would like to think they can do that. There might be times when they think they are struggling with this but if I tell him he may not pick me type thing. If they need to get it out then they have to be big enough to do it. I'd like to think that there are some good people around here who are approachable and if the chips were down would help them out. Whether they would go right to the top I don't know.

David -I think you have got approachable people, but there might be something about your positions as coaches that undermines that... (Pause)... I say that really delicately by the way?

Ray - Is it any different here to any other counties?

David -I just think that when you are associated with selection and things like that...

Simon -Well that's understandable...

Rob - Well how do you get around that?

David -I am throwing that to you?

Simon – (Loudly) Well you will get a day as a bowler where you feel absolute shite, you don't bowl right well, you feel crap and you go to your mates and say, I am glad that's over I bowled shit today, you do don't you, but you don't go and make a deal of it do you...

David -I have heard a lot of this now, and I think that is you Simon, the hardened you, you are capable of handling yourself and these things, but I don't see that in a lot of players or hear that in a lot of players...

Simon -But I heard a lot of bowlers say that, I feel like shit today... they are not going to run to him and say it are they (pointing to Dean and laughing)... Fucking hell, I felt like I ran in on sand today...

Dean then made some suggestions about players needing to 'accept fact' regarding selection decisions, but Simon's tone has sharpened here (his volume increasing with every contribution) he then crosses his legs, leans away from me and the rest of the group in his seat, and begins again, seemingly with his patience running out.

Simon -I will throw another one in... (Smiling at the group)

Dean - ...and I don't know how many there are that maybe can do that?

Simon –(Laughing) What then if players say... use me I am not bothered its fine, players say they can't talk to me, but yet I produce 20 test bowlers in the next 10 year, well fuck em, because I have done my job... just a point...

Dean - Say that again...

Simon -Use me I am not worried...(Looking away)

David -I am not using you by the way...

Simon -No it's fine, I can accept it, I am not worried... I am not bothered mate either way... use me... someone can't talk to me, but I produce us in the next 5 years, 10 top line bowlers, then what?

Dean - You have lost me I don't know what that answers?

Simon -Well what are we searching for? Do you know what I am saying Dave?

David -Yeah...

Simon -I could be the biggest arse whole in the world, if I produce 10 bowlers or whatever, then so what, I have done my job...

Rob - But Dave is looking for a reason why they can't come and talk to you?

Simon - I know...

Dean - But then you might not have to produce another 10 if they can come to you and discuss issues with the 10 we have already got... Does that make sense? To me that doesn't achieve anything... Simon's comment there, well fuck them, because I can produce another 10 in another 10 years...

Simon – (Aggressively) No I didn't say that... no... who cares what anybody thinks, I was saying...

...

Simon -But also as a coach you might be particularly hard on a player for a reason... you might give him a hard time knowing full well I am going to get him through this...

Dean – Aye aye...

Simon -Do you know what I mean, he might not like me... I don't know how much "Morts" (England international) liked me when I was giving him a hard time and so on... So as a coach what do you do? You play act half of the time don't you...

The atmosphere was now intense, the others silent as Dean and Simon exchanged views, his comment *'Use me I am not worried'* and choice of language seemed to reflect his impatience here, as he seemed (to me) to interpret the players experiences as attacks on his methods. While content analysis themes neatly suggested that *'Coaches should welcome knowledge / support that affect a player's state of mind'* (MB-56; PK-192), that *'Management have to commit to communication'* (AT-123; JA-23), and *'The environment has to promote and support open communication'* (AT-122; MB-62; HN-69), clearly the reality here is more complicated. Momentarily Ray actually seems to calm the atmosphere

a little here with a more prolonged contribution (which everyone seemed to respect without interruption):

[Quote on Screen]

...I don't like telling anyone my business, I keep it away from them, its not that I don't trust the management staff or anything I just don't like telling them... its not that I do not trust them

You do not always feel that you can talk to coaches... you never find a player going to one of our coaches, I don't know what it's like at other clubs, and talking about personal problems..., I just don't think that's necessarily their, what you would think their job was... they're after results and um I just don't think people would use that as an outlet really...

... in my younger days I did feel pretty much alone, your coach is there for your cricket really, so the captain and the coach can say their door is always open you can come and talk to me about anything, well I don't think you can all the time...

Ray-(Calmly) I think when you work one to one with a player and Simon and I do a lot of that, and Rob has started to do a lot of that... you have more chance, because you are spending time, talking and you can get into other realms apart from their cricket, and its fascinating... if I was to talk through all the players that you work with I have a different relationship with each one of them, about what you might talk about and discuss and that's a very natural thing, not forced, you know you are not trying to pry, trying to anything, you are just two human beings, one who has lived a bit longer and has more experience in life, and you know I have got blokes at this club who have told me things that I would never repeat to anybody else because they wouldn't want me too, and I would always treasure that, actually trust it and treasure it, because I think that's a bit special, that people can share some of the things that you're talking about, I think it is precious...

(Pause)

Tim- But if you turn that onto the Nick Greswell situation, would it have helped if that had of come out earlier...

Ray- Well you talk about Nick and that winter, personally I spent quite a lot of time with him, once a week right through the winter and we developed quite a nice rapport, you know, and then the season goes on, different things happen, and then you hear vibes, about stuff you are talking about, and I would have said to him on one or two occasions, you know how's things, is there anything you would like to have a chat about or work on, "no its fine", and you don't, well, you don't turn around and say no it's not fine, I might have done, maybe I could have done but that again goes back to where Simon went on about we flit in and out of the team... you're not quite sure yourself where people are at if you don't see it on a daily basis...

Ray reflects above on how he has worked closely and had some success with some players, and in response to Tim's questioning, inevitably struggled with others. As Ray's comments about Nick seemed to quieten the atmosphere a little and more quotes are

presented, Dean then begins to read one line quietly to himself as the others are talking (as he continues to do for a while), it relates to players being 'Hesitant to communicate problems to coach's for fear of not being selected' (MT-106; HN-70; PK-196; TS-38), and as with Simon previously, it resonates strongly with him.

[Quote on Screen]

I couldn't actually see myself sittin' down and talking to him [coach] about this, to be honest, through no fault of his ... it wouldn't enter my mind... he's a great bloke and I have a great crack with him and what have ya, but...no, I wouldn't do that... if I thought that he thought that I wasn't really 100% right, he might not play me for another two weeks...

...I didn't know who to talk too... to tell somebody your problems was seen as a weakness, you know coach I'm struggling or coach I don't feel right, well the first thing that would happen would be that you are dropped from the side. So you are conscious that you don't want to say that because you want to stay in the side...it was something very hard, something I dealt with on my own...

Dean - I didn't know... (Reading the quote under his breath and looking at the screen)... I just think that bottom one is crap, my personal view of that bottom one is absolute crap I am afraid, and relative to experiences within it...

(Pause)... (Everyone talks up)

Rob -But you have said that all day that they should be big enough to come and talk...

Dean - Aye I have

Tim - Do they know that, do we tell them that?

Dean - you know coach I'm struggling or coach I don't feel right, well the first thing that would happen would be that you are dropped (reading again)... That is crap...(Leaning backward)...

Rob - Yeah but do they know that, do they know that...

Dean - So you are conscious that you don't want to say that because you want to stay in the side...it was something very hard, something I dealt with on my own...(reading off the screen) That's absolute rubbish I just can't relate to that, its absolute rubbish...

Ray - So if someone came to you and said that, would you tell that it's rubbish...

Dean – (Forcefully) I would Aye, I would Aye... Your telling me that you are that bad a player that you are telling me you are going to get dropped I think it's absolute rubbish...

Rob - But they must be feeling that...

Ray – It's all complex...

Dean – (Turning to Ray)... Why must they... you tell me why it is so complex...

Ray - Well all the things we have been talking about today and all the emotions and things leading up to that...

Dean - The bottom there I just find that a rubbish comment

Ray - I think you would find 90% of people would feel like that

Dean - Well that's fine... but it still doesn't detract from my view

Ray - But do you think that you might give off a vibe... that might make it difficult to come and say those things to you

Dean - Well that can obviously be perceived that way, but it's not an intention or that's not how I want to be perceived...

Ray - But that is how it comes across now...

Dean - If it does do...

Ray - It does now...

Dean - If it does...

Ray - It's...(very quickly)... you are quite a hard...(Pause)... it's quite a hard line on it... it's bull shit...

Ray and Deans exchange was again an anxious one; their articulation and body language fighting each other in as much as their conflicting views were, and again the others were quiet. I would like to point out that the intention was not to question the way coaches' deal with selection and deselection, as the comments may not be true to events or fair on Dean, instead the intention was to reflect players' perspective's and experiences in communicating about more personal and lifestyle based issues. For that reason, and forgetting whether the statement is a fair or unfair reflection on Rinshire and Dean, what is obvious is the antagonistic dynamic between Ray and Dean. Ray was prepared to challenge Dean, with comments like '*you might give off a vibe*' and '*that is how it comes across now*', but Dean clearly refutes Ray's take and stands by his convictions.

As Ray and Dean appear to be composing themselves and seem to return to the group (physically as well as mentally), Dean just could not move on:

Simon -Fascinating innit

Dean - Buts it's not going to detract from what I said.... David it doesn't apply here... that does not apply here, there has never been a point in time when I have ever known that that has ever happened

(Pause)

David -I shouldn't say this, but what if I was to say that that was a player at this club?

Simon – (Bursts out laughing)...

Dean - Well clearly it is, clearly it is, but he wouldn't have a clue how far he is from being wrong

David -I think you are right but do they understand that?

Dean – (Leaning forward)... The whole selection policy Dave, everything that has been tried to be done, it's a tough school I don't make any apologies for that, it's a tough school, but it's a fair school and in my view it's consistent, life is fucking tough and this isn't the real world.

Rob- But even if we said that right, to them, “you can come to us” they still wouldn't fucking come...

Ray - No they wouldn't

Dean- No they wouldn't

Simon- You (pointing at Dean) would be the last they would go to, because of your position

Dean -... Just answer me this then (addressing the whole group), what decisions or policies or selection policies that have been done, what of those have been done for people to believe that, for people to accept that is what it is...

Rob - Not necessarily anything I would say

Dean - Are we inconsistent with our selection or anything we do?

Rob - Because you are capable of cutting off their income aren't you

Dean - I am, but based on obviously their performance and that's it

Rob - That's why they wouldn't

Tim – That's an insecurity

Simon- Well what do we do, if that's right, what do we do?

Although I feel I make a mistake above and run the risk of exposing a player whom I'd interviewed at Rinshire at this point (by suggesting the quote on view is from a player at the club), I also felt the need to challenge Dean myself (perhaps to release some of my own frustrations again). Simon's closing question seemed to me a good one, and the impression given by the others was that they would also like to work to change the player's perception, whether it is right or wrong. However, at this point I am challenged myself (touché); and as Dean is still contemplating the quotes in terms of selection (still reading them line by line), he still cannot accept the words in front of him, so folds his arms, turns his body more toward me, and although I could have easily left my response to one line, and remember feeling particularly vulnerable at this point, I decide to offer more.

Dean - I just want to ask Dave, what could you... based on the side and the position you are in, what could we have done for that to have been suggested upon for that to be right? That is what I am asking? (Looking directly at me?)...

David -In terms of selection and those things I don't know because I don't know what happens there...

Dean- Right (Still looking at me)...

David -...and performance issues I really don't know

Dean- Right (unmoved)...

(Pause)

David -... Because it's not my area... but... I would be hesitant to talk to you, I have heard things and I am hesitant to come and talk to you, and yet when we had that meeting up there (pointing to his office) you showed me, you said come in and share something come in and talk... but I struggle with that...I would struggle to come and do that...

Simon- (Interrupting) Do you with me?

David -Yeah... I have in the past yes

Simon- (Laughing)... why I have said come on in mate...

David -I know but it's alright to say that, but I am saying that has not necessarily happened...

Simon- When I was doing it (academy director) Dave came in you see... (addressing the whole group)...

Dean- When what

Simon- When I was academy director Dave came in

David -I am not saying that is your fault I am saying it's the position you are in

Dean- It's fascinating in it...

Rob- Maybe it's a perception of what people think as well

Simon- (Laughing and looking towards me)...

I was asked what selection decisions might have made a player say the things they had here, but I had no answer to that question as I hadn't asked them about selection specifically, so instead (and I remember a brief pause where I was questioning whether I should say what I did in that it might have made me appear weak and soft), I felt at the time that it might perhaps also reflect how the players sometimes feel when they are having lifestyle or personal based difficulties. Indeed, on hearing my contribution Tim seems to identify with my offering, and while Simon was still laughing towards me, Tim mentions his current experience with a young fast bowler Jonesy, who has just moved out of the academy and onto the professional staff at the club and has known Simon for years:

Tim - There is one now... one bowler now who will ring me and ask if I can arrange a session with Simon and he is out there (pointing to the pitch)...

Simon -Who's that?

Tim - He's scared stiff of ringing you

Simon -He's a dickhead then in he

Ray - That's why he doesn't ring you because you talk like that?

Simon – (Bluntly) No I am not, it's because he is inconsistent, and he is unreliable... I am not fucking running about after him

Dean - Who?

Tim – Jonesy will ring me and ask if I can fix a bowling session with Simon, I said well why can't you ring him?

Rob - He is scared of you? (Teasingly)...

Simon -He has had that many sessions with me and not turned up, there's no wonder he should be scared I want to strangle him

I was pleased Tim intervened and attention left me here, and knew of Jonesy's situation. At this time the focus group slides were still on the theme communication, and slides shown related to 'The environment has to promote and support open communication' (AT-122; MB-62; HN-69) and 'Everyone and the environment need to appreciate and empower those having difficulties' (MB-55; TS-40). Interestingly another dynamic seems to appear here amongst the growing annoyance and frustrations that were surfacing:

[Quote on Screen]

... the ability to communicate is overlooked in a lot of businesses and teams

...some how you've got to break down the barriers to go and see somebody to go and talk to somebody is for puffs basically, for want of a better word. It's not the done thing, oh I can't go and do that, people will think I'm weak... that I think should be the goal, you know to be able to create an environment where people are gonna be comfortable to come and see ya ...

Dean – (Talking to himself, over everyone else and reading off the screen) It's not the done thing, oh I can't go and do that, people will think I'm weak... that I think should be the goal, you know to be able to create an environment where people are gonna be comfortable to come and see ya ...

Simon – (Irritated) What about though, what are we talking about here, on-the field, off-the field, general things... I am sorry I am not with that... I am not mate

David -Off the field...Why

Simon –I am not with that... Well why should someone have a barrier, if they come and say oh my mothers not very well?

Rob - Because of your position...

Simon – (Exasperated) They never do Rob... They never do... When they communicate, they have a problem at home, they never go oh I can't tell him that... that's bull shit that...

Ray - Someone might not think you are listening...

Simon – (Assuring) I know everything about our bowlers Ray that I need to know and they need to tell me

Ray - Well that's it then

Simon – (Aggressive) One of our bowlers has just split up with his partner last week, I know that, so you want to know that?

Rob - That's good that you know that

David -That's fantastic

Rob - If you feel you have that relationship then that's fucking awesome

Simon -What do I do then, pin it up on the board?

(Lengthy Pause)

Dean - But I have that... (Laughing)... I know more about them now in this last four months than I have in maybe the last 2 years, in fact...

Rob – (Interrupting) I am not sure they would come to you with those problems?

Dean – (Turning to Rob) Cause they can, I can think of 5 off the top of my head now...

Rob - Good... (Looking away)

Dean- No... I can tell you which players they are, senior, mature, honest players

Simon- I can't think what that is (pointing at the screen), I am not sure what they are on about

Dean- Honest pros... and that's the big difference to me.. that's a huge difference... your honest straight lased pro, who doesn't piss about with excuses...

Within the dynamic above Rob and Ray seem to adopt similar viewpoints to one another, while Simon and Dean seem to again take the quotes personally and stoutly defend their relationships with players and awareness of their personal experiences and circumstances. For the third time Rob also casts doubt on Dean, something which I sensed was starting to vex him, and again there seemed to be suggestions that senior professionals are not likely to be the players who feel they cannot talk to coaches (despite the prominence of senior professionals amongst the 1st order themes, in red, outlined earlier) and the possibilities that lifestyle issues could be used as excuses. Simon's assertion that '*I know everything about our bowlers that I need to know and they need to tell me*' also seems somewhat contradictory to Tim's earlier comment about Jonesy.

I want to stress that contributions are being said louder now, it is becoming harder for anyone to finish their sentences without being interrupted and tempers are unquestionably surfacing.

Simon -Because they can't tell me their problem then, they are fucking shit out there (the pitch) is that what we are saying... I can't follow that...

David -So you are saying that this environment promotes open communication, well I am not here to judge because I am never here, so how can I... I am just giving back what players have actually said...

Dean - This fascinates me...

(Pause)... (Ray begins to laugh)...

Dean - What are you laughing at? (Aggressively directed at Ray)...

Ray - I just think that...

Rob - (Laughing and butting in)... what you laughing at you cunt? (Directed at Ray but making a joke at Dean and Simon)

(Everyone laugh's)

Ray - This is the thing you see.... I think you could quite easily give off to a player a disposition of "what the fucking hell is the matter with you"...

Dean – (Bluntly) Good

Ray - That's why they might not come to you Dean.... This is no good I am not comfortable...

Dean - I live in black and white areas because to me that is where you don't get complications...

Ray – (Interrupting) but then you say you don't understand why someone might say that... what was on earlier...

Dean - I just can't, there has not been any situation where I have been captain or Director of cricket where that has applied in any shape or form... so that is where I would take serious offence, well not offence... from a... there hasn't... my point on when that has come up based on selection, there is just nothing at all that I have ever done that can apply to that, and I would take offence to that... a huge offence...

David -I don't want to offend anybody...

Simon doesn't seem to believe that players being *'fucking shit out there'* had anything to do with (his) communication issues with players, which may of course be true, but is somewhat contradictory to some of the suggestions from players who felt that 'Talking can alleviate or help you deal with your worries and concerns' (HN-70; JA-24; TS-40; SBr-165), 'Problems get too much and you bottle things up so it becomes essential to talk' (NC-207; RK-179; JH-185; HN-70; SBr-166; FW-83) and specifically that 'Communication will benefit your performance' (TS-38; SBr-166). I tried to deal with the uneasy atmosphere and reassure the coaches I was not trying to offend anyone, but trying to relay players' experiences, but as I did, and as a reaction to Simon's comments, Ray, unperturbed (as Simon had previously) just started laughing. Dean (whilst banging his fist on the table) had also clearly taken offence to the quotes on view in line with 'Management and the environment they create are central to positive communication' (2nd order) and continually made the point that in his previous position as captain and his present one as director of cricket, he had never done anything that could warrant such views. In fact, I mentioned earlier how Dean and Simon had both initially shown a degree of composure throughout the focus group, had given considered responses and seemed to try to respond with a poise and calmness to reflect the confidence in their convictions, but now, their reactions were emotionally charged, and they seemed to repeat themselves more often, with their frustrations growing and growing:

Dean- But is that not fair Ray

Ray- I think you are looking at it from your perspective

Dean – I am looking at it from the player's perspective

Ray- No you are not...

Dean – I am

Ray – You're not... you are looking at it from yours

Dean - I am, I am looking at it from yours... the most important people here are the players because they are the people who go out there and if I have got a position where I can hire or fire those players I owe it to them to be more than fair, I can't sleep straight in bed if I am not..

Ray- But if a player was to come to you and say Dean I have got a problem, then you might say "well what's up with you", and he might tell you something and you might, say, well get on with it, or bull shit...

Dean- He's coming to me then they'll ask me my opinion

Ray – But that's why they might not come to you again

Dean- I don't think I have ever had that, I don't think I have ever had that... If a player comes to me he has my undivided attention and that is never in question, that has never ever been a questionable issue, ever... I have said at length to yourself, lets go back to the Nick Gresswell situation, too often I will find out something and I go back to situations last year where I believe I could glean information from lets say Hugh (the physio) earlier, that I can deal with and handle ... and that to me is critical, that the information is getting fed in... that I stress... here we are facilitators we are coaches we are facilitators to help and make sure players are performing at their fucking optimum, and if there are lifestyle issues then that is one of the reasons that Dave is as powerful a person as he is in this situation... and I can leave this room certainly and know that any issues that we might face with players have been dealt with fairly, alright we will have opinions but surely them coming to me is for an opinion, or for help, or for advice as they would be for any of us...

Simon- You can't be fucking blaming us for 24 hours a day, you have to be aware of it, but when you read that, fucking, what do we do here, 24 hours a day, say he's not sleeping very well, well what do you do? Alright mate... you only know a bit but you don't want to know it all do you? Do you?

Rob- Well I think its important to know your players isn't it?

Simon – Yeah but how much?

Ray again challenged Dean's perspective, but also used Dean's forceful reactions in that moment as an illustration of why players might not seek support. Simon also seemed to question the extent of support offered by a coach, in that '*you don't want to know it all do you*'. At this point everyone seemed to try and take a step back from their own frustrations, indeed a few sighed deeply and began lighter conversations amongst themselves perhaps to ease some of the cynicism and tension which the quotes had provoked. Rob, then asked, '*There must have been positive comments as well though surely?*' and I genuinely tried to reinforce an earlier slide which reflected many of those positive comments about the support players had felt they gained from coaches, which was indeed a theme itself, in that '*Some coaches provide psychological support from training and their own experience*' (SB-5; PK-192).

The focus group is now approaching 2 hours (which with its intensity I can assure you felt longer) and moves onto the theme of Personal relationships and performance (General dimension), and in an attempt to quicken the pace (knowing how much remained), clips were shown and I read through many of the quotes and slides in this theme. As I then pause for thoughts from the group, they seemed to listen and read each quote with a level of engagement that struck me at the time, and there was stillness amongst them:

[Quote on Screen]

...It affects me because I just feel like my mind gets cluttered, I start questioning myself, I question then whether I am being a decent person, whether it's me that's out of order in the relationship. It rings in my head...

...The first time something happened it affected me quite badly and I found that it affected my game...

...I think that us blokes particularly do not talk about things. I think you let it build up and then 3 weeks down the line someone will say to you, "what's up?" ... and bang...

...its quite a difficult subject relationships because nobody really likes to talk about what they are doing at home and I think we are all different like that...

Ray - "I can relate to it"... I had a marriage that wasn't right for some time and in the end, concentration was a real issue... concentration while I was batting was an issue, I got pinned twice, on the back of it, it was a lot to do with the fact that I had so much going on out of the game that it affected my game no doubt, so I can relate to that, some people... I don't know have an ability to put personal things a little bit on one side and don't let it affect their game, I would have thought there were fewer of those people, I would of thought that for the majority it would go hand in hand, home life enhancing your game...

Rays comments also offer support to player's suggestions that 'Having a relationship can affect a performing mindset' (MB-54; PK-198), and that 'It's difficult trying to just block out your relationship problems when at cricket' (NC-206; MB-54; NG-97; SBr-165). However, in contrast, Rob (who had similar marital problems) felt he was able to focus on his game despite such problems in his personal life, which offers an important balanced view and supports suggestions that 'Off field issues and player welfare don't affect all players' performances' (SB-8; KH-140; SBr-165, 170; HN-72; PK-198, 199, 201; NG-97).

The group then discussed how some players might use many of the issues being discussed as excuses for performances, which was something I welcomed as another balancing viewpoint in light of the quotes being presented. Tim then suggests that *'Seeing those clips up there I can imagine that being the hardest thing for someone to talk about'*, and as with Ray above, in a softer tone, Simon (who had remained quiet for a brief period) then speaks softly, if briefly, about his own personal life when playing as a professional.

Simon - I am saying that my concentration would waver, I will admit this, but not when it was important, my concentration would waver and I couldn't remember getting to Rinshire sometimes and I'd be like fucking hell, you know what I mean..., but it didn't waiver on jobs I had to do, when this is the time I had to do it. You know what I mean, it's the same as when you have a family bereavement, which I went through, with my mother, but I thought when do they want me to get on here, I will go and do it mate... you know what I mean and I could see it would affect some for a fortnight or a month or whatever, people are different aren't they...

The contrast of Ray's experience with Rob and Simon's marital problems reflect the uniqueness of every player's existence off the field. This holds implications for accompanying support structures and associated practitioners, and as described by senior professionals there is 'Most value in really knowing the "person" and what works for individuals' (PK-193; SBr-161, 162; NG-85; TS-36) and 'Man management and systems should reflect player's diversity' (HN-64; NG-93, 97; TS-40; DN-151).

As Ray agrees with Simon's points above, Simon's tone quickly changes again, and he seems to snap out of his personal reflection

Simon -I am saying that as a constructive statement, but him who is saying, oh it affected my performance, oh I want to go away for 5 months, he's a fucking wanker him in he... well lets be honest...

(Everyone laughing)

Ray - No I don't think he is a wanker

David -Then you wonder why you can't identify with the quotes earlier...

Simon – (Aggressively) I can, cause I can... I don't know where we are going with it, I have made a few notes but... why doesn't he just get it finished and piss off for Australia if

that's what he wants, he started to say oh it was on my mind I am not playing well, it's a load of bollocks in it?

Ray - No, no it's not...

Simon - Well we will disagree then mate...

Ray - That's alright I don't have a problem with that Simon... (Ray laughing)

David -I don't know...

Simon – (Interrupting) It's affecting his game, I want to finish with her, well why doesn't he get it done then and it won't affect his game, he'll then blame something else... I have a barrier between me and the coach, that'll be next...

Simon returned to his earlier perspectives and frustrations here (*it's a load of bollocks in it*), which again seem to question whether 'Personal problems affect your state of mind and performance' (2nd order) and perhaps more specific suggestions that 'Worrying affects your focus and cricket performance' (MT-102, 105, 110; MC-156; JA-24, 26). Having agreed to disagree with one another, Simon yet again seemed to take the players' comments personally (and although tensions have only just abated), this once again turned the atmosphere. By this stage my sense was that the disagreements and tensions, that at times seem so strong and so personal, have perhaps tired the group (and me), to such an extent that jaded laughter was the only alternative to any further opposition.

Simon -I am here to get players to play for Rinshire, good ones, and how I do it is fucking up to me as long as I am successful... and you can go on and go on all day... how many times do we say it Rob, what makes good teams...

Rob - Good lakers (players)...

Simon -Correct

Rob - But can they be better Lakers by getting sometimes some more support

Simon -You won't do it with soft twats that's for sure...

Dean - You have got to be careful haven't you... you would accept that over the last 7 years different coaching styles have been learnt from level 4...

(Ray and Rob start laughing at Simon)

Rob - Let him have his laugh over there...

Ray - Fucking soft twat...he said... get fucked

Simon - You enjoying this Dave?

Rob - aye it's on tape this, be careful

David -I am finding this fascinating...

Despite the tiredness I eluded too, the coaches again continued to reflect on the quotes in relation to their own personal lives, and Simon explained how *'I missed my daughters growing up through cricket and through me of course'*, while Ray agreed in that *'I haven't seen my daughter for 6 years'*.

The focus group then naturally eased into the last section of quotes under the heading 'Lifestyle, well-being, welfare and performance' (general dimension). On this theme, Ray was again someone who seems to show support for the quotes, and leaning back in his chair, suggests that *'There are a lot of cries for help isn't there?'*, and;

Ray – Cricket is all encompassing innit, day in day out sort of thing, I can remember there have been people who have struggled after cricket haven't they, suicides in ten times as many cricketers, who say committed suicide than any other sport, it's all engulfing in it...

Having been through many of the slides of 'Off field welfare' and 'Supporting player welfare and well-being' (both 3rd order), I then try to ask the coaches to reflect on the support available to players in terms of these particular areas and those previously mentioned.

[Quotes on Screen]

... if you have a bad lifestyle your not going to perform like you can, but if you have a good lifestyle and are happy in your lifestyle your going to relax more, and you will play your best sport and do anything better when your not nervous or worried about anything...

...It might put my mind at rest and when I come in it might make me a happier person...

... you play your best cricket when you're fairly relaxed and not too tense... one or two people probably thrive on bein' under pressure, but most people will play better when they're a bit more relaxed... I think if you can be happy and you can be comfortable in your life, I think you stand a much better chance...

I know when I have performed well it has been when I have been happy. Enjoyment has played a massive part and has been a primary goal in playing cricket. Some of my best days on the cricket field have been when I have been playing just to enjoy it and I enjoy the challenge of taking on good players and I enjoy performing under pressure...

...touch wood, my lifestyle is a happy one, I have got a house I am living with someone, its just steady away and its hard to say what I am getting across, its just a happy well being really...

Most people who just think that things away from cricket do not have an effect on the way you play, I'm not sure how I can't relate to that. Of course it does...

David -Do you think a lot of attention is played to player welfare and well being?

Dean – (Looking around the group) Yeah I do aye... I think, we have just got a general awareness, a general awareness of players' personal lives and their well-being I would say?

David -Do you think you are equipped to deal with those things? I know you are aware of them?

Dean - Who knows?

Rob - No we are not are we? We are not psychologically trained are we?

Simon -I am not a bloody marriage guidance counsellor, I can sympathise with somebody

Rob – Yeah we can listen and...

Dean – (Interrupting) We can be a supporting ear... that's never been an issue... a voice that has suddenly got a deaf ear... someone saying no fuck off I don't want to talk about that, that's bull shit, so you have a supporting ear haven't you?

Rob - That's all we have got though haven't we, that's all we can...

David -Is that enough?

Dean - How do you know?

Simon - Well how can it be anything else?

Dean- How do you know if it is or not? A lot of the times as Rob has said you know, if someone talks to you about an issue for 15 or 20 minutes, that can be the perfect tonic... I think there is a genuine support of players and their general well being, without a shadow of a doubt yes... What about you Ray?

Ray – I think there would be if a player felt like he could communicate?

Dean's belief in the awareness of "*player's personal lives and their well-being*" is something that I will return to in the next chapter in light of the experiences of players at Rinshire, but Ray seemed to support Rob's earlier views about communication at the club in his last comment. The quotes continued and outlined 'Considerations for practitioners supporting player welfare while working in the reality of professional cricket' (2nd order):

[Quote on Screen]

...Any sports club will look for some kind of pattern that they can control to produce success out on the field. If we do this training, if we do have this number of hours sleep, if we tick all of these boxes that we can control, that gives us the best chance of being successful out on the field. Yet very little time is spent on the most unstable bit of a sportsman's personality the most insecure part of his makeup, his life... It is not something that gets looked at and I think that it is something that should be looked at definitely...

Simon – (Appearing to become more frustrated) It's not our responsibility to do this... get on with your life man...

Dean - To me that is just excuses... that's my view...what do you think Ray?

Ray - I don't think it's excuses, I think it's someone crying out for some help there...

Rob - It would be interesting to see if the county employed 5 fucking Guru's instead of 5 coaches and what results they got... Cut coaching for a year, get lads in who they can all talk to and see how they perform, no one will ever do it but it would be interesting...

...

Simon- Are they going to look after the coaches as well these Guru's? Fuck me...

Ray- I could do with a Guru at the minute, I've had a fucking bad month...

Dean- (Reading under his breath) You could employ a lifestyle guru in the dressing room, but that's not gonna happen because they couldn't afford to do that either ...

Ray – You could see if I am seen going to the Guru that might be a weakness...

Rob – Who is this Guru, who's the top Guru?

Ray – That could be a weakness though couldn't it? (Laughing)...

Simon- What shall I do? Wear a long white coat, where are we going fuck me?

It seems that Simon and Dean continued to maintain their more sceptical perspectives (*To me that is just excuses*) while Ray and Rob continued to adopt more accepting views (*I think it's someone crying out for some help*). Again jovial references were made to a 'Guru' hear, which allowed me once more to return to players suggestions that 'The

person you speak with has to be professionally qualified and experienced enough to deal with the issues' (NC-207; KH-141; MT-104) or indeed wider suggestions relating to 'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk' (3rd order) and the 'Need for professional counseling skills and practitioners who are genuinely empathic, caring, honest and supportive' (2nd order). Discussions continued along these themes:

[Quotes on Screen]

... a lot of it is about being able to trust a person in order to talk in depth enough about these things...

I think it's hard to just introduce somebody and say, here I am, tell me your problems, you know, that's human nature...

If it's a stranger comin' in and sayin' look, come speak to me if you want to, you tend to sort of not go speak to him...

I think we've had it once or twice where the club has said look, you know there's a sports psychologist that you can go and see, but who is he, nobody knows him, so why you gonna go and see him?...

Dean - I think we would all listen to their plight, and if we have to listen longer I don't know, but you would listen surely...

Ray - Listen, listen, listen comes up doesn't it? It's a skill listening, it's a skill to be able to listen, isn't it...

David -It is to genuinely listen yeah...

Ray - Aye yeah I think it is... (Nodding)

In support of the previous dialogue, the short extract above reflects what the coaches felt they can do to support players, and the seemingly simple concept of 'listening', which was something players had referred to in that 'Sensing empathy and a real understanding of personal experiences builds a connection' (NC-207; FW-83; DN-147), and quite simply, 'The ability to listen is valuable' (NC-207). By now comments and viewpoints are again been repeated, and opinions are becoming more and more disparate:

[Quotes on Screen]

... every single person is an individual who deals with things in a very different way so if cricketer x had a bad do with his relationship he may deal with it completely differently. It's like 2 and 2 don't make 4 with people. What works for him may not work for him. It is a very grey area but you are constantly learning aren't you? ...

Simon – But what gives them the idea that that is our responsibility...They are saying this profession has, that's what I am reading, or the game of cricket has, however you want to word it... why?... You know, consider it with any other trade, fucking hell is it the foreman's job onsite... it's nothing to do with him...

Dean – Aye that's bloody true (Nodding at Simon)

Simon -If some twat gets their self in trouble then get out of it and sort it ... I don't know...

...

Simon -... we are talking pro sport it's a cut throat business mate, I think some of them have not quite got the right idea of what this is about, and if I don't do it somebody else is going to do it, and that has always been the case in Rinshire...

While Ray's continued to show sensitivity to these themes and a willingness to embrace such responsibility in his own work, Simon again questioned the need for his involvement in such areas and described the 'cut throat' reality of the sporting profession. The slides and themes are approaching their conclusion here:

[Quotes on Screen]

...everyone is different, as long as you perform out there, all this bull-shit you're interested in helping players with Dave, doesn't really matter...

...try all you want but ultimately from a cricketers perspective it's the way they perform that matters...

David - As I said I look at the person and what they go through, as I am sure you do, but I don't have to worry about that side of things do I? That is what I see myself doing at the moment, I just listen to players, people away from that, I am not in that (the county staff), I don't see it...

Dean - And when you have done that Dave, then what happens? (Looking and leaning toward me)...

David -That's what frustrates me because I do just hear stuff, so it just keeps going round...

Simon - Well how do you quantify it...

David -Quantify what?

Simon - What you are doing?

David -In what way?

Simon - With a player like you know?

Dean - What's your result?

David -I am not sure I have any? (Looking at Both Simon and Dean)...

Simon - That is what I am saying? ...

Dean - But I just wonder what is your result? ...

David -I wonder that too?

Dean - Do you know what I mean, we are all result oriented, bar none, and on top of that we have some pretty radical, pretty big decisions to make, again all of us... and what I ask is what decisions have you to make, and what results have you got which does allow nine tenths of what you have there to come out on your plate and maybe not mine or Ray's or Rob's...

David -Yeah, I think that's right and that's where I find myself floating round and thinking why am I doing that?

Dean - I am not saying that in a derogatory manner

David -No but I sometimes think like that, because I think well what is the value in that, there may be more value in not doing that, because I may open things up with players and then suddenly disappear for a week or, I am not going to anybody with the stuff I hear so what am I doing?

Ray - I would think that, a lot of the time if someone gets something off their chest, it often makes them feel better, rather than this bottling things up thing, I would think there is a lot of value to what you do, personally...(Looking at me)...

Dean - Ray I am not saying there isn't... It's a massive bloody thing as we have said...

Ray - But you cannot put it on a chart and say, this is what...

Dean - We can see it can't we? Do you know what I mean, you can see results, and I am asking can Dave see results and it would be difficult to see results, I suspect...

David -It's a difficult thing to quantify...

At this point the closing slides reflected Simon's earlier comment about what a 'cut throat business, pro sport' is, and Deans stance that 'we are all result oriented', in that 'performance is what matters'. I also tried to reflect some of the approaches I (am able to) take in supporting players and the potential value of supporting some of the generic themes from Study 1. This seemed to offer Dean and Simon an opportunity to question and challenge how I 'quantify' such support and what the 'results' are of such support, to which I had no real response (or quantifiable results), and although slightly threatened, I

found myself supported by Ray. Although challenged here, I also felt a degree of confidence, which seemed to stem from a sense of denial in some of the responses of the coaches, and perhaps even a sense of insecurity which had caused such emotive responses (and of course the experience I have been fortunate to have listening to players within my operational role). I did not dare to express such beliefs however, and by this stage knew the final round was approaching.

In closing I ask the group what they would do now based on everything that had been presented and discussed, and although everyone offers detailed responses, Simon and Ray's summations, appear to reflect quite well, the differing interpretations amongst the group on the material under discussion. In fact, as Ray finishes, I found myself remembering his earlier comments to me in private, '*you know, you have to have experienced some of these things to really understand them Dave*'.

Simon - Well I suppose I am the oldest and most set in my ways and I have found that has given me food for thought, but also I will be honest I have dismissed some of it, parts of it I thought yeah maybe I can learn from that, or and other parts I thought no not for me that.... But that's my prerogative in't it...

David - Yeah... Anyone else

Ray - There is not a lot on there that surprised me to be honest on your presentation, and I have felt a lot of those things through my life, you know, I am pretty strong now as a character, but all through from being young I have felt a lot of those things so I can relate to a lot of that and you know you are always growing as a coach and I think its heightened the awareness I think of some of the potential issues, that can be out there... and you look out for them...

3.5 – Study 2 - Discussion

What follow are contextual reflections relating to the general understanding gained from Woodshire and then Rinshire's focus group. These initial reflections relate more specifically to research aims (B) and (D) and theoretical messages that synthesise with the data. The next section then offers concluding and broader reflections on *both* focus groups, also alongside relevant literature. Following these broader reflections, and in light of focus group narratives, a lifestyle practitioner role and associated implications for practice are discussed. This discussion appears to offer implications for practitioners and so might relate more specifically to aim (C). However, when addressing a practitioner's role, this discussion does not occur in *isolation from* other research aims, but arguably continues to relate to coaches perspectives (i.e., aim D) and the potential influence of contexts, cultures and environments (i.e., aim B).

3.5.1 - Contextual Reflections on Woodshire CCC's Focus Group

The atmosphere during Woodshire's focus group appeared reflective and concerned, refreshing and coherent, consistent and astute, but also ended with a sense of uncertainty. The coaches were immediately sensitive and supportive and remained so in their reactions to the quotes, not only in relation to their own careers (*'I'm not negative at all as a person... but as a player... I had that'...* *'I'd feel more frightened of failure now than I would have done then'*) but also to the experiences of players now. The general enthusiasm and tempo of coaches' contributions when discussing the transition to the professional level also seemed to consolidate the coaches' personal connection and agreement with the early themes presented. While literature suggests coaches need to explicitly acknowledge the correlation that exists between an athletes well-being, welfare and performance (Vernacchia, 1995; Cassidy, Jones & Protrac 2005), from the beginning and then throughout the focus group, coaches at Woodshire regularly made links between a players lifestyle experiences and their performance (*'it does affect certain people, I think they do take it into their games'...* *'a lifestyle does have an affect on your emotional state'...* *'that would have an affect on his performance no doubt'*).

Jack's honest, empathic and critical contributions (*'I wouldn't know about some people taking their son out'...* *'I think that's where the work that you've done is so powerful'*) often seemed to deepen and challenge the atmosphere and other coaches throughout. Jack's natural reaction was to explore the difficulty of present players (e.g., referring to John Harrison and Quinny) and how support might be improved at the club. Such levels of authenticity seemed to encourage Liam and eventually Geoff to *critically* reflect on their own daily practice (at times harshly) and existing support available to individuals at the club.

My own involvement oscillated between facilitation and engagement, and while I appreciated his intentions, I also felt a degree of frustration in Geoff's early, and seemingly sophist, technically driven and symptom relieving (Corlett, 1996) suggestions (*'Is there a particular book you can force them to read as an academy player and test them on?'*). The 'learning to drive' analogy and associated solutions seemed somewhat simplistic, and only aimed at the young professionals' and (to my mind) were out of touch with the complexities I had heard during my tenure as practitioner and throughout the interviews in Study 1. When reflecting on the clubs previous attempts at supporting players with the issues presented, Jack was critical of support at both the academy and professional level, and with comments like *'we've been guilty in the past, in that we've given blanket' ... 'we need to improve our mental thought processes, get some psychologists in, "buff"...*', and seemingly negative reactions from players, the coaches seemed to arguably seek more socratically aligned (Corlett, 1996) *'expertise in that area'*. In this regard, Brewer, (2000) explained how coaches may at times seek referrals for their athletes to receive sport psychology and other services when ethically or professionally constrained (e.g., lacking competence to deal with the issue).

Numerous authors have commented on the need to 'be around', immersed, witness first hand, spend time and build relationships with athletes and coaches and become part of the sport environment as a practitioner (Gould et al., 1989; Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Bull, 1997; Anderson et al., 2004). In this regard, and in line with research aim (C) and (D), a critical eye was cast over the level of existing support in

the form of personnel available to players. Coaches suggested *'there has to be some sort of facility, known to our group of players'* and believed that their sport psychologist *'isn't around enough'*. In doing so Woodshire coaches appeared to draw parallels with themes from Study 1 in terms of better supporting players, including *'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk'* and essentially, the need for someone *'not being part of the process of affecting their careers'*. The latter is also supported by various authors (Dorfman, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991) including Rotella (1990), who while acting as practitioner in a support role with professional athletes wanted nothing to do with selection or cutting so not to hinder athletes from talking in an open and honest manner.

Clearly Woodshire coaches had picked up on and agreed with many of the issues being presented in their daily dealings with players, and attention regularly turned to the players at Woodshire (something which made an impression on me throughout) and notions of how to better support them. While honest and unthreatened responses also made an impression, they equally allowed the freedom to encourage self-reflection (*'...do I really look bothered... they tell me and then I'm like... oh no... oh wait a minute I have a phone call'*). This reflective atmosphere was seen as a major strength of the focus group methodology and offered opportunities for the researcher to encourage further reflection when coaches seemed keen on such a process (*'...that is very honest of you ...What about you two, because Jack has been very honest there'*).

Knowles et al. (2006) stated that coaching effectiveness is almost exclusively focused on competitive performance outcomes. Giges, Petitpas & Varnacchia (2004) described a world of forced achievement and unrealistic expectations in coaching. In this regard, and in line with research aim (B) and aim (C), whilst the coaches accepted and wanted to change players negative connotations and barriers associated with communicating problems (*'create that environment where they can and possibly do open up'*), Jack, Liam and Geoff also articulated the inescapably judgmental nature of a coach's role, the performance oriented accountability of coaching (*'see that's what we're judged on'*) and the reality and climate of professional sport itself (*'the closer you get to the sharper end*

the more it's based on results'). However, although to differing degrees, they always remained open minded and accepting of the lifestyle based experiences of young and senior professionals, realized their importance (*'we're talking about a players well-being'*) and potential links with performance (*'what you're finding is that there's a huge area which will affect performance that we are not aware of, or it's hidden from us'*). Jack also made reference to the researcher as a potential practitioner (*'a non threatening good ear... a good listener... you're looking at the person'*) in seeking to improve support for players.

Longer pauses, softly spoken contributions, few arguments and a relaxed but genuine debate seemed to allow the coaches to digest the *'powerful'* quotes, discuss live examples within the club (*'Quinny is one of them, and Rob Kenny's is another... you can just tell in their eyes'*) and possible ways forward. Indeed, on admitting potential faults in their own practice, the coaches did not condemn one another (nor did I), but instead seemed to trust and support one another without harsh judgment, thus encouraging further self-reflection and in turn even greater interest in opportunities for personal development and collective improvement (*'so how can we make it different'*). In terms of research aims (B) and (D), a sense of authenticity in their responses and a non-defensive context was something that dawned on me at the time.

Results from Woodshire's focus group also seem to offer support to Cassidy, Jones & Protrac (2005), who stated that although coaches are often counted on to act in emotionally sensitive *'counselling'* ways, in general they are not given adequate training to successfully deal with *'others'* intricate personal issues. In this regard, and in line with research aim (C), it is (in my opinion) a credit to these coaches that they are aware of and indeed heard very similar personal experiences to those presented. However, Woodshire coaches appeared to be uncomfortable at times in dealing with such sensitivities (*'that's going to be our judgment on whether we intervene...isn't it... otherwise you become too involved'*). Little seemed to surprise the coaches. However, the closing uncertainty and hesitancy over their own role, skill base and depth of involvement (thus addressing research aim C) in just how far they might let themselves go in supporting players with

such issues, seemed to leave them confused given their accepting take on their significance and influence.

3.5.2 - Contextual Reflections on Rinshire CCC's Focus Group

While Rinshire's focus group opened calmly, unlike Woodshire, the evolving reactions, dynamics and atmosphere appeared more defensive, somewhat self-centred (in some) and questioning of the material on view. While interpretations supported many themes from Study 1, interruptions and direct questions amongst one another (*'But do you tell them that?'*) also created a friction that grew with the sensitivity of the material. Ray's opening approach and ongoing receptiveness often moved me (*'I can relate to a lot of this because I have felt it'*); while others remained dismissive and their coarse language and aggressiveness encouraged disagreements that often left me frustrated but intrigued by such reactions.

Literature suggests humanistic coaching is associated with the display of a deep interest and emotional investment of care and concern regarding the welfare and development of an athlete (Vernacchia, 1995; Jowett & Cockerill 2003) and that coach-athlete relationships must encompass the whole person and be carefully nurtured and flexible (Cassidy, Jones & Protrac 2005). However, when Rinshire coaches were prepared to question current practice or reflect on examples of players' experiences at the club (*'what should we have been doing because he became very isolated'*), they appeared tentative in their manner, and a metaphorically indignant distance (in some) seemed to appear between the Rinshire players and coaches. In terms of this distance, researchers have commented that the athlete-coach relationship is fundamental in the process of coaching because its nature is likely to determine the athlete's satisfaction, self esteem and performance accomplishments (Lyle, 1999; Jowett & Meek, 2000). While the reader is encouraged to consider such a distance on reading the ethnographic material in Study 3, it would seem any practitioner seeking to support the lifestyle experiences of players at Rinshire, independently or collectively alongside coaches, would be better positioned to do so with a knowledge and understanding of coaches' perspectives.

Rinshire's focus group appeared to gain pace as Ray engaged in greater levels of honest self-reflection (*'I felt lonely for 15 years, from 20 year old to 35... (Pause)... I felt I was all on my own in life'*) which Rob seemed to support throughout, and yet the few ideas in terms of improvement seemed lost amongst tensions and personality clashes that left a tense, increasingly sour and intolerant atmosphere. My interpretation of this atmosphere appears to indirectly address research aims (B) and (D). More specifically, it appeared that having been 'a player' themselves, the material resonated with individuals in the group very differently. Some coaches strongly identified with the experiences of others (*'it was not just cricketing issues, it was growing up issues, life issues, which it affected me badly'*), not unlike Woodshire, whilst others seemed unable to do so based on their own careers and / or experiences in life. As discussions became more delicate, emotional, and at times aggressive; it was assumed (by some) that many senior players would be somewhat removed from many of the difficulties being presented (*'when you're older you think I will get out of that form tomorrow'*) and that players espoused issues may actually only be, excuses (*'it's a load of bollocks in it'*).

I was not a dispassionate bystander during Rinshire's focus group and as a result of such reported defensiveness I often found myself being questioned and threatened, but also supported by Tim and Ray. However, I was also prepared to (apprehensively) explore existing practice and perceptions based on my own experience in the club (*'I would be hesitant to come and talk to you'*) despite recognising how my own contributions often left me feeling vulnerable. A feeling perhaps not alien to some Rinshire players. As tones sharpened, volumes increased and body language and choice of words (*'well fuck em'*) suggested further irritation, animosity and personal offence (*'use me I am not bothered'*), I report how the atmosphere became intense with individuals seemingly intolerant of material (*'I just think that bottom one is crap'*) and determined to stand by their convictions (*'Well that's fine... but it still doesn't detract from my view'*). In doing so divides appeared which seemed to split the group and led to even more questioning of one another, and in turn, to somewhat contradictory viewpoints and experiences over current affairs at the club (e.g., views over Jonesy's behaviour). As composure dissolved,

volumes increased and sentences were being cut short; shared laughter (amongst those who shared similar views) and a detachment from the material (*'Well we will disagree then mate'*) appeared the only alternative to repeated disputes. However, as Ray often calmed the atmosphere with prolonged, uninterrupted, tender and personal contributions (encouraging respect and support from everyone, but particularly Rob), all coaches seemed to momentarily engage in the quotes (personally), almost letting their guard down somehow (*'I will admit this'*), before sceptical and aggressive perspectives often resurfaced (*'him who was saying, oh it affected my performance, he's a fucking wanker him'*) and masculinity remained intact (in particular regarding a coaches role, *'I am not a bloody marriage counsellor'* and the distinction between genuine difficulties and players just using *'excuses'*). These sceptical and masculine perspectives appear to draw parallels with those offered by Parker (2001). He described football institutions that exhibited a similar dominant masculine form, largely characterised by notions of heterosexuality, power, ruthlessness, authority and competitive aggression.

As Rinshire's focus group concluded, not unlike with Woodshire and in line with suggestions from Cassidy, Jones & Protrac (2005) regarding coaches being counted on to act in emotionally sensitive 'counselling' ways, coaches at Rinshire also questioned their own role (which relates to research aims C and D) in the support of players (*'what gives them the idea its our responsibility'... 'you don't want to know it all do you'*). Coaches also directly questioned the value and results of supporting players' non-performance and lifestyles oriented issues further (*'how do you quantify it'... 'what's your results'*). In line with Rinshire's direct questioning, Anderson et al. (2002) described how the effectiveness of applied sport psychology is ultimately judged by performance improvements, and that as professional sport grows, and money invested increases, the reality is that performance and results will increasingly become the yardstick against which *all* support people will be judged. In terms of this judgment, I had no quantifiable answers to coaches' questions, but by being honest, gained support for further engagement and better understanding.

3.5.3 - Concluding Reflections on Both Focus Groups

Firstly, the author would like to briefly comment on the occasional emergence of the researcher as a PL practitioner within the narratives (and possibly the eyes) of the coaches in moments of *both* focus groups. Momentary references to the researcher as practitioner reflect his PL operational experiences prior to the research venture (e.g., Jack – *‘That’s why you (nodding at the researcher) get the calls that you mentioned, because you are, a non threatening good ear... and a good listener’... ‘that’s where you (David) have a detachment’*. Tim – *‘I would still say they would go to David with some things’*). In addition, there were occasions when the researcher felt that his involvement in the focus groups went beyond that of background facilitation (Basch, 1987; Murphy et al., 1992; Bloor et al., 2001). During these brief moments the researcher felt able, if a little apprehensive, to respond and even challenge coaches’ perspectives (e.g., David - *I would be hesitant to talk to you, I have heard things and I am hesitant to come and talk to you, and yet when we had that meeting up there (pointing to his office) you showed me, you said come in and share something come in and talk... but I struggle with that...*’ David - *‘Then you wonder why you can’t identify with the quotes earlier’*). It seems important to address this fact and clarify to the reader the researchers positioning. During the moments I describe above, the researcher still felt that he was acting as a researcher, but was doing so, and was contributing *with* the knowledge and experience of a PL practitioner. Indeed, a pre-existing knowledge, experience and role appear subtle parts of the research process. In line with reflections from Kitzinger (1994), this may even be seen as a genuine strength of this phase of the research in that the researcher was not solely passive, but was able to maximise interaction (by occasionally challenging coaches directly regarding their practice) and urge debates beyond stages they might otherwise have ended.

Whilst the positioning and general emergence of the researcher has been described as an advantage above, one might also briefly consider aspects of social desirability bias (SDB) (Paulhus, 1991) or the tendency of subjects to respond in such a way as to present themselves in socially acceptable terms in order to gain the approval of others (King & Bruner, 2000; Loving & Agnew, 2001). The pervasive tendency of individuals to present

themselves in the most favorable manner relative to prevailing social norms has threatened to compromise research findings in the social sciences for more than 50 years (King & Bruner, 2000). To the extent that the effects of SDB represent a source of influence which obscures measurement of the primary relationships under investigation, validity may be compromised (Malhotra, 1988). It is therefore incumbent on the researcher to identify situations in which Study 2 data may be systematically biased toward respondents' perceptions of what is socially acceptable. Firstly, focus groups incorporate self-report measures that might naturally harbor potential bias (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). Study 2 also investigated potentially sensitive constructs that might encourage socially acceptable responses (Fisher, 1993; Mick, 1996) (i.e., a coach's take on Study 1 data had the potential to be personally and socially sensitive if they disagreed with players perspectives). Bias is also thought to be a concern in situations where subject anonymity is compromised, or when subjects anticipate the consequences of how their responses will be evaluated. King & Bruner (2000) suggested that confluence of two or more of these conditions in a single research design could result in profound SDB contamination of data. In Study 2, the researcher's unique position working for the National Governing Body (i.e., the ECB - whom the coaches gain their coaching qualifications from, and interestingly from whom, the counties also gain substantial annual funding) and operational role (working as a PL adviser within counties) might have encouraged coaches to respond in socially acceptable ways with regards their perspectives on the lifestyle based experiences of professionals. Indeed, at times one might suggest that coaches answered in ways that might be perceived as being publicly acceptable (e.g., to the ECB) or would meet my own approval (as a researcher interested in players lifestyle experiences). However, the author believes that a number of factors combined to moderate the potential for SDB. Firstly, the researcher ensured anonymity to encourage genuine disclosures without fear of repercussions from the NGB. It was then his own unique position and perhaps even reputation as a researcher *with* the knowledge, experience and role acceptance of an athlete adviser that meant coaches seemed to know, or perhaps feel, *I could* be trusted with honest responses. Perhaps coaches also knew I could not be *fooled* by socially acceptable responses. In addition, I might also argue that my own approach to facilitating the focus group, did not seek to *overtly* or *overly* judge coaches' responses. This non-judgmental approach seemed

to reconcile notions of SDB and encouraged *more* honest disclosures. More specifically, with responses like, ‘*he’s a fucking wanker him in he... well let’s be honest...*’ (Simon) or ‘*we’ve been guilty in the past*’ (Jack) and ‘*I find players are coming less to me*’ (Liam) one might argue that it was actually the above features of the researcher’s practitioner laden position/reputation and *predominantly* non-judgmental approach that arguably contributed to the researcher getting *closer* to the very heart of coaches honest perspectives.

In terms of the two focus group narratives they seemed different in both content and nature. They also seemed to take two different journeys and yet coaches at *both* clubs arrived at a similarly uncertain destination with regard the future support for players’ lifestyles. Literature outlined earlier suggested athletes non-performance and lifestyle based experiences can affect performance (see Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Loehr, 1990; Parham, 1993; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Douglas & Carless, 2005; Nesti, 2006). Literature also suggested that coaches need to explicitly acknowledge the correlation that exists between an athletes well-being, welfare and performance (Vernacchia, 1995; Cassidy, Jones & Protrac 2005) and their relationship within that dynamic (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Findings portray how coaches at Woodshire did appear to more readily acknowledge and support such suggestions and correlations within literature, while some (but not all) coaches at Rinshire actually seemed to readily dismiss and deny them, believing some player’s lifestyle experiences could just be used as excuses.

Essentially, there seemed to be two differing perspectives at two different clubs. Knowles et al. (2006) described how in the real world of coaching and practice ‘practitioners’ are often faced with situations in which wider personal, financial, economic, political and environmental factors combine to influence practice, meaning the neat application of theory to practice may (sometimes) appear too simplistic. Subsequently, however accurate previous content analysis themes and theoretical notions above may be, the reactions of *all* coaches in Study 2 reflect *real*, live and very different working cultures and contexts. Within these contexts, and in terms of Study 2’s research aims, the interpretations and reactions of ‘coaching practitioners’ appear to stem from their own personal histories as

professional players (together and independently), existing skill base, current role, frustrations, limitations, beliefs, views (of themselves and others), coaching philosophies, styles and performance pressures. It would seem that all (or a mixture of) these personal variables and situational factors have the potential to shape any lifestyle oriented support for players, whether that support manifests itself through a localised relationship between a player and coach, or through a more global supportive or unsupportive club culture. In light of these variables and situational factors it would appear that a player's life does not occur in a vacuum, nor totally separate from coach involvement or contextual influence. In this sense, the findings and dialogue in this study (combined with those from Study 1), appear to portray how coaches and contexts might potentially influence for better and / or worse, the *transitions* that occur in a cricketer's career and those in other domains of their life. More specifically, Study 2 data might inform various existing transitional models (see Bloom, 1980; Côté, 1999; Stambulova, 1994; 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée, 2004) in which the realities and potential influences of the environmental context, and in particular the contextual voices / influences of coaches, are rarely described.

Having mentioned the specific variable of performance pressure above, Giges, Petitpas & Varnacchia (2004) stated that coaches of elite teams are often forced to perform under high levels of pressure and operate under intense public scrutiny. The authors believed this can mean coaches live in a 'fishbowl' world of absolutes in which there is only winning and losing. In support of coaching literature (Côté, Salmela & Russell, 1996; van Rossum, 2001; Giges, Petitpas & Varnacchia, 2004) and in line with research aims (B) and (C), coaches from *both* clubs in Study 2 acknowledged the performance pressure that accompanies professional sport and how their (personal) coaching roles are ultimately and occupationally accountable to outcomes and performances. However, in some coaches a combination of this accountability and a disbelief in the relationship between a player's lifestyle experience and performance; seemed to leave them unaware of player's (particularly senior players) potential difficulties. The author wonders whether this combination and resulting unawareness might also act as a hindrance to any truly egalitarian, unconditional and non-judgemental relationships with players. The interpretations and contributions of (some) coaches in this Study therefore address

research aim (C); by highlighting the potential for practitioner roles in player oriented support *outside* those of coaching and its ultimate and occupational accountability to performances. This potential need also resonates with suggestions from players in Study 1 regarding the potential for practitioner roles ‘Supporting the individual’s lifestyle alongside the realities of professional cricket’ and roles ‘Supporting player welfare and well-being’. Findings relating to a potential lifestyle practitioner role; also resonate with suggestions within the literature (see Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; Balague, 1999; Brown, Cairns & Botterill, 2001; Ravizza, 2002; Lavallee & Cockerill 2002; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Anderson et al., 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) that advocate the need for caring, listening, non-judgemental and unconditional support, from practitioners whom understand the performance oriented context (see Petitpas & Champagne 2000; Brown, Gould & Foster 2005) within which they might pursue a humanistic agenda, but also possess counselling skills that empower them too (as Jack suggested) look ‘*at the person*’. Study 2 findings and this literature base offer an opportunity to further address research aim (C) and explore the potential intricacies of a lifestyle practitioner support role in player oriented support.

3.5.4 - A Lifestyle Practitioner Support Role & Associated Implications for Practice

The UK PL Programme explains how PL support involves ‘working closely with coaches and support specialists as part of an integrated team to minimise potential concerns, conflicts and distractions, all of which can be detrimental to performance’ (UK Sport, 2007). In this sense, Study 2 findings conceivably address research aim (C) by shedding light on what it might *actually* mean to ‘work closely with coaches’ in *live* contexts. For example, while attention at Woodshire turned to the difficulties of present players, a critical review of existing support, and coaches felt a freedom to discuss how provision might be improved, at Rinshire a distance appeared between the coaches and players and any ideas seemed lost in an infertile atmosphere. One might therefore assume that some coaches may champion and acknowledge lifestyle oriented issues and support whilst others might dismiss and deny their significance and value. At this time the ECB PL programme does not mention or offer guidance on how practitioners (e.g., PL advisers)

supporting the lifestyles of cricketers might work with or alongside coaches within the unique contexts of professional cricket. At an academy level it does mention that a 'core programme of support is agreed between the Academy Director and the athlete adviser based on the needs of the individuals in the academy', and that a core Academy programme consists of group based PL workshops and one to one support for academy cricketers (The ECB PL strategy document, 2005). However, the results of this Study suggest the need for an additional support role above and beyond academy level collaboration with coaches regarding workshop provision.

One might consider what this additional role at the professional level might entail and require in terms of working *with* coaches. Firstly, and in line with research aims (B) and (D), a practitioner who seeks to understand coaches' perspectives and contextual realities, would conceivably be in a more informed position from which to understand the context within which players experiences are occurring and the supportive or unsupportive part coaches may or may not be playing in ameliorating players' issues. Practitioners might then also be in a more informed position to act or advise players should they request or want their lifestyle problems (e.g., see 'personal relationships and performance') to be known to coaches. In this regard contextually informed practitioners would be able to anticipate which coaches specifically and contexts generally might understand and support players' issues or perhaps dismiss and deny them as merely excuses. Findings also allow the author to contemplate some of the disadvantages of not gaining the contextual understanding outlined above. Lacking such knowledge and understanding, practitioners might engage in efforts or processes (i.e., workshops and one to one support) that end up being contextually uninformed and at worst insensitive and misplaced and doing little to support the issues of the player. These suggestions also relate to findings from Study 1 which highlighted how players felt practitioners must consider and work to inform the contextual environment (of the sport and club) in any support offered, and that given the environments influence on a players well-being, any environment should seek to understand, accommodate and minimise player's problems' (e.g., see 'Considerations for the environment').

When seeking to work closely with coaches and managers (like those in this Study) or NGB's (e.g., the ECB), one might also consider notions of practitioner accountability. In this sense, matters of confidentiality and questions over who is the client and rules of engagement appear pertinent. At this time the PL programme and its practitioners are employed by the NGB of cricket, namely the ECB and have an association with the players union, the PCA. This employment status might be perceived as a strength of the programme in that if managers and coaches of counties were holding the purse strings to practitioners involvement they might want to know about what value (e.g., '*how do you quantify it*', '*...what's your results*') they were getting for their money and any changes in athletes issues (see Andersen, 2005). In this regard, Bond (2002) suggested that sport psychologists typically employed to work with athletes by sporting organizations or teams (e.g., Rinshire or Woodshire) sometimes find it difficult to define who the client is, how far confidentiality should extend, and to what specific information strict confidentiality should apply. Numerous authors (Andersen, 2000; Bond 2002; Van Raalte & Andersen, 2007) have also described the temptation of saying that the client is clearly the individual athlete and that while most would agree, where the athlete is part of a team in which the coaches employment and livelihood is dependant upon results (as is evident from this Study), the situation is not always thought to be so clear (Bond 2002; Van Raalte & Andersen, 2007). Equally, Anderson, Van Raalte and Brewer (2001) warned that if a psychologist becomes overly associated with a club (e.g., is always near the coach at practice or games) then athletes may be less likely to feel comfortable confiding sensitive material that they would not want to share with the coach.

While the employment status of the PL team has been described as a strength above, such accountability and status might not stop some coaches and managers from realising how 'powerful' (using Jack and Deans words) a lifestyle oriented practitioner could become and want to know (from any practitioner, whether sport psychologist or PL adviser) about issues in a players life that are currently, or might potentially, affect their performance. In this regard, Andersen, Van Raalte and Brewer (2001) described the pitfalls and quagmires of the sport environment and how serving confidentiality in the extremely un-confidential world of sport requires complex navigation. Equally, Andersen (2005) suggested that the

ethical principal of confidentiality is the foundation upon which a viable and healthy working alliance is formed. Andersen (2005) also suggested that training in ethical principals and behaviour is of paramount importance for practitioners, and that if one is not licensed, chartered or registered (as is the case for PL advisers), then one is not bound by the national code of ethics, and legally, but not ethically, can do and say all sorts of things. Therefore (and in line with research aim C), regardless of employment status and issues surrounding confidentiality, questions over who is the client and ethical matters of engagement seem pertinent to the current and future training and reputation of any practitioner (or programme) seeking to support the non-performance and lifestyle based needs of professional cricketers. Particularly within what appear to be intensely competitive and highly pressurised results driven contexts.

3.6 - A Brief Reflection on the Research So Far

Study 1 could only engage players in a one off, mid-season and retrospective interview. Nevertheless, it did offer foundational understanding of the non-performance and lifestyle based experiences of professional cricketers. However, some data also appeared more complex and *began* to reveal players' perceptions regarding some of the more elusive, convoluted, cultural, individual, interrelated, personal and private lifestyle needs of cricketers. Whilst these needs appeared to relate to their general emotional, cognitive and personal well-being, welfare and life in general, these needs could only be discussed retrospectively. Study 1 did offer further perspectives on how these needs might be supported, but could only do so from the players' perspective. In this regard, whilst players' perceptions did reinforce certain existing practices of the ECB PL programme, they also *began* to offer further guidance for practitioners and implications in terms of improving future support. However, Study 1 was unable to follow up the relevancy and currency of these implications in terms of supporting the everyday existence of a professional player.

Coaches in Study 2 were only engaged in a one off pre-season focus group. Equally, focus groups in Study 2 could only gain coaches perspectives on players experiences and *their* subsequent perception of the associated provision of support. Focus groups could also only gain an ephemeral sense of what it might be like as a player and as a lifestyle 'practitioner' within the idiosyncrasies and nuances of two clubs. In this sense, data could only paint a transitory picture of two live and different contexts at Woodshire and Rinshire, with the latter *appearing* to be one beset with tensions and differing takes on the experiences of players, which certainly contrasted the more accepting interpretations and *apparently* more coherent and cooperative atmosphere amongst the coaches at Woodshire. However, one might question whether these contrasting perspectives are actually a true reflection of reality. For example, in everyday reality, do coaches do what they say they do, and are these contexts as they appear? Data also suggested that a number of mediating variables and situational factors had the *potential* to shape any lifestyle experience and accompanying support offered to players. However, data was not able to be more

definitive or offer live examples of how these potential mediating variables and situational factors influence player's experiences and accompanying provision. Study 2 did highlight the potential for practitioner roles in player oriented support outside and perhaps at times alongside those of coaching, but was unable to fully explore this potential further. The possible intricacies of such a role did include a notional discussion on the development of contextual awareness and aspects of practitioner accountability and confidentiality, but such a discussion could only be discussed in a hypothetical sense alongside Study 2 data.

In light of all of the above, both Study 1 and Study 2 have their limitations. Essentially, up to this point of the research, Study 1 and Study 2 have *only* explored players and coaches' (i.e., others) experiences and perceptions and accompanying ideas for future provision. Equally, neither Study has been able to explore the specific aims of this research *within* live contexts or in real time, *during* and *throughout* an entire competitive season. Nor has either Study granted an opportunity for the researcher's experiences and perspectives to come forth. In this sense, there remains a *need* to explore further.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY 1: PLAYER INTERVIEWS

Chapter 2 - Study 1 aims;

- A. To (better) understand the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.

In season - May 2005 to September 2005



STUDY 2: FOCUS GROUPS with Coaches at Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Clubs

Chapter 3 – Study 2 aims;

- B. To explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support.
- C. To explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers.
- D. To explore the coaches' perspectives of the lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers and their subsequent perception of the associated provision of support.

Pre-season - April 2006



STUDY 3: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT & CREATIVE WRITING following Rinshire & Woodshire County Cricket Club Second Teams

Chapter 4 – Study 3 aims to address;

Research Aim (A), aim (B) aim (C) and aim (D); but also

- E. To undertake prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement to further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer during an entire cricket season.

Entire competitive season - April 2006 to end of season September 2006

4.1-Study 3 – Aims & Methodology - Ethnographic Engagement & Creative Writing

In light of the brief section entitled ‘reflections on the research so far’; at the end of the preceding chapter, Study 3 recognises a *need* to further explore the specific aims of this research. However, in addition to seeking further exploration of research aim (A), aim (B) aim (C) and aim (D), the researcher also created another research aim, bespoke to the unique methodology of Study 3. This aim is;

- E. To undertake prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement to further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer during an entire cricket season.**

To clarify, Study 3 aims to continue exploring and better understand the (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers (i.e., aim A), but seeks to do so *within* the actual *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket. Essentially Study 3 aims to explore the daily existence of players within their everyday milieu. Study 3 will also continue to explore contexts, cultures and environments in terms of their potential influences on players’ experiences and any accompanying support (i.e., aim B). During this exploration Study 3 also aims to continue exploring the role and associated skills of (allied) *practitioners* in supporting the *lifestyles* of professional cricketers’ (i.e., aim C), including coaches’ perspectives, and their perceptions of the associated provision of support (i.e., aim D). However, by undertaking prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement, Study 3 also aims to build on and then go further than previous Studies, by seeking to explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer (and the aims above) *during and throughout* an entire cricket season. Essentially, Study 3 aims to explore the above research aims, *as they happen*.

To achieve these aims, and in particular aim (E), principals and processes of longitudinal ethnographic engagement and creative writing were embraced. This methodological perspective and its associated principals and processes are outlined in detail in the sections

that follow. In doing so, qualitative researchers and qualitative literature are drawn upon (Sparkes, 1998; Tedlock, 2000; Foley, 2002; Tierney 2002; Krane & Baird 2005).

4.2 - The Process of Ethnographic Engagement – April 2006 through to September 2006

Biddle et al. (2001) raised questions about whether the sport psychology community wished to stay in the comfort zone of interview and content analysis or whether new qualitative horizons could be embraced. More recently Krane & Baird (2005) discussed ethnography and advocated greater flexibility and more latitude in research design, to encourage creativity in finding the best strategies to answer a myriad of questions and entry into uncultivated paradigms. Furthermore, Tierney (2002) suggested qualitative researchers broaden the narrative strategies used in research and open up a space in social science texts for a more protean and engaged portrayal of the lives we observe and live. In order to attempt to further explore this studies research aims, the author adopted a prolonged ethnographic perspective. The ethnographic process is summarised by Tedlock (2000):

“...by entering into close and relatively prolonged interaction with people... in their everyday lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other approach...” p456.

It was envisaged that an ethnographic approach would enable the author to feel, sense and (perhaps) understand the culture of cricket from a player, coach and researcher perspective. The aim of the ethnographic process was also to understand the culture within each club from the perspective of the players, coaches and the researcher (see Wolcott, 1995; Tedlock, 2000). This process aimed to discover a more meaningful appreciation of the social context and a fuller understanding of professional cricketers’ specific and individual encounters, events, experiences, behaviours, values, emotions and mental states (see Chambers, 2000; Krane & Baird 2005). Krane & Baird (2005) recently suggested that ethnography would benefit researchers interested in controversial or sensitive issues in

sport, and provide an avenue for developing closeness with athletes who would arguably be more likely to disclose beliefs, opinions, or behaviours not ordinarily discussed or readily revealed in single interviews.

In summary, authors from sport psychology and the social sciences have commented on the need to continue challenging and stretching epistemological and methodological boundaries (Sparkes, 1998; Tedlock, 2000; Biddle et al., 2001; Foley, 2002; Tierney 2002; Krane & Baird, 2005), and as Martens (1987) had suggested years earlier, employ methods that integrate the practitioner and researcher. In this regard, Krane & Baird (2005) suggested putting sport psychologists (or in this case the PL practitioner-cum-researcher) in the thick of the data to truly hear the voices of athletes and coaches, help satisfy an area of research needed in applied work and deepen our understanding of their experiences.

4.2.1 - The Process of Entering the Setting

Ethnographers (typically) begin with gaining entry in to a setting, which initially involves building rapport, developing trust, and garnering interest with gatekeepers to obtain access into the field (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). In this study entry was readily supported by gatekeepers (see Sands, 2002) as the researcher had already established rapport (and arguably a degree of acceptance and acknowledgement of role) with players and coaches. The reader may also recall supportive suggestions for further engagement from coaches at the end of focus groups in Study 2 (e.g., see page 190).

An ethnographic outsider is a researcher not originally a member of the culture, whereas an ethnographic insider has been a member of the culture under study (see Ely et al. 1991; Wheaton, 2000; Lofland, 2000; Berg, 2001). There are thought to be benefits and challenges of both positions. In this Study the researcher aligned himself as something of an ethnographic outsider (i.e., researcher), but also as someone *with* the privileges, relationships, acceptance, experience, opportunities and degree of knowledge, of an ethnographic insider. As in Study 2, the author would again like to clarify his position to

the reader in terms of the ethnographic engagement and creative writing that follows. In this Study, the researcher adopts a prolonged ethnographic perceptive and writes creatively *with* the knowledge and experience gained from being a PL practitioner.

4.2.2 - Experiences as Researcher / Ethnographer within the Setting

Upon entrance to a setting, building rapport remains essential to the success of fieldwork and researchers must be able to fit into a social group and maintain a high comfort level among all individuals (Krane & Baird, 2005). Poor rapport is thought to result in poor data, because without trusting relationships, participants will not be willing to open their lives to the researcher. In this regard, the researcher's previous relationships and experiences as a practitioner, and growing relationships with players and coaches from more intense involvement (outlined below), were thought a major strength of this phase of the research. However, the researcher did not know all players and coaches, and to establish rapport, made every effort to be sincere, communicate empathy, break through communication barriers, understand and employ the participants' language, establish common ground, assist in everyday chores, and remain humble (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The process of engagement was limited to second teams given that academy, junior professional and senior professional players all occupied team places and because the researcher was more familiar with players (and vice versa) within these teams. This decision was also made because the researcher had commitments as practitioner working for the ECB PL programme and so could not follow more teams. Prolonged engagement involved 7 months observing, following and interacting with players and coaches over the entire 2006 county cricket season. The season ran from the beginning of April through to the end of September. Involvement included being at games and training sessions, on playing and non-playing days, and travelling and staying with teams in hotels during away games. Days within these settings would regularly last from anything up to 18 hours, with breakfast at 7am, players 'on deck' (on the field) at 9.30am, (4 day) games starting at 11am and finishing beyond 7pm. Down time (e.g., evening meals) in hotels followed

games. During away trips, days like these might also last for 6 consecutive days and 6 consecutive nights.

To ensure players and coaches were aware of my involvement and research, and in an effort to adopt more overt, humanly involved and politically correct research practices (Tedlock, 2000), the players at each county were addressed at the first game of the season. Second team coaches (Jack and Geoff at Woodshire, and Ray at Rinshire) addressed players with regards to my 'research' over the coming months. In addition, when observing and seeking to further understand players in their working environment over such a period, it was important that the researcher (and any accompanying equipment) did not become an obstacle and / or liability within the respective environments (Mitchell & Charmaz, 1998). In this regard, the researcher did not use a dictaphone, specific notepad or any other means that might destroy existing relationships, trust, create hostility, hinder existing access, future access to others, or damage professional liability (Mitchell & Charmaz, 1998). The researcher also felt that using a dictaphone or any other means of recording data (e.g., conversations and interactions) would be inappropriate in changing rooms, hotels and the sporting environment in general. Furthermore, because the mere presence of the researcher could have altered the behaviour of players and coaches (see Le Compte & Schensul, 1999), the researcher was careful not to allow his own presence to change the culture. This involved acting and operating as I had previously in my operational role as a PL adviser, and maintaining a low profile in an attempt to blend into the setting and encourage players and coaches to act naturally (see Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Krane & Baird, 2005). While the researcher could not literally become invisible, the researcher did make every effort to remain unobtrusive, and sought to achieve what Krane & Baird (2005) described as transparency, in which the researcher role, not the researcher per se, becomes transparent. This level of involvement enabled the researcher to interact with players and coaches, have discussions and acquire knowledge about the group whilst minimising disruption.

During Study 3 I was still employed and operating as a PL practitioner. However, I would like to stress that what follows in Study 3 is prolonged ethnographic research. Whilst some

aspects of the ethnographic engagement in Study 3 might naturally draw parallels with the practice of a PL adviser (e.g., listening to players and visiting games), there are also a number of distinctions that classify Study 3 as I do above. For example, at the time of writing, a PL adviser is not required to record all of their (ethnographic) experiences in written form. A PL adviser might also only be required to focus on the educational and career oriented aspects of player oriented support. PL advisers are also not required to stay over or travel with teams during away games or immerse themselves in locations (e.g., changing rooms, gyms, bars, restaurants) players choose to frequent. Finally, a PL adviser might not set out with the specific aim's outlined at the start of this chapter, in particular the aims of exploring the role and associated skills of (allied) *practitioners* in supporting the *lifestyles* of professional cricketers' (i.e., aim C), including coaches' perspectives on the associated provision of support (i.e., aim D).

Whilst I use these arguments to differentiate my practitioner and researcher role, I feel it would be somewhat disingenuous to claim *complete* differentiation and claim I was only ever an ethnographic researcher during the season. Indeed, my pre-existing knowledge, experience and operational role at that time continue to appear subtle parts of the research process. I also do not know whether *all* players and coaches *always* perceived me as a practitioner-cum-ethnographic researcher despite everyone being informed of my research venture. I therefore acknowledge that whilst what follows in Study 3 is what I perceive to be prolonged ethnographic research, I was still operating as a PL adviser *during* the data collection of Study 3. Whilst extensive reflections on practitioner-cum-researcher experiences are addressed further in the final methodological discussion, it seems appropriate to clarify the researcher's perception of this research.

4.2.3 - Recording Observations & Interactions

Observation provided the backbone to the ethnographic process (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), which has also been described as taking mental pictures with a wide angle lens (Spradley, 1980). The process involved the researcher creating a comprehensive, descriptively detailed, and conceptually framed understanding of players' and coaches

(and my own) experiences as they happened (Lofland, 1996; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; Tedlock, 2000). The researcher participated in the daily activities of the social group while conducting these observations (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1995). While the researcher was not a member of the playing team, he did participate in all daily activities aside from those 'on the field'. During this process the researcher observed and recorded as much detail about the environment as possible, starting out with a broad focus primarily describing aspects of the culture (Krane & Baird, 2005). Krane & Baird (2005) reviewed a variety of means through which the ethnographic record can be shaped, and those most relevant to this methodology are outlined below.

The researcher generated rich data by taking notes at the end of (but not during) each day. These notes were written from memory and included accounts of a day observing, descriptions of players' and coaches' actions and shared conversations and events (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Whilst elaborated on later, notes and reflections were also made on the research process, including my own personal behaviours (and struggles) as a researcher in the environment (see Sparkes, 1995; 2002; Krane & Baird, 2005). Often shaping these notes were informal or formal, structured or unstructured conversations and interactions with players and coaches. These conversations and interactions sought the words of the people under study, and it is thought that the richer the accounts the better (Ely et al. 1991). Krane & Baird (2006) suggested an example of this in a sport setting would be chatting with athletes in the locker room after practice or talking to coaches while the team conducts a warm up. In this study, the researcher engaged and interacted with players and coaches within the playing environment, and spent time in dressing rooms, on viewing balconies, spectator seating in stadiums, in hotels, bars, night clubs, restaurants, gyms, on long car journeys and anywhere else players and coaches went. All of the above required the researcher to write notes and reflections within a research log / reflexive journal (Ely et al. 1991), or as is termed in this research, the (electronic) 'ethnographic source document' (refer to data authenticity file). Reflections were completed after an observation, conversation or interaction at the end of a day (and / or night), with the researcher often writing in his hotel room into the early hours of a morning. In line with suggestions from Krane & Baird (2005), no more than 24 hours elapsed before attending to ones writing,

and another days writing did not occur before notes from the previous day had been completed.

4.2.4 - The Process of Biographical Positioning

If the researcher is to produce a more defensible interpretation of his or her fieldwork then there is a requirement to explore the self and the other relationship (Foley, 2002). The researcher did not purport to approach the field setting as a blank slate or from an objective position; instead he brought his personal history, conceptual dispositions, and epistemological perspectives with him (Krane & Baird 2005). In this sense, such personal perspectives shaped the ethnographic source document. Krane & Baird (2005) explained that in ethnography researchers socially construct data, should not be separated from data, and that the researchers influence on the setting and data should be considered. In addition, Foley (2002) stated that self critical awareness also allows the researcher to realise their limitations as an interpreter and helps deflate fantasies about absolute truth and objectivity. Essentially, engaging in and writing with self-critical reflexivity as a researcher, helped position the author / researcher with respect to what I know, and how I know it (Sparkes, 1998). The difficulty here was to identify which part of the author's biography were relevant, and how this could be written without engaging in self absorption or providing narcissistic undertones (see Sparkes, 1998). In light of the above, the process of self-reflective writing offers the perspective through which the practitioner-cum-researcher interpreted the data, including the 'so called' facts and ideological assumptions that are attached to such a position (Denzin 2002). It is hoped that my own self-reflective writing will help better position the reader to judge and interpret the research (Foley, 2002). Up to this point, I have offered the reader biographical context through self reflective writing and positioning, as depicted under the headings 'Researcher as practitioner', 'Further positioning of the researcher', and reflections from the author's own 'Autobiographical narrative' at the start of the literature review and more extensively within the data authenticity file. These reflections consider, position and attempt to offer the reader more clarity on my perspectives and experiences as a (PL) practitioner and researcher regarding issues relating to player oriented support, cricket and life in general.

4.2.5 - Representation of the Ethnographic Data

Tedlock (2000) stressed that the (researcher as) author must recognise, and hence represent, the human being in a multiple strata of reality, which may be organised in different ways. He also stated that because ethnography is a process and a product, ethnographers' lives are embedded within their field experiences in such a way that all of their interactions involve moral choices, that the experience is meaningful, and that subsequent outcomes are generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. Consequently, representing players' (and coaches') lifestyle experiences and accompanying notions of support through embedded ethnographic processes required the researcher to firstly consider, and then offer a more contemporary form of representation. The use of the passive voice, the avoidance of employing the first person, and an emphasis on a disengaged narrative or 'author evacuated text' (Geertz, 1988) are hallmarks of positivist texts (Tierney, 2002). However, the break with positivism by qualitative researchers has seen a corresponding movement toward texts that use the active voice, utilise the first person, and aim for a more dramatic retelling of events (Tierney, 2002). The researcher therefore asked himself how he might put himself into the ethnographic text and with what consequences (see Richardson, 2000). In this sense, Tierney (2002) explained that any author:

"...ought not to be omniscient as if he or she is merely a recording instrument presenting neutral data..." p388.

Tierney (2002) also suggested that the social science text has seen a reflexive turn, and that the 'researcher-cum-author' should become actively engaged in the text, and that any previous notions of objectivity or neutrality were misguided. Importantly, Tierney (2002) also believed that writing is a craft, and referred to the dangers of assuming that the author can capture (or has the ability to capture) vivid experiences and / or the qualities of an individual just by simply inserting *the self* in the text. Representation of data was therefore not merely about the use of the first person – 'I' – in the text, but was also about how to utilise the experiences of the 'researcher-cum-author' as a way to make meaning. Tierney

(2002) believed that the use of the voice in the text is more of an epistemological concern about studying / working / collaborating with the other (e.g., players), and advocated the need for the reflexive insertion of the author in the narrative, where writing should attempt to capture the critical relationship between the researched, the researcher and the reader.

Having considered all of the above, what follows in the results and discussion section of Study 3 are the researcher-cum-author's tales of the 'self' (i.e., I) and the 'other' (e.g., a player or coach), without letting the 'self' dominate the text unnecessarily (see Tierney, 2002), or neglecting the concern for understanding the non-performance and lifestyle experiences of players and notions of how to improve support. In the next section the author emerges where appropriate to help move the story along (see Micthell & Charmaz, 1998). The researcher as author presents both the self and the other together within a single narrative frame that concentrates on the process, characters and emotions of the ethnographic experience (Tedlock, 2000). This process enables a multiple voice dialogue (i.e., of myself and others) to occur within the text. This means representations of the players, coaches and my own experiences are presented together to provide a narrative that attempts to capture the vividness of a scene and the unique voices and lives of individuals in ways that normal social science texts cannot (see Tierney, 2002). The inner feelings and reflections of the researcher-cum-author (myself) are therefore presented in, and are part of, the results of Study 3.

4.2.6 - Constructing the Narrative

The 'Ethnographic source document' (refer to data authenticity file) houses a plethora of reflective narratives, behaviours, scenes, experiences and interactions with players throughout the *entire* 2006 cricket season. However, the narrative presented in Study 3 offers a more concise and edited version. This narrative has been through a reworking of observations and experiences (Okely, 1994), which involved ongoing development of understanding and discussion within the supervisory team similar to the rubric in Study 1 and Study 2. Whilst triangulation did not act as a means of validation, this process did enable further reflexive moments and decisions on how to present the data (Davis, 2000).

Subsequently only those reflections thought most closely related to the non-performance and lifestyle experiences of players and accompanying notions of support (i.e., the research aims) have been extrapolated. To structure these extrapolations, one critical outcome of the discussions outlined above was the decision to create a *timeline* from the beginning to the end of the season to best represent the *reality* of cricketers' experiences. This timeline was thought to be the best means of portraying an accurate, *faithful*, *believable*, *credible* and *authentic* representation of players' experiences and (importantly a sense of) the season itself. These elements (in italics) are thought fundamental when judging, evaluating and interpreting an ethnographic text (Lincoln, 1993; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Ellis, 1995; Schwandt, 1997; Sparkes, 2000). Indeed, new ways of writing and knowing also invoke conversation about criteria for judging ethnographic work (Richardson, 2000) and various kinds of tale (Biddle et al., 2001). In this sense, much has been written about how to deal with issues such as reliability, validity, trustworthiness and data analysis (Tierney, 2002). These are all methodological notions addressed and reflected on in the final discussion.

The timeline structure was chosen instead of a more fragmented collection of intermittent and exclusive short stories and case studies. The author felt that whilst these forms of representation might have been easier to present, they simply would not have been as effective in exploring this Studies research aims or able to convey the convoluted reality and flow of an entire county season. Within the timeline the text moves along in a differential way, for example, the narrative may track one moment to another, sometimes from one day to another, but also from one week to another. To explain, one minute you may be reading about the events at a game and then find yourself reading about being back at the team hotel, or even at another game altogether. In addition the two teams which I follow regularly interweave, with one (team or story) sometimes seeming more prominent than the other. Such occurrences are simply due to the nature of the fixtures at that point within the season. Although every effort has been made to ease your journey through the timeline, a more uninterrupted version of the material is available within the ethnographic source document. Occasional anecdotes will provide further insight and portray the depth and breadth of experiences that (often unpredictably) arose over the course of the season.

More specifically, the narratives and timeline represent the understandings of the researcher, and the players' and coaches' subjectivities, beliefs and way of looking at the world (Corker, 1999). Creative non-fiction vignettes act to illustrate moments from the (past and otherwise lost) timeline, from April through to September 2006. Together they help to tell a story.

4.2.7 - Introduction to the Ethnographic Timeline & Four Reflective Stop Offs

Having outlined how the narrative of Study 3 was constructed and represented, I would like to clarify how and where the narrative is *discussed*. Within the ethnographic timeline that follows are four (what have been termed) reflective stop offs. Stop offs serve several functions; firstly, given the extensive nature of the narrative, it was hoped that natural and appropriate breaks (stop offs) from the timeline would help the reader digest large amounts of data. Secondly, I believed these stop offs provide the perfect platform from which to engage in reflection *and* discussion on the preceding narrative. The four stop offs also naturally accommodate the integration of relevant data from Study 1 and Study 2. This process has resulted in four reflective stop offs that discuss and comment on the reflective narrative of Study 3 alongside the perspectives of coaches in Study 2 and thoughts of players in Study 1. Having read texts by Basch (1980) and Andersen (2000), I realised that a structure and style of first presenting narrative, and then engaging in inductive and deductive discussion on that narrative; would help guide the reader through an extensive text.

Before the timeline begins I would finally like to make a few things clear to the reader with regards the nature and representation of the multi-layerd data set *and* discussion ahead. The reflective timeline (in normal font) was written during the 2006 season and has been through a reworking of observations and experiences (Okely, 1994). In addition, another narrator voice appears at times (*in bold italics*) to guide you through the timeline changes I have mentioned above. This voice will serve to introduce you to the diverse contexts you will visit upon (e.g., different player's experiences at different clubs). On four occasions I then engage in further inductive and deductive discussions as narrator (*in*

bold) during four reflective stop offs to draw out key implications from the data (see Krane, Andersen & Strean, 1997). These reflective stop offs also integrate data from *all* three data sets. For example, occasional and very specific content analysis themes (as in Study 2), with accompanying (and predominantly new) raw data quotations will be integrated in these stop offs where recurring themes continue to surface. Focus group extracts and coaches' contributions (including new extracts and those relevant but already read) will also be provided from each county (indented and with background shading), relevant to the passage you currently read (e.g., more detailed extracts from Woodshire regarding Quinny who is mentioned in the previous chapter). The reader is thus afforded the opportunity to read the ethnographic text of Study 3 alongside understanding gained from Study 1 and Study 2 and elements of relevant literature.

Despite sport psychology being a separate support strand alongside PL in cricket, this thesis has naturally sympathised with literature closely associated with sport psychology research and practice. This association is also supported by sport psychology literature and sport psychologists reflecting on notions of lifestyle oriented support in their work, but also by a lack of any other practitioners (e.g., PL advisers) articulating their experiences in providing lifestyle oriented support. The literature review concluded that the similar aspirations of some Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and some Sport Psychology practitioners appeared to lead to cross over of services that stemmed from any approach to practice that was interested in the *person* and *any* issues (including non-performance based issues) in their life. It also suggested that practitioners from both Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and Sport Psychology were seeking to support a similar niche, namely, *the support of people's lives in sport*. Whilst lifestyle oriented support remains the focus in Study 3, the four reflective stop offs will continue to be associated with research and practice in sport psychology and use this literature base to draw out implications for practitioners (whether a sport psychologist, a PL adviser, or an allied practitioner) seeking to support the non-performance and lifestyle oriented experiences of professional cricketers.

To clarify then, following the two county focus groups conducted in April 2006 (Study 2) relating to feedback from players interviewed from May to September 2005 (Study 1), I wrote (and then rewrote) the following ethnographic reflections on my experiences with the second teams of Rinshire and Woodshire CCC during the 2006 season (Study 3).

4.3 - Study 3 - Ethnographic Engagement & Reflections

“...First at Breakfast, Last in the Bar...”

The following key is provided to help the reader maintain clarity of characters and matches throughout the narrative.

*2CH - Second team championship match, 3 or 4 day competition.
SET – Second eleven trophy, one day competition.*

Rinshire Coaching Staff

*Dean Mason – Rinshire Director of Cricket /First Team Manager
Simon Sheldon – Rinshire Bowling Coach
Ray Nolan – Rinshire Second Team Manager
Tim Ryder – Rinshire Academy Director
Rob Keep – Assistant coach*

Woodshire staff

*Jack Harper – Woodshire Player Development Manager / Academy Director
Geoff Randel –Second Team Manager
Terry Stokes – Director of Cricket / First Team Coach
Liam Moreton – Batting Coach*

Players

*Broady – Established senior player at Rinshire
Quinny – Young professional player at Woodshire*

Miscellaneous

Out ground – a club ground where counties games are sometimes played.

Monday 8th May 2006 - Fellfordshire v Rinshire – 2CH

Walking into the county ground I notice Charlie's picture on posters all around the stadium. Promotional posters show him stood arms aloft having scored a tonne in his last game for Fellfordshire (v Rinshire first team). I slowly walk into the ground until I spot Ray and Tim sat down; they are in spectator seating behind the bowler's arm, a place most coaches go for a good view of the action and where I'm sure I'll spend a lot of my time this summer.

"...what's with shoes lad...?" (Jovially shouted out by Ray toward me)

Both Ray and Tim start talking about Charlie (26 years old, and had been at Rinshire from academy upward) on the opposing team who is now scoring runs for free, including the game against Rinshire. A few supporters are sat around, but not close enough to hear and we talk, happily, jokingly, the usual banter for a while. Then a degree of seriousness arises as we each give honest comments about the fact Charlie has been given a chance to regularly play first team cricket at Fellfordshire. Indeed I asked why, for someone with such talent he stagnated and never really broke into Rinshire's first team. Everyone gives their thoughts about why he's getting runs, but all agree that he no longer has the history of how he's been *treated* at Rinshire forever at the forefront of his mind. The word '*treated*' stayed with me. Although only a snapshot (and Charlie isn't included again), I offer this moment to start to paint a picture of Rinshire and the treatment of existing players at the club.

Early in the game, Simon is getting out of Dean's car at the other end of the ground. They've been watching together in the distance. Simon is quickly walking towards a player (Oli) and aggressively gestures about fielding positions to him on the boundary. Ray says that's out of order:

"...you can't do that..."

"...what's grumpy up to now...? (Tim)"

The conversations suddenly become a little less relaxed. Ray and Tim guess what's been said for a few minutes, and discuss the likely tactical alterations being suggested (the bowlers shouldn't be bowling round the wicket as they are). Dean is now getting out of the car, and he begins walking round the ground and round the perimeter towards our position. He looks smart, but it strikes me that while walking round the boundary edge towards us, despite being still some distance away, the man looks enormous. He's tall and has a slim build, but the image is physically intimidating. As he approaches, the weather begins to change, it's getting freezing, darker and while the three of us are sat round grasping coffees to keep warm, Dean marches over wearing a short sleeve shirt and trousers. The three of us welcome him. He sits beside me and suddenly I find myself between Ray and Dean, and having witnessed the tension within their relationship during Rinshire's focus group, I know it's not likely to be a comfortable place to be. Immediately Dean relays his concerns regarding the tactics, bluntly and aggressively, looking straight across me and at Ray:

"...why the hell are they playing like this, why is Oli bowling to this field, on that line and length, he'll increase his chances of getting wickets by?"

Ray seems to laugh things off, tries to remain in control, tries not to get rattled but clearly feels agitated by such reactionary remarks. Ray keeps staring forward but clearly feels uncomfortable. He's gone quiet, but can handle Dean on this occasion, or perhaps put him off for now anyway. The aggression eventually dissipates and the conversations become more general. I'm still sat in

the middle looking at the action (without paying much attention) almost not daring to look either side of me, but I make sure I occasionally do so, just to let everyone know I'm not uncomfortable (though I am) with their initial altercation.

It's only 12.14pm on an early Monday afternoon in April, probably about 5°C and the light is fading already. Amazingly the enormous floodlights come on and the lads literally light up in the middle. I find my whole body is now shaking because it's that cold, and I'm desperately trying to stop my legs from shaking and my teeth from chattering, but I'm struggling. Still, I am not admitting that, I'd be asking for trouble, nor am I going anywhere.

Conversations then become more general, the coaches talk about the opposition, the floodlights, then attention turns to the keeper, he's an academy lad, currently playing for England U19's. Dean asks Ray;

"...As he dropped any..." (Referring to balls passing the bat, not missed catches)

"...Yeah a few..." (Ray)

"...well he needs to know what he looks like, he does not look like he gives a toss, not a clue, he needs to wake up wouldn't you say? Ehy..." (Dean)

"...I've seen it all now..." Tim has returned after walking a few yards away to take a short phone call. It's getting darker by the second, and Tim offers his thoughts on the keeper;

"...he was getting ready for his school prom after last weeks game on Saturday (academy weekend fixture), and... get this... he was using straightening tongs in the dressing room..."

"...What man (a brief pause)... I can tell you what I'd do with them, I'd shuv them up his arse, he needs waking up surely..." (Dean)

No one dares offers comment (including me). I'm interested in Dean's last comment about waking Miles up, and finally ask how he can be helped to wake up?

"...by telling him, is the answer..." (Dean)

"...but does he listen?..." Tim tentatively asks Dean.

Nothing else is said, Ray has reclined in his seat and has been quiet, he seems to be simmering after Dean's arrival and snapshot comments about the state of play. Five more minutes pass and it's still cold and getting colder. The sky is almost all dark. The batsman plays an aggressive drive and presents an easy catch straight to mid on. Oli is at mid on, the one who relayed the tactics earlier on, and Rinshire need this wicket as only one has fallen and Fellfordshire are 75 for 1. Oli drops it. The easiest catch you can imagine, one you'd expect anyone to take comfortably. Nothing is said for another uncomfortable five minutes or so, mostly everyone looks forward, and I only hear mumbles from under everyone's breaths. Comments eventually turn to Oli. Dean has left our seating position and heads back to his car. Everyone, including myself has relaxed, Ray explains Oli's situation:

"...well he's played every single game in the one dayers (for the first team this year), was told he'd be likely to play in the next one and now this, he's with us and was not even told himself. He

found out in the paper. Now that's crap and communication is not good here, it's about people mate and we are not good at that here..."

I find out that Charlie, the ex-Rinshire player, the one on the poster, is enjoying any conversation he can have with anyone from Rinshire. It's increasingly clear why he has decided to come in on a rare day off, from the start of the game, against the team he left last year, and why he has a swagger about him that reflects his new found confidence. "Up yours"!

At lunch Simon taps my side:

"...now then..."

I exchange the same but we leave it at that.

Immediately, within a mornings play, a sense of the managerial problems, the disputes and support for players is gained. Rinshire are a club with a huge history, tradition, success and perceived wealth, but are lingering in mediocrity and below, arguably making little of the talent at their disposal. Ray and Dean don't get along. Rob is now with the first team. Tim gets on with everyone, Simon is his own man, and somewhere within all of them, are players at the start of their season. My experiences over the past few years in my operational role, and insights gained from the focus group mean I know a lot of the issues going on, but seeing, hearing and feeling things first hand, always makes everything clearer.

Later that evening, having left the ground and returned to the hotel, I arrive down at the bar;

"...A pint of Grolsch, half a Carling and a pint of Guinness please..."

I return with my round to Tim and Ray. The team are back at the hotel and everyone has arranged to meet in the bar, for food and a 'few drinks'. Ray asks me straight out...

"...So come on Dave, you said you had some questions and observations from the day..."

Premiership play offs are being shown on a big screen and there are a few supporters up for the game, or as they call it 'the scrap'. I'm immediately struck that a lot of lads have pints of Guinness or lager, and buy the rubbish bar snacks available from the menu, and although the lads don't seem too bothered, what I percieve to be an amateurish trend is something that I know will continue throughout the summer. Tim, Ray and I are sat on a small table behind most of the lads, with everyone spread out trying to find a spot to eat and watch the game.

"...Ray, I felt in the middle of you two today..."

"...What? Explain yourself then..."

"...Well, Dean came over looking like he had things to say and he said them. He made observations of the team and of you and it seemed a bit out of the blue, and to be honest... and I'm a little guarded against saying so, but I will, I think you were a bit undermined..."

"...You know what I have just been on to the phone with my wife, told her what's gone on today and she said exactly that, and I didn't like it. I didn't like the way I felt today. Simon was the same, at lunch he came in to the changing rooms and I said my bit about the team..."

Tim leans forward from his seat and rest his elbows on the table. Ray carries on:

“...Yeah Simon was bubbling, ready to speak. I thought we bowled well and generally did ok, but things needed tightening and that... Simon said, what..., you what..., we bowled fucking shit... and then proceeded to give a bollocking to everyone, despite it really being about a passage of play, when Oli, decided on the tactic of bowling round the wicket for too long. So ‘we’ didn’t bowl bad. Oli bowled badly...”

To explain everything that went on in the bar would take an age, but as players slowly left for their rooms, Oli, Ray and I ended up sat alone together at 11pm discussing the way he had dealt with today’s events. Oli said it bothered him, but that he could handle it. It’s typical of when he goes in the first team and that he is *treated* in ways he doesn’t think he should be, and he isn’t *treated* with respect. Ray went onto say how glad he was that Dean won’t be coming to anymore of the game, and that he won’t miss his involvement at all. It’s clear that Dean is under pressure. The first team are not winning (it’s only April), and being Rinshire’s Director of cricket, is a big, tough job where performances matter. Oli is told to go to bed by Ray. We are left together and it’s gone midnight.

“...It tires me all this. It saps your energy talking about all these things and you know what they can push me to a certain point but I will say something eventually. I will take Dean to one side and say, listen do you want to fucking do it, if you want to do this then come and do it but don’t undermine me and what I am doing, and I will say that....”

“...That surprises me a little Ray...”

“...yeah, I have a limit Dave and I will say that, and I have said those things in the past. I once said them to Simon...”

“...and how did he react?

“...He said Fuck off...”

“...and you...”

“...I said no.... you fuck off...”

Tuesday 9th May Fellfordshire v Rinshire – day 2 of 3

I make sure I wake early and am early to breakfast, but writing away late last night means Tim and Ray beat me to it. It’s 7am, a wet day, damp and grey outside, but the forecast is for improvements. Lads come and go at breakfast, and I am a little self conscious, in that I don’t normally stay over at games but most don’t seem to notice. I also feel keen to start talking to lads as I normally do, but circumstances haven’t lead to that yet, and I know you can’t push those things. I know they will come.

We arrive at the ground and the next 2 hours feel like some of the most boring I have ever worked. But perhaps after further reflection, were some of the most insightful. With it being wet outside we all sit in the dressing room looking out onto a wet pitch. Fortunately the sun is coming out so it’s likely that there will be play today once things have dried a little. Laney (played for Eng U19 for a couple of years, and had a handful of games in the first team last year) confidently walks round the dressing room taking the mick out of ‘Chavs’ in general and anyone else who dare say anything.

He's parading the dressing room, moving from player to player and is doing a real turn. Everyone is laughing, but equally on edge, hoping they are not next to be cross-examined. As the laughter dies down and the lads grow increasingly bored, the mag's come out, porn mags, probably 10 or 15 of them and even a pile of 20 pornographic films, with a DVD playing one on someone's laptop. Most players gather round watching.

Tabloid newspapers also scatter the floor and physio's bench. The Guardian is immaculate. The lads are engaging me as a group now, they are bored and I am something new in the changing rooms. I'm asked my opinion on 'her' in the Sunday Sport, so I give it, and am even tempted to pick up The Guardian, just to get a reaction, but I decide against it.

Meanwhile a boxing ring has been created in the middle of the room, using bats to mark the outer edges. The lads are bored, it's early season, they are keen, they want to do something to pass the time, perhaps do something that reflects the masculinity that's been cultivated all winter. Something to exercise their dominance as they are being prevented from doing so because of the rain. It's explained to the younger lads that it's a game to see who's strongest, who's hardest, and essentially who's tough. As you'd expect only the senior lads are interested. Indeed, suddenly they pipe up and show an interest having been the quiet ones amongst the group? The younger lads look apprehensive and hope they aren't picked. I wonder about those showing such an interest and need to bully.

The ring peters out, after only a couple of lads got involved, most head to the shop just outside the ground and return with chocolate bars and sweets. They fill themselves full of junk, literally eating bar after bar, some might have had 3 bars and others a couple of packets of crisps, so I jokingly suggest:

“...you could never accuse of cricketer of not being an athlete could you?”

Few understand. It's so boring sat round, I am thinking about what other work I might be able to do, and yet I know that each lad has their own perspective on what's going on. Indeed, if you took this as a typical rainy day, most would say absolutely nothing happened, and even I fall into the trap of my mind wandering onto other things. At this point I know I am not uncovering anything new, special, or significant, nor am I doing anything in particular. However, I am beginning to understand the context more and more. The culture of the sport, of second eleven cricket and indeed the culture within the club. I also appreciate that as the season progresses, 'being around' might lend itself to more and more opportunities to support players, that are always likely to arise for someone, at some stage, so I remain patient.

As the summer and season continues and I became more aware of the uniqueness of each players experience, these days I describe were no longer boring or frustrating days, but were instead opportunities to observe, engage in dialogue and (even became opportunities for players to seek my time) and time to try to support and understand player's current experiences. At that time though, I admit that the day seemed boring.

Sat 20th May – 10am

Back home I lie watching the TV on my couch after a busy week, and my phone goes. It's Ray, and so I head upstairs for some privacy and ask how he is:

“...Well to tell you the truth I found it tough after Fellfordshire, I had a couple of days and was down a bit...”

Ray forcefully explains that everything has been helped in that Rinshire bowled Manningshire second team out for 26 yesterday, with Jonesy taking 6 for 11 and Drew taking 4 for 14. Ray goes on to talk about how he talked to Dean and Simon about their involvement in the last game, but quickly explains that five first teamers are now going to be playing with the second team next week at Shelf CC, and he's not in charge. Although officially he's still 2nd team manager, Dean will be taking over for the game. Ray explained further, mentioning that Rob was growing increasingly frustrated as well, as his role appears to have little influence. It's clearly a tricky time and Ray is finding it hard. I wondered how Ray was handling the situation, and suddenly he burst into life;

“... You know its doesn't take much to make me smile Dave, I can be outside and have fresh air or see a bird or something and I can appreciate that, and I have also got my wife to talk things over with. You know, how down I have been in life and I should have played Test cricket, I played for Rinshire and scored runs, but I felt *lonely*, and no one treated me right or understood me and that held me back... I was very very low Dave, and it took me some time to get over things when I finished...”

Having gained an insight into Ray as a practitioner here and some of his own experiences as a player within the focus group, this was the first insight from Ray during the season as to why he might be sensitive to the way he is treated. His closing comments from the focus group act as a reminder;

Ray - There is not a lot on there that surprised me to be honest on your presentation, and I have felt a lot of those things through my life, you know, I am very strong now as a character, but all through from being young I have felt a lot of those things so I can relate to a lot of that and you know you are always growing as a coach and I think its heightened the awareness I think of some of the potential issues, that can be out there... and you look out for them...

Ray continued over the phone but just before he left, having been so low, but suddenly so passionate with me, and open, I suggested that in a perverse way I actually think he is enjoying this battle, this fight to help the players. The lines gone quiet, I'm regretting my choice of words and questioning my summation;

“...shit... why did you say that...” (Silently to myself)

“...Your right you know Dave, in a perverse way I am now, yeah, that's it, I'm perverse!...Ta lad, see you later lad...”

Monday 22nd May: Cullingshire v Woodshire 2CH

Having been with Rinshire this week, I then find myself with Woodshire second team.

“...I'll be down about half nine Dave, England U19's have taken Dom, Wayne and Colin so we are under strength. John will be there though...”

Jack and the rest of the team are heading down to the hotel late so they can spend their day being productive or I guess with their respective partners as we'll be away for the next few days. I arrive early, around 3pm, as I've been working in the area this morning anyway and I've time to kill and opportunities to do some work. Having heard coaches and players describe the hotels and lifestyle of staying away I am apprehensive but equally keen to experience *exactly* what it's like. I only stay away occasionally throughout the year, for the odd meeting, night with a friend, or a couple of days away while working at Rinshire or Woodshire. However I appreciate that is nothing like staying away for 3, 4 or 5 nights every week over a 7 month period.

When I arrive at the 'typical', bog standard hotel, I see it's £155 a night, but thankfully the team get a £55 a night rate. I can't imagine paying £155 for a room such as this. Indeed, the novelty of (someone else paying for my hotel) wore off some time ago, and when I get to my room the electronic card doesn't work, great start! After an hour on the phone to various players I go to the gym to kill some time and expend some energy having driven for a few hours earlier in the day. It's now 6pm and the lads and coaches are not expected till 9.30pm so I've still a couple of hours or so.

"...See you Thursday then, ok bye..."

I've just been on the phone with my girlfriend. She's had a rough week and add to that the fact that she's just arranged a weekend away with all her friends and respective partners in a cottage and rung to confirm, when I realise I have got my dates wrong and can't go as it's my sister's 30th. It understandably doesn't go down well. I'm useless with dates and planning sometimes. I put the phone down, and it suddenly becomes clear to me that I find myself on my own, basically in a magnolia, dirt and smoke stained box. It hits me. This is what the lads are always telling (warning) me about. I get the impression that when things are going well you don't notice these things, when you're scoring runs, taking wickets, or simply going in the right direction, this lifestyle isn't so bad. But when things aren't great I reckon these isolating feelings I have now come pretty close.

In all honesty, these feelings are actually pretty horrible. I feel really insignificant at this moment. I feel *lonely*. I'm wondering how my girlfriend is, how she is spending her evening and I reckon you could easily drive yourself mad thinking too much. I realise these feelings I am having are compounded by the fact I am not part of either team I'm following, despite coaches making me feel as welcome as they could.

I could leave it there but let me try and explain my insecurities a little more. You see I sense these looks from players (I've given them myself), who sort of wonder why you're there, and having played in a number of teams (cricket teams at that), if you're not playing in the side, nor even a member of staff, I've always personally felt slightly more insecure than I normally would (natural I know). To paint a picture then, my thinking is along the following, who should I call? Would they be interested? I don't really want to tell anybody? I should stop being so soft? Why don't I just go home, it would be easier? Eventually I talk with a friend and work colleague who calls later in the evening, and I feel better, just for talking, funny that!

That night I head down to the bar, (slightly forcing myself) see a group of lads in the corner and head over to join them. As others arrive, I'm stood talking with Geoff; I still don't really know him so well so it's a good opportunity to talk. I remember here that I didn't want others to know how I was feeling, that I'd had a difficult hour or so, and can now see how the experiences of players are likely to be hidden behind similarly protective mechanisms. I sense that when your away from home, or those you are close to, that when things are not quite right you hide those difficulties

away and put on a façade. I wonder who spots those things? How they spot them, or who is around to talk with players about such experiences? Whom could and do players go and talk too?

As with the previous week's reflections in Rinshire's changing rooms, it might be perceived that it was a pretty uneventful night in the bar. There were no major discussions, no major incidents and nothing overtly obvious. Yet (again) when I carefully consider some of the things I noticed, they seem more and more revealing. Let me try to explain. That night a few of us, Geoff, Jack and a couple of players were stood round the bar, enjoying general chat and the usual banter. Then around 10pm two players arrived at the hotel. Travis and Quinny. They noticed us at the bar, gave a wave to everyone, checked in at reception and wandered over. I remember feeling slightly apprehensive in that I'd worked with Quinny before on his personal development but nothing had come of it, and (although to a lesser extent) because the coaches had referred to him so many times in the focus group. I wondered what he'd thought of me. Slightly sensitive tonight as you can tell.

What struck me however were their bags? Travis put down a suit carrier, a well prepared, fully packed black carrier and rested it against the wall before making his way to the bar. Quinny, followed, but put down an unzipped slightly scruffy, half empty and smaller sports bag. Everything was showing. Things had been thrown in, nothing particularly prepared, probably thrown in in a rush. I didn't make anything of it at that time, but with hindsight, can now see how such signs fit in with future discussions with Quinny.

I managed to chat with Quinny a little before heading off to bed that night, and remember being glad I'd braved coming down.

Tuesday 23rd May: Cullingshire v Woodshire 2CH

I'm deliberately first to breakfast the next morning and sit with my fruit and cereal and, as always, find the furthest corner where I can survey what's going on and observe lads as they arrive (not spying I stress, more in a supportive sense). The breakfast area is bright and clean with everything set out, glasses, cups and saucers and plastic plants on each table. I quickly realise I'm surrounded by suits, all reading the Telegraph, all look hung-over, all look bored, and it's only 7am. No one is talking to anyone, and everyone around seems to be tucking into a cooked breakfast they wouldn't normally have. I stand and go for some more juice and arrive back at my table. To my surprise Quinny is there, seemingly a coincidence that he sat on the same table out of a possible 20 or so.

"...Morning, how are you Dave?..." (Quinny)

"...I'm well, sleep alright?..." (David)

"...Yeah, but there was some foreign guy next door on his phone all night, kept waking me up..."

We exchange minor chit chat, and I mention that we are staying in the crime hot spot of the country, Cullingshire, as the papers and news is suggesting this morning.

"...So you playing then?..."

"...What me..."

"...Yeah, what you doing here?..."

“Oh Jack’s not mentioned anything?”

“...Not to me...”

“Well you know I work with the academy”

“Oh do you”

I explain my research and some of my personal interests into how things away from the game may interact with someone’s performance. As I do, memories flood back about the coach’s comments and interactions in relation to Quinny at various stages during the focus group with Woodshire.

The following focus group extract did not appear in the previous chapter but seem relevant here:

Geoff - That talent we saw two years ago?

Jack - That’s what I mean... its not...

Geoff - Its not there...

Jack - So he’s not doing anything technically much far removed from the way he was.... So this is where this has been very very revealing...

...

Jack - Do you know that Quinny’s mobile phone bill while they were away in St Kits was £500?

...

Jack -When you think about how he performed last season when he was going through a split up with that girl... who was coming over from abroad... and he was shit wasn’t he?

Geoff - Yeah, he didn’t know whether he was coming or going did he? There was tales of him saying I don’t want to get married, so I’d say well you are getting married, have you booked a date...he’d go ‘no, deep down I don’t want to do it’. That must be playing on his mind...

Jack - I just look at his body language now, and how he conducts himself... he’s not good...

Back at the breakfast table.

Quinny and I remain alone, and I ask about his brother whom I met a few times last year when he was with Woodshire. His brother moved away and has been playing first team and doing well, but it turns out he has a double stress fracture of the back. Surprisingly, something no-one else at the club had known about until I asked.

Quinny then puts his knife and fork down having finished off his three eggs and three rashes of bacon, and I lean back a little after finishing my horribly chewable toast. There is still time to kill before he takes the yellow jersey at 8.30am (lead rider in the convoy of cars). Quinny puts his elbows on the table and occasionally runs his fingers through his hair. He slowly explains, in great detail and with surprising honesty, that he has felt (in his words) ‘emotionally down’, that last year

he split from his then fiancé and that while they were together he tried to speak with her everyday but it never really seemed right;

“...How long had you been together...”

“... Eight years... she had her own problems you know... I found that hard last year. You know I was never established in a side (he played around a dozen one day games). I had nothing to take my mind off the game. I lived with my brother in the centre of Woodshire so when we got back we'd still probably be talking about cricket...”

“...Did anyone notice?...”

“...Yeah, Jack, and I appreciated that. Him and Geoff noticed things. No-one else though!...”

From initially just chatting (and I don't want to risk overemphasising or over-exaggerating things here) for the next 30 minutes or so I didn't notice anything other than Quinny (his choice of words, his expressions) the suits around us nor the waitress who came and collected our plates (whom I shamefully didn't even say thank you too). Instead, for that brief period I sensed in Quinny someone enjoying being heard. He liked the fact I was interested, he also explained himself very clearly, almost like he'd rehearsed these things maybe, like he was ready to talk. Quinny spoke openly, softly, he wasn't ashamed to say things you would normally expect to be quite personal, and he appeared keener than anything. He would look out of the window at times, and I'd look away at times, sometimes deflecting the sensitivity of our conversation. After all I don't really know him and he doesn't know me.

Travis then appears on Quinny's left shoulder;

“Quinny, you're yellow jersey today so come on”

The moment has gone, others had arrived at Breakfast with their bags. I then acted like nothing had happened particularly and I changed the subject and made light of the fact he'd get us lost. Quinny said little when Travis arrived but looked at me, a prolonged look that made me slow my stride in leaving the table and continue looking back. It said a couple of things to me, firstly 'can I trust this guy' and secondly, perhaps, 'thank you'.

We arrive at the ground in convoy but because of heavy overnight rain, the game is eventually called off around 11.45am and everyone decides on a quick get away. Although I have a long chat with John Harrison on our arrival, I now have a decision to make as to how to spend the next two days. I am contemplating whether to go to the Rinshire game, or do I go home. I weigh things up, I'd be lazy to go home, that's the easy option, but I do have work that needs doing. This is a typical example of where I wouldn't be missed at the Rinshire game; no one would notice I didn't go, but having planned to be away for three days I decide I must take every opportunity I have to 'be around'.

I have no clue where the Rinshire game is being played on leaving Cullingshire other than the name of the out ground. I played there a few years back so presume I'll find it. I ring Ray who also suggested there is likely to be some play today. Eventually I head up the motorway and arrive at the ground. It brings back a few memories. I played well here in the past. I'm proud of myself for finding the ground without a map. I slowly walk round the corner from the car park at the rear. I don't like being noticed especially, so I sit on a bench, looking at who's about, basically where I can make myself known without having to walk right up to everyone and announce my arrival. I

then notice on the scoreboard that one of these teams are 80 for 8. I see Rinshire lads kicking the ball about and enjoying themselves, and for a moment believe they have got Mortonshire in a spot of bother. Then I see Laney with his pads on and realise Rinshire are the ones who are struggling.

After a further half an hour or so, the game is about to restart after the rain delay so I walk around the ground toward Ray and Dean on their own in that familiar position behind the bowlers arm. Dean says hi, but Ray turns and looks at me intently, his eyes bloodshot, his head has been down for some time looking at the ground, messing with the rope with his feet in front of him. He then holds out his hand and we shake:

“... just give us five...”

Immediately I realise the need to wander off toward the changing rooms. Clearly they are talking about something they don't want me around for, and clearly it's getting more and more heated. I'm stood alone looking out onto the field, hands in my pockets with Dean and Ray 50 yards to my left and the changing rooms with all the lads outside a similar distance to my right. A few lads see I'm there, give me the customary nod and I wonder whether to wander over. I see Rob Keep sluggishly get off his chair. He's coming over. I call him Rob, and in fact call all senior players I don't know by their name as opposed to their nickname, until corrected (I've seen mistakes made by other players and support staff who have assumed they can use a nickname, that in fact may be very personal and even mean something (e.g., given by another senior player) to that player). We exchange the usual, You busy? How are things? The usual comes out, yeah not bad, yeah I'm busy, but I sense he wants to talk. I want to do the same. I soon realise I am dealing with someone who clearly wants to get to the point.

“Look Rob lets cut this small talk, can you feel the heat from over there?”

I look at Rob and he knows I'm talking about Ray and Dean 50 yards away on the boundary. Ray still has his head down, is still playing with the boundary rope and occasionally gesturing to Dean with his hands.

“Dave, things are not great, Dean is feeling the pressure, we are losing (referring to the first team), that's why you see five first team lads here today. It's naughty boy nets. It's a punishment!”

Rob explains that he has little to do, he is not sure what he is doing, what his role is, he says he is assistant but has no say, and goes onto talk about various management issues. It's impossible to talk about everything here, but standing in the same spot for an hour, I learn more and more. Rob continues to open up, to talk about his personal and professional situation and I can see he's feeling vulnerable. He occasionally looks at me with uncertainty, his eyebrows rising and his face looks sincere. It dawns on me after a while that he's talked about his role, his frustrations, his anxieties, his ideas and then he moves onto his son and his previous marriage. He crosses his arms.

“You're a pair of ears you Dave, you hear it from all angles don't you, come on what do you think? Your always interested in something you?”

Rob is right, I do hear things, but it strikes me that it should be about helping players, not just hearing about them. I take this opportunity to talk about the lads in front of us and to deflect attention from Rob as I can tell he's gone as far as he wants to for now. He's moving around in his stance a bit having stood still for a time. I sense he's told me enough, let me in enough.

“Take Broady Dave, Yeah”

Rob refers to Broady and we go onto talk about what I hear of him; that everyone loves him, he's the one you would want 'in the trenches'. He's been at the top for some time and now he's struggling a little. Broady has had a couple of bad years, his contract is up next year, he has given the best years of his working life to this club, and now he is struggling. Rob knows he will be feeling really insecure, ten years he's played at the club and now things are particularly difficult for him.

"Then there's Hano, an intelligent guy. He played for England, he set the benchmark high, and never really got back to that. I can understand that, I played for England and had a lot of success early... (Rob pauses)... and he even turned down a contract extension this year, a three year deal... I have heard he had offers from elsewhere, from down south, where his girlfriend is..."

I remember talking with Hano a year or so back in my role supporting his education and career development. I remember him talking openly about wanting to eventually move down south, about his girlfriend, and about the set up of his life.

Still stood with Rob between Ray and Dean and the changing rooms, Ray is now quickly and purposefully walking our way. Dean is now out on the field with pitching mitt in hand and warming the bowlers up. Both look unsettled.

The tensions reflected in the focus group with Rinshire come to mind here, where dynamics between the coaches became aggressive; a reminder of those dynamics may be helpful before we return to Ray and his discussion with Dean.

Ray -But (Dean) do you think that you might give off a vibe that might make it difficult to come and say those things to you

Dean - Well that can obviously be perceived that way, but it's not an intention or that's not how I want to be perceived...

Ray -But that is how it comes across now...

Dean - If it does do...

Ray -It does do...

Dean - If it does...

Ray -It's... you are quite a hard... it's quite a hard line on it... it's bull shit...

Ray jumps on his way towards us, he sort of runs (half walk half jog);

"We've had words (all said in a Rinshire jovial tone), me and Dean, had words like"

Rob is still, quiet, as am I, Ray clearly wants to talk.

"What about then?" Rob asks first, I felt it right that I didn't.

“Well we’ve had a set too... to be honest, had an argument, had a disagreement. Well he started off talking to me about the first team batters not batting well, so I say well what do you want me to do? I am the second team coach (although Ray is actually the batting coach at the club in his job description) and I’ve not been at first team games. So then I turned it on him and said don’t you think there are wider problems than this? Bigger issues? And he didn’t like it, then he almost made me feel like I wasn’t doing my job right (Ray’s volume rises). I didn’t like that, and fucking told him so, and he didn’t like that either, he got aggressive, said, don’t fucking talk to me like that he said. I questioned his treatment of players, it’s like no one has emotions, no one has them...”

The subject is changed after a pause and some more silence, Ray has got his thoughts off his chest but Dean is only 50 yards away and players are now swarming round, Ray asks us both;

“Are we going for a brew? Lets have a brew”

We move into the clubhouse and I get everyone a warm drink. We are stood inside watching through a window. Having only just got back on the field the players come off for another rain delay and we all sit around in uncomfortable silence in the pavilion. Then, and after a further altercation for a few minutes, Ray asks;

“Come on Dave we’re going for a walk...”

Ray takes me round the ground, and talks me through his feelings;

“...he attacked me Dave. He was aggressive. Can I retire? Am I old enough?...”

I know he doesn’t mean it, but I listen, he’s unloading, and benefiting. He occasionally moves quickly, then slows and stops to face me. Ray explains the argument and how he reacted. I try to facilitate his dialogue. How do you think you handled it? I try to show I’m listening, and I try to summarise;

“...it sounds as though he wanted to unload his frustrations on you (and the current context of the game provided an ideal opportunity, 80 for 8) and you deflected those frustrations back...”

“I have a short temper sometimes Dave, things bother me. He bothered me at Fellfordshire, he must get off on it? I feel better though, talking it through, I have enjoyed having Rob round to talk too and Tim, and... (pause... he’s looking at me... but I’m looking at the action)... you Dave, you know people I can trust, I need that...”

I’m left contemplating the word trust and thinking about the research and about the players. I question, who am I here for? I am supposed to be exploring player issues and all I hear so far are the coaches (Rob and Ray) and their frustrations. I sense that is not going to be an uncommon trend, in that they obviously experience equally difficult issues during a season. They are no different. Maybe all these tensions are evident to players, the insecurities, the anxieties, the disagreements, and I wonder if they are transferred onto players?

Baronshire V Rinshire – 30th May – 2CH

After the focus group Ray recommended I come along on this trip because it’s a few days away and a great opportunity to get to know the lads better than I already do. It’s a ten day trip, with two games (of 3 and 4 days duration) separated by a weekend. I arrive at 6pm, find the hotel, it’s

quirky and old, but my room is comfortable. Lads begin to arrive throughout the day, some early some later. James, a senior amongst the team (whom will briefly be mentioned later), hears I have arrived and gives me a call;

“...Dave stop playing with your piece and get in here for a pint. We are in here for the duration, the football is on...”

I look at my watch and it's 7pm. Most of the lads are now in the “Walkabout” (a bar). It's crowded and there is a massive screen in front of us. Lads order bar meals and I look, but to no avail for a healthy option. The lads are drinking Magners cider. I manage to avoid joining the round of 6, and am grateful when I see how quickly bottles are being renewed. Two uneventful hours or so later and quite suddenly, the lads start moving, getting off their high stools, putting their coats on, there is a bit of a buzz;

“...Lads we are on here, listen we are in for free, that's right, we can get in for free...”

I had noticed that James had been talking with a guy in a suit all night and I couldn't quite figure out who this guy was. It turns out he runs the Walkabout bar and has links with the strip joint over the road. I am last to make a move. The others are out of the door already; Ray seems a little unsure but knows the lads are going to go in regardless.

We leave the Walkabout, cross the road and literally in front of us is a huge red neon sign ‘For Your Eyes Only’ and because of James, it's free admission when normally it would cost £20 on the door. I wonder why Ray is prepared to go in? Surely he (and I) should keep a distance? Surely this isn't right? Most of the lads are in now, only James, Ray and myself are stood outside. Ray takes a step up and into the doorway but turns my way, I am still, I have my hands in my pockets, one foot on the step to the entrance and one foot on the pavement. I am unsure, I'm not here for this, still I go in.

We walk in, these places are not alien to me (uni days), but the younger lads suddenly look uncomfortable. They try and act cool, shoulders back, standing tall, frown, look angry and order a beer. We all settle in the corner away from the crowd. Lucas, the youngest amongst us, looks knackered. Absolutely knackered. His eyes show signs of tiredness, they are red and bloodshot. He had actually gone back to the hotel an hour or so ago, but had now come back from the hotel, and actually got out of bed to be here, after someone had rung him up. It strikes me that the older lads are trying to smooth me and Ray over, trying to make us feel comfortable so they aren't challenged or questioned about what they are doing, or what influence they are having on the others. I lean over to Ray;

“...Ray, they don't prepare you for this on your coaching courses do they?...”

Ray explains his reasons for coming in, that he knew they would come in anyway, that he will be out in 15 minutes (something I said when I entered), and that he is glad he is here, except for the fact he feels very on edge. The ‘Girls’ come round picking off the young lads one by one, school girls, nurses, you name it, they show a little interest and the lads fall for every trick as they quickly agree to the dance and their money keeps coming.

I sit talking things over with James, he's just bought a beer for everyone and says he's looking after the young lads. He's also just been on a three day bender and is making this number four. 15 minutes are up, I have finished my beer, I expect Ray to lead the way out but he hasn't. James tries to explain his reasons further;

“...if the lads don’t do it tomorrow (i.e., perform) they’ll get hammered, and they’ll know that and so they’ll be at it...”

I agree but can’t think this is right. I feel uncomfortable now; I feel the need to distance myself from this. I decide it’s time for me to leave, regardless of being the first;

“...cheers for the beer James, I will buy you one back tomorrow...”

I stand up and everyone looks my way. James shakes my hand, he knows I mean it and seems happy this conscientious (boring) influence is going.

“...Cheers...”

Wed 31st May – Baronshire v Rinshire – Day 1 of 3

Some lads turn in for breakfast around 7.30am, but I don’t even see others, and because I’m following Ray to the ground I have to head off early, otherwise I am likely to get lost with no directions. I would have loved to hang around and see how everyone comes down to breakfast and whether some come down at all. When we arrive at the ground, spectators ask lads for their autographs, to sign their ‘who’s who’ books. They give me a second look a couple of times, but realise I don’t play. I stand outside the dressing rooms. Laney arrives and is dragging his bag, head down, tie untidily done up and hanging loosely around his neck. His shirt is lightly hanging out. James looks similar but has his shades on so you can’t see his eyes. Laney has a plastic bag in his other hand, it’s from a computer store and I recognise the logo. It turns out Laney has been to a store this morning before the game, he’s spent £250 on a portable game console, and a couple of games on top. He’s just been paid, but I can’t help wonder how much he spent in the strip club last night (though I later find out).

Rinshire win the toss and choose to bat, Laney is buzzing all over the place, reminding people of how much he drank last night, jumping up and down and telling people that he’s been sick this morning and that he’s glad they aren’t bowling today (his role in the team) otherwise he’d be ‘fucked’.

After the day’s play, we all make our way back to the hotel and Ray and I arrange to meet up. I know tonight is not going to be like last night, you can’t do that 2 nights running (can you?). To be absolutely honest, at this time, I would prefer to be with the lads, capturing experiences, capturing data, and I realise how selfish I sound but am worried I am not capturing players’ experiences during a window that won’t come about again (again, I realise how selfish and unfair on Ray that sounds). We find a Tapas bar on the front of the town, down by the docks, an intimate place, and are taken to a cosy table in the corner of a large and dimly lit restaurant. We order a few Tapas and a bottle of red wine to be shared.

It seems right here to refresh your memory of Ray’s distinct contributions from various stages of the focus group with Rinshire in light of the conversation over dinner you are about to read.

Ray -Mine was the opposite, because cricket was everything to me, so I can relate to a lot of this because I have felt it... that was what it was for me, and when it started going wrong, it was not just cricketing issues, it was growing up issues, which it affected me badly, and I struggled to cope with it, but I had a lot... I mean for me as a 16 or 17 year old, I was put on a bit of a pedestal really, this bloke is going to do it. Because everything had been easy up to then, and then when life kicked in, I found it difficult to cope with. But at the time, there was not anyone really to communicate with or talk about the issues, it was more or less a sink or swim, or piss off and sort yourself out...

...

Ray -I haven't seen my daughter for 6 years? I have learnt to cope with that now, but they are things I would have struggled to cope with years ago, but I guess it's maturity and growing that has helped me deal with stuff...

...

Ray -I felt lonely for 15 years, from 20 year old to 35... [pause]... I was all on my own in life, I did alright but I didn't perform to what I know is my natural ability?

Why?

Ray -Why, for a number of reasons, not just one reason, a whole host of reasons, it's complex, things you don't put to sleep and you sweep them under the carpet...

The table is small and our seating positions mean we are relatively close. I can see the rest of the restaurant behind Ray, but he is facing me and the wall behind. Ray is bouncing tonight, he's a little tired but he seems ready to tell me more, to tell me about his experiences, he knows my interests and seems to be realising my (non-intervention) methods (caring, listening, supporting). I guess he's taking to me and probably just enjoying the company. I sense what's coming. Over the last few weeks, Ray has been impulsive, been telling me more and more about himself and his difficult experiences as a player and during his career. I sense he's been trying to tell me things, personal things but has been looking for the right time, perhaps wondering whether he can trust me. We begin talking casually, we are in high spirits, I ask about his wife and about his life;

“...I have been in dark places Dave, places you don't ever want anyone to go to. When I was young, I was a bloody good player, you know that now, but I was eventually released. I worked a bit... but I then ended up at my mum's house... I was laid on their couch for weeks... (Ray looks down)... I was there for a long time... I would find myself staring out of the window....”

Ray is comfortable talking, he's leaning forward on both elbows and occasionally leaning back to enjoy a sip of wine, he's not looking round, not checking who's about and having put my frustrations aside, I am interested in his experience, and how it relates to the coach and man I see before me;

“...I never knew I was going to be released, I never knew that, I was surprised, I also had a lot to deal with as I was having trouble with my now ex wife... I also met Rina (his current wife), we met at similar times, she was breaking up with her husband and me, my wife, I was down... I would think about things... I was a mess...”

Ray's disdain and facial expression reflect the difficulty of that period of his life, his upper lip raises on one side closer to his nose.

“... It's like when I was 18 to 35... I didn't feel anything, I was numb, I didn't have emotions that were recognised or understood.... I struggled....”

For the first time at this moment I offer something about me, and it readdresses the balance for a moment, but Ray continues;

“...I now have someone I am sharing my life with, for so long I felt alone, and for all my life I was wanting to share my life with someone. I have that now, I can’t tell you enough about this women, we are good for each other, she does so much for me, you can see why I am so interested in the areas you are looking into....”

I understand why Ray is so interested and engaged in the issues of a player’s experience, why he is sensitive to their moods, their experiences and does everything he can to try and understand and support them.

“...This feels natural this...”

A stunning looking waitress comes over, Ray laughs, leans back and pipes up;

“...hello dear...”

Ray is buoyant, he is talking clearly, confidently, and not ashamed by anything, he says this is still therapeutic for him, even now.

“...This dark place Dave, it got really bad you know...”

I feel Ray wants me to ask how dark. I know something is coming (but then I have known this for some time). Over the last few weeks I predicted (not that I am trying to sound clever) that Ray would talk about counselling, about perhaps going through a depression in his life. Ray begins talking about such a time, about this dark time, very clearly, openly, he says to me, this feels honest, this feels natural.

Ray looks directly at me, directly into my eyes and rarely looks away. He continues to describe his difficult period in detail and to understand Ray and his commitment to players, his understanding of their experiences and desire to support them, is to know that he has lived it, he has breathed it, their discomfort, their disappointment, their anxiety, their insecurity, their masculinity, their denial, their aggression, their discontent, their loneliness, all the things that reappear in players, at different stages of their careers. My mind regularly goes back to his comments to me before we began the focus group:

“...you know, you have to have experienced some of these things to really understand them Dave...”

I again tell Ray a little (but very little) about my girlfriend, about the fact I am with someone special to me, that we share a lot, we identify with one another. We then constantly go over the players, what they are like as people, how they deal with things, what’s in their thinking at this time, I don’t mention anything about the game, about technique or tactics, though Ray does occasionally. Ray feels for the lads, that’s obvious, he feels a lot, he is a sensitive man. He understands them, and the players respect him, indeed they know he is different and often say things which I overhear like;

“...he’s mad Ray...good though...great tough...”

Ray isn't cool, nor especially all powerful or domineering. He is just there for players whilst also working in a coaching capacity. I feel I understand a little more about why Ray is who he is and the skills he has as a coach.

Thursday 1st June - day 2 of 3

Today turns out to be a very long day in the field for the Rinshire lads. Baronshire are forced to follow on having fallen 3 runs short of Rinshire's first innings target (in that they have to bat again straight away). The lads look exhausted after the days play, it has been hot and humid and they've spent approximately 8 hours performing on the field today. The team meal is cancelled for this evening, and all seem to want to have a quiet one then get off straight to bed. Reflecting on the day, it's amazing how many fans want lads to sign things, sign little copies of their 'who's who' book. These fans hang around the dressing rooms or catch players as they run off the field. I can see how it might give players a sense of being someone, when actually they are actually only playing second team cricket. When things were going well throughout the day and wickets were falling the whole atmosphere amongst the team on the field became more and more presumptuous. I could hear an undercurrent of mischievousness as I watched the game and lads intently;

"...we can get this wrapped up and have an all dayer boys tomorrow... we'll get on the golf course, we'll get on the beers, we'll get the fines committee and evenings entertainment and games going early..."

This evening we get back to the hotel at 8pm and I am exhausted in my hotel room. I collapse on my bed and stare at the ceiling. For a moment I relax and close my eyes to try and gather myself as I feel fatigued. Although I'm with Rinshire, I use my mobile to send Jack a text:

"...spoke with Quinny, we are going to continue our conversations next week when I come to the county ground, speak soon. DP..."

Jack rings me back immediately. There are clearly no set hours to this job.

"...Dave how are you? Just to provide you with a little detail, we had nets today and you know Quinny couldn't bowl... he err... he literally couldn't pitch the thing at times.... In fairness Terry was good with him... and said listen don't worry, don't worry about bowling, just leave it for a few days, a week or so and enjoy your batting..."

"...That explains why he was so down earlier today Jack..."

When I spoke with Quinny today he explained that he had mentioned our discussion with his girlfriend whom he enjoyed talking with, and that he was sat at home with his feet up, doing 'bits' apparently, but I sensed he was doing very little. It sounded like he was sat with time on his hands and he sounded happy just to be talking when I called. Jack continues with a sympathetic and worried tone;

"...It was terrible today Dave, the lads... they noticed it as well, they didn't even want to hit the balls he was delivering, and that's not good...seriously..."

Jack asks whether Quinny said that he'd spoken with Paul Littlewood, the Sport Psychologist at Woodshire. I explained that he hadn't mentioned it to me. I am trying to think of another (unobvious) reason to call him tomorrow. There is clearly a young man struggling with his game

and perhaps with his present situation. Jack explained to me that Quinny is now 26, and that John, Wayne and Mob's are all in front of him in terms of being selected for the first team, and 'his time and opportunities' are swiftly running out;

"...it's the last year of his contract, if he doesn't turn things around he is gone..."

Friday 2nd June – Last day of three: Rinshire win by 8 wickets

As predicted Rinshire win this game easily, they only have to chase 80 odd in the last innings today having bowled Baronshire out again, and despite losing a couple of early wickets when things may have become a little difficult, Taylor and James see the team home. As it's only early afternoon around 2pm, most of the lads have arranged a round of golf so head off to the course attached to the ground. James (whom I talk at length with during this game) offers to do some training instead. He tries to 'cane' me as we do figure of eight laps of the second and first team pitches, giving me head starts and then seeing if he can chase me down.

That evening, and having headed back to the hotel, changed and agreed to meet the others, I realise it's Friday, 7.30pm, and there is a long night ahead. I wander over to the Walkabout.

"...£20 entry Dave, you're late as well, don't be late to these things..." (James)

As I reluctantly hand over my £20 note, I see a meticulously prepared table in a cordoned off corner of the bar, boxes at fourteen place settings, at least two drinks at each and a couple of flipcharts on the wall. This must have been meticulously prepared. There is a beer glass in front of everyone's place setting and a pint of some blue concoction at each place. You could say I am nervous about the next hour or so. I am actually most worried about being sat next to Ray. I'd like to distance myself from him in a way (not meaning because he's annoyed me or done anything wrong at all), but I don't want to be seen as his right hand man as that will influence players perceptions of me I'm sure. I'm not so nervous about the drinking and games, I can generally hold my own in these things (again uni days of which I am not particularly proud) and I'm not looking to impress anyone. I am however also nervous about embarrassing myself. I'm not the extrovert type, never one to lead much in these situations, but fear, being new, I am going to be set up.

We are all eventually allowed into the cordoned off section and all sit down, 'Noel Bradley Edmonds' (James) is the games master. He stands confidently in front of the group and boisterously outlines the evening of entertainment ahead. We are told the rules of the game and they are identical to 'Deal Or No Deal', a game show on TV at the moment. I could have left this experience out, I could have made more about it than I have, but I write because this is another example of the culture of Rinshire's second team. Drinking games, general drinking, it appears that having 2, 3 even 4 beers a night for most (but not all) is common. Incidentally, women and girlfriends aren't talked about with any respect, courtousy, nor with any honesty.

It's not anything particularly different to any other group of men of similar age I suppose, not something I am alien too, nor am I any angel. I am not actually 'bothered' by anything I see or experience on the evening, in that I suppose I've done it all before myself. But importantly, I was never aspiring to play professional cricket. Nevertheless, the game is over, it's a Friday night, they have won, they are on an away trip and the atmosphere amongst the group is buzzing. I get a little sucked in to be honest, although I agree that this 'session' is timed better than the first evening, it's still a drinking session.

As the 'Rinshire virgin' (newcomer) I am asked to stand up and provide the first toast of the evening. I slowly stand up and everyone is looking at me, I feel myself going red and look around the table. I hold up my glass and all I can see are expectant eyes. I toast a thank you for their welcome this week. Most chuckle and laugh and James make's me down a drink, at which I am embarrassed to do (what if I hadn't?). Others know the customary toasts of Rinshire. So as players are asked in turn they stand up and raise their glasses to, 'The queen', 'Absent friends', 'Wives and mistresses may they never meet', and 'Fuck the opposition'. James turns to me again. He asks me to sing the first song of the evening. Shit, what do I sing? Quick, think, think!

"...Stand on the chair to do it..." (James)

This whole episode couldn't be more embarrassing for someone like me. I've explained I prefer to blend in, and certainly not to stand out. Since I feel the point is an important one I would like to stress that I am not including this anecdote, to show my acceptance, to show off, to show my relationships, or to prove I'm cool enough to fit in, because I honestly feel this doesn't matter. In fact I personally, shy away from such attempts to build rapport or whatever phrases are used to describe someone (insincerely) trying to fit in. I get the impression lads are not bothered whether I am there or not, whether I drink a pint or don't. For me, it's not about being one of the lads, I know that, I never will be and they seem to know I don't want to be their best mates (but I am enjoying the team spirit I admit). In fact, I think players sense it when you're trying to achieve some of those things I mention above, they've seen and sensed it before, and know when your not being yourself. The culture is a relaxed one, drinking with friends and colleagues, sometimes for release and sometimes to escape and relax. I also get the impression that this is just typical of what young men do at their age in their (and my) circles, it's a weekend, and they've worked all week? It's in custom to go out and have a few drinks. It's easy to fall into this culture; it's very easy for young lads to be 'mulled', in that if someone wanted to set a young player up, get him pissed and play trick's on him (harmlessly or intentionally) they easily could. Thankfully no-one here does.

4.3.1 - Reflective Stop Off 1

On reflection, and in line with research aims (B) and (E), it occurred to me that a lot of my reflections were about the environment and characters in context and not so much about the players themselves (Quinny being an exception). Although player's actual dialogue becomes more prominent as the season unfolds, as in Study 2, there is clearly some significance in my tendency to reflect on the context and culture in which players reside. I would therefore like to address research aim (B), and make some observations about this environment and context using data within the timeline, and from Study 1 and Study 2. In doing so I therefore occasionally return to raw data from Study 1 and make reference to content analysis themes of 'Unprofessional lifestyles', 'The consequences and culture of drinking', 'Consequences associated with being a professional cricketer', 'Difficulty of managing the process of failure and dealing with fewer opportunities at the professional level', 'Issues associated with transitions onto professional staff', 'Personal relationships and performance' and 'Communication'.

As will become increasingly clear as you read more about Rinshire there appeared to (generally) be a very masculine, macho, narcissistic (perhaps not unlike most sports dressing rooms) but also at times somewhat unprofessional lifestyle and drinking culture within the second team. Cumulatively, and in terms of research aim (A), the pornographic materials, regularity of drinking and poor diets amongst other behaviours seem to support such assertions which certainly continue (and at times escalate) throughout the summer. Similar to these observations, Parker (2001) described the social endeavours of professional football trainee's including nights out, bouts of vomiting in the early hours of the morning and hangovers during training, which not unlike Rinshire, seemed to Parker (2001) to mirror traditional behaviours of working class adolescent life and contemporary youth culture.

Beyond such an assessment, and in an effort to try and further understand such behaviour, I would also like to try and offer a more complete interpretation in

relation to my understanding of the game of cricket itself (and everything that that entails), drawing on data from each study. The nature of the game of cricket is a unique one, in that few sports last all day for 1 or 4 days at a time, over an entire 7 month season. In addition, travelling to away games for anything up to two to four days (or more) over a 7 month period, with young and senior professionals mixed together, and in hotels with little else to do other than spend time with each other might also give more reason to the behaviour. The above certainly seems to add further credence to the reasoning for lifestyle oriented support and the ECB PL programmes objective of supporting cricketers to 'become self managed professionals' (ECB, 2005). It also supports suggestions from players that 'Something other than cricket is needed to help you relax at the professional level' (NC-206; SB-11; PK-194; DN-149), by for example, 'Escaping cricket through study' (AT-113). Perhaps more simply, these behaviours help players find alternative endeavours and fill the inevitable down time during and after games (with something other than alcohol, pornographic material or a manufactured boxing ring).

Specifically within the timeline, Quinny himself suggested '*I had nothing to take my mind off the game*', and in Study 1 players described how 'The nature of cricket consumes every aspect of a player's life and their thinking' (JH-188; HN-71; MB-63; TS-32,39, 42; PK-194), for example:

... it's such an intense lifestyle, you play it from something like 16 to 35 if you are lucky... but every minute of the day is cricket, cricket, cricket... and you know it gets on top of the best players within the game... Tony Scott 39

... it takes up every minute of your life, its hard to explain because if you're not playing your thinking about how to improve or how you got out, and all people want to talk about is cricket... So cricket is with me all the time ... people say, well your not working tomorrow you are just going to play cricket... but the thing they don't get is that its another job like any other, and people get sick of it... Tony Scott 42

...cricket is full on and can be chaos... Its incredible; it is very difficult for someone out of the game to see how it is ...Paul Kelly 194

Players from Study 1 also suggested that ‘Failing to cope within the professional environment leads to worrying and becomes a vicious circle’ (SB-1, 6, 8; JH-186; AT-118; HN-67);

... there are players, especially those who are starting off, and literally everything they are worried about is their cricket, everything their talking about is their cricket, and they start to worry about contracts this and he's got this and he's got that and I am a better player than him, and it becomes a vicious circle, that is all they think about, and that is all they worry about... John Harrison 186

In addition to these perspectives from players, (some) coaches from Study 2 also identified with the consuming nature of the game;

Ray [Rinshire] – Cricket is all encompassing in it, day in day out sort of thing, I can remember there have been people who have struggled after cricket haven't they, suicides in ten times as many cricketers, who say committed suicide than any other sport, it's all engulfing in it...

Jack [Woodshire] – But this is where you're experiencing problems in established first team cricketers, where even though their results are strong, they've still got issues... sort of getting away from it a little bit, that's one reason why I reckon there's so many suicides within our game... it's a team sport with individual performances being judged. I'm not negative at all as a person... but as a player... I had that and...it's frustrating for me...

Geoff- This page has surprised and shocked me really; I didn't know players could be so lonely.

Reflecting on these findings and in line with aim of exploring the cultural nuances of the sport and the environmental realities of a cricketers existence (i.e., aims A and B), whilst still relatively early in the season there are many examples within the ethnographic text that actually elaborate on the consuming lifestyle experiences and subtle transitions players and coaches have to cope with within professional cricket. Specific examples (so far) within the ethnographic text include the long rain affected days not playing, Oli's experience of de-selection, Ray's description of how things ‘tire him’, the complexities Quinny faces in his professional and private life whilst in the last year of his contract, drinking and socialising in hotel bars and even my own isolating experience of a ‘magnolia smoke stained box’ (which relates to research aim E). Perhaps coping with these complexities might therefore further explain (some) players behaviors and at times encourage players to escape, relax and socialise with team-mates and friends in bars or hotels. In Study 1 players themselves' had also

described how they had learnt to negotiate complexities within their lifestyle through experience, suggesting that ‘Developing a sense of perspective eases a troubled mindset’ (2nd order) and how ‘Being too focused can lead to too much pressure and a lack of balance’ (AT-113; DN-143, 144; NG-86); as reflected below:

I think my focus to the game has served me well but I did not get that balance right, you must get that balance, because you will be a better cricketer for it, certainly a more relaxed cricketer... I think that is crucial and that is a talent in itself, to get that balance it's a talent... Dave North 143

... you put yourself under pressure, you become so obsessed with the game that you give so much... Dave North 144

In addition to the consuming nature of cricket's on and off field demands at the professional level, there is also the potential influence of the drinking culture within Rinshire CCC (and the sport itself). You may recall players describing ‘The consequences and culture of drinking’ (2nd order) in that ‘Not drinking to be part of the team can be difficult’ (PK-191; DN-142, 146). All these factors may therefore contribute to the unprofessional lifestyles I observed and describe. In contrast to this assertion, players from Study 1 also stressed the importance of ‘Sacrificing nights out to look after yourself physically’ (MC-154, 158; DN-142) and ‘Knowing the right time and place to enjoy yourself’ (MC-157; DN-146; HN-64) amongst seemingly more professional and balanced perspectives that resonate with previous research (Amirault & Orlick 1989; Douglass and Carless 2005). In this sense, elite athletes believed balance was essential in regard to their performance and life as a whole. Interpreting all of the above and data from each Study, it seems a very fine *balance* exists from one person to the next in terms of their lifestyle. Seeking this balance appears to lead some players to personal and professional (or unprofessional) ways of coping with the difficulties and consuming realities of performing (and when not performing) during the season itself whilst alongside their peers. However, players appear to try and find ways of coping with similar difficulties and realities in their own life whilst in an influential professional sport environment.

What also struck me from a lot of Rinshire's behavior was how often the players were happy to be away (during away games) from the county (perhaps like Charlie), away from how they were being '*treated*' and all the accompanying tensions previously discussed in Study 2. Indeed there was a togetherness amongst the players which in many ways seemed to enhance team performances throughout the year. From here on management issues (like Ray feeling undermined and the '*heat*' and pressure felt during his conversation with Dean on the boundary), teams performances and interpersonal relationships between coaches, and coaches and players, fade somewhat (as I focus closer to players and their experiences). However, in terms of research aim (B), the ethnographic data suggests that it would seem wrong to ever regard management issues and coaches (i.e., context) as ever being separate from the experience of any given player. This assertion is also supported within existing coaching literature (see Lyle, 1999; Jowett & Meek, 2000a; Jowett & Cockerills, 2003; Knowles, Borrie & Telfer, 2005), and as Ray suggested, '*it's about people mate and we are not good at that here*'.

Lastly then, aside from the physiological dangers of drinking as a professional sportsman, what is of great interest is how often the personal, private, emotional and off field experiences of players (like Quinny) manifest themselves and are hidden in the unforgiving, insensitive, masculine, timeless and abrasive contexts I described in the timeline. Seemingly, it appears that any person's lifestyle has the potential to be complex, but a professional sportsmen's lifestyle can also be complicated by the context and culture in which they reside, the nature of the sports industry and of course the nature of the game itself (see Ivey 1980; Parker, 2001; Brown, Gould & Foster, 2005). Therefore, findings in this research regarding context and culture also arguably begin to answer van Rossum's (2001) call for research with athletes in different contexts, cultures and talent domains. Specifically the findings help illuminate the peculiar characteristics of professional cricket and directly address research aim (B).

4.3.1.1 - Personally Oriented Ethnographic Reflections

This research sought to explore the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers (i.e., Aim C). In this sense, authors have commented on the need to be around, immersed, witness first hand, spend time and build relationships with athletes and coaches and become part of the sport environment as practitioner (Gould et al., 1989; Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Bull, 1997; Anderson et al., 2004). Having embraced these perspectives as an ethnographer and had days and weeks away, lengthy and often late phone calls (in relation to both teams), whilst observing in changing rooms, living in boxy hotel rooms and being first at breakfast and last leaving hotel bars (talking with or observing players like Quinny), I report myself growing increasingly tired. Sometimes I felt I had no particular role or part to play especially (apart from my PL role supporting players' personal development etc). In fact I didn't actually 'do' anything tangible or obvious as an ethnographer, but believe I felt tired because I had tried to observe and listen during every waking minute of everyday (and night), with anyone (as noted with Ray and Rob) I was with. This required an intense state of awareness and unremitting vigilance on my part. In a similar (and applied) sense, authors have commented on the demanding nature of an immersed practitioner support role (see Andersen, 2000; Bond, 2002; Gilbourne & Richardson 2006; Gilbourne, 2006). In terms of my own experiences as an engaged ethnographic researcher, the efforts, involvement and interactions with players outlined above, as well as training, socialising, little sleep and long journeys all took their toll. Like the players I also had my own life to lead. However, this felt like a different tiredness which I struggled with in that it was not so much a physical one or something I have felt from being busy. Over the summer being a researcher with 'a pair of ears' (as Rob suggested) wore on me significantly. In writing these further reflections I do not invite sympathy. Instead I am trying to reflect how ethnographic research (and a potential practitioner support role) focussing on players lifestyle issues, might involve genuinely and vigilantly listening and observing every day and every night for significant periods of time, and essentially how that is enervating. In this regard and in an applied sense, Van Raalte & Andersen (2000) described how in

other helping professions, in and out of sport, supervision is an integral part of the training process, one of the most important parts of service delivery, and as yet, has not received the attention it deserves in the field of applied sport psychology.

I intend to draw on supervision literature again later in the timeline to offer implications for researchers, practitioners and NGB's, but I recall an analogy from my PhD supervisor of a syringe to try and describe this experience clearer. I might suggest that my intense observations of the context and environment and the way in which players and coaches were beginning to extract care (or more accurately empathy, understanding and unconditional judgement) from me, reflects how a syringe might similarly extract blood from me and leave me feeling somewhat empty. Ironically however, perhaps the caring dimension, observations and efforts I describe, also acted as something of a magnet, drawing people in, and in some way contributed to Ray, Rob and Quinny opening up. However, without any formal or regular supervision I also struggled with these privileges. This was the first time that I felt this tiredness over the summer, and although it was only June, it grew with the ethnographic process, the season itself and even beyond that.

Wednesday 7th June – Woodshire v Baronshire – County Ground

I pull up to the ground and park. I check the scoreboard and realise Woodshire are batting so Quinny is likely to be around. I wonder if he has got any runs. Jack meets me downstairs and we walk into the changing rooms, it's actually only the second time I have been in there and it strikes me how professional the set up is compared to other teams with which I work. The lads are all over, I am not interested in everyone though, and am oblivious to the fact then, but realise now, that I probably stand out like a sore thumb, as I was the only one not in kit. I sit next to Jack and relax into my seat; suddenly Quinny says hi and immediately asks if we should have a chat. Jack cleverly manoeuvres his legs to one side to encourage me to say yes and go for a chat somewhere else.

Before you read my interaction with Quinny, the dialogue offered below was centred around the theme of supporting players, and seems to reinforce Jack's intentions and leg movements here. At various stages during the focus group (as below) he expressed his desire for me to work with Quinny on things he hasn't time for, might not care as much about, and to help players with issues which require someone to be more detached from performance and more unconditional in their judgment (something you may recall he very honestly explained he struggles with in his own role as a coach).

Jack -So you need somebody who is not, who they see, not being part of the process of affecting their careers...

...

David -... Because I don't want this to come across as players will always play better... and if I'm absolutely honest I'm not as bothered about that....

Jack -What, you're not bothered about the players' performance?

David - I am but...

Jack – [Interuping] See that's what we're judged on...

Liam - You see we are but there are obviously issues in their lives that need to be...

David - Because I'm not bothered about performance and I think that's the reason.... and I think the players sense that. I'm not judging them about how well they are doing in their cricket....

...

Jack -You see that's what you do really well... and its what I don't do really well... because I have got a solution within 2 minutes of listening to someone, I'd like to do more of that though, I do empathise well but sometimes I don't do, I am not genuine enough I don't think... because deep down I'm thinking 'you're not bloody good enough'... and that is how I am judged... that's where you have a detachment, you're looking at the person...

...

Jack - I would come and see what happens... Maybe we could just drop your name into things...perhaps with Quinny... I don't know...

Allow me to return you to the game and Quinny's suggestion to have a chat.

Quinny and I wander off into a small room just outside the changing rooms (which I later realise is an office the manager uses). It's a cramped room with a skylight and if you were outside you could just see us through a glass panel on the door. The room is pretty empty other than our chairs and an untidy desk. The door closes and we sit facing each other quite close together. I sit back in my chair, take a sip of my water and try help Quinny relax. It feels stuffy and warm in here being another nice day outside, but we begin. Quinny begins talking in his relaxed way. He explains so much, very clearly and openly and surprisingly honestly (again), even after our chat at breakfast. He leans forward, looks at me and is speaking quickly. He begins with his form, with the fact he is struggling and would like to find a distraction away from the game to help him relax. A vocation of some kind, a course or something perhaps, which I am obviously happy to help him with. He then moves on and explains how he has been told, but also feels himself, that he plays best when he is relaxed and approaches the game with a carefree attitude. He talks at length about that, and I am sure we have all heard it before, about not caring, about smashing it, about playing with freedom to your own strengths. Quinny feels that getting back to playing without a care is important, that he is emotionally up and down a lot, and is, in his words;

“...In turmoil...”

When he first came to Woodshire on trial two years ago he had nothing to lose and played as though that was the case. Over recent years he has been encouraged to play more conservatively and he doesn't feel this fits his character or style, something I know is supported by Jack who believes the same. He talks a lot about the handling of him and seems to suggest he can't be himself. I ask Quinny about what's going on with him at the moment away from the game, what are the potential influences? Who is involved, what's going on? Quinny split with his fiancé last July officially, having been together 8 years. I ask what that is like and after a long pause and the first noticeable silence between us, where I become a little uncomfortable but don't talk; Quinny leans back in his chair, folds his hands together and starts talking a bit differently, more vividly and emotionally whilst looking directly at the floor:

“...I was listening to the radio the other day and I heard someone talk about the loss of their limb, and that they feel they sometimes have a scratch and want to scratch it. That's how I feel, I wake up sometimes and you know I wonder where she is, she was a big part of my life you know...”

Quinny explains how he thought he was over his fiancé and the split, but having started to talk things through a little more realises he may not be over it just yet. He explains that he has a new girlfriend who is more carefree and they are living together. He makes sure I realise just how close they are and that he likes this girl, that he likes her more and that life is better with her. I reflect back the fact that Quinny was with someone for 8 years and that may take longer than he expected to get over, despite the fact he has a new girlfriend, whom I know he's very keen on. In addition I ask Quinny about his brother. He explains how close they are, and yet he has moved away now, down to another county and away from Woodshire this winter. His brother seemed to play a significant part in Quinny's approach to things, obviously a significant person in his life. Quinny seems to be missing someone close to him in addition to his brother's carefree influence. Quinny explains that his brother has been through similar things, he reminds me he is out for the season with a double stress fracture, and that he also wonders whether he should go home, and give up the game.

“...I don't like this second team environment, I like to think big, I am a doer. I met a guy from my old cricket club and he is a millionaire property dealer. Now he keeps encouraging me to go into property and I like the job he has, I am always thinking of property. I even sometimes drive into work imagining what I would be doing in a job like his, I reckon I would do well...”

I suggest he probably would. Quinny explains that when he was 14 and 15 all he ever wanted to be was wealthy, to be rich, to have his own business. He likes the area he lives in now because he wants to be around money, and he remembers me encouraging him to speak with people whom he might network with and learn from in terms of a parallel vocation alongside his cricket when we met a year or so ago.

“...I met this guy from my cricket club and although I don’t get on with him greatly, he is a millionaire and I would like that, I would like to have houses and property, even all over the world... I think about that a lot and tell my friends and my family this but not others... (Pause)... that’s the kind of person I want to be...”

Clearer Quinny appears in ‘turmoil’ over where he finds himself now, getting paid a reasonable wage and surrounded by people who, in his words, don’t think big and just think cricket.

“...I don’t like the second team environment; I don’t like the first team environment either particularly. I have done so much with my life, lived in two countries, been to uni, played in my country’s academy for two years, for the best team back home, travelled everywhere, played pro cricket with two clubs, been in a car crash, been to court and had compensation rewards, had a fiancé, nearly got married...”

Quinny clearly has done a lot and previously enjoyed that relaxed approach to the game where nothing mattered, indeed he enjoyed the early years, but we both question whether he is now? He is encouraged to find that approach again by Jack and the sport psychologist who works on a consultancy basis with the club. Yet when he describes his life now, everything that it’s made up of, and his outlook, I question whether he can return to the approach everyone is telling him too. It strikes me how Quinny appears to have changed from the person he was, based on the way he is describing his present. He wants a parallel career, wealth, he wants more for himself, he wants to be challenged, and above all, to be himself.

“...I sometimes now think about packing it in, what’s the point, I would like to be more than this, I feel restricted, I feel enclosed, I want to experience things, I want to...(pause)...”

Quinny’s staring intently at the floor, he isn’t moving, and neither am I. I watch him intently; I can see his eyes moving left and right. Eventually I interrupt his silence (after at least thirty seconds):

“...To live...”

“...That’s it, that’s exactly it...”

Quinny vehemently thrashes his arms around, I feel my eyebrows rise in surprise;

“...I want to live and at the moment I feel like I am in a vacuum and am punching my way to try break out...”

Quinny continues vigorously using his arms to rein-act the punching and escape from some sort of smothering cocoon he finds himself in, he explains how the management at the club and people seem to be pushing down on his head, stifling him. Quinny was asking for solutions from me throughout, I want this; I need this, reflecting his anxieties, his desires for a solution. I can understand that. I wonder if there is a quick fix? I consider where Quinny finds himself in his life now, at 26, living together with a girlfriend (as opposed to the fiancé and previous routine he was

so comfortable with as a teenager), having now been over here for some time and had some successes. But he does not have university to fall back on anymore, and is without much of a support network around him and without any sign of the wealth he craves. I consider whether all these things prevent that carefree approach? Quinny says himself and everyone tells him he needs to be that carefree person again, but the complications of previous experiences and his presenting situation seem to prevent that. Perhaps Quinny has changed, his circumstances certainly have and they appear to be influencing him. He seems to want to be more than he presently is, he wants to live, and he feels he has lost perspective.

There is a noise outside the room. Quinny moves his head towards it. Someone walks past the door and we can hear that Woodshire have been bowled out, so everyone starts to return to the dressing room. I tell Quinny he'd better go and get ready to go out and field. After 15 minutes or so the team, except for Quinny, take the field. Quinny is acting as twelfth man for now (no doubt a deliberate move by Jack) so we continue our conversations on the balcony. He continues to compare himself to his past and I wonder whether this is a healthy pastime. The Quinny in the past appeared to have little to think about compared to the Quinny in the present. Quinny and his circumstances were different back then, yet everyone tells him he needs to recapture something he perhaps cannot. He is confused, anxious, unsure, ill at ease, thinking a lot, forcing himself, forcing his thinking, forcing something that might not be forcible? 20 minutes or so later I leave the ground as Quinny goes off to field in the blistering heat. I tell Jack I'll be back tomorrow and hope to see Quinny again. As I leave the ground, although still feeling exhausted from the previous week, I now feel a greater sense of renewal and purpose. These past two hours and the connection I just had, are why I do what I do.

Thursday 7th June – Woodshire v Baronshire – The County Ground -2CH

As I wander into the dressing room, lads are everywhere so I realise they are chasing (batting). They must have bowled the opposition out yesterday and now only need about 160 so the atmosphere is relaxed. Quinny and I say 'Hi', and a couple of others do the same. I sit round for some time, separate myself from the group and realise Quinny is padding up and must be next in. I'm sat on my own but that doesn't bother me. When Quinny goes out to bat (he's still batting at number 3), a part of me wonders whether our chat might help Quinny play, then I quickly realise it's not about that. I cannot attach myself in that way and also realise that I do not have to feel like I can solve all of his problems and make him a better player as that would be my agenda, not necessarily his.

Quinny strides out to the wicket. The opposition move into their fielding positions and I notice that a couple seem to be disdainfully mocking Quinny as his helmet turns to those who are speaking to him. Out in the middle Quinny prepares his stance and marks the ground repeatedly with his studs for his guard. Dust rises around him as he finishes his pre-delivery rituals. Quinny looks around the field, over his shoulder, stretches back and then forward. As the bowler reaches the end of his mark, he turns and begins his approach. I find myself watching Quinny's feet for some reason, despite the fact he's probably 200 yards or more away. He is fidgeting and seems restless. Quinny walks at the bowler as the bowler releases the ball, it shocks me a little. It's so early on in the innings after all. It's a quick delivery I can hardly see it through the air. He's hit on the pad as he plays an aggressive shot and a huge and unified cry of 'how's that' goes up from the opposition. I turn to the umpire. His right arm begins to rise with his finger pointing upward. He's quickly given out leg before (lbw). The first thought I have is one of disappointment, I turn away. The atmosphere in the changing room alters slightly and talks of betting and odds die down. The mood is getting a little more serious now. Chasing a small target in the last innings can often be tricky.

After crashing around a little, a few choice words and some time to suggest the decision by the umpire was a harsh one (that the ball had pitched outside leg), Quinny and I exchange glances (I did not seek any contact). He continues expressing his disappointment, grunting as he sits in his locker space with his head in his hands. After about 15 minutes, he asks whether we should continue on from yesterday, so I say 'fine' and we head to the managers office again.

I summarise some of the discussions from yesterday, about Quinny's response to my comment about living, about feeling like he's being pushed down on top of his head, about his present relationship and previous one and his desire for a quick solution. Quinny jumps in, he has a football in his hands (I remember last time he seemed uncomfortable not playing around with something, so I am encouraged);

"...I spoke with my girlfriend Louise last night about our conversation and she seems to think there is something in it..."

I agree and show further interest in Louise who appears to be playing a significant role in Quinny's life. He explains that as a social worker she has an interest in people, and regularly challenges him on things. Something his previous girlfriend didn't do and something he now enjoys.

"...I want to hit my way out of trouble, play shots. I wandered down at the bowler today and I want to keep doing that, it's just, I got a bad decision today..."

Quinny explains how his motivation was always previously something that was at its best when someone said he couldn't do something. He reel's off a few very recent occasions in a cricket context;

".. I remember getting a six for, getting 70 odd..."

...and then slows down, takes a breath and speaks softly as he stops spinning the football around in his hands:

"...I remember a conversation with my Dad once, I haven't spoken about this for years. Stuff is just coming to me at the moment talking to you... it was in a car leaving some trials or something. He said there are probably 5000 lads trying to get into that team and I shouldn't worry about getting in. I remember just thinking, fuck you. A year later I was playing in the actual first team. Full of internationals, that's what I have always been like up to now..."

Despite knowing the sport well, I didn't realise how strong a side that team would have been at that time. Quinny recounts his ability to bowl, to bat, how they interchanged, and a few more occasions when Jack or Geoff had, in his words, 'turned him on' by suggesting others bowl or bat before him, that it got to him and he showed them. At this stage I remember the advice he'd been given, to recreate his old style of thinking, his old approach to the game, and Quinny begins to talk about his approach today, about trying to psych himself up to take people on, so I ask;

"...But can you simulate those things? And for me the question is why they don't happen naturally now..."

Quinny talks slower again, there's perhaps an acceptance in his reaction to my suggestion. He seems to believe that he can't recreate those feelings, those instincts, he pauses, it's quiet again... he suggests that now... really... he doesn't care so much, he isn't as bothered. 'The fire', as he puts it, isn't there.

“...Why Quinny?...”

He continues, he explains how during his early years he was pushed by his parents, not too much... but pushed. He wanted to prove selectors and a few others wrong, again, as before... how he had nothing to lose. He always wanted to be known as the best overseas player ever and to break records. I realise these are all external things, external motivations, and after more and more similar motivations are discussed, I wonder how many are left, how much more he has to prove to others and what Quinny's own reasons and motivations for playing are?

“...You know people always say, you are a great player. You have all the shots. Perhaps I need someone to tell me I am no good, that they don't rate me. I know Terry doesn't rate me. Jack and I had a chat once and I asked him straight, and he gave me an honest answer, that he (Jack) thinks Terry doesn't (rate me)... he's straight like that Jack... good like that...”

He explained how when scoring loads of runs in the second team, he was then told in an appraisal that he 'scored runs too quickly'. This seemed such a significant thing for Quinny. Something he remembers to this day, and that when he heard that he hasn't felt the same since. Quinny looked deflated and seemed to return to that moment for a few seconds, he's still, his shoulders then drop, he looks downward, he appears drained, *beaten*, he definitely won't ever forget that comment. I wonder why that didn't motivate him to prove Terry wrong;

“...I am learning a lot about you Quinny and your past. Do people here know you?...”

“No I don't think so. Jack knows me. Well, he knows enough about me, but you know even my fiancé didn't know me despite being with me for 8 years. Like I said there are things about me people don't know...”

Quinny and I hear someone talking in the corridor in a familiar deep voice and it sounds like Terry. He tenses up, spins the ball around as before, rises from his wilting position and tries to pretend he isn't bothered. Everything about his bullish physical reaction suggests he is. I suggest we break for a bit and he can grab some lunch. I don't want to but also don't want to put Quinny in a difficult situation (i.e., in Terry's office and talking to me). Over lunch I mention a couple of insights (i.e., he's talking, understanding more) to Jack, and as always he is honest about the fact he doesn't really have the patience or time at the moment while the game is on. I see that. He is heavily involved in this game, keeps kicking out with his feet, keeps saying 'go on ball' when someone plays a shot toward the boundary rope, he wants to win. I appreciate that, I heard him say how much he wanted to win this game, and I also appreciate that's the idea (and of course what he is judged on) after all!

Jack is justifiably aligned with performance. You may recall that during the focus group he was the first to reflect one step further than the other coaches. Jack tried to be completely honest about his thoughts on supporting players with issues indirectly related to performance, which are more lifestyle based and personal in nature;

Jack - But how often have we said in the last 4 years, is everything alright? I've said it... I have said it...

Geoff - What to players?...

Liam - We do say it... but...

Jack - But do I really look really bothered... they tell me and then I'm like... oh no... oh wait a minute I have a phone call...

On our return after lunch, Quinny discusses the same things again. This time we are round the back of the ground away from the changing rooms and any sight of the game. It's an opportunity again for him to talk, but this time somewhere where we aren't going to be disturbed and I sense Quinny is more relaxed. I bring up the 'living' question again, and Quinny becomes passionate,

"...Yeah mate, Yeah..."

He becomes animated again, and talks in a louder and more meaningful tone;

"...You know I would say I have lived and done things... but I cannot say that I have lived and lived, if that makes any sense, do you know what I am saying?..."

"(Pause)...It makes a lot of sense when you remember our conversations yesterday, yes..."

Quinny again returns to the idea that he has always been playing cricket. That he has always wanted to do more with his life, and to have achieved more by the age he finds himself now. I cannot help but think this is (currently) eating away at him.

"...You know I woke up the other morning and out of the blue I said to Louise, I don't like cricket that much, and we discussed moving away and living and opening a bar abroad. Now what does that say..."

"...It probably says a lot, but what does it say to you most importantly?..."

I also put a difficult question to him.

"...Are you worried about not being a cricketer..."

"...I am probably more worried about being a cricketer, I..."

There is a long pause. Quinny looks directly at me, with an uncertain gaze, his eyebrows rise, hesitant to say what he wants to;

"...Say it, say what you were about to say but didn't because you are scared of my reaction or what I might think..."

"...Well I, I am not sure this is really what I want to do... If I am going to play cricket I want to play my way, and here I don't feel like I can or am encouraged to do that..."

We both breathe a sigh of relief and Quinny blows out his cheeks. Again the atmosphere changes, Quinny is drawing more and more conclusions himself. I worry I am doing him a disservice. It feels like I am talking him out of being a professional (perhaps he will prove me wrong?). I would be so tempted to take the easy option here and suggest he proves people wrong and uses Terry's

disbelief to score runs, but I realise that's a technique, it's a quick fix, and for me, there appears to be more than that going on here.

Quinny talks about his 'business books' reading, his interest as a person in business and finances, and his 18th birthday present. He asks me what I think it was. I suggest a bat or something knowing it wouldn't be, and he explains it was 'financial shares'. He's interested suddenly, he talks quickly and confidently about his dabbling in the stock market and how much he enjoyed it. It appears to reflect his desire to find something else that's interesting him and fits with his ambitions, the ambitions he had as a boy. My sense is that Quinny does love cricket, but just not here, not now, not in these circumstances now. Our conversation return's to his present situation:

"...You know I am now with Louise, but last year admitting to myself that I didn't want to be with Michelle my fiancé, that was a hard thing to do, but it was the right thing..."

I see and suggest more parallels:

"...I wonder if you are now doing the same with your cricket. You are facing up to something that's hard to admit, especially in this environment?..."

Our conversation was coming to a natural conclusion now. A couple of times Quinny asked about me, a couple of times he actually offended me a little, but I reserve judgment. I do however (momentarily) say that I can understand and identify with Quinny's lack of 'fire' and not caring as much, wanting to do others things, but realise this isn't about me, its just something I have also experienced as a 'lesser' player. Perhaps this will do nothing for him or he'll end up making runs, but I feel that Quinny feels understood and hope I have provided an interpersonal environment in which he can express himself and perhaps even understand more about himself. Perhaps he may realise that he has changed. That it's ok to feel in turmoil, and that he is deciding on what to do himself, where he finds himself now, and how things might be different someday. I do however anticipate other conversations as there are four months of the season to go.

You may notice here that there are ten days between my interactions with Quinny above and those that follow with Jack below, and even more until a further discussion with Quinny. Such breaks and jumps between players, clubs and contexts seem to reflect quite well the pace, transient and disjointed reality of a support role within a competitive season.

Saturday 17th June

I have been at another championship game Tuesday and Wednesday this week, but never had the immersion or opportunity to be around the Woodshire lads as they played against Gladeshire. My job commitments also meant I had to be elsewhere during the afternoon of both days. Again, I am left feeling disorganized, uninvolved and on the periphery. A bad patch for me. As I leave the gym I turn on my phone at 9.30am and as usual the voicemail rings. It's Jack:

"...Hi Dave, just something I wanted to let you know about. Yesterday we won the 3 day game against Gladeshire, but Quinny, well, he played in a manner that suggested he didn't give a fuck, that he really isn't bothered. I understand his situation, you know I do, but I think we need to come to some agreement because, he is having an influence on the rest of the team. Like Wayne, he's impressionable and plays in a similar carefree way and this could be a virus I don't want spreading through the team, anyway don't worry about getting back to me soon..."

By the sounds of the rest of the voicemail, Quinny played in a manner that suggested he didn't care; he tried to smack it and Jack's impression is that his approach is rubbing off on younger players; he says he's seen it happen before. Having listened to the voicemail again, I drive home and decide to give Quinny a call, see how he is. He picks up and sounds like he's not keen on speaking to me, it's obvious from the outset, I can tell. Quinny explains what happened yesterday, that he got 20, that the team won, that he's another club game this weekend as is looking forward to a night out with the lads. Then I ask why he seems a little different, I'm blunt and to the point, but importantly I try to be honest;

"...Quinny, I'm sorry I have called this morning, I just wondered how you were, but do me a favour, be honest with me and just tell me why you sound almost fed up of talking..."

Quinny explains that I now seem to represent what he doesn't want to be thinking about at the moment. He almost suggests that I am creating a negative vibe with him, that he wants to be positive and not talk about negative things all the time. I didn't think we were. As I sit in my parked car, engine off outside my house, with the phone to my ear, there are a couple of uncomfortable gaps in the conversation. I feel guilty to a certain extent, but deep down know that I only ever helped Quinny describe how he feels, but can also understand that's doing nothing for his game at the moment. Perhaps he might have realised some things and is rejecting them. I reassure Quinny I don't want that influence, the opposite in fact, but again, I try reassuring myself that I know that Quinny spoke about his agenda to me, about the way he felt to me. Jack and I speak on Sunday, we discuss the coming week's game against Rinshire, that I'd like to stay over with the team and he explains his voicemail and the situation last Friday when Quinny was eventually out in the second innings.

"...There is a context to all this, last week there was a great deal of maturity shown by the players, but also things said to umpires and helmets thrown and that.... (Jack explains a few management issues, but I'm sat waiting for Quinny's name)... When Quinny was out he was in the changing rooms Dave, and he was punching his bat, with his gloves still on, for about 20 minutes or so, it was a bit disconcerting to be honest..."

Everyone reacts in different ways and badly sometimes when dismissed, but sometimes things boil over and go beyond the norm. This sounded like such an occasion. I am not shocked, but I get that horrible feeling again. I get that feeling that comes with not being around. Instead of being at the ground that day I was elsewhere and Quinny was going through this. I appreciate that it's not my responsibility and Jack handles these things well, but I still get an '*aching*' feeling. This again highlights my frustrations of not being able to be around or have a general accepted or defined role. It also reflects the realities of supporting players and possibly people, in that often, it doesn't feel right, doesn't go right, that there isn't always a happy ending and I'm not always going to be effective. Jack explains how he handled the situation, how he let a few things go last week, knowing the context of Quinny's experience. As always, he handles things well and I suggest so. It would be too easy to have a go, get stuck into him, it must have been harder to try a different way. I explain how Quinny has changed a little with me, and Jack quickly comes to my defence (he regularly does). Jack also explains that his appraisal is coming up soon and he's likely to be told he won't be getting a renewed contract despite it only being June (very early for any player to be told). He's staring down the barrel. We all know that, and I sit thinking that Quinny probably knows that too.

Having fled between involvement with Rinshire and Woodshire, at this stage of the season the teams now play each other in a Championship game at Rinshire's county ground. It is during these few days that I engage further with Quinny, but also meet Broady, whom you may remember had been mentioned above (while I stood with Rob at Shelf CC). Broady is in fact someone who will emerge as another central character in the timeline.

Tues 20th June – Rinshire V Woodshire – County Ground – 1st day of 4 – 2CH

As I walk around the corner from the car park and into the stadium, the Woodshire lads are running out to field. This stadium is huge, a wide amphitheatre with white seating everywhere. It's dull, warm and cloudy. Rain is forecast this week. I feel strangely at ease, unlike the last week or so, as I know I am going to be around for 3 whole days. I don't have to rush off anywhere, and I can get on with, well, 'being around'. As I walk around the boundary to the players' balcony overlooking the pitch, I'm heading towards Jack and Ray (opposing coaches of course) both stood with their arms crossed and pointing at players. Then although there might only be 100 people in the stands, I hear a member on my left side shout;

“...come on Broady, knuckle down, get some runs...”

Broady has come down from the first team, after a poor start to the season as you may remember my earlier conversation with Rob. Broady looks confident at the wicket, shadowing strokes as he warms up and the Woodshire lads set their field. Looks can be deceiving of course. I sit with a couple of lads outside but I am eager to get into the changing room area, to get going, to get my ears open. After five minutes or so I decide to wander up the stairs towards the dressing room / viewing area, but as I turn to face the game I hear a loud familiar collective shout of celebration. Broady has been caught behind. It's a good delivery that lifts from around off stump. He's nicked it and been given out caught behind. I immediately wonder what he's going to be like for the rest of the day. Broady deplorably walks off the field towards the dressing room. It's a long walk from the middle of an empty (and large) ground. White seats envelop Broady, his head is down, then up, almost forcing himself not to show how much he's bothered. He looks at the scoreboard, the ground again, then up again to the sky. He pauses as he looks at the sky for a moment longer. He takes his helmet off, angrily forcing his batting gloves inside, tucks his bat under his arm and runs his fingers through his hair. Sighing and shaking his head a couple of times, his spikes echo against the concrete that joins the grass of the pitch with the changing rooms. No one says anything. Few make eye contact with him. Players close by uncomfortably look away. It's a *lonely* place that walk.

I make it to the changing room area overlooking the ground, it's quiet and a few lads are around. Interestingly, lads come over as I settle in at the back of the room away from everyone.

“...Dave can we catch a word later...”

“...Dave, are you around for today or longer...”

I suppose I get something from such reactions, they make me feel important or valued and are quite a contrast from last week. Broady walks in, puts the paper down and asks how I am (we've met briefly a couple of times), we exchange a few words about Football teams, the England game, the usual, but it's over everyone else who's in the room, and no one else has said anything to Broady other than;

“... unlucky Broady... got a good pill there...”

I ask Broady about his business and then we lead onto researching courses into plumbing in his local area, something he's currently interested in to support his property development and refurbishment business. Broady has put significant amounts of his own money into a property venture this winter, and he was labouring all winter. Lads continue to come and go in and out of the room as the game breaks for lunch, so we continue with a casual conversation.

After lunch, everyone returns from the canteen, back to the viewing area where I have been sat alone thinking of ways to talk to Broady. On his return I ask if we can go out for a chat when no one else can hear us, and say I have a few questions for him, because essentially I (genuinely and simply) wonder how he is. We slowly move outside and are sat together facing the action on the player's balcony. It's small but has three or four seats where lads regularly sit in groups, but I hope they don't today. As always for the next hour I'm not even interested in the game, yes we might comment on the score, the three well hit cut shots that Seb plays in the space of three overs, but I'm not really interested in that, and although I might pretend I am (with occasional claps and comments), I'm interested in Broady. I ask Broady how he is, how he's feeling. Broady is well known, his reputation in the club is significant. He's a big player in the county, has been for years. He began by talking about his lack of form this year, that he's struggling, that things are not going well. I try to ask how he is, and as I begin to stress the 'he', the barriers eventually seem to come down a little. Broady looks at me, then the floor;

“...I feel *lonely* at times, especially when I used to be dicking about. I mean I would do it and you know it would be great at the time, having a laugh and being part of the story the day after, but when I went back to my flat on my own I'd be thinking... this isn't right...”

Broady explained that he is now in a long term relationship with his fiancé and that they'd been together off and on for around 8 years but they both decided it was time to commit. He explained and showed me a lot of the financial commitment he'd made to the business he's now part of and it is highly significant amounts of money. Broady continues to explain his situation in his blunt and strong Rinshire accent. He hasn't scored runs and he has no excuse, but he doesn't want the young lads to have to listen to him moping around or anything.

“...I woke up about three weeks ago and it was glorious outside. I was playing first team that day, and I said... oh shit... and Diane said what?... You know, I was disappointed that it was sunny because I didn't want to come into the ground. I didn't want to play and that worried me. That's not me...this environment just isn't good for me. It's not a good place for me...”

That didn't really surprise me, everyone has those days, but not often when playing first team. Broady explained how down he felt, that he's frustrated, that he's out of nick, and that he feels he's kind of fallen out of love with the game;

“...I got a random text the other day, that's not important, but it actually said in it, are you still wasting your time running around a cricket field for 4 days a week, and it made me think. Shit I am. Take today, I have been given out early and I am just wasting a day. I've been upstairs for a bit (trying to catch up with some work correspondence) but normally we can't use our phone and that (with the first team).”

We are both leaning forward now, our chairs facing forward, both our positions slightly turned toward each other, arms folded into our stomachs, backs bent over, mine less so, looking either at the play or down at the wet green carpet lining the floor. Broady explained that he'd been working

all winter on one big building project, his first. He said, and I remember it striking a cord with me, he enjoyed being 'normal' and doing 'normal' things. The words normal seemed to jump out at me. He enjoyed the escape from the game, the banter with the brickies. He also wondered why his cricket hadn't taken care of itself now he's sorting himself out away from the game. That it may even be making things worse. He explained that he's got a profession, a parallel vocation, he's working and he's also settled:

"...I'm content... and happy in the way my life is set up now, it's comfortable, I like it. My cricket just hasn't happened... It's opened my eyes this winter, I've been cocooned in cricket for so long and now I am out of that..."

I try summarising some of his comments, that he's settled, content, that he likes and craves normality, and suggest he's coming to terms with his 'different' life perhaps?

"...That's it, it's different, I am different..."

Broady explained the party phase some more, but not in the way a man does when he's boasting, when he's telling you how good he is, his conquests, it's not like that. This is somehow a more sensitive and reflective talk. A mate told Broady he hadn't got a run since settling down, then Broady suggested that going out and getting birds gave him a buzz, his self esteem would rocket, he gained confidence, but now he's staying in more, living more like a normal life and coming to terms with that. I ask whether he wants that life...?

"...Yeah, I want that, I don't want to be 35 when this finishes and not have someone..."

After laughing over his suggestion that Broady should go out tonight and grab a bird or two, 'get some' and see how he plays, I try to assure him that this might not be the reason. He agrees and asks more about my girlfriend. I don't let him in, but share a little about how long we've been together, before moving us on. This isn't about me.

"...I can't talk like this, I can't tell people this, I tell some, my core, but there is a lot of bravado and that and you don't want that stuff to get out..."

Broady feels he's been talked to and handled badly. This is a major issue, you can sense it, feel it. I can feel Broady growing angry. There is something there between him and Dean. They used to play together. I wish I'd asked how? And to give examples of what's happened? I missed such an opportunity. Broady, throws an imaginary object into the air;

"...The way I've been handled has pissed me off, the brickies just said smack him..."

He uses phrases like 'insecurities' and 'anxious', and he clearly is. He enjoys the opportunity to talk and I remember only consciously 'thinking' about our conversation twice during the hour or more we were sat together, the rest just flowed. We both stand up as Ray and another player are close behind us. I look elsewhere, and put my hands in my pockets. Broady stretches his arms out and backwards and yawns. Suddenly, Broady sticks out a hand, I go to shake it normally and look at his hand, but he makes a fist, and lifts my hand so it forms more of an embrace of hands. I look at him. He pulls my hand and my torso a little closer so our opposite shoulders meet, Ray see's us and laugh's in a way that suggests he knows.

"... Alright fellas..."

The difficulties Broady is experiencing (not to mention Quinny and others that follow) personally and professionally are obviously being played out in specific contexts which I hope became clear in the previous chapter. I therefore invite you to re-read the brief extract below, taken from Rinshires focus group, but this time with Broady's current experiences and dialogue from the above interaction at the forefront of your mind. Although I intend to draw further implications later, having said 'I feel lonely at times' and 'I can't talk like this', 'I can't tell people this' and 'that and you don't want that stuff to get out', my question to Dean below seems an appropriate place to return too.

David - Do you think anyone is afraid to communicate here at this club?

Dean - Do I what Dave?

David - Do you think any players would be afraid to communicate here, and I know that sounds bad?

ALL- [Everyone contributes] I am sure there would be yeah... oh yeah... I'm sure

Dean - I am sure there are some that would be afraid to speak to one of us but would prefer to speak with someone else? ... I don't think any player wouldn't be able to approach anyone of us 5? They might not approach four of us but they might be able to approach one?

Rob -So what about on personal issues then?

Dean - I would back that as well?

Simon -Some are fearful of your position man, that's one of the things... Or they might be fearful of the chief exec or...?

Dean - Well to answer Dave's question? I don't think anyone wouldn't be able to approach any of the five of us?

Rob -I think on cricketing issues they would, but on personal issues I am not sure...

...

Tim -I would still say they would go to David with some things...

...

David - I am fascinated why you think some players couldn't come to you with personal issues?

Ray -Well there might be someone who hasn't spoken with anyone about personal issues? And I don't think that would be unnatural either, they would think that it's not macho; it's not what you do when you are a bloke?

After the lengthy interaction with Broady (and others) the game eventually ended for the day with Rinshire in a commanding position. I had no further opportunity for dialogue with Broady in the game, and as things transpire, it is nearly a month until we meet again. Tomorrow would be another interesting day.

Wednesday 21st June - Rinshire v Woodshire – County Ground – 2nd day of 4

I arrive at breakfast at 7am and as always I am early. I don't particularly expect anyone down for a while, but as I've explained it's a good idea to be down before anyone else (and of course in the

bar till the end) then, surprisingly Quinny turns up, alone, looking exhausted, wearing shorts and a t-shirt, looking scruffy. Last night in the bar he'd apologised for not wanting to come across as being off with me on the phone last time we spoke, and he seems relaxed this morning. I encourage Quinny to speak with Geoff and Jack, because he continues to change his thinking regularly. There appears to be little consistency, his mental approach is full of frustration, and I don't see how just trying to 'hit' his way out of trouble is going to work.

After breakfast we head to the ground where the usual warm ups and preparations begin. Later in the mornings play, Rinshire are still batting, going well and Jack, Geoff and me are sat watching the game on the viewing balcony. Everyone is sat with their feet up, comfortable but contemplative. Jack provokes a conversation about Quinny, he's again being honest about things and feels that in the grand scheme of things, the clubs management have failed him by encouraging him to play in a way that didn't suit him. Despite a couple disagreeing with his use of the word 'failed', Jack explained his point further:

"...He arrived 18 months ago as a prodigious talent, and now look at him, actually *look* at him in the field now..."

As Jack encourages us to look at Quinny, the over has just finished and players are moving into their fielding positions while the next bowler prepares himself for a new over. As Jack speaks, Quinny is walking across the wicket, returning to field in the slips, a few of the other players are strolling too. He has his hands in his pockets and is moving the slowest out of them all, his shoulders are drooping and he is moving at what appears a lazy pace. Indeed, it's interesting how players can hide the way they feel a lot of the time, whether it be through a quick show of energy, or maybe a few warm up movements that are supposed to reflect their readiness, bouncing on their toes, shacking off their arms, swinging them side to side. Yet, if you keep watching (sometimes) 5 or 10 minutes later, the energy often passes, the 'shows' peter out, and players can be rooted to the spot, looking at the ground, dazing, until someone shouts some encouragement to the bowler or something else captures their focus. Quinny is dragging his feet, he is feeling the cold and puts his hands under his arm pits. It's a (typical) overcast day, windy, growing colder and his movements mirror the setting, not to mention the way he might be feeling.

Geoff pipes up:

"...I get the impression Quinny will be told in the next couple of weeks that he's done. That will be it, they'll pay him up..."

Being assistant coach Geoff knows a lot about contractual situations and thoughts, and without saying it, it's obvious he and Terry have had talks. Incidentally, Seb Clay makes his debut for the second team in this game and scores a hundred with an ease and class that everyone takes note of. Indeed, sat with Jack, he claps and gasps at Seb's classy use of his wrists to play the ball late, to cut into the gaps behind square and at his class. As a future star announces himself. I sense he won't be in the second team for long. Rinshire finish their innings and Woodshire are now batting, John and Wayne head out to open the innings. The rest of us remain in the viewing area and Quinny is stood in front of everyone in the changing rooms, fully kitted out. He's wearing every piece of clothing and padding you can picture. He's shadowing shots in the window facing the field, shadowing aggressive shots in and amongst the rest of the lads. He looks good, he looks confident. As we look to the wicket Wayne is out early, caught in the slips, so Quinny goes out to bat, shadowing the same aggressive shots as he makes his way out to the middle.

Quinny then plays aggressively but with some degree of control. His approach appears more considered. It has a better balance to it. He hits 49 off 41 balls with 2 sixes and 5 fours, and continues to play aggressive shots, but it's all a little less frantic, a little more composed and selective. Quinny eventually gets caught out down on the boundary at third man, a dismissal reflecting his aggressive play. Jack is playing every ball at the moment, kicking at the window frame in front of his seat, swearing and shouting at players playing poor shots. He's growing frustrated as more lads get out. They are playing rash shots, and playing with immaturity and Woodshire start to struggle.

Woodshire are bowled out for 262, and are forced to follow on (bat again). Fortunately for them, John and Wayne survive a tricky 4 over spell before the close of play, but Woodshire are in deep trouble. At 6.30pm and the close of play, Jack is concerned about today about the way the game has gone and the way the lads have played. He's visibly bothered and is contemplating everything, he asks my opinion about the game and I don't particularly add much significant, but he says a few honest things:

"...Some of the approaches and shots I think are being influenced by the virus, Quinny is negative and playing like he does not give a fuck and that is translating itself to the rest of the team. I can't afford that..."

Jack has told me that he and Geoff have considered dropping him from all games. Paying him off because of his negative influence on the rest of the team. Quinny has been pissing him off, the way he has played, he thinks he has not cared and he feels it's a bad influence on the others. Jack clearly cares, but doesn't want to make Quinny a scapegoat. He is honest enough to admit he could do that, but he says something that makes me think:

"...In the past I would have dropped him, got rid of the virus. The old me would have done that, but I know what's going on with Quinny now and the way we have dealt with him in the past, I know, and I am accommodating certain things because of that ..."

Terry calls to ask how things have gone, so I leave the room and leave Jack to it. As I do I hear Jack talking him through his concerns, and then is asked about the results and performances from the day, after all, and as discussed before, that is how he is judged. Back at the hotel tonight, its 8pm and I arrive down for some food and sit with the younger lads all eating their burger and chips. Quinny joins us and comes and sits next to me and we chat again, but this time I don't ask anything. Quinny is asking me questions, about my study, he keeps talking a lot then thinking on his own, looking at the floor between his knees. He leans back on a small stool, his back arched over; he's thinking about something but I am not sure what:

"...You know I think I am more self-aware now, having talked things over this past month or so..."

"...What do you mean?..."

I pretend I haven't noticed how deep in thought he was:

"...I understand more about me, what I have been through, what makes me tick now, how I am emotionally and that, how I've been handled, how I have reacted... (Lengthy Pause of around 20 seconds)... I feel alright..."

We sit next to each other and I try not to take any credit despite some coming my way. I try to make Quinny understand the value in talking and describing himself. He disappears to buy me a drink.

“...I am alright, I am off to bed me, cheers, see you all later...”

None of the younger lads notice especially, they are busy watching the game. I am left alone with the young lads who are oblivious, they don't know what we have been doing, what we have been talking about this last month and to be honest, they even keep jibing at me, 'what you doing Dave?', what you up to, you've a right job you have? I don't care, they don't need to know, no-one does particularly. Although, somewhere in me, I recognise that I want Jack to know I am supporting Quinny, that I am trying to help him, I suppose I do want some credit, someone to say, you're helping. Having felt I have made and will no doubt continue to make many mistakes in supporting players, that night one phrase stays with me until I fall asleep:

“... I am alright...”

Thursday 22nd June - Rinshire V Woodshire – Day 3 of 4

It's 9.30am and I am sat in the viewing area while everyone else heads out to the field. During the warm up, the lads are in a group, the familiar circle on the outfield having come together after a 5 a side warm up. Words are being said, I can see everyone's looking towards Jack at one end of the circle. He'll be giving his thoughts about the day, but now they are looking towards Quinny at the other end of the circle, he must be saying something, and I wonder what, this isn't normal? Then the usual physical preparations begin. On resumption Woodshire lose a wicket early again, so Quinny is in early again. It will be a test again with the ball 'doing a bit'. Quinny stands up to it, he plays well and goes onto make 70 in 121 balls. Vastly more considered, and in the words of players in the viewing area, more 'like a pro'. Jack and I meet in the corridor between the two changing rooms and we discuss how different Quinny is this morning, I mention how he was last night, said he was 'alright' and that he seemed to play differently yesterday, not to mention today.

“...I was uncomfortable talking to Quinny this morning, but in the end he was really good, he was a virus yesterday, but today he provided an antibiotic. He put his hands up and said I am at fault for this and that, and from there I felt I could work with him...”

We are surrounded by people moving past us in and out of changing rooms. We compare opinions; we flit between conversations, concepts, and surprisingly go deeper into Jack's own situation, his relationship with the manager and his own concerns over that. He's impressed with Quinny and now he's buzzing himself. After meeting Jack in the corridor and discussing our 'collective' approach to working with Quinny, we are now sat in the changing rooms, and when he reaches 50, everyone rushes and goes outside to clap him. Everyone but me that is, I purposefully try to stay away. I don't feel comfortable doing that, as it appears dangerous ground (not to mention the impact on the Rinshire lads). Although I would like to, and I do feel a satisfaction within me. Later in the game Jack also explains how he would have gone for a quick fix in the past, how he would have been tempted to listen to someone offering psychological techniques to sort Quinny. I don't see that anyone has sorted Quinny. We also agree that he could change in a week or so, but we all get the sense he is in less 'turmoil', that listening support and caring matters. It might have also contributed to him scoring runs and perhaps in him scoring 49 and 70 in this game? Perhaps? Perhaps not? I wonder what Quinny will be like when he fails next. Will his other career aspirations elsewhere reappear? How long

this will last? Will his contractual circumstances change in ways beyond his control? Will I be around?

When he returns to the dressing room Quinny isn't bullish, he is excited, proud and happy, but not over the top. He's almost seemingly contemplating things, more reserved, still thoughtful. I would like to quickly mention that Seb also took 5 for 80 odd bowling in this game, on top of his hundred, again a quality performance despite losing the game. One last thing I also remember each day during this game was my position. Despite this being the most intense rivalry for these two teams, more animosity on the field than between any other teams, it dawned on me after the second day, that I had been walking from one dressing room to the other, exchanging conversations with one player and then the other, with one coach and then the other, and yet amazingly, no one had actually commented. In fact no one seemed to care perhaps or hadn't even noticed, and I don't take it lightly, nor mention it.

4.3.2 - Reflective Stop Off 2

In line with research aim (C), Andersen (2000) suggested that the best way to provide a window of what occurs during service delivery is to have extensive examples of conversations between practitioners and athletes and coaches. He also suggested that very few researchers (as in my case) and applied authors have placed emphasis on the process of working with athletes or how athletes and practitioners talk to each other. In line with these suggestions and my own experiences as an ethnographic researcher, I will draw further implications from the reflections in the timeline which have moved closer to the dialogue (and experiences) of players during conversations and interactions with me. Arguably the reflections above could also relate to many themes within all general dimensions from Study 1.

Discussions in Study 2 addressed research aim (D) by portraying the differing perspectives coaches offered on these content analysis themes from the two clubs, and are considered alongside the lifestyle based subject matter emerging from time with Quinny (at Woodshire) and Broady (at Rinshire) in the timeline. Views in focus groups on whether players talk (or the extent to which they talk) to coaches about personal or lifestyle based issues and their roles (as coaches) in supporting such issues were expressed; and Quinny and Broady's stories seem to fit in and illustrate these different perspectives. I do not and will never know whether Broady or Quinny spoke to coaches at either county to the extent they did with me (or in fact with anyone) during these moments or throughout the summer, and although I am not precious, I sense not. You may recall that at Rinshire, Dean had suggested that he didn't think 'any player wouldn't be able to approach anyone of us 5' whilst Rob was more hesitant suggesting that 'on personal issues I am not sure'. With Broady (at Rinshire), it did not seem to me that he had sought, been given, or even wanted advice from anyone, nor did I try to provide any. In fact as the ethnographic process and summer continued it seemed more apparent that Broady had no intention of approaching anyone (the opposite in fact) and that few would know or even (be allowed to) seek to understand the extent of his personal experiences. This impression

supports authors more general observations of athletes who comment on a universal reluctance on their part to ask for help (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; Brown, Cairns & Botterill 2001), and more specifically Ravizza's (1990) suggestions that professional players are essentially very proud young men who find it difficult to seek help.

At Woodshire, Jack suggested that 'it may not be appropriate' to support players with some of the issues being presented in that he was 'connected with things' contractually and in terms of team selection. However, in making indirect reference to research aim C and the need for a practitioner support role, Jack also felt that 'there has to be some sort of facility, known to our group of players'. Indeed, in contrast to Rinshire, coaches at Woodshire certainly seemed to embrace and understand the difficulty players may have in sharing their experiences with them. Brewer (2000) suggested that at times coaches look to other practitioners to help their athletes address issues of concern. I would therefore like to point out that although the opening reflections below may appear to expose Jack's inabilities to support Quinny's personal difficulties in the timeline, they may also reinforce his abilities. Specifically Jack seemed to recognize the limitations of his own skill base and the kind of role he is able to play in supporting players' non-performance based difficulties. However, he also seemed acutely aware of players' needs and the importance of additional expertise to support them. Jack's contributions during Study 2 portrayed how he honestly and critically reflected on how he sometimes struggles in supporting players with experiences like Quinny's in the ethnographic text. Jack suggested that he has 'got a solution within 2 minutes of listening to someone', and felt that he may not be 'genuine enough', because 'deep down I'm thinking you're not bloody good enough'. The reality of Quinny's experience above is (typically) captured during a game, a situation where Jack would simply not have time to find a quiet room as I did. Equally, as literature suggests (see Ravizza, 2002; Bond, 2002; Giges, Petitpas & Varnacchia 2004; Knowles et al., 2006) and Jack points out, coaches are 'judged' on performances. In contrast, I am fortunate and self-aware enough as a researcher (and previously as a practitioner) not to create an

attachment with performance and so am able to ‘have a detachment’, and as he suggested, am ‘looking at the person’. Jack’s own reflections here allow me to elaborate more closely on looking to research (and potentially support) the person and their lifestyle, based on interactions with Quinny and Broady in the timeline. In doing so I address research aims (C) and (E), and draw on some counselling based literature (while I certainly do *not* purport to be a counsellor, I do allude to an association with counselling concepts and skills). In this regard, sport psychologists are thought to be increasingly interested in the theory and practice of counselling (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Lavalley & Cockerill 2002; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) and describe how a greater use of counselling at the elite level is thought to be revealing the weaknesses of traditional MST approaches and making a useful and innovative contribution to the well-being of athletes and coaches (Cockerill & Tribe, 2002).

4.3.2.1 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Quinny

Whilst others encouraged and *told* Quinny to find and recreate the carefree approach to his game that he had previously adopted, I did not try to encourage or tell Quinny anything. Whilst Quinny asked for solutions from me, I also knew that offering performance based solutions was not my role as a researcher and that I did not have any solutions for him. Corlett (1996) believed the easiest route to try improve performance when working with athletes like Quinny, is to remain the sophist and “*patch em up and send em back out there*” (p.90). Corlett (1996) also suggested that within a lucrative and time demanding market such as professional sport, solutions may be the main requirement of the organisation, coaches and the athlete themselves. These suggestions from Corlett (1996) seem to resonate with the solution based support offered to Quinny.

In contrast, and reflecting on their more socratic philosophy in working with athletes (Corlett, 1996), Balague (1999) described trying to find out as much as she can about the whole person, whilst Ravizza (2002) believed concern for the athlete as a *person*

was unique in the sport culture. In this sense, but as a researcher, I asked Quinny about Quinny, and Broady about Broady, and as they responded I listened to them as people. Whilst listening, I believe I *genuinely* cared a lot about their experience. Caring was fundamental to the dialogue that flowed when with them (or any player) and something that players and coaches seemed to sense (or perhaps at other times did not). In this regard, Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) believed successful practice is 'held together' by a psychologist's capacity to care and foreground caring qualities rather than scientific knowledge as the key to successful practice. As a researcher, the caring and listening dynamic I describe seemed to encourage a few things, in me and in players, which I would like to mention, mainly in relation to Quinny, and briefly in relation to Broady. In doing so I address research aim (C) and offer research based experiences, that align with theoretical literature, as potential implications for practitioners.

Andersen (2000) suggested one of the most common difficulties of practice is learning to be quiet, and the way I remained quiet as a researcher with Quinny sometimes seemed to encourage long pauses between us (which I realise now, because I felt uncomfortable with, I occasionally broke). By remaining quiet, Quinny might then be still, before speaking differently whilst looking at the floor, or might look directly at me, uncertain and hesitant to say what he wanted. I felt this uncertainty stemmed from Quinny's worries about what I would think of him as a person, and what I would say, following his disclosure. When talking about his past and present, his ex fiancée, his new girlfriend, his brother and his ambitions outside of the game there also appeared (to my mind) to be moments when Quinny was perhaps feeling and talking over things that he hadn't for a while. Quinny's hidden way of coping with private and personal issues reflect content analysis themes in that 'Bottling problems up mean its harder to deal with' (PK-195; HN-73; MB-55) but 'You don't want to talk to people about your private life' (HN-73; MB-55), which is perhaps understandable as one senior player from Study 1 described from his own experience;

...unless you've got close people in and around you literally coming up to you and saying how are things, is everything all right, you know I'm here if you want to talk, and if you can get it out of people, then maybe you can talk to people and you can try and understand things...Martin Black 55

In being quiet, unconditional and non-judgemental as researcher, Quinny then appeared to feel more able to express his feelings and thoughts with me, regardless of his continuing low scores and without fear of judgement or advice (both commonplace in sport). In terms of research aim (C), I might further consider the potential value and nature of this unconditional and non-judgemental approach. In a similar (but therapeutic) sense, Rogers (1957; 1961; 1980) described 'unconditional positive regard' as one of the necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. This 'unconditional regard', means there is a warm acceptance of each aspect of the clients experience, no conditions of acceptance and a caring for the client in a non possessive and non judgemental way (Rogers 1957; 1980). As a researcher, I sometimes found myself torn and less able to listen when I occasionally felt a (practitioner based) desire to advise and offer solutions, finding that such interventions on my part would detract from the flow of dialogue between us and somewhat contaminate the non-judgemental environment I describe. However, as a researcher (and in terms of research aims A and C), I also found myself interpreting and feeling Quinny's 'turmoil' (i.e., how he had changed from the person he once was, based on his description of his present) and observing his manner more intently. I would occasionally share and check this understanding with him, putting into words in the most sensitive, genuine and articulate way I could, what I felt Quinny was going through. I remember some of his responses seeming significant, as much in his choice of words, as the way he expressed them (sometimes much louder, sometimes with confusion and frustration), particularly these;

"...that's the kind of person I want to be..."

"...I want to live and at the moment I feel like I am in a vacuum and am punching my way to try break out..."

"...You know I would say I have lived and done things... but I cannot say that I have lived and lived..."

In terms of the value of sharing and checking understanding as a researcher or practitioner, authors have commented on the value of possessing and communicating empathy (Orlick, 1989; Anderson et al., 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). Rogers (1957; 1980) also described 'empathy' as a powerful healing agent that requires a sensitive immersion in the clients' private world 'as if' it were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality. Rogers (1980) also felt that being empathic can dissolve alienation and is a core condition clearly related to positive outcomes. Seemingly, to be empathic, and communicate empathically as an ethnographic researcher, firstly required me to absorb all the atypical aspects of Quinny's unease, and then offer my understanding of them. On reflection, this seemed like acknowledging to Quinny I could and had heard him. It almost seemed like holding a mirror in front of Quinny, allowing him to see and hear his own experience for himself. In my reflections with Quinny I also write how I was worried I was doing him 'a disservice' in that it felt like I was talking him out of being a professional, and that prior to our second interaction, when Quinny went out to bat I was hoping (surprisingly so) our time together would improve his performance. After those moments (admittedly not during them), I also realized how such thoughts as a researcher, or indeed as a practitioner could encourage judgment on my part, and as Jack had previously described; jeopardize any 'detachment' I might have and maybe even detract from my ability to 'look at the person'. This awareness was also something that grew increasingly difficult when Quinny suggested I represented some of the things he didn't want to be thinking about. I found that difficult. In fact, reflecting further on my time researching and listening to Quinny (and other players) on listening to non-performance, lifestyle oriented and personal issues without any preoccupation with performance, I would go as far to say that (sometimes) when fundamentally looking to support the *person*, one might not (in certain circumstances) automatically support the *player* or any ensuing performance. Through my own awareness as a researcher, and Quinny's deteriorating performances, perceived viral influence on other players and 'disconcerting' reactions in the dressing room, I actually felt more able to foster a relationship that resembled something more unconditional, non-judgemental and empathic (see

Rogers, 1957; 1961; 1980) with Quinny. In terms of research aim (C) it appears that the immersed modality and ethnographic process allow ideas for practitioner roles and skills to come to fruition. Moreover, in light of the prolonged ethnographic engagement, it appears that adopting, engaging and possessing notions of ‘unconditional positive regard’ and ‘empathy’ as an immersed practitioner might be fundamental qualities and skills in supporting players. I would like to point out that whilst lifestyle support is the focus of this research, it is noteworthy that it is the more socratic elements of the sport psychology and counselling literature that might best describe the activities undertaken by the researcher. That is not to say (not for one moment) that sport psychology was practiced here, rather that an open minded ethnographic engagement and the embedded nature of the research combined to create an in depth, empathic, unconditional listening process.

4.3.2.2 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Broady

Like Quinny, when Broady spoke about his previous and current relationships, he too was often motionless and his manner tended to be more sensitive and reflective. He rarely looked at me. With frustration and perhaps embarrassment I also remember well when he said;

“...I feel lonely at times...”

Ravizza, (1990) described a professional baseball players experience as lonely, and it is Broady’s (senior pro) and Quinny’s (junior pro) experiences that seem to me to reflect how ‘lonely’ (using Broadys words) some players can feel during a season. I would like to diversify the discussion momentarily here and use the word ‘lonely’, these two examples, and extracts from all three data sets to further explore the potentially isolating experiences of some players. In doing so I also hope to address research aim (A) and (E). In Study 1 players highlighted the value of communicating in that ‘Talking to someone is a strength and should not be seen as a sign of weakness’ (SBr-166; TS-38), and that ‘Talking can alleviate or help you deal with your worries and concerns’ (HN-70; JA-24; TS-40; SBr-165); for example;

It's important to share all your emotions perhaps and talk to people and it certainly does alleviate the worries and emotions that you go through.... ... Jack Andrews 24

...and the point I am trying to make is that there has got to be communication all the time, you know whether that's a 16 year old lad who is just finding out about himself and his game or a 33 year old guy. Everyone has feelings and experiences and everyone is complex in different ways... Tony Scott 40

Players from Study 1 also pointed out that 'Problems get too much and you bottle things up so it becomes essential to talk' (NC-207; RK-179; JH-185; HN-70; SBr-166; FW-83); for example;

Outside of my cricket, which is quite a big reason for having arguments is because I am a classic case of bottling things up for weeks and months... until one day something triggers me to just let it all go, which can result in me being in a bad way depending on how you are feeling and even performing at the time, I don't know what triggers it but eventually when you do bottle things up you will snap and let it all go... Harry Nicholas 70

... everyone has their different approach and way of dealing with it, mine was through talking about it and getting it out, I think keeping things bottled up is not a great way to deal with things. My way was to get things out and get things out in the open, and that is the way I have approached most things in my cricket and my life. So you always know where you stand to a degree, there are no grey areas... John Harrison 185

However players from Study 1 and Broady and Quinny in Study 3, allude to the 'Barriers associated with communicating problems with coaches and more generically, the 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket' (both 2nd order). Using further raw data and 1st order themes from Study 1, Players also suggested that 'Professional players guard against sharing their thoughts and emotions' (JA-23, 24, 29, 31; DN-147, 152),

I certainly don't do it as much, I don't share things, I bottle things up far too much and then it might be a case where it all suddenly comes out and that's one spell after you've been bubbling away... Jack Andrews 24

I have been, I have been in a mess, but my private mess, no one knew the mess I was in, no one in this world, err, only me... Dave North 152

...so in the end I just cocooned myself, for 3 years, I was always one of the lads but in terms of my game, I probably cocooned myself no, for four years... Dave North 147

Ray's made reference to men not talking and sharing in Study 2, as 'it's not what you do when you're a bloke', and players in Study 1 had also suggested 'Players are afraid to communicate' (JA-31; TS-44; DN-147, 149; HN-71; SBr-165);

If you think I'm a man, and I can't talk to any one about this, it gets worse... Shaun Brown 165

It seems fair to suggest that these quotes and perspectives seem similar to those of Broady and Quinny, who like the players from Study 1 seemed to be 'Feeling lonely and worrying about problems' (JH-187; NG-87, 94; JA-27; DN-148). The following quotes from this 1st order theme again seem to reinforce the experiences of Broady and Quinny in the ethnographic text;

Yes, [big sigh] there are times when I have driven home and, [sigh] you know motorways and cars are lonely places, and you find yourself thinking about all sorts of things and I tend to think about other things than my cricket... John Harrison 187

... I actually feel quite alone because when you share your problems or share your thoughts share happiness, I'd like to share all them, my problems, my happiness, my joys, my sorrows, and that's what I think being in cricket we lose... Nick Greswell 94

Equally, notions of loneliness resonated with (some) coaches during the two focus groups and you may recall Ray and Rob's contributions from Rinshire in Study 2;

Ray - I felt lonely for 15 years, from 20 year old to 35... (Pause)... I felt I was all on my own in life, I didn't perform... I did alright but I didn't perform to what I know is my natural ability?

David - Why?

Ray - Why... for a number of reasons, not just one reason, a whole host of reasons, its complex, things build up... you don't put to sleep and you sweep them under the carpet...

...

Rob - People don't talk, young males I would say, don't talk about their issues, so that's one of the biggest things you learn in life, to talk about these things, it's beneficial, to talk about whatever your problems are, and you don't have to have solved them, but the fact that you have talked about it?

In a similar sense coaches at Woodshire realised the importance of 'Communication as a performer and person' (3rd order) in supporting players;

Liam - But how do you break that down with the players, to create that environment where they can and possibly open up a little bit more for their own benefit and not been seen as a negative?

Jack -I think it's very difficult

Geoff - If I am not going to tell you anything and you are my coach, what can you do?

Jack - But there has to be some sort of facility, known to our group of players that if they do have some issues they have someone to turn to... otherwise you get the 3-year bottling up thing...

In summary, similar to the quotes and themes from players interviewed in Study 1, and the reactions of some coaches in Study 2, Quinny (a young professional at Woodshire) shared similar experiences in Study 3. For example Quinny said, 'I think about that a lot and tell my friends and my family this but not others', 'I feel restricted, I feel enclosed', 'I want to live', 'I haven't spoken about this for years' and 'there are things about me people don't know'. Equally Broady (a senior professional at Rinshire) shared similar perspectives like, 'I've been cocooned in cricket for so long', 'I can't talk like this, I can't tell people this, I tell some, my core', and that 'you don't want that stuff to get out'. Whilst these findings do not suggest all players experience such loneliness or difficulty, the echo of feeling '*lonely*', regardless of the supportive or unsupportive context within which players reside, combined with the often complex issues surrounding a players lifestyle (i.e., all general dimensions) adversely affect some players and coaches whilst within the game and arguably warrant greater levels of expertise and support. In terms of this expertise and support and in line with research aim C, literature (in sport psychology) appears to be increasingly attracted to and appears to increasingly advocate the need for counselling, counselling skills and counselling training (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; 1993; Corlett, 1996; Lavalley & Cockerill 2002; Cockerill & Tribe 2002; Anderson et al., 2004; Nesti, 2006; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). The results of Study 1, 2, and 3 here, also appear to support such a *need*.

4.3.2.3 - Personally Oriented Ethnographic Reflections (II)

The second phase of narrative within the timeline and the researchers embedded ethnographic experiences again offer potential insights for practice and address

research aims (C) and (E). I make comments in the previous reflections regarding my awareness of feeling a desire to improve Quinny's performance and its potential affect on my approach as a researcher, and my generic relationships with players. Many applied authors have commented on the importance of overall self-awareness as a practitioner and its value in enhancing relationships and facilitating positive outcomes in support of others (Gelso & Fretz 1992; Danish, Petitpas & Hale 1995; Simons & Andersen 1995; Petitpas, Giges & Danish 1999; Andersen, 2000). Moreover, to become effective as a practitioner it is not thought to simply be a matter of applying a set of techniques, but learning a great deal about oneself (Gelso & Fretz, 1992), what one brings to the consulting relationship (Simons & Andersen, 1995), the process involved in practitioner-athlete interactions and the ability to develop a working alliance characterised by trust, openness and collaboration (Petitpas, Danish & Giges, 1999). In terms of building and maintaining my own relationships with players as a researcher, with Broady, unlike with Quinny, we found no room away from the game, but in fact a space watching on a balcony. Speaking in more general terms and as an example, when sat talking and listening to a player on a balcony like the one I describe, players naturally followed the action, and clapped and commented on their team-mate's stroke play or the opposition. In return I might then occasionally clap or even say 'shot' myself, sometimes naturally, but sometimes perhaps not. It came to me later, that during these more unnatural moments, I felt I was often just trying to detract from the extremely private and personal conversations I was having with another man, and in particular another older man* (as in the case with Broady).

Reflecting further on my research based interactions with players', I have since contemplated my level of authenticity whilst building and maintaining relationships with them and their reactions to me. These researcher based reflections address research aim (C) and might offer implications for practitioners and researchers. In terms of building relationships and my ongoing interactions with players, more insincere moments might mean me engaging in coarse banter that I normally would not, or drinking a beer instead of the soft drink I would have preferred, all in an

effort to ‘fit it’ and feel more comfortable. I believe that players (like me) often sensed these more inauthentic and unnatural efforts, but also sensed more sincere efforts to build relationships through more genuine and natural intentions (like running together, patiently observing an *entire* days play, playing football, leaving the hotel to find a different menu, positioning myself close to a player of any age or status who appeared to be struggling, taking time to be with someone privately at any time of day, being prepared to feel vulnerable by saying something caring, taking phone calls late into the evening, sticking to the players tiring schedule and not leaving before the end of a day’s play, waiting at the back of food cues and carrying equipment etc). In line with my experiences as an embedded researcher above, practitioner acceptance might be sought by becoming ‘one of the team’, or by being the ‘consummate professional’ (see Bond 2002), and there are thought to be many ways (including a balance between the two approaches above) in which practitioners might read the situation and gain acceptance with athletes and coaches (see Andersen, 2000; Bond 2002). However, while players seemed to appreciate simple efforts on my part, it was also my experience that players knew when I was trying to fit in, perhaps get on their level like other practitioners have in the past (including previous consultant sport psychologists) or was making an effort to build rapport or build relationships with anything other than genuine intentions (i.e., to understand and because I cared). In terms of implications for future research, training and practice (i.e., aims C and E), my own embedded experiences as an ethnographic researcher suggest that the dynamics of any practitioner-athlete relationship appear critical components in building, maintaining and providing lifestyle oriented support. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that professional sportsmen and the environment of professional sport itself, were not at times particularly welcoming, and that the material in this thesis was not readily accessible or forthcoming.

• As a male of 26 years, I have also considered how my age and gender might support the level of engagement I achieved and did not achieve as a researcher. While much successful practice of applied sport psychology consultants depends solely on the consultants’ knowledge, preparation, personal effectiveness and competence, there are thought to be some situations in which gender may influence the consulting situation (Yammarino & Connolly, 1991). In this sense, players rarely seemed uncomfortable talking about their personal issues with me, another man. Equally there was no mention of my own age or of being too young or too old to understand their experience. In extreme cases I might only have been (approximately) ten years older (i.e., players being 16) or ten years younger (i.e., players being 36) than most players, and was mainly of a very similar age to most players, though with Ray I was much younger. I might conclude that my age and gender as a researcher had few limitations to any level of my engagement in potentially understanding players. In contrast I might suggest that as a researcher my male gender and current age bracket provided a comfortable middle ground and allowed me to traverse from younger to older player and coach without undue constraint.

Tuesday 27th June – Woodshire v Fellfordshire – 1 day game (SET)

On arrival I sit in the car figuring out the best place to position myself. I can see Quinny in the distance, Woodshire are batting, and he's doing the same routine as last week; robustly shadowing shots, looking to get himself into gear. I wander over to outside the dressing room and we exchange a couple of pleasantries; he's trying to get himself ready, so I walk away. When a wicket falls Quinny strides out to the wicket with his team-mates offering encouragement.

“... Go on Quinny lad...”

He begins his innings, nothing spectacular, and nothing kamikaze. He's looking to build an innings again and is playing with a sense of calm. He gets a quick single, his team-mates all applaud. He's made 2 or 3 runs so far and the bowling does not appear too dangerous or threatening. The bowler returns to his mark, shines the ball on his trouser leg and begins running in. As he delivers the ball with an extra grunt it pitches and gathers pace, Quinny plays it defensively and it bounces down towards the floor and around his pads. No-one can see the ball, where has it gone? I notice the ball hits the floor and slowly starts rolling towards his stumps. Quinny frantically tries to stop it with his foot despite losing his balance in doing so. He stumbles and falls backwards onto the floor desperately stretching with his foot to try and stop the ball. The ball tantalisingly rolls and strikes his wicket with just enough pressure that the bails fall off. He's out. So unlucky. Quinny's head drops; he stands up and wipes the dirt off his front. The opposition celebrate and give each other high fives. He slowly walks back to the pavilion, head down, grief-stricken. For the remainder of the team's innings Quinny and I don't talk. I don't force anything, the occasional gesture but he stays in the dressing room for some time and only occasionally comes outside. I position myself in places to provide him with an opportunity to talk but he doesn't want to. I have no problem with that.

Later in the day Woodshire are fielding and I am stood with Geoff away from the pavilion near the spectator's cars. We are out of the way. I see Quinny nervously approaching the wicket taking the ball and stood at the bowling end. He's going to bowl. I'm a little surprised, hopeful, and nervous about what might happen. I break Geoff while he's talking:

“...This should be interesting...”

He realises what I am looking at. He sighs and looks down, he must think so too. Quinny bowls a couple of ok balls, but is being picked off round the corner too easily. Geoff seems excited; his tone heightens after each sentence,

“...well bowled Quinny, but sort your field out first...”

Then Quinny bowls a couple of full tosses, a couple of half trackers, he's being hit hard to the boundary, and if not for some acrobatic deep fielding he could have been very expensive in only a couple of overs. He bowls two overs for 19 runs. Inevitably he is taken off. Jack briskly walks past us both to take a phone call:

“...What did you make of that?...”

I look unsure and mutter:

“...interesting...”

Jack walks off, and Geoff and I head back to the pavilion. For the remainder of the innings Fellfordshire fight back but Woodshire are always in control. I am watching Quinny (who doesn't bowl again for Woodshire in this innings) and sit with Jack and Geoff:

“...He's been struggling in the field hasn't he...”

Jack knows who I am talking about.

“...Yeah, but not for the want of trying, but... I don't know...”

Quinny takes an easy catch, fields a couple cleanly, but doesn't look too interested. He looks tired. He throws a couple of returns hard into the keeper, nothing happening to call for it, no potential run outs, and perhaps unnecessarily. They seem synonymous of his plight. His team-mates reactions denote they know what's going on and everyone leaves him alone. After the game, I wait in the bar, but Quinny doesn't appear and having talked with other players (about their issues) I eventually leave and wonder what Quinny's going through now. I'm driving back over the motorway home and have to turn the radio off. I consider calling Quinny, but leave it. I'm not going to be around tomorrow. I might struggle to see him much over the next week or two and that really bothers me. It makes me feel guilty, I feel an ache again, it feels uneasy and it's unsettling. How can I get to him? I don't want to bug him, but I do want him to know I care.

Thursday 6th July – No game

I've been working with Jack and the academy at Woodshire this morning and afterwards we wander over behind the indoor school and a few lads are having a net. It's the second team players whom are not involved in first team '20 – 20' games and Quinny is there. He's sat on the bench, seemingly not doing much. The sky is bright blue today, this really is the heart of a wonderful summer now and the temperature is probably around 30⁰. The weather is so unlike those early days of the season when I was shivering and shaking at games. A few lads say hi, and while I sit down on a bench, Jack is shadowing shots with a first team player behind the bowlers arm. Quinny eventually comes over but doesn't seem keen on talking. I don't push it. Eventually we share a bit of banter. I ask his whereabouts this week. A little more relaxed, Quinny takes up the opportunity to talk.

“...I am not with the 20-20 squad that's for sure, even John, a blocker, is getting in in-front of me. I haven't spoke with Terry for 2 months, or he hasn't spoke with me, only to tell me not to bowl a while back when he took me over there on my own (pointing to the place where he started yipping in the nets)...”

Frustration and bitterness ooze out of Quinny, with an equal amount of uncertainty:

“...I just don't know what's going on, my club side (league cricket on a weekend), get this, they rung me Friday last week before the weekend game and said, oh we can't pay you anymore, we've run out of money...”

“....So did you play for them then...”

“...Did I fuck! I probably owed that to them, but thought fuck that. Problem I have as well is that I don't want to burden my girlfriend with this at the moment. She's got enough on herself and not

only that I can't mess her around, she's got a job and that as well...(referring to looking elsewhere, other counties)..."

Quinny is off loading. It's growing increasingly warm and I can feel the top of my head and shoulders burning having not moved for half an hour. A few lads keep looking over and occasionally pad up near us. I deflect attention for a few moments, and suggest my heads on fire, while Quinny starts again:

"...I have an agent looking at other clubs for me. I have spoken to the players union as well, they said they can circulate my details. I reckon my best bets are a couple of other counties. My brother has told me to approach these here and ask what's going on..."

Quinny goes off to practice his batting. I see Jack leave the pro and wander over towards me. He pulls me aside and tells me that Quinny will have a meeting on Thursday to discuss his situation, he asked:

"...I wonder, I have to be with the age group squads now and my time is precious, when should or can I speak with him, Thursday morning maybe..."

"...Jack, for what its worth, my opinion is that although you can't be in the meeting, you have to be available to Quinny on that day, you know him, he respected your honesty all along and its important in my opinion you are there that day, and talk to him as soon as possible about what's going to happen... no bull..."

"...Ok DP, I will be, I want to be anyway..."

Jack clearly cares, he has such skills as a practitioner, as a coach as a man manager, he can adapt to different people, different situations, he can do most things, and he is heavily involved in this, he knows he has a role to play. He can be forceful but caring too, he intuitively knows what players needs are, sensing their difficulties and he certainly senses the inevitability of Quinny's situation. After the nets have finished, we move indoors and are sat in the first team changing rooms (there is no game on). Out of the corner of my eye I see that Quinny, Jack and Geoff suddenly head to Terry's empty office. Is this it? Is Jack going to mention Quinny is likely to be released because he knows he can't be around later this week? The three of them are in there some time, it has been a good half hour or so but feels like an eternity. When Quinny emerges, he walks slowly, he seems almost in shock, goes to his locker, and very sluggishly starts to collect his things. I can't see his face yet but Jack and Geoff have a nervous way about them and disappear out of the room and out of view. I turn to Quinny and look at him. He's dressed in army pants/shorts and a cap, and although over six feet tall, he suddenly looks like a young man, a vulnerable one too. His waterly glazed eyes look toward me, no actual tears, but they are not far away:

"...I'll ring you soon Dave. I'm off to meet my girlfriend for lunch, then we have some builders coming round the flat..."

A few other first team pros look over. I don't think they know what's just happened. It's awkward for Quinny. They start laughing, but not at Quinny. He doesn't know that and looks dazed and despondent. He is standing rooted to the spot. He looks outside to the playing area and then breaths in and out deeply before quickly setting about collecting the rest of his kit. He says goodbye sheepishly before wandering off out of the changing rooms. I walk out of the dressing room and see Geoff and Jack in the corridor. They tell me that when they were discussing the likelihood that Quinny wouldn't be getting another contract extension, and were quickly outlining his options

(play somewhere else, a lump sum payment, or monthly payments), Quinny literally stopped them running through the options and just said:

“...How did it all get to this?...”

Geoff said he had a churning stomach when he said that, but that Jack was brilliant with him. Geoff walks off. Jack and I are stood in the long corridor where we are now standing alone together, just outside the changing rooms where lads make toast or get showered. We chat away and have come to a stop where we are, there is no one around, no one to notice this work. I can't emphasise how important Jack is now, how he's so busy, a million things to do and complete, yet he's prepared Quinny for his meeting with Terry and done the right thing. The corridor is oppressive with heat, the sweat is pouring off Jack, he's had a busy morning, has busy age group commitments coming up, and as always his phone was going off. He looked down at his feet, and with a soft, calmly spoken tone, suggested what they were doing was the right thing, at the right time and with genuine sorrow said that same quote from Quinny:

“...How did it all get to this?...”

Clearly this had made Jack sad, that it had indeed got to this.

Over the next few days I look through my diary. The season has changed. There are more one day games now, fewer opportunities to be around for prolonged periods of games and time. Teams don't generally stay over in hotels when playing one day games unless it's a very long journey, and the game moves very quickly. I feel my role suffering. Instead of continual conversations and understanding, I am restricted to phone calls from players. It's harder to understand players' issues. I feel out of it. I can't summon meetings; decide on my priorities, whom I'd like to see. My hands are tied with other commitments. I need to embrace it as a practitioner, but put simply, it makes things harder when I'm only around occasionally.

Tuesday 11th July – Manningshire v Rinshire - SET

It has been a busy time but such a break from Rinshire and the structure of this writing in many ways reflects the nature of following a player's experiences during a season, as they interweave and rarely come to a definitive conclusion.

After an interesting evening and an early start I arrive at the ground and wander round the local club. It's obviously a very good club, but it's a very barren landscape with mining quarries in the distance. It's totally open with the sea only a few hundred yards away. It's warm and blowing a gale. I move inside the changing room. A few lads are sat around and it's small and boxy. It's a typical changing room, white walls and dilapidated wooden benches with a hanger above each place. They double up as rugby changing rooms by the looks of motivational quotes on the walls and the fresh mud on the floor. Laney's in the corner. His kit is all over the place. He's laid with his head against his bag, turned away from everyone and bending sporadically to one side to release a fart. Others are flicking through 'The Sun' and 'The Star', heads down, few talking. The usual banter then begins to fly around, nothing different. Laney seems to be acting up a bit though. He jumps up. He's getting his kit on, but wants to be slightly different so doesn't wear the usual fleece for warm up. No-one else is getting changed yet. Suddenly and without any warning Laney turns around, laughing coldly. He has only got a t-shirt and socks on, and as he turns to the centre of the room we are all shocked to see him stood with an erection in front of us all. He continues

laughing, roaring and howling at everyone. I am shocked, so shocked, and like most turn away. The lads have a go at him, but in a joking and disgusted way:

“...Fuck sake Laney put it away man...”

“...What are you doing?...”

He eventually puts his cock away, but not after leaving it all in view for a few minutes, shaking it at people and holding it with both hands and gesturing to everyone in view. Like most I leave the room. I block out what I’ve just seen. Put it down to stupidity, masculinity, typical of changing rooms and head off looking for somewhere else to be. It’s not until later in the day I find myself disturbed. Is that really typical of changing rooms? I am not only disturbed at his behaviour; that goes without saying, but more than that. I am disturbed that no one, including me, seriously challenged Laney. I think for a time and turn to Ray during one of our walks around the ground;

“...Ray, that what Laney did earlier in the changing rooms, I know what it’s like don’t get me wrong, in changing rooms and that, but... that’s not normal man!...”

Ray agrees, but, like me, can’t offer any other explanation, just that if you have a go at him he doesn’t listen and thinks your attacking him. I think about Laney for a moment longer and consider some of the other things I’ve heard and seen since the beginning of the season. On his days off he regularly drinks during the day. He doesn’t touch a drop on match days, but yesterday he mentioned how at a charity game he was leathered by midday. He then ended up drinking all night, and that meant he’d not been home for a week. He turned up yesterday with shorts and flip flops and his Rinshire cap on backwards, he looked scruffy, with a shaven head, and the others told me he had a couple of pints of Cider in the afternoon that day. His behaviours are erratic; I remember Baronshire and his vomiting on the morning of the game. After being paid he spent over £200 in the strip joint then immediately went out and spent £250 on a portable computer console. This is not normal behaviour, there is a macho and lads culture, which explains a lot of what I see (I hope), but this is seemingly escalating all the time without opposition. He (like many in the team) talks about porn all the time, instigating crude conversations and seeking attention. He regularly boasts at “going for a wank” or having “5 a day”. Again this might be merely a bravado and front, he may even be lying, but I wonder if it will continue to escalate? How far it can go? Where will it end? Who is responsible? When speaking to Ray he mentions that Laney’s father is a “fucking idiot” who swears all the time, and used to shout when at games. Although he doesn’t know if it’s true for sure, it is claimed Laney’s mother has apparently “been through” most of the local rugby team. Laney never mentions home. He only says he is never there and avoids going home wherever possible. His girlfriend is apparently on holiday at the moment, and all the lads suggest she’s “having a good time” out there which winds him up. I glance in his bag when back in the changing rooms and see a crumpled dirty blazer at the bottom of his bag, amongst the mud, grass and empty toiletries. It’s not even his blazer!

Despite all this he is also touted as a potential captain for the first team. Simon talks like the future Rinshire team should be built around him. Ray agrees that he has been bowling well all year. Everyone agrees that he can win games, he’s different, a leg spinner, and the current spinner playing in the first team (Hano incidentally) isn’t performing. Yet Laney drinks at any opportunity, has no base or home, spends all the money he earns, never seems to have any clean kit, always talks about wanting to go on loan to another club, regularly disrespects the first team coach in front of everyone, and now this? I wonder if anyone at the clubs reads into things as much as me. What their reactions might be to my thinking above. I remember what the Rinshire coaches’ reactions were like when feeding back players experiences from Study 1.

Simon – I have written 3 points down from this... We have got to get an understanding players more, both on and off the field, especially important issues, environment is important its vital, they have got to come to work in an environment that they trust, that's what we are saying, they can have a laugh and so on and so on, and to create this we have to pursue other interests, days off... they are the points I have written down... I am saying that I don't want to know everything about everybody 24 hours a day... I don't want to know that....

...

David - Do you think a lot of attention is played to player welfare and well being?

Dean - Yeah I do aye... I think we have just got a general awareness, a general awareness of player's personal lives and their well being I would say?

Monday 17th July – Woodshire v Rinshire - SET

Today is a hot, humid and dry day again. The grass looks parched and beautiful clear sky's dominate the scenery. I feel right in the heart of a stifling summer. I arrive at another out ground packed with spectators about 10.30am, apply sun cream in my car, and then wander over to the changing rooms. I can't position myself in either of them right now, the time isn't right. I just want to be seen, and make my way towards where the lads are, slowly. There is a different atmosphere when these two play each other, an extra edge. I notice Broady and Bolly both in the team, both have come back down from the first team. Immediately I wonder how Broady is, I've been wondering that for the past few weeks and had recently contacted him over the phone to see how he was. Nothing of note is going on initially. No-one is keen to talk (which is ok of course), everyone is being polite and shares the usual banter. It's one of those uneventful days today. One of those deeply frustrating and insecure days when I feel uncertain and question what the hell it is I am doing here. I think I feel this way, having turned up late and because I am not part of any team. The dressing rooms are also really small so I can't be a part of it (in a supportive sense). Amazingly, as I stand alone Quinny calls my mobile. He asks where I am and having told him, he's sensitive to my words and goes quiet. I realise this may be because he is no longer with the county (unofficially) but that this is also the club where he plays his league cricket on a weekend. Quite the coincidence. We discuss a time to meet later in the week as he would like to discuss his options and it strikes me how vulnerable and isolated he sounds. It's still only early, around 12.35pm, but I am thinking I could be doing so many other things (you may recall I've had that thought before). I have many other deadlines to be working towards? I head off away from the ground for some lunch from a local supermarket. I sit in my car eating my lunch and even contemplate leaving the game altogether. No one would notice, no one even seems to know I'm here today. Instead I decide against leaving. I arrive back from lunch and Woodshire manage 242. That does not seem an insurmountable score when the pitch and conditions are so conducive to batting today.

By now it's around 2.30pm and Broady and Bolly are opening the innings for Rinshire. Broady has been off for a couple of weeks with an ankle injury, but he's moving freely in the middle, taking first ball. He's moving up and down in his stance, warming himself up. It's a steady start to the innings with only a couple of overs gone. At the start of the opening over, Broady is facing and gets a short delivery; it lifts to chest height so he goes back and swivels in his stance to pull the ball but gets a bottom edge. He accidentally plays the ball onto his stumps. Immediately, he slowly turns in his stance, and walks back towards us. The changing rooms are very close to the outfield and it's very very quiet. Most educated supporters will know a senior player is having a difficult period, and despite a few hundred in the ground, it's deathly hushed. Broady is disappointed, as

anyone would be. He wanders into the changing rooms with that echoing (and sometimes haunting) sound of spikes on concrete again. Having waited outside the changing rooms I eventually see an opportunity and move to stand in the changing room doorway while he heads inside. I make sure he doesn't see me move. Again the heat is oppressive and I'm so uncomfortable, my trousers are literally wet through! Broady has taken his pads off and is now sat watching the game. He occasionally holds his head in his hands, in the corner of the viewing area. I want to give him the opportunity to talk, it would be easy to walk away here, go and get a drink, or worry about all the lads noticing. I'm stood in the doorway, sweating and uncomfortable! A couple of young lads come and ask for his autograph. He politely signs a couple of caps, and as he does so a couple of the academy lads chirp up:

"...Unlucky Broady..."

An academy player from last year, now on a pro contract this year, is in the corner reading the paper. He talks about everything he reads. He's upbeat. He's been playing first team cricket, sounds confident and is buzzing. I can see how that (not the player himself) might get to Broady. Broady abruptly stands up out of his bent over slumber, looks around, doesn't quite know what to do, so decides to sit outside. He's restless though. He stands back up and turns our way. I'm still in the doorway. He asks if I fancy a lap, and of course I agree. We set off around the ground and initially we discuss Broady's interest in business legislation, in his uncertainties about his financial dealings with his business in property development, as he fears he and his partner are in a little over their head. He's worried about the financial situation he is currently in and might be in. I suggest a couple of avenues of advice through the players union. We then make our way past a few of the other players and the coaching staff, who are, as always, behind the bowlers arm. It would have been tempting to stop, but bar being polite and a little banter, Broady wants to move on. It's obvious so I take the lead and stand beyond everyone. Eventually we see an opening in the fence that surrounds the ground and leave the ground itself. Broady heads off for an ice cream. I say I'm ok despite how nice it sounds. It's probably not a good idea to be seen eating ice cream, I'm working remember. As we leave the ground, and I notice how beautiful the scenery is around us, we find some refuge from everyone, and begin:

"...I've been thinking a lot about you since our last conversation..."

"...Aye what did we talk about again Dave. How's that bird of yours, still serious are you?..."

I offer a summary of our last meeting based on what I can remember having been going over things since we left the changing rooms. Suddenly we are away from the ground and now in a little corner shop buying ice cream. After a little more loose conversation about the fact my girlfriend had her birthday at the weekend, and he would have brought his fiancé if he'd have known it was such a nice place to play today, the tone of our jovial conversation changes a little (again, a trend I am beginning to recognise in players):

"...I just can't be around those lads now, I can't listen to their conversations. As I said before though, I can't tell anyone anything because I don't want to sound negative. Take this for example, after I have just got out I don't think any of the lads knew how to deal with me, I think they were a bit...well... intimidated by me..."

I can understand that, Broady has played professional for a decade; these lads are merely making their way. Broady explained that he didn't want to be in this environment for long, that he would benefit from being back in the first team where people know him and he knows them. Oli wanders over (alone) to where we are stood at a somewhat inopportune moment. The issue of Oli's own

contractual situation comes up. Broady gives him good advice, better than I could, and suggests that he can't demand anything in particular at this early stage of his career, that it's all about performance. Broady has a lot to say and not necessarily about Oli (who seems to be getting a little lost at times as he argues his corner). I sense that Broady is really talking about himself.

"...We steal a living, compare us to doctors and them in the army and that, and we steal a living. I have been saying that for years, and most of the first team lads have a go at me for saying so. Take my mechanic mate for example, we can go to the pub for a pint and both pull out a twenty quid note, difference is, I know he's worked for his..."

As Oli and Broady continue to disagree, I take a back seat. It strikes me how negative a perception Broady now has of his own profession. To think that he steals a living, I say so and suggest that that isn't a healthy mindset he appears to have and that many people can't do what he can. Broady seems to take note but won't change that viewpoint. Later when Oli leaves us to go and pad up after a few more wickets fall, Broady leans on the wooden fence in front of us and explains his thoughts further:

"...I used to say it a lot to get a reaction out of the first team lads who were on big money, more than me in my early days. I'd be thinking, I am getting more fucking runs than you lot, I used to love getting runs and showing them up, and that's a big thing for me now, pride. I want them to do well these young lads. Take Ernie there, he's just been bowled, but it was a no ball, now that's such a fine line, because he's scoring runs now and it'll build his confidence. But you know, these young lads will be thinking the same as I used too, deep down they will..."

Broady explained to Oli that he needed to build a portfolio of himself, a record, what he can offer, what he can bring to the team. That's what he did. He scored runs and brought a lot to the team environment, and in doing so created his own status, and his money jumped tremendously when he was capped by the first team. But he also described how because of that, he is now in a vulnerable position. How all capped players are like that, in that they can offer and do offer a lot, and so get rewarded, but then when you're not delivering to that expectation level; you're there to be judged. Just before he left, Oli returned to the subject of money. After understanding Broady's points, he then asked Broady a good question:

"...So do you play for the love of the game now, or because you need the money?"

Broady doesn't answer directly, but explains his own situation in full. He needs his money to pay his commitments,

"...I've given things up for this game and although it doesn't owe me anything I have given a lot of my life to it, there's more to me playing this game now..."

You may recall the first interaction with Broady when he was dismissed early in a game and we found a similar opportunity to talk. A greater sense of his experience is emerging with each exchange, and the focus groups provide (an indication of) the context within which Broady's experiences are played out. I would like to return you to the coaches at Rinshire discussing how they felt players (in particular senior players) are able to deal with insecurities associated with the profession.

Rob -It's a maturity thing isn't it, it's the same in my career, it wasn't until the latter stages that I could take cricket for what it is. I think as a younger player you do tend to worry about things more, without a doubt.

David -I think the younger players tend to dwell on things a lot more.

Simon-Well that will be just insecurity Dave won't it, as a younger player, when you become more senior you think, well I have all that behind me so, you are not thinking I am going to be out of the door. When you have 5 or 6 years as a capped player...

Rob -You're always under pressure to perform though aren't you?

...
David - Do you think more could be done to support those insecurities or is that just something that they have to deal with and come out of?

Simon -I am not sure

Below are the latter stages of our conversation.

Still just outside the ground, watching the game and leaning on the fence, Broady describes things that, I sense, others wouldn't be conscious of. Broady has been in management meetings so he knows he would have had a good chance today of being selected for the first team if he had scored runs. If, using his words, he had "got one hundred and thirty". Broady knows he is going to have to speak with Rob and Dean today, and probably others, who will all want to know how he has done, so they can give him another chance in the first team:

"...That's not a nice feeling that, it's uncomfortable knowing that I haven't got any. I haven't held up my end of the bargain. That if I get runs they will give me another chance. They want to, I know they do, that's what I was thinking when I walked off the field today back toward the pavilion, that I'd have to speak with them later..."

Broady talks in what appears to be a healthy way and yet at times he's more and more negative. He enjoyed his 2 weeks off, shopping for groceries; working on the building site, doing bits basically because he couldn't do much with his ankle. He was thinking that if he got a chance, even though his ankle is still hurting, he'd manage it during warm ups just to get that chance.

"...The thing is, I am only thinking about these things because I am not doing well..."

I wonder whether he isn't doing well (in the first team) because he is thinking about these things. As the game draws to a close and we make our way back round the ground, we've probably been away from the others and talking for a couple of hours together (with Oli's involvement) so it's closing in on 6pm. Rinshire are cruising to victory, and as we pass them spectators adoringly look at Broady, and try act normal. As we continue round the perimeter and approach the changing rooms again. I thank Broady for his insights, and suggest I know more about him now:

"...Aye... I understand more about me too..."

Wednesday 19th July – No game

Quinny and I have been exchanging texts and the odd phone call for a couple of weeks. If you recall we arranged to meet over the phone (at the last game I was at) so he could talk about his options now he's officially been released. We agree to get together in a shopping centre outside the city. I arrive early and I find a quiet corner in a restaurant to jot down a few thoughts from our last meeting in an effort to reflect back the content of our conversations. I am put off by the music and the waiters singing away in the background, but I have a decent size table and there are no spectators around to bother us particularly. I am grateful for that (for once). Equally, although we are only 5 miles from the ground where he used to go most days and we used to meet, it's clearly not appropriate to arrange to meet there. Quinny strolls in with his 'Rayban' shades on, and wearing long colourful surfing shorts, I apologise for wearing similar casual clothing but as it's the hottest recorded day of the year I couldn't wear those trousers again. I begin by asking Quinny how his meeting with Terry went last week:

"...Ah ok mate, I just went in expecting a proper meeting, but he only broke from training, came in, I thought it would be a meeting but he just basically signed the cheque and that was it. It's a business at the end of the day, remember..."

Quinny then dived into his cricketing options and the fact that he's tied into a contract with his agent because when he arrived 2 years ago they agreed to help him find a county (but in the end he found his own trial with Woodshire). The deal he settled for with the agency was that he would only ever have to pay them anything (i.e., a percentage) if he moved clubs again within 2 years. He therefore felt tied in to that, but had said he's decided to write to clubs himself and see whether they are interested. Quinny spoke about clubs and cricket a little more than previously. It sounds as though these days sat at home while the summer is at its peak and the lads are playing might be eating away at him. I was burning to ask him more about our previous conversations, about things away from cricket. I mentioned a couple of things he'd said last time, that he wasn't sure "he wanted to do it anymore", or be in that kind of environment, wanted to be doing other things with his life, that he felt he'd "lived and done stuff but not lived", Quinny was talking in a matter of fact way, in a lifeless tone:

"...I don't feel I have reached my potential, and although I can't regret the experience with Woodshire, I would like to see if I can play this game again. If anything, to prove Terry wrong..."

"...Is that a reason to continue playing...?"

"...Yeah, I think it is..."

I reflect the understanding I have from Quinny, he runs through 4 or 5 counties he's hoped for contact with, a couple have even asked his brother how he's been and what he's up to; which Quinny reads as them being interested. Perhaps significantly, Quinny also said that he has told himself this time, that he doesn't want trialling to get in the way of finding and pursuing another career.

"...I'd like to turn it around now, to say that I want to play cricket for fun and pursue things outside my cricket seriously, as opposed to the other way around..."

At this moment Quinny appears in charge, he stops stirring his coffee and eating the froth off the top of his cappuccino. He's no longer talking as he might think he should or is expected too (i.e., about cricket) and for the next hour or so, Quinny's face and eyes light up. He's animated, and

starts to lean back in his chair a lot and enthusiastically use his hands more. I ask Quinny how all these business ideas impact the life he is currently living, his situation with Louise, everything? Clearly a slightly harder subject. Quinny gives me a suspicious look, a look that says to me that it's a personal question. His head moved ever so slightly to one side, he looks away, and slowly continues talking. I get the impression, and hope he's remembering and thinking, maybe realising, that I am asking these questions with honourable intentions (I'm no agent):

"...It's hard because Louise doesn't know what's going to happen, I suppose she would come with me to wherever I might play depending on how we are doing at the time, but she has found friends here, her own, and her best friend is coming to uni this year. It's hard though because Louise, my mum and dad, my brother, they all have vested interest's. They are all telling me that I should carry on and find another county, that I'm a good player. My brother asked me the other day, 'Do you miss it?' I said nar, the lifestyle yeah, but not the cricket really..."

Quinny explained how when he met Louise she knew him as a cricketer and would introduce him as a cricketer, and that if his dad was over here he would just straight out tell him to get another county and that he is a good player. It appears that almost everyone is talking to him at the moment, but I wonder who is listening? We then discuss career interests of his. For at least an hour, he throws out ideas about the stock market, about housing, that's he's meeting Cooky on Friday to shadow his work, a possible coaching business; all sorts of ideas that he had in a black book he'd brought with him. He opened the book (brand new, about 5 pages written in, the spine hardly creased) and explained how he'd gone for a coffee the other day and written things down as he knew we'd be discussing his options when we arranged to meet. He almost seemed apologetic though, and a couple of times said sorry for me having to listen to him, and to his hair brain ideas':

"...Remember that chat with Jack at Rinshire in the bar one night; well he's right, I do want to get rich, but not necessarily a get rich quick scheme... It's weird... (Pause)... I've been talking to you about things I don't say to others because they don't expect it. They just see me as a cricketer, they think I have these ideas and don't think they will ever work. But I have had these ideas all my life, since I was 10, when I drew a picture of a stadium with advertising hoardings and thought to myself, I could own a team one day..."

Quinny explained how he wants to be in control of his life, of his work, that he wants to be creative, and sees how he hasn't been able to be himself for some time; be creative or be in control in his cricket. Quinny asks me; I remain quiet, then he asks himself, what's stopping him from going for it? Going for the business ideas he has? Especially now, when he's been paid up. He has a decent bit of money to tick him over for a while, and he isn't going back to Australia till November, and realistically, has little else to do:

"...The thing is, I think that I should be providing for Louise and providing in our relationship, she works and earns a good wage, and I feel like, probably something to do with my ex, in that I had a life mapped out for me there, to get married and pay a mortgage, you know, to provide, go to uni and that, and yet now... (Pause)... I don't think I have to do that with Louise and yet I'm probably thinking I do, it's like I feel I have to settle down when I don't have too and don't want to yet..."

Quinny continues to talk about the place he finds himself, how he's feeling. He keeps taking big breaths, blowing out his cheeks, perhaps coming to some realisation of his options and where he finds himself. He slowly outstretches his arms and describes how he feels;

“...I now feel like I am stood with white all around me and a line in front of me. A big line; with all this stuff we’ve talked about behind me, and it’s... well... it scares me. It’s scary that...”

I suggest he’s right, it is scary, but also, perhaps an opportunity to be the person Quinny wants to be. To live the life he wants to live, and we both laugh as I suggest I sound like some American life coach or something. Quinny asks me about what I want to do? I explain my thoughts, my situation, my fears, my insecurities and try reflect that they are normal feelings for us both. Quinny suggests he’s weird, he’s not like normal people, I suggest he’s just Quinny. He continues to talk about business ideas (apologising for doing so, almost embarrassed when each time he mentions a new idea). He loses me a couple of times, which I own up too; he laughs; he’s smiling and not mentioned cricket for at least 20 minutes or so:

“...This is daft... I feel like... like I am coming out or something daft. I never talk about this stuff to this extent to anyone, it’s like I’m gay and I am coming out for fucks sake...”

Quinny has enjoyed talking about his interests, without someone saying, “...you can’t do that, that’s a load of crap, go play cricket...” we also talk about how he might explain these thoughts to those close to him; his brother, mum and dad, Louise. We discuss the realities of earning, needing to earn money, of trailing with other counties, of everything really, but Quinny then keeps asking me what else I think, what I would do in his situation.

“...I can’t answer that Quinny, I’m not you...”

“...I suppose I just want some reassurance, someone to say, go for it, what’s stopping you...?”

Quinny immediately picks up his glasses and walk off, pretending as to go and start things now. We laugh again, but he sits and leans back in his chair, he’s laughing, and blowing out his cheeks again and keeps saying:

“...I’m exhausted, I feel drained, are you?...”

“... Nar, I’m finding this interesting...”

I summarise some of our discussions, of Quinny’s experiences and suggest he think about those some more, and perhaps act on some of the options he has while he has the chance. Quinny appeared to learn more about himself, and although I was again worried that I was talking him out of a cricket career, I never said he shouldn’t trial or couldn’t play. He seems to realise why he thinks some of the things he does. He appeared to be looking for reassurance, for someone to say, “...go on Quinny, you can do it and achieve what you want...” We exchange a few more pleasantries then agree to leave. The restaurant is filling up, we both stand and as we shake hands he says:

“...Thanks for listening...”

I won’t forget those words as this might be the last time I see him face to face.

Wednesday 26th July – Rinshire v Thanshire 2nd X1 – Second day of four

Although I have missed the first days play, today Rinshire are batting, so I have an opportunity to speak with players. Interestingly, Broady is here today, he too is still playing in the seconds and

has apparently started to score some runs again (including a 112 in a one day game against Felfordshire). I closely observe Broady during the day, and on a lap of the ground, Simon suggested:

“...I can still see in his face he’s not right man...”

While batting he does look more at ease, a little more steady in his mannerisms, more sure of himself somehow. I don’t know, maybe I’m wrong? Broady makes 80 when the team were seriously struggling, losing wickets, with the ball boomeranging all over the place. A good knock, a professional innings and it’s obvious why he’s played at the top for so long even to my relatively uneducated eye. Walking round the ground, Ray and I are chatting and he runs a few ideas past me about the batting line up, just verbalising them before he makes his decision. I am constantly watching Broady, I don’t know his mannerisms at the crease, but you just get that feeling he’s with it today, coming back. When Broady was eventually out he initially sat outside the changing rooms cursing his shot that led to his dismissal:

“...that was a gimmie...”

Minutes later he lay in the changing rooms on the floor. I could hear him. I turned round and wandered in to sit on a bench whilst looking outside, not at him;

“...Could of done with a few more Dave...”

I suggest he has scored runs, that I heard he’d scored runs last week, that’s all he can do.

“...I’m hitting them alright... Oh... my body... nearly 30 and my body is fucked...”

Broady is chirpy, perhaps more like the old Broady, the one people couldn’t recognise earlier in the year and so left him alone against Woodshire, or the one who was tiptoed around before we (sorry he) went for an ice cream. I pass on some info about a one day course in taxation to help him with his business, the books side of things, Broady is buzzing a bit;

“...So what does it mean when she says “...I’m ready and waiting in a text Dave...”

“... Not a clue...”

I hear form Ray that Broady also makes 100 not out in the second innings, but I leave before the game finishes. I text him that night, suggesting he seems different from the man I met earlier in the year and hope the runs keep coming, the late reply reads “Cheers d lad”. Perhaps the recent nets session at the club when an ex-England player gave him some advice helped Broady, perhaps Simon’s comments that he should be playing down the ground more helped, or perhaps we all helped?

4.3.3 - Reflective Stop Off 3

During the following stop off I will reflect on the incident with Laney, the closing interactions with Quinny and further exchanges with Broady before offering reflections in relation to my own experiences.

4.3.3.1 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Laney

The brief incident in relation to Laney provides a unique (though perhaps somewhat extreme) case study in which to discuss and illustrate the lifestyles of players. I might argue that as a researcher my perception and observations of his experience overtly epitomise some worrying lifestyle aspects of the culture of professional (second team) cricket (particularly at Rinshire), but also those of this young man. I stress that as a practitioner-cum-researcher I understand the realities of a dressing room and the trimmings associated with males (sportsmen) spending time together. In this regard and in terms of research aims (A), (B) and (E) there appears to be a number of research based observations worthy of further consideration. These include (but are not limited too) his regularity and volume of drinking on non-playing days or after games, sporadic spending, no definitive home or domestic base, a seemingly troubled home life, poor hygiene and scruffy appearance, references to repeated masturbation, his abundance of pornographic material and his public erection. Taken together and aside from any preoccupation with performance, these ethnographic observations seem worrying. Moreover, the collection and complexity of issues within this young mans life appear considerable.

In terms of research aim (B), these experiences occurred within the unforgiving, insensitive, masculine and abrasive context I have described throughout. Such behaviour may be witnessed by staff whose operational involvement with teams might vary, and whose interpretations of such issues differ greatly (as depicted in Study 2). At Rinshire (where Laney plays) Simon said he cares for players suggesting that if they ‘want any help’ they ‘can ask. Don’t be on your own’. He stated the need

to understand players more, ‘especially important issues’, but also that he didn’t want ‘to know everything about everybody 24 hours a day’. Dean also explained how he lives ‘in black and white areas’ because to him that is ‘where you don’t get complications’. Adding to this contextual understanding it should not be forgotten, that at this time Laney was performing consistently well, was winning games, offered something different as a performer and had been selected for the first team. This seems to support players suggestions from Study 1 that ‘Off field issues and player welfare don’t affect all players’ performances’ (SB-8; KH-140; SBr-165, 170; HN-72; PK-198, 199, 201; NG-97), and more specifically players suggestions that ‘Performance is what matters regardless of your lifestyle’ (TS-36; FW-76).

Rightly or wrongly, as a researcher I did not approach Laney or anyone other than Ray with my observations and concern. Ray did what he could to challenge Laney’s behaviors knowing that he often ‘doesn’t listen and thinks you’re attacking him’. In light of Laney’s continuing success and the chaotic and consuming nature of the game (and I am sure factors outside my own awareness) nothing further was done. It is not my intention here to criticize the club or anyone else, but I will reflect on such insights and behaviours having made the suggestion myself, that ‘that’s not normal’. Perhaps Laney’s behaviors were unlikely to ever worsen, unlikely to resurface or be tolerated in the first team, or were missed altogether and cast aside as mere stupidity. Alternatively, these behaviours may be examples of the ‘important issues’ of players which Simon alluded to in the focus groups, or the ‘significant things’ that Jack had described. In relation to coaches’ perspectives (i.e., research aim D) and varying practitioner roles (i.e., aim C), there will inevitably be many interpretations of Laney’s behaviours. Some researchers or practitioners may believe that Laney demonstrated no behavioural abnormalities. In this sense, these practitioners might tolerate his aberrant behaviours for the short term benefits of his consistent and match winning individual performances. However, other practitioners and / or researchers may perceive Laney’s situation differently. For instance, some may interpret Laney’s behaviours more analytically, with less concern for, or interest in his performances on the field. These practitioners or researchers might also

contemplate the potential escalation and diversification of his behaviours. They might equally anticipate the reactions of coaches and Laney himself, should (or perhaps when) his performances / fortunes begin to falter. Some practitioners and researchers may also perceive such worrying behavioural trends as inappropriately chosen but desperate cries for help and attention. In this sense, such cries may (at some point) require supportive action on the part of a practitioner or club. One form of supportive action might be an appropriately timed referral to someone with greater expertise and knowledge than anyone at the club would be able to offer. While in the case of Laney no referral was made, problems requiring referral do occur in the athletic population (Anderson et al., 1994; Andersen & Todd, 2005). In light of the above I might suggest that the embedded ethnographic engagement and ongoing reflections encouraged the degree of detailed awareness above and that by constantly contemplating, anticipating and closely monitoring any player's situation, practitioners may be in a more informed position *should* they ever need to seek out professional help for a player.

4.3.3.2 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Quinny

Quinny's time with Woodshire officially came to an end when his contract talks were brought forward and his terms of employment were paid up. It is the time leading to this end and our last meeting which I reflect on here. These ethnographic reflections appear to address research aims (A) and (E) in that they shed further light on the turbulent existence of a professional cricketer. As Quinny became more of a 'forlorn figure' and his performances continued to worsen, Jack's comments about approaching any further engagement in a 'player centred way' signify how closely he became involved in this sensitive process and the manner in which Quinny's release occurred. Quinny's situation also resonates with players perceptions from Study 1, who described how 'You do worry and think about what you will be after you finish cricket' (AT-116, 122; JH-190; TS-47; SBr-167; FW-78; HN-72; DN-152) and that 'There is no security within the profession' (JH-186; SBr-161). One senior player also

described how ‘There is a fear of the unknown’ (PK-193) based on his observations of younger professional players, perhaps like Quinny;

...it is a tough call, trying to make it in this you are not making that much money and suddenly to be thrown to the big wide world out there it is a bit of a shock to the system... It may not be fantastic but it is a good living and to suddenly lose that money and to think what am I going to do? ... Paul Kelly 193

Quinny’s specific experience offers a further example of one player’s career transition experience, which suggests the need to support and prepare athletes for life after sport. Quinny’s experience also provides a *live* example of one professional cricketer’s release from a professional playing contract. Both Quinny and Jacks question ‘How did it all get to this?’ hint at the speed of his transition and the speed of which a professional player’s career might change and the ‘Uncomfortable insecurities and key moments’ (2nd order themes) that accompany the profession. In Study 2, Jack described Quinny as a ‘destructive player’ and Geoff had alluded to his early precocious talent. Yet my own preconceived perception of Quinny as a six feet tall, athletic and highly skilful player, paled into one of a vulnerable young man (with water in his eyes) during his release.

In light of research aims (A) and (E), and having highlighted the complexity of a player’s lifestyle while within the game, one must not forget that such complexity remains on their release, and how interrelating variables can mediate the overall quality of adjustment (see Taylor & Olgilvie, 1998). Taking Quinny as an example, he found himself frustrated and bitter in the middle of the season. He hadn’t spoken to the manager or had contact with the first team for months. Only recently Quinny experienced what was perceived to be ‘yippling’ in the nets. He had contractual uncertainties with agents who were also acting to find him another county. He didn’t want to overly burden or disrupt his new girlfriend’s life, had little family support close by and was being advised to stay in the game by those close to him. Additionally, he had a variety of seemingly unheard (or even unspoken) career ideas and ambitions outside the game. These personal complexities also appear to offer intimate and intricate detail of one player’s experience within the discontinuation

(Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003) and culmination (Stambulova, 2000) stages of Quinny's professional career.

Authors have commented on the need for support of athletes career transition experiences (Alfermann, 2000; Lavallee et al., 2000), and in the case with Quinny, it appeared that Jack was also involved in such support. Despite Jack's own questions of how 'genuine' he might be in supporting players, it struck me how caring and involved he was in Quinny's release. In this sense, notions of care resonate with humanistic coaching literature (Vernacchia, 1995; Borrie & Knowles, 1998; Jowett & Cockerill 2003). This investment of care was also offered despite the fact Jack was so busy with other commitments that he would ultimately be judged on. As a coach, and in line with research aims (C) and (D), Jacks involvement also seemed somewhat imperative in supporting Quinny's transitional experience. Firstly, Jack was respected by Quinny, but importantly, he was also honest with him, and offered Quinny his thoughts on the uncertainties and frustrations he had experienced in relation to his playing career (like Terry's suggestion he scored too quickly). On reflection, without Jacks involvement, care and honesty, Quinny might not have addressed those uncertainties and frustrations.

Reflecting on the last meeting with Quinny after his release, when he appeared vulnerable, apologetic and looked for reassurance it seemed easier to step beyond my research role and adopt a career advisor role to satisfy his needs. At times I seemed to adopt a practitioner role, agree on action points and suggest things to him (like CV writing and career development planning) in line with my operational role and the 'Employment & Career Advice' objective outlined within the ECB PL Strategy Document (ECB, 2005). However, on reflection there seemed more to our exchange. It seemed that during those moments where I listened and only facilitated his dialogue further, I write how Quinny took 'bigger' breaths and blew out his cheeks, his manner becoming more reflective and pensive, and how his (and other players in the timeline) half finished sentences, choice of words, pauses, sighs, facial expressions and movements, seemed more telling. Indeed, Lavallee et al. (2000) cited empathy

and active listening as important in supporting athletes in transition, and as Quinny said things that seemed more thoughtful than normal, to my mind more emotive, this seemed liberating to him (and me) whilst also being exhausting for him.

In line with the above, because the timing and duration of career transition adjustment varies considerably, any intervention must be multidimensional and involve enhancement, support and counselling (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; Petitpas et al., 1997). In this regard, a number of traditional therapeutic approaches have been developed as interventions for athletes suffering from distress associated with athletic career termination (Lavalley et al., 2000; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalley, 2004). Having alluded to the potential value of a counselling based approach to supporting a player's lifestyle *during* their career, one can draw parallels with traditional therapeutic approaches and interventions, and extend the value of a counselling based approach and someone to talk to (see Werthner & Orlick, 1986) during a players release. Above all, it seems that however supportive systems, programmes (like the ECB PL Programme itself) and personnel (like Jack and PL advisers) are in such circumstances; every players experience will have a personal and professional history, and a complexity that cannot be forgotten or underestimated. Instead, it would seem that every player's experience should be embraced and respected. Although Quinny will be the only one who knows, perhaps in his case, with appropriate and valuable coach involvement, and a balance between listening and occasional advice, Quinny may have come to some (positive and negative) realisations for himself, about himself. In the more telling moments I described above, I particularly remember these;

"...I've been talking to you about things I don't say to others because they don't expect it, they just see me as a cricketer ..."

"...probably something to do with my ex, in that I had a life mapped out for me there, to get married and pay a mortgage, you know, to provide, go to uni and that, and yet now... (Pause)... I don't think I have to do that... yet I'm probably thinking I do, its like I feel I have to settle down when I don't have too and don't want to yet..."

"...it's like I'm gay and I am coming out for fuck's sake..."

“...I now feel like I am stood with white all around me and a line in front of me, a big line, with all this stuff we’ve talked about behind me, and its... well... it scares me ...”

Whilst Athlete Lifestyle Programmes, the ECB PL programme and PL advisers are all in place, clearly the application and realisation of support for athletes in the real and transitory world of professional sport, is very likely to be a convoluted and complex affair.

4.3.3.3 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Broady

Literature has alluded to the potential relationship between a players lifestyle, general well-being, welfare, non-performing issues and performance (see Orlick, 1989; Loehr, 1990; Botterill, 1990; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1992; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Douglas & Carless, 2005; Nesti, 2006), and highlighted non-athletic transitions that can affect developemt (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). In line with such literature, findings from Study 1 and Study 2, and Broady’s comment that “...I am only thinking about these things because I am not doing well...”, I have also considered more of the ‘things’ in Broady’s life that he felt able to talk about. I also intend to discuss any potential benefits to that process and discuss any potential downsides had he chosen not too. In doing so I highlight the *reality* of Broady’s daily experience as a senior professional cricketer, address research aims (A), (C), (D) and (E) below, and arguably shed light on the ECB PL programmes objective of helping players ‘manage the competing demands of life both on and off the pitch in order to perform at the highest level’ (ECB PL Programme, 2005).

Players in Study 1 described how ‘Players problems are often not technical’ (AT-120; TS-40) and how ‘Players will experience difficulties in their professional or personal life that can influence their performance’ (JH-186,187; MB-55; NG-85; SBr-164; DN-151; PK-198) which arguably draw parallels with Broadys situation. More specifically, whilst Study 1 highlighted the ‘Difficulty of managing the process of

failure and dealing with fewer opportunities at the professional level' (2nd order theme), dismissals amongst 'hushed' (but aware) crowds and being around young, intimidated but ambitious players day and night undoubtedly made things harder for Broady. In addition, Broady talked about the uncertainties over building legislation and his financial dealings in property development, the expectations that accompanied his salary and vulnerabilities as a 'capped player', his perception of 'stealing a living', not to mention his personal 'pride' and how there is more to him playing the game now. On top of this he described relationship uncertainties, how much he enjoyed working and something more like the 'normal life' he had described earlier in the summer, and an 'uncomfortable' feeling in talking with Rinshire's management team about his recent low score / failure (against Woodshire) and subsequent chances of first team selection. For the first time, and to offer even more detail of how Broady's personal difficulties continued, I will briefly supplement the ethnographic timeline already read in relation to Broady, with further dialogue from research exchanges with Broady later in the season (taken from the ethnographic source document with corresponding page numbers should the reader wish to know more of the context). These quotes, combined with the understanding above, hopefully, and in some abstract way, reflect the *real*, enduring and extremely intimate nature of Broady's issues.

"...What I am saying is that if we were opening partners for 5 years, you and me, with all the peer pressure, with the travelling and us being away, with the temptation and opportunities that come to us, and with your emotions all over sometimes in the job we do, and how hard it actually is up there (pointing to the ceiling, suggesting the first team) sometimes you look to readdress the balance (now using his hands to indicate scales moving to an equal position). If you've had 3 bad scores and your down or three good scores and your top of the world, you might react in different ways. I might turn to different things, to this (pointing to the Guinness he's just ordered)... might even go for the beautiful bird behind the bar here tonight..." [Page 544]

"...I am nearly 30 now (putting his finger in the middle of the table, suggesting he's in some middle ground), wedding next year, a housing project, and I am not happy in this environment. That's so different from the last 10 years or so, when I remember scoring runs for fun... (Broady pauses, the room is littered with people all making noise, but they soften from my attention)... in fact I have even forgot how I scored runs altogether during that period, games that I can't remember but did well in, I just did it, like young Dunc is now, but times are different now..." [Page 560]

"...My parents have lived together for years, never been further than Spain and bless them, they are happy. I have more money than they have ever had, been to places they never will, I have lived a different life, but I do want that life eventually..." [Page 561]

"...but things are changing all the time..." [Page 561]

However, data within this thesis also appears to contradict some the above perspectives regarding the potential relationship between (Broady's) a player's lifestyle, general well-being, welfare, non-performing issues and performance. For example, Players from Study 1 suggested that 'Off field issues and player welfare don't affect all players' performances' (SB-8; KH-140; SBr-165, 170; HN-72; PK-198, 199, 201; NG-97), and in situations like Laney's, there appears to be evidence to the contrary at times. Indeed the intention here is not to assume *all* Broady's difficulties were related to his 'Off field welfare' (3rd order theme). You may also recall the differing perspectives amongst Rinshire's management in relation to experiences like Broady's (at Rinshire), with Simon suggesting that '... you're not thinking I am going to be out of the door when you have 5 or 6 years as a capped player', while Rob had suggested that players are always under pressure to perform.

Having sketched out the reality and complexity of his experience, I would like to look back on a collection of prolonged research exchanges with Broady. In doing so I will address research aim (C) by considering what my own ethnographic skill base and research based experiences might mean for the future aspirations of an applied practitioner support role or programme. Essentially, I tentatively wonder whether the combination of Ray's more humanistic coaching and management style (see Vernacchia, 1995; Jowett & Cockerill 2003), alongside my listening, care and something that might resemble a therapeutic dialogue, might have played a part in helping Broady with some of his off field difficulties *and* his ensuing performances. I might even argue that a *combination* of an accepting and supportive coach in Ray, and a research based approach that draws parallels with a socratic philosophy (Corlett, 1996) and counselling based listening skills (Rogers, 1957; 1980) could have helped Broady, in his words, 'understand more about me (himself)' and contributed (the extent of which will never be known nor advertised beyond here) to him finding better form again (i.e., the 112 not out, the 80 and 100 not out, and scores that build later in the summer, including a double hundred). In line with these suggestions, Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) concluded that;

“... A performance agenda and caring agenda are, to my mind, symbiotic. They have congruent properties rather than divergent philosophy...” (p. 325)

In addition to Broady (at Rinshire), Jack (from Woodshire) also strongly believed that my ethnographic engagement, that involved listening and understanding Quinny (from Woodshire) had briefly helped him recapture form for Woodshire and contributed to Woodshire winning the game (coincidentally) against Rinshire. You may also recall Quinny’s comments, ‘I think I am more self-aware now, having talked things over this past month’ and ‘I understand more about me (himself)’. However, it is important to remember that unlike Broady, Quinny’s improving form did not last. One might also wonder who else Broady and Quinny might have spoken to, if at all, and what outcomes might have transpired if left alone in ‘Feeling lonely and worrying about problems’ (JH-187; NG-87, 94; JA-27; DN-148).

I cannot claim nor prove that researching or supporting a player’s ‘Lifestyle, well-being, welfare and performance’, ‘Emotions and cognitions’, ‘Personal relationships and Performance’ or ‘Communication’ issues (all general dimensions) will lead to improved performance. However, given the complexity of Broady, Quinny or any others player’s lifestyle experiences, I can *propose* benefits of such support. In line with potential benefits and Broady’s and Quinny’s supposed self-awareness and improving mental states outlined above (despite enduring issues), players from Study 1 also believed that ‘Personal emotional awareness is valuable to a player on and off the field’ (AT-123; RK-180; JH-189; FW-79; NG-97), and that ‘Well-being / happy away from the game improves a performing mindset’ (AT-123; MT-105; TS-46; NG-91, 97; MB-55; DN-150; HN-72). Perhaps lifestyle based data from all three Studies therefore requires further attention, practitioner expertise and resource, in looking to support *and* improve players’ performances. Though I must accept such assertions are somewhat difficult to substantiate, in terms of improving a player’s performance, I would like to consider the responses of coaches from Study 2 (below) alongside the themes from Study 1 (above), and accounts provided in Study 3 so far (in the timeline).

At Woodshire Jack had suggested they are all ‘in the business of getting people to improve their performance... by a small degree or percentage’, and suggested that understanding lifestyle issues is so ‘powerful’ because it gives an insight into the player’s emotional state’ which he and the other coaches at Woodshire recognized as ‘a huge area which will affect performance’. Similarly, Dean felt strongly that coaches’ at Rinshire ‘are facilitators to help and make sure players are performing at their fucking optimum, and if there are lifestyle issues’ someone able to understand players can be a ‘powerful’ person. Indeed you may recall that *some* Rinshire and Woodshires coaches seemed to accept (to differing degrees and with some Rinshire coaches suggesting players issues were excuses) a player’s lifestyle could affect their performance. However *all* coaches from both clubs also arrived at a very similar and uncertain viewpoint, not only in relation to their own role in support, but also in terms of how to improve future lifestyle support for players. All data sets therefore appear to point to the value of lifestyle oriented support without any definitive conclusions as to its exact form, application or future.

Perhaps the general belief in lifestyle oriented support that stems from Study 1, 2 and 3, but also coaches procrastinations about whether to pursue such support further, reflect the ambiguity over outcomes and roles that appear to accompany non-performance and lifestyle oriented provision. Indeed, given the findings of all three data sets, and my own embedded ethnographic experiences that might offer potential insights for future practice, lifestyle support, and support for the *person*, often seems to be recognized as being crucial, but then remains non-urgent, unseen, protracted, intangible, equivocal, subjective, intuitive and as complex as people themselves. In Study 3, there appear no better examples of this inexact science, in that while Broady continued with his career; Quinny’s career had come to an end (at Woodshire anyway).

4.3.3.4 - Personally Oriented Ethnographic Reflections (III)

In the timeline I began to reflect on what was becoming increasingly more occasional research involvement due to the uniqueness of the season and my own operational role. The nature of my practitioner role and that of the season (according to different competitions and fixtures) were such that they ultimately affected the time and opportunities available to me to follow players. Whilst at games of longer duration more time naturally became available to engage with players and coaches as a researcher in hotels, over meals or during games. However, at games of shorter duration or during particularly busy times operationally, the game moved quickly and such valuable time seemed to disappear. This was noticeable, as were increased phone calls, lengths of time between seeing players and a sense of being on the periphery of their experience. Whilst numerous applied authors have commented on the need to be around, immersed, witness first hand, spend time and build relationships with athletes and coaches and become part of the sport environment as a practitioner (Gould et al., 1989; Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Bull, 1997; Anderson et al., 2004), my own ethnographic experiences seem to reinforce such fundamental but important points. As do findings from Study 2, where at Rinshire Ray suggested that his previous role would mean he would ‘flit in and out of the team’ and find himself ‘not quite sure... where people are at if you don’t see it on a daily basis’. Simon shared similar thoughts in that ‘for someone like me who goes to odd matches you don’t really know their habits do you?’ Equally at Woodshire Jack had criticised the availability of support offered by the existing Sport Psychologist ‘where the contact is so minimal’, and that although greater engagement is needed ‘you’re not going to get that bobbing around a dressing room’.

Realising research time was becoming increasingly short, not to mention the uncertainty and complexity of embracing players experiences, I also describe an ‘aching’ feeling and moments of self doubt. Such feelings and thoughts were also particularly strong (throughout the season) when turning up late, separate and unknown to teams, or during lengthy periods when nothing seemed to be happening.

At some points I would often consider leaving games. The combination of all these factors was often difficult to deal with as a researcher but might also be the present reality which practitioners must decide to embrace, and / or try and improve. Indeed, my own ethnographic experiences suggest that for future researchers and practitioners, the value of waiting patiently and with assurance (that when moments often unpredictably do arise, you are there) cannot be underestimated (Orlick, 1989; Rotella, 1990; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Gilbourne, 2006). However, on a cautionary note I must also point out that my own personal difficulties as a researcher suggest that while 'physically being there' is of utmost importance, 'mentally being there' is then, conceivably of even greater significance when with a player.

Wednesday 26th July – Rinshire v Thanshire 2nd X1 – Second day of four

Whilst some characters previously included in the timeline remain in focus in the following narrative, other characters subside from view as new characters and stories briefly emerge. The following section completes the timeline and season. The opening passage returns the reader to the same game I had previously discussed, but on the second day's play. It is here that I talk with Hano, a senior professional at Rinshire. Hano is a player who has been mentioned previously, who features strongly in the source document, and whose (condensed) experience below reflects further complexities in living the life of a professional cricketer.

Yesterday at the end of the game Hano came past me as the team left the field. He looked absolutely exhausted. His hair was all over the place, his eyes drawn, and he just stuck out his hand, said hello and that he'd catch me tomorrow. Hano has been playing for the first team all year, he's 25 years old and a big name within the club and county, and has represented England. I found out that yesterday he played for the First team in the Quarter final of the 20-20 competition down at Gladeshire (which they lost). Having left the ground at 10pm he didn't get home in Rinshire until 3am but was at the ground this morning at 9am. I guess that may explain how he looked. He is captaining the seconds having lost his place to Laney. Laney is with the first team now. Ray keeps suggesting Hano may not get back in the side now. During the afternoon Hano got 80 batting at number 6. He played well, aggressively; he can bat as well as bowl. He later suggested he'd had a lot of luck and that without wanting to disrespect anyone, said;

“...it's only second team cricket...”

Hano asks a little about how things are, and I explain I'm still doing what I've always done but have also been doing some research. He shows an interest in the words I use; emotions, off field issues and thinking, ups and downs, how I like to know the individual and their experience, how I don't necessarily have the answer.

James suddenly walks past and suggests crowds are mad; he's overheard two old boys talking about cricket past and present, the type who come to every game and ask the lads to sign their autographs. His comments suddenly spark Hano off to talk about the crowd at Gladeshire, who were some of the worst he'd experienced (in this country anyway). He described how he was on the boundary, and they were giving him the usual about “being gay”, that their language was horrific. He even explained that when there was a break in play, as the ball was being found after being hit for a six, and as he leant against some railings on the boundary, someone tried to pull his trousers down. He said he tried to elbow the guy to get him away and then shouted “fuck off”, to which the rest of the crowd, full of families and children said they were disgusted and that they'd report him.

The young lads sat round were fascinated, they all put down their FHM's and Sunday sport newspapers and listened to his every word. Then, when they all started talking amongst themselves and were no longer interested in his story, Hano, softly muttered;

“...Shall we have that chat...?”

I'm glad he mentioned it before I had to. We move into the pavilion and find a seat out of the way of the lads. Hano is sat to my right, I can't see out of the window at the game but he can, I pretend to see the action and occasionally bend forward to suggest I am watching, but really I have no interest now. I am ready to listen (despite spectators coming over to him, and the TV on in the background), but wonder how better this could be if we only had some privacy. These distractions

occasionally drift in and out of my consciousness. Hano starts straight away about his situation, he explains that his girlfriend is still living in London, they have been together 7 years now, although in the winter he thought they may split, they somehow stayed together. I would like to know more as in my previous fleeting conversations with Hano their divide seemed significant somehow.

“...I don’t feel I have a right to ask this particularly, but I will because I think it might be relevant, but don’t you want to be with your girlfriend and see her more often...”

Hano admits he would want to be with his girlfriend, but I don’t know him that well, I haven’t seen him in a while and with this fleeting, opportunist meeting it doesn’t lend itself to any further enquiry:

“...I don’t want to blame this on her though. You know our last coach, when we won the championship, he would take notes when we met, about my personal situation. I’d see him having a drink with my girlfriend in the stands during the game, and he just was a good man manager...”

I don’t suggest that his girlfriend is the reason he’s been struggling to take wickets but that it may be a contributing factor to the way he feels sometimes. I enquire some more. Hano explained that he has been playing first team all year and was told to go and bowl “like he used to”. He knows and admits he’s only got 9 wickets or so all year, and that similarly last year he struggled, but it was his batting last year that kept him in the side. Rob Keep and the captain had spoken with him when they dropped him, but Dean hadn’t, like most he had a low opinion of Dean, really low. I asked Hano to explain why he thinks he isn’t bowling like he used too. Hano began to explain his perception:

“...I just think I have a confidence problem with my bowling... I have this mental block with a red ball. I am ok with a white ball, I have bowled well in the one day competition and have been told I’ll keep my place in one day cricket, which suggests it’s not a technical problem. I went to see Alex (a psychologist associated with the club in a consultancy fashion last year) and he taught me deep breathing exercises before I’m due to bowl... but I do that in the outfield and then when I’m thrown the thing to bowl, I shit it! He also recommended self talk and gave me some queue cards to read before I play and that... but it’s not worked has it. I just told the captain to throw me the bowl and I’d ball straight away so I can’t think about it...”

I explain that I can’t do mental skills training, that it’s not in my role, but I would like to learn more. I also resist the opportunity to ‘slag off’ mental training techniques too much; it would be unfair on the psychologist to do that. He/she may only have had a short time with Hano and after all they have a place sometimes. Hano continues to talk about his situation and experiences. I continue to ask about how he feels about them.

“...It’s always up here with me (pointing to his temple). I think about it all the time when I’m not playing. In fact I don’t think so much about it when I am playing...”

He explains that last year he almost went to play for Mortonshire, but the deal fell through at the last minute, right at the end of the season. I have known through conversations with coaches that Hano has turned down long term deals with Rinshire, that Dean wanted him to be the future captain, I relay that knowledge:

“I just don’t want to get stuck up here (suggesting to me he believes he is). I don’t take anything for granted at this club because I have seen what they are like. I keep being told to settle down up here but I am 25 and don’t want to settle down here...”

He continued;

“...I just remember playing with this guy who averaged 45 in first class cricket but who decided to give it up because he said he didn’t enjoy it, that’s a bold move that, gutsy...”

As our conversation floats from one area to another, as if to avoid any real depth, I ask him to describe to me what it’s like when he bowls, what he’s thinking, how he’s approaching the game:

“...When I used to play with nothing else on my mind (something I felt significant, that there may be “things” now) I would bowl to get people out. Now I bowl to stop runs, to not go for many. Because if you’re not taking wickets, you also can’t be expensive as a spinner...”

My thoughts turn to the value of this conversation with the coaching staff, would they want their bowler thinking like this, of course not. I know it’s not my area of expertise but I also know that a negative approach isn’t one conducive to taking wickets. We could co-ordinate our support of him here, those case conference approaches everyone loves. But, really, I know such an approach would be undermined by his perception of Dean and Simon, and theirs of him. Hano’s genuine and growing contempt for Dean continued. He explained that a couple of weeks ago Dean told Laney he would be playing at Baronshire. Hano only found out he would not be playing with the first team from Laney himself a couple of days ago, and Hano doesn’t get on so well with Laney at the best of times. Having to hear that from Laney and not Dean was another kick in the teeth.

I made suggestions that he was well aware of things within management that others may be blind to, that he’s a perceptive and educated person. However, that didn’t lead to anything, and my words almost seemed to detract from our conversation and even create a barrier between us. I wonder if perhaps he’s fed up with being told how clever he is. I suddenly felt that I just needed to reflect to Rob how he appeared to me in that instant, how he was with me and how our conversation was going now:

“...Hano, you almost seem hesitant to admit things that might be contributing to your lack of form, your frustrations, your confusion?”

“...That’s because I’m *embarrassed*...”

“...Embarrassed, why, because you’re Joe Hanson the capped Rinshire player who’s played for England?”

Hano smiles at me, looks at me, he’s engaged now, jumped the barrier I mentioned, his face and expressions are more pronounced:

“...Yeah, I have pride you know, I feel like I have been in a boxing ring this year, I just keep being punched and have to keep getting back up. It’s weird. When I was told that I would be playing second eleven, although my pride was hurt, I almost felt relieved to be honest. I’ve never thought that all these things are contributing to me out there (gesturing to the middle)...”

“...They may not Hano, I can’t tell you they are either, but they do all add up...”

“...Yeah, and they wear you down...”

Looking back I wish I had done more of that, more feeding back to Hano about how he was with me, in our conversation, it seemed to facilitate so much more dialogue and honesty than anything else. While sitting with Hano there were a few silences where I sat quiet, Broady came past on one occasion, then came past again and gave us each a lolly. He didn't interrupt, nor make any blunt jibes as he usually does. He knew we were into something and quickly left the lollies and walked off, perhaps because he'd been there a week before. I silently thanked him for that. I knew time was running out. I wondered and wished this could be common place, that I could be around to have more time for these conversations, that players knew I had a role in these area's. Hano just thinks I'm listening, although, I suppose he's absolutely right! I contemplate whether I have the power (or dare) to say "right, let's go over here". I don't do that, I predominantly wait for the lads to make any move.

I again returned to some knowledge I had from others, about the fact that he may not be the same player since his time with England. He initially, confidently and assertively suggests he's got through that after a tough first year, and then, for the first time, he seems a little confused. He no longer has as much interest in the game through the window:

"...Perhaps I am still not over that, you know Rob Keep tells me not to be so down on myself and he's right, but I also speak to my mum and dad and they tell me to be confident, that I am a good player. But I often wonder and think... (lengthy pause)... you know, am I as good as I was?... (again a pause). Did I just have a purple patch for 2 years?"

As good as he was? That was something I wanted to enquire more about. What is he comparing himself too? Why? Is that healthy? I wanted to suggest we involve some coaches at the club, get their advice more. I wanted the conversation to continue revealing Hano's situation, current feelings, confusions, insecurities, and pessimisms? With time looming, we discuss our previous career discussions, which he would like to find something to do to take his mind away from cricket sometimes and we agree that's a good conversation to pursue in the future.

Friday 28th July – No game

I've just left the office after a long day catching up on admin and general correspondence and it's about half four. I'm not feeling too good; a little run down. I've been feeling this way a while now. You may recall that tiredness I mentioned earlier in my writing, well it's becoming more acute now, and I feel like and know I need a break and some support. I know the long drives and nights away are taking their toll but I am not actually tired of going to games, or listening and trying to support players, I am simply tired of the *weight* of that reality. I know my ability to be around, to support, to notice things is being brought into question by the way I feel, this tiredness I feel. I also know this is a key time and I need to get through this summer (I may never get such an opportunity again). As I sit in my car to leave, and as it has for most of the day, the phone goes, but on this occasion I am happy to see a familiar name, it's Quinny:

"Dave how are you mate?"

I explain I'm ok if a little tired, and enquire about how Quinny has been. He explains he's been doing bits, he worked with Cooky for a day alongside him on his building and property firm. He's looked into correspondence business degree's, and he's also started building a website in line with an idea he has. He seems upbeat and full of energy, unlike myself:

"...Sorry Dave, am I keeping you from something..."

His response reinforces the way I feel and makes me realise I need to take better care of myself when I get the chance.

“...No sorry Quinny, I’m just tired, fire away...”

After the call I realise how easy it would have been to send Quinny to voicemail, but he always asks whether he can still call me, whether he can still ask for help. The last time I met him I pictured a young man at home during the week, trying to move on with his life, with no reason to leave the house, searching for something to do, waiting by the phone for another county and searching for reassurance?

“...You know I wake up nowadays excited Dave, I used to wake up hating the idea of going to training. Don’t get me wrong, I still miss the lifestyle, I still wonder. But my agents are stalling a bit and I figured I’d write to clubs myself and I did, but I reckon if they don’t call me I won’t call them, I don’t want to come across as desperate...”

I get the sense Quinny wouldn’t mind if they didn’t call, he isn’t going to push it too much (right now) as it’s not what he really wants, but I may be wrong and don’t feel the need to reflect that back to him. We continue to discuss ideas, and Quinny continues to search for approval for his idea’s;

“...can I still call sometime, I need people around me that can just guide me a bit when I need it...”

I don’t see this as dependency. If you met Quinny you’d know that he wouldn’t want or particularly need to be dependant on anyone. I remember Quinny’s context. He has no parents around, his girlfriend is in a good job but unsure at their future plans. Quinny wants to provide in their relationship but does not want to settle down. His brother has moved away. He has gone from playing 3 or 4 days during the week to having no reason to get out of bed other than his own business ideas which few people know about or perhaps even believe in. I am glad I answered the call.

This lethargic feeling continues for some time and I find myself trying to come to terms with it for the benefit of my practice and myself. It’s not so much when I am at grounds, but when I return home, or on a weekend if I am relaxing. I talk it over with my girlfriend and friends and it’s a weird thing. It’s not that I am too physically tired. I train a lot and that gives me a release, but perhaps I take players’ problems on board too much, see myself as someone who has to sort things out, be strong for everyone, consistent, reliable, a constant. Perhaps I am being naïve. I see my experience as understandable. The *weight* of all the issues players talk to me about which I try to really understand, really feel with them. The hours of driving, the staying over in hotels, the heat of the summer, switching from one club to another, writing reflections into the early hours of a morning after a game, the rest of the work I am employed to do, experiences in my own life. The feeling doesn’t leave me. It’s almost as if my batteries are low, but my eyes are opening to new “issues” and people all the time. I am being pushed, stretched, called upon, entrusted, and all the time I am questioning myself professionally and personally. I am doing this without any support myself, apart from the valuable support I have from my work colleagues, supervisors, and my close friends.

Monday 20th August – Steetonshire v Rinshire – Pre game night at hotel

The following narrative relates to interactions with Jonesy, a young professional at Rinshire. Our exchnage takes place in a hotel on an evening before a second team away game. I include our interaction because it was a vivid and challenging one. You may recollect that Jonesy and his relationship with Simon were mentioned during Rinsihire's focus group;

Simon -Well you know what there is to know about players because they talk to you

Dean - Yeah

Simon -I know Spence's wife's pregnant, I know Clarkey's mother is ill... I know everything about Wesley, you know stuff about them don't you.

Dean - Aye

Simon -I can't think that out of all the bowlers, I can only think of one young one who I don't know

Dean - Likewise, likewise

Simon -Hand on heart I can say that.

Tim - There is one now... one bowler now who will ring me and ask if I can arrange a session with Simon and he is out there (pointing to the pitch)...

Simon -Who's that?

Tim - He's scared stiff of ringing you

Simon -He's a dickhead then in he?

Ray -That's why he doesn't ring you because you talk like that?

Simon -No I am not, it's because he is inconsistent, and he is unreliable... I am not fucking running about after him

Dean - Who?

Tim - Jonesy will ring me and ask if I can fix a bowling session with Simon, I said well why can't I ring him?

Rob -He is scared of you?

Simon -He has had that many sessions with me and not turned up, there's no wonder he should be scared I want to strangle him

After having some food with James, the pair of us move into the main bar where most of the lads are now stood talking together. Simon Sheldon suddenly pulls me by the arm to one side in the bar. He takes a drink of his pint while I'm on cordial tonight (looking after myself remember).

“...I need to talk about Jonesy....”

Simon talks forcefully about Jonesy, says he is worried about him, angry at him, fed up with his behaviour; and that he's never had to give up on a lad before, but he's close to it now. To explain some further context to this situation, an hour earlier I had a conversation with Tim about Jonesy over the phone. He recounted the weekends worrying observations during their academy game. Ray has also mentioned a few things about Jonesy over the phone this afternoon. Everyone seems to be saying the same things, that Jonesy's behaviours are erratic, worrying, and his moods the same. He's up one minute and down the next, and at the semi final on Sunday there were public examples of these behaviours, plain for everyone to see. Jonesy apparently launched a tirade or verbal abuse at the captain of the team, Tim also saw him head butting a wall, headbutting his helmet and then punching another wall. In addition, a club member has today complained that he was overheard swearing as he left the pitch on Sunday having been dismissed. Simon's face is growing increasingly angry, he has explained the same incidents to me and that he heard him say "mother fucker this and that". Simon explained that Jonesy had been "called in" this morning to face Dean, who apparently gave him a dressing down. In addition, Tim mentioned to me that Helmshire had made an approach, and plan to do so formally in 28 days, a legal requirement that they give Rinshire such notice when wanting to approach a player in contract. Tim has also told me this afternoon that Jonesy has been banned from driving again. Simon, Tim and Ray are worried that Jonesy might be taking something? Worried he might be on drugs? They simply can't understand his behaviours but know he's a bit of a gangster in his local city, and hangs around with dodgy types.

I see Jonesy come into the bar over my left shoulder, while Simon is talking to me; he's trying to listen to Simon and is only a few yards away. I can't have this, he know's we are talking about him. Ray has arrived, the rest of the team are also sat around now, there is a lot of movement and when Simon takes his eyes off me (finally) I see an opportunity to talk to Jonesy. I stand up and tell Simon I'm just getting a drink. I move toward Jonesy and subtly ask if he wants to talk, he agrees but I suggest we do it elsewhere. Jonesy is a big lad, big chest, physically intimidating. He's wearing a smart hooded top, jeans and trainers. High street stuff. His hair is shaven and clean cut and in a modern style. He walks and acts in every way the gangster, kind of strutting to one side as he moves. He's sort of a street kid, with a tongue to match. He's a fast bowler and known as an aggressive bowler. He is known as the gangster, "the man", "big en". For example at the bar he'll say, "give me 2 of them" when asking for a drink.

We wander over to another room separated from the main bar. I'm sat on the bench aside Jonesy. I feel I need to be upfront with him straight off as he will see through the fact Simon has just been having a word. He's smart and I'd rather come clean about that, than try hide it. I go over 2 or 3 things mentioned above from the weekend. Jonesy jumps in, he immediately starts being defensive, immediately defends his corner, his barriers are up, he's talking quickly and aggressively all the time and his eyes are kind of intimidating to me. Jonesy's pupils are dark but the rest of his eyes are brilliant white. I realise Jonesy is sitting upright in his seating position, face to face, taking me on, almost to put me right on a few things, pointing as he speaks, hand gestures that reflect those of a rapper on stage (Ray and Simon later told me they saw him being like that with me, they didn't like it, and he wouldn't do it to them). He continually strokes his chin, his stubble, and he vehemently defends everything thrown at him;

"...I didn't do shit man..." "...Listen right..."

He explains that he didn't disrespect the captain of the academy side Lucas on Sunday (in the dressing room after the game), and had tried to explain to him that his comments weren't personal before he'd made them. He goes on to say that he always bangs his head against walls, and helmets (that coaches are sometimes encouraging him to get ready, psyched up, that they'd never

discouraged him before. I've seen this before too and nothing is said other than, 'Jonesy you nutter'). He agrees he shouldn't swear as much, that he'll stop when he goes back to uni because he can't with lecturers, but most of all, he stresses that things are being blown out of proportion. I listen for at least 15 minutes to Jonesy's justifications. To his reasons for sharing his thoughts on Sunday after losing the game, that he likes to wind himself up before games, that it makes him feel better. I am growing increasingly uncomfortable at his comments and our interaction (and am almost being distracted from listening) at his desire to put me right, state his case, and when he finishes I offer the following:

"...Jonesy, you've spoken for 15 minutes or more now and you know not once have you been wrong about anything, everything you've talked about seems right, and yet the coaches think and suggest otherwise, and we are all wrong sometimes? I know I am..."

Jonesy again becomes animated, moves in his own seat again, and turns to face me directly even more than he already is:

"...That's because I am defending my points, and when I know something is right I defend it..."

I suggest the key word might be defend, that that is exactly what he appears to be doing. I continue to ask why he feels he has too, does he feel I am attacking or threatening him? A defensive theme continues throughout but I encourage Jonesy to talk to me as it felt right to in that moment;

"...Jonesy, cut out the bull shit, just *talk to me* man..."

Jonesy explains his background, that his mates are basically gangsters, that he looks up to two or three in his area where he lives, they are seen as the man. They have great cars, great clothes, look cool. He envies them, looks up to them, wants to be like them, always has. He recounts a couple of examples of their behaviours, of carrying guns, of driving without a licence, of taking and selling drugs, of making a mint. I am wondering how much of this people know, those within the club? Have they been having these conversations with him? Can they?

"...I have been given some Nandrolone in the past right, I've seen Steroids, all my mates at the gym are on steroids and they offer them too me, and I even asked my mum if I can take a case of steroids... I mean... what kind of a question is that. I got some for myself, ordered them, but they weren't the fluid stuff you drink or in tablet form, I'd have to inject to use it, I sat there with my arm (he shows me his forearm, and rein acts injecting himself, like a druggie would), but I couldn't do it..."

I explain my amazement, as I stare at his forearm;

"... Jesus Jonesy..."

I can't believe he's been that close to doing drugs, ordering them, taking them. I wonder to myself if he's telling the truth. Is he exaggerating, trying to be the man but I am also shocked at his use of his arm to show me how he'd inject? Vivid that... He then explains how he'd never jeopardise his career, saying exactly what you would expect him to say, model answers, the kind you've heard before. I am left wondering why he ordered drugs in the first place; why he got so close to taking them. I didn't advise, just kept listening. His stories continued:

"...My mates deal, they are driving mint cars at a young age but they have got it through bad means you know what I mean, but I don't want that, their into dodgy shit and everyone knows it.

They all drive while banned, and I'll sit in the back of the car (he leans forward and puts his head between and closer to his knee's, as if sat in the middle seat in the back of a car, staring at what would be in front of him). I am fascinated by the drugs they take, the lines of coke they have in front of me, I have always been fascinated by those things, but I have never taken anything..."

I question him again and again; keep suggesting he can tell me if he has taken anything and if he wants too. My thoughts race back to Helmshire earlier in the year. I'd been sat with another player who wanted to check on the drug information database whether his hay fever tablets were on the prohibited substance list. I helped him do that, and Jonesy overheard us, so came over and checked out the site. Later that day he then found me alone and asked about a substance I'd never heard of, something that sounded banned, as stupid as that sounds in itself. I remember how worried I was back then. I reassure Jonesy I will believe what he says, but others always suggest he's drinking, putting vodkas in his cokes etc. He suggests that's bull shit, that others in the squad do that, but he doesn't. By this time I am becoming more and more impatient at those around us talking loudly, influencing my ability to listen, yet again. He continued recounting stories with an undercurrent of felony, talking himself up, using what can only be described as crude, cool, aggressive language, when in fact he can often come across as an educated young man, when he isn't trying to impress:

"...One time, I was taking over a micra right, one time on a hill (he uses both our phones to rein act the overtake on the table in front of us) I couldn't get round, but when I decided too, I went round it on a corner and on the wrong side of the road, the other side of the road. Just my luck there was a fucking police car there, coming my way. I carried on and they came after me, and I thought... (pause)... I put my foot down, tried to lose them, my mates do that all the time..."

Again, I am not actually that shocked at these behaviours, these stories. I've heard others describe how mad Jonesy is, but I am thinking more about why he seems to be trying to impress me almost, his eyes continue to light up, those big white eyes with dark pupils. He continues to stick his chest out, to tell me the things he's done, perhaps still to impress me, but I continue to appreciate the influences on him. I then sense a lot of myself comes into our interaction and my own thinking. I have seen these things in my own upbringing. I'm not especially impressed, I think Jonesy has done a lot of these things, but I sense some are made up, some are not as he describes them. I try to focus on why he is exaggerating, maybe, why he feels the need to impress me, make himself sound, perhaps, as though he is something he isn't.

Jonesy tells me he walks around like the big man for a reason, he wants to have reputations like the gangsters have whom he mentions, but not doing what they do. He wants to have the respect they have, but not through the means they choose. I remember this moment lucidly during Jonesy talking, he had his palms touching together and pointing forward at his chest and began straightening his arms away from his chest, but as they did, they separated into two pathways, that moved further and further from one another as his arms stretch out.

"...I want to be like them, have the car, the birds, look cool, be funky, act funky. But I also want to be a cricketer, achieve. I am just not sure I... [pause]... can do the two. I sometimes think, that their thinking (referring to his mates, gangsters) influences mine..."

We've been sat together a good 45 minutes now. Jonesy also explained that he has massive respect for his father. He's made his money and has gone about things in the right way. He has raised his family properly. He explained that his mother's side is slightly different, she eggs him on sometimes, and they have family who have been locked up. He clearly had respect for his father still, he reiterated how he didn't want to let them down, let anyone down, including Simon; that he tells Simon all the time that they'll get up there (pointing upward, i.e. to the first team) together

and he'll remember all the things he'd done for him, all the help and instruction he's offered. His relationship with Simon has been an important one, fundamental to his success and development, but the way he describes it, it's breaking down, and the way Simon described it in the bar earlier suggests even worse. As our conversation drifted and our drinks lowered. I shared with Jonesy that I sometimes found myself talking about my home city in a more negative light than it perhaps is, that it makes me feel better, portrays me in a light which makes me appear a hard guy; someone who hasn't had it easy, isn't Johnny average, someone who's come through it all and done ok. Jonesy agrees, suggests that he is seen as a hard man, a gangster, when in fact he has a stable background, has only had two scuffles in his life and that all this behaviour isn't necessarily him. Admittedly his family sound like they have had problems, his uncles have been in jail and his cousin today had incidently just been released from a stretch in prison.

Jonesy has started to slow in his dialogue now, started to look away more. He's being less aggressive with me, started to think, he is quieter. He appears to be contemplating more.

"...I should really see myself as being above those I hang around with, my mum tells me all the time that I am..."

Jonesy appears to be questioning this reputation he and others have built for him, what his identity is, but this I appreciate is only a brief moment, a short insight for both of us that will pass. It appears it might be of value to continue, as I fear I won't get such an opportunity again. I reflect back how Jonesy is questioning himself, he occasionally asks my opinion, my thoughts, but as we finish, I encourage him to ask himself the questions he's asking me to answer.

Interestingly something else that has been recurring this month revolves around Seb. He's been with the first team for some time now since his early success, he's still being doing well, taking wickets, contributing with the bat and showing his potential. But all the time I have my ears open and all the time I hear of Seb going out. I hear that he is regularly going out when with the first team. He'll sneak out of the hotel and go on his own to night clubs or bars, wherever he is. I'd heard Ray and Simon mention things a couple of times but now a couple of the lads are starting to tell me worrying stories. In fact the Woodshire (not Rinshire where Seb plays) lads have heard things too. They were in London after a game and were enjoying an evening out. When suddenly Doran felt a tap on his shoulder and there was Seb, on his own, in the club, despite the fact Rinshire were playing the next day. I have heard similar things from the Rinshire lads, how he's always going out, and staying out till 4am. I mention some things to Tim and he's heard bits but doesn't want Dean to know. I encourage him to speak with him, stay close to him, but Tim is with the academy and Seb has moved on now, he doesn't see him as often. He's also got an agent. I wonder if the coaches are doing anything about it, following him, talking to him, finding out why he's doing it and making sure he stops. I reckon they are too busy fighting amongst themselves to notice.

Tues 29th Aug – Ortonshire v Rinshire – 2nd day of 3

After this particular day's play, Broady and I decide to run back to the hotel. We reckon its only 5 mile or so although I haven't a clue where to go. As we begin, we discuss fitness and the rest, he's got his kit on and we run through the town centre first, before finding more remote paths. Broady asks me questions about my career, my ambitions and my thoughts, and I do my best to explain everything as honestly and clearly as possible (it's funny how lads start to ask about you eventually). Broady then make's a point I have become very aware of, particularly at this game:

“...You need to experience what I am striving for, what we are missing, be with the first team for a year, realise what it can be like, how good it can be... that would be good for you to see...”

I agree and wish I could, but logistically that is simply impossible in my current role. I gained a great deal from our run. Broady continues to educate me on the game, the experience and so much more, but he also said something very strange, which I will find hard to forget, when I explained my way of working, my approach to support and what I'd like to help players with:

“...You're like a girlfriend in a way for the lads...”

“...I'm not sure I like the sound of that, but go on, explain your sen then...”

“..You are a *constant* for us, Dianne isn't bothered really if I get a 100 tomorrow or a duck, although I am a happier bloke when I get a 100 obviously, but you're not either are you...?”

I try to thank Broady for what appeared to be a back handed compliment, that although being described as a girlfriend isn't exactly what you might hope for, I appreciate his sentiment greatly. Yet again this is another example of the occasions to listen, learn and support that you are simply unable to do when shipped in, where clubs send players to you, where a consultancy contract is the norm and you are limited by time.

Thursday 14th Sept – Rinshire V Pointshire – Last second team game of season

I set off around 8.30am, it should only take me an hour and a half at the most so by 10am the lads will be on deck and beginning their warm up's and I can find a spot somewhere in the ground. Unfortunately, things seemed to conspire against me today. Ray had called suggesting there were problems on the motorway. Indeed an accident means I am stuck in traffic, I am frantically listening for radio messages and try divert from the now closed motorway and find an alternative route. Unfortunately, but perhaps predictably, the smaller roads simply can't handle the volume of traffic. I sit for the next 3 and half hours, moving occasionally and slowly, I even turn my engine off at times and just remain stationary. I am absolutely gutted, anxious and tired. “Why me?”, “Why now?”, “Fucks sake!” I don't want them thinking I've disappeared, don't care, don't want them thinking that now I've got enough for my book, I've gone and done one. I call Ray and ask about the stage of the game and he explains they are looking to bowl Pointshire out today and have them 20 for 2. As time passes I get another text, ‘40 for 5’, the chances of me seeing any play today or catching up with the lads is dying and I am growing more and more frustrated. I try not to think that the world is against me. I try to remind myself that really, a traffic jam is only a traffic jam, nothing more.

At around half past one Ray calls asking where I am. I explain I am stuck and he laugh's, but while doing so I hear an appeal in the background, it's the last wicket Rinshire need. I can tell it's an appeal, I've heard it a million times. The game is over. The season is over. I can hear Ray walking across the ground. I can picture him moving to the dressing room and the lads doing the same. He say's he'll call me later and see me soon. I hang up the phone, and am left gutted. I really wanted to at least say thanks to everyone. To see how Broady and Hano are. I'd heard Broady had scored a double hundred in the game, I wanted to say well done, at least something. Instead I head back home, literally back down the same road that I had taken hours to move 50 yards or so and in the end what took me 3.5 hours to get maybe 50 miles. It only took an hour to get back. Unfortunately for me, no-one calls, no-one asks how I am, and I'm left with a pretty dismal feeling and surroundings to match, a wet motorway!

I found that during the this crazy and consuming summer, when I got back from trips and away games, when I wasn't on the phone, not in front of the computer, not driving, not speaking with coaches, but was living my life, and am amongst friends for example, I sometimes found it hard to engage in chit-chat, fully enjoy myself, switch off, and I found that, well, a bit sad. Things seemed more trivial than normal and it frustrated me so. I wondered a lot, sometimes finding myself in deep thought, remembering exactly what lads said (their *exact* words), their choice of words, our shared dialogue, or, totally the opposite thinking nothing and staring into space. On reflection and as the madness of fixtures and travel petered out, I sometimes think that because I was fortunate to get into meaningful conversations with people, with players, I then found it trivial to talk about a soap on TV, a game of football on the TV. I didn't get it, I struggled to switch off (or escape politics), and I can see what the lads mean when they say they don't want to talk to their parents, partners or friends about these things. Not because you're stubborn, or proud, more because you don't want to keep talking about work, that your actually trying to forget about, when with those close to you, trying to switch off, although I did benefit from off loading to those close to me many times.

I often thought about the need for supervision when working with players (but from whom, and about what?), and sought advice and guidance all summer from various people whom I respect or trust. I do worry though, that maybe I am getting above my station, getting carried away with things, taking things a little too seriously, taking myself too seriously, perhaps reading into things too much. But it's the way I feel and felt. I felt privileged but weighed upon, self doubting but a need to be strong for others, treading water but there for those moments, an outsider, striving on the inside, and at times very alone. It strikes me how self assured you have to be. How rarely people ask how you are, how you have to be able to handle yourself, look after yourself, be strong in yourself, otherwise the driving, the late nights, the shitty hotel rooms, the drinking, the ego's, the lure of the lifestyle, the women, the opportunities to let go, the mistreatment of players, the injustices, the frustrations of individuals, the struggles, the failures, the amazing highs, the amazing lows, the length of the summer and the game itself... it will simply eat you up!

4.3.4 - Reflective Stop Off 4

Reflections below centre on the two ethnographic exchanges with Hano and Jonesy that complete the timeline and more general reflections in relation to Seb.

4.3.4.1 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Hano

Hano's drawn eyes initially said so much. His schedule of leaving a first team game at 10pm, being subjected to '*horrific*' language, reacting to the crowds intimidation, then arriving home at 3am and starting a second team game at 9am the following morning reflect the 'Consequences associated with being a professional cricketer' (3rd order) and how, at times, there is simply 'Not enough time as a professional cricketer' (MC-159; NG-85, 90, 93; PK-197). They also support authors' observations that at certain times athletes can feel overwhelmed by rigorous and demanding lifestyles (Balague, 1999; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002).

Like Broady earlier, Hano was a well known player, and despite scoring runs on that day, by saying 'it's only second team cricket' you get a sense of his thinking, and might draw further links with previously extrapolated themes, including 'It becomes harder to deal with failure when cricket is your livelihood' (JH-184; SB-14; DN-147) and 'It becomes harder to deal with fewer opportunities when it's your livelihood' (FW-83). In terms of research aims (A) and (E), just like Quinny, Broady, Laney, Jonesy and any other player in the timeline, Hano's issues were personally and professionally unique; diverse and laden with history. Hano had represented the first team all year, had recently captained the club, turned down a contract extension, nearly transferred to another county, didn't want to 'get stuck' or 'settle down', was well known and seemed confused as to whether he had 'got over' his international experience, while seemingly wondering whether he was as good as he once was. As with all players such intricacies, or noise, might be confused with a hierarchical list of solvable problems. However, such noise seems to represent a player's personal mosaic of highly private, often undisclosed, interrelating, emotive and enduring

issues. Hano's intricacies also included the fact he was fleeting between first and second team cricket, was fully aware of his failures, wanted something to take his mind away from cricket, had an uncertain long term and long distance relationship, doubted the first team coach, had seen others (i.e., Laney) selected above him, felt worn down, like he'd been in a 'boxing ring' and was essentially 'embarrassed'. These personal complexities again arguably offer detail of one athlete / player's experience within the mastery (Bloom's, 1985), latter (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003), investment (Côté, 1999) and culmination (Stambulova, 2000) phases of his professional career.

The wider complexities of a player's existence were not readily forthcoming to the researcher. Indeed, I report how the conversation with Hano initially fled from one area to another as if to avoid any real depth, and how my own words (regarding his intelligence) sometimes seemed to detract from our conversation and even create a barrier between us (and perhaps strengthen something like a protective façade). However, I also described more facilitative ethnographic moments with Hano (and others). Particularly when *I* felt the need to reflect how Hano appeared hesitant to admit things in that instant, and as earlier, when *I* decided to question Jonesy on his manner and his choice of word as it felt right in that moment. On reflection, what I believe to be appropriately timed, sensitively delivered and spontaneous feelings and feedback on my part, regarding our interaction, seemed to facilitate more honest and open dialogue and a more complete understanding of Hano's experiences. Drawing similarities with the above, another of Rogers' necessary and sufficient (core) conditions of a psychologically facilitative climate included 'congruence' or genuineness on the part of the therapist. Rogers (1957; 1961; 1980) described how this means the therapist does not deny to himself or herself feelings being experienced, and is willing to express and be open about feelings in the relationship, without façade. Gaining a detailed understanding of players as an ethnographic researcher, as I arguably did with Hano and Jonesy, suggests the need, at times, for an intuitive, congruent and humanistic interaction and skill base, when seeking to understand another. Indeed, being genuine and congruent as core ethnographic skills

might reasonably translate into practice based situations where practitioners also seek to build relationships and understand the completeness of players' difficulties.

Authors have commented on the value of working in collaboration with, as opposed to in isolation from coaches to support athletes' development and performance (see Orlick, 1989; Ravizza, 1990; Loehr 1990; Partington and Orlick, 1991; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004; Brown, Gould & Foster 2005). Having suggested he used to perform with 'nothing else on my mind' and would 'bowl to get people out', coach involvement would also appear at times, and perhaps in this instance, an important compliment to any support. You may also recall that whilst the ECB PL programme offered no guidance on working with coaches, the UK PL programme had the objective of 'working closely with coaches' (UK Sport, 2007). Findings in Study 2 also suggested that contextually informed practitioner's may be able to anticipate which coaches specifically, and contexts generally are willing to understand and support players' issues or perhaps dismiss and deny them as merely excuses. Therefore, however appropriate coach involvement might be in supporting Hano, he clearly had a growing contempt and low opinion of Dean. He also didn't 'take anything for granted' with the club in light of their treatment of other players. One might also remember earlier discussions in line with players' 'Perspectives on communication and sharing experiences', 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket' and 'Barriers associated with communicating problems with coach's' (all 2nd order themes). I might also offer a reminder of comments from Simon (Hano's bowling coach) during the focus group in Study 2, that reflect the context in which Hano finds himself;

Simon -They never do Rob... They never do... When they communicate, they have a problem at home, they never go, oh I can't tell him that... that's bull shit that...

Ray - Someone might not think you are listening...

Simon -I know everything about our bowlers Ray that I need to know and they need to tell me

Simon -(Laughing) What then if players say... use me I am not bothered its fine, players say they can't talk to me, but yet I produce 20 test bowlers in the next 10 year, well fuck em, because I have done my job... just a point...

Dean - Say that again...

Simon -Use me I am not worried...

David - I am not using you by the way...

Simon -No its fine, I can accept it, I am not worried... I am not bothered mate either way... use me... someone can't talk to me, but I produce us in the next 5 years, 10 top line bowlers, then what?

Simon -I could be biggest arse whole in the world, if I produce 10 bowlers or whatever, then so what, I have done my job...

For the final time I briefly supplement these reflections and the caveat with Hano already read in Study 3 with further associated dialogue found later in the season (taken from the ethnographic source document with corresponding page numbers). Although contextual understanding found in the ethnographic text is somewhat lost, Hano's discourse below offers even further insight into the complexity of his lifestyle, his coach related concerns and his performance based issues discussed above;

"...Its simmering away all this, my game, my granddad now, everything, and I know its going to release sometime, I am just trying to nail it down and keep it shut down for now (Rob uses both his hands to seemingly push down a trap door and keep things from bursting)..." [Page 564]

"...When I was bowling today, after my first ball I turned round and Ray and their coaches (from the opposition) were doing this (rein acting the spin imparted on a bowl at the top of his action) and I just thought fucking hell not again, it just wiped me out then..." [Page 564]

"...I have always been wary of people, right from at school and as long as I can remember, I just don't trust people easily, I don't know why, can't think of a reason, I just don't..." [Page 541]

"...I know he (Simon) talks to me about stuff with other players, and that isn't right, so he must talk to others about me. He pushed me when I was younger for a spot with the firsts (Hano's right arm rises and he opens his palm out flat, facing upward, as if something is being lifted, supported), and I am grateful to him for that, but, now it's almost been like I have made it, so don't need anyone now, he's pushing others now (his left arm comes out, it does the same, while his right arm begins to fall), others that are coming up behind me, to replace me..." [Page 541]

"...I put my trust in him (Dean) in the early season and the first time I asked for some leeway, he didn't give me it, remember I told you about the Noonshire trip..." [Page 542]

Despite the insights above, it should be remembered that Hano initially only seemed to discuss his performance based concerns (a common and understandable trend in light of points made earlier vis-à-vis the abrasive and masculine contexts in which players reside and males withdrawn tendencies). Without further questioning and

patience on my part as an ethnographic researcher, insights into Hano's concerns might have been restricted to his perceived 'confidence problem', 'mental block' and restricting ability to only 'bowl to stop runs'. In this regard, Hano's subsequent explanations surrounding the use of recommended 'cue cards', 'deep breathing exercises' and 'self talk' also provide an opportunity to briefly reflect on the use of such mental skills in light of a greater awareness of the wider issues within his life.

Despite several and repeated calls to consider the importance of other skills aside from MST (Corlett, 1996; Anderson, Van Raalte and Brewer 2001; Andersen, 2000; Nesti, 2006; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) little seems to have happened in terms of practice (Nesti, 2006), and techniques and interventions not unlike those recommended to Hano in Study 3, remain the mainstays of much sport psychology and performance enhancement service delivery (Morris & Thomas, 1995; Andersen, 2000). However, given the density of issues that appear to be contributing to Hano's difficulties (and other players documented), any sophist oriented, technique based symptom relief (see Dorfman, 1990; Simmons & Anderson, 1995; Corlett, 1996; Ravizza, 2002) based on the administration of mental skills, seemingly devoid of Hano's personal and private issues and contextual understanding, and offered in a one off meeting, would appear (certainly in this case anyway) somewhat insufficient. The MST recommended to Hano also seem similar to the 'book' suggested in the focus groups by Geoff that players should be 'forced' to read. These techniques also seem to relate to Jack's criticisms in Study 2, where Woodshire had 'been guilty in the past', in giving 'blanket' support to players, by getting 'some psychologists in', and as Geoff had suggested, this leading to some players (perhaps like Hano) thinking 'it's not for me'. Perhaps then, instead of MST techniques, more socratically aligned (Corlett, 1996), protracted, therapeutic and person centered (see Rogers, 1957; 1961, 1980; Balague, 1999; Ravizza, 2002) approaches require further consideration in supporting the non-performance and lifestyle oriented experiences of players. I would again like to stress that whilst lifestyle support is the focus here, the more socratic and person centered elements of sport psychology and counselling

based literature continue to be referenced and so might best depict some of the activities undertaken by the researcher.

4.3.4.2 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Jonesy

The second aside offered with Jonesy was a vivid exchange. This exchange offers insights to research aim (A), (B), (C) and (E). The manner in which Simon suddenly pulled me to one side, and the way Jonesy was immediately defensive, talking aggressively with intimidating dark pupils and gestures to match, reflect the complex personalities, characters and challenging realities in professional sport. Having suggested earlier that no players experience ever appears separate to the context in which they reside (also see Ivy, 1980; Brown, Gould & Foster, 2005), one might recall the focus group exchange in relation to Jonesy (see pg 214) and Simon's thoughts on him being 'inconsistent', 'unreliable', and how he had not even turned up to prearranged training sessions with him. Jonesy's relationship with Simon had been fundamental to his success and development, and Jonesy clearly appreciated his guidance and knew Simon's importance to his professional future. One must also respect Simon and other coaches' methods in supporting player's development in professional sport, for example;

Simon -But also as a coach you might be particularly hard on a player for a reason... you might give him a hard time knowing full well I am going to get him through this...

Dean – Aye aye...

Simon -Do you know what I mean, he might not like me... I don't know how much "Morts" (England international) liked me when I was giving him a hard time and so on... So as a coach what do you do? You play act half of the time don't you...

On pulling me aside in the hotel Simon was also 'worried and angry' at Jonesy's recent behaviour and pointed out that he felt close to giving up on him. Tim had also suggested Jonesy was 'scared stiff of ringing' Simon in the focus group but also shared similar worries during the season about his erratic moods, head butting, punching walls and loud profanities during dismissals. In addition, there were the

complications over another county's reported interest, his second driving ban, all the coaches' fears of him hanging around with 'dodgy types' and growing suspicions over him taking drugs. One might also bear in mind the uniqueness of Jonesy's relations, including his respect for his father's achievements, awareness of his family's chequered history and his desire not to let them down. Players from Study 1 similarly reported 'Aspects of tangible and intangible parental involvement' (2nd order) in that a 'Parental influence shapes personal qualities conducive to success' (MT-107; SBr-162; PK-192) or conversely a parental influence 'Failing to shape personal qualities conducive to success' (SB-5; PK-192; SBr-168). Players also described how 'Parental support benefits performance' (MT-108), and the quote from Study 1 below seems particularly relevant to Jonesy here;

... it's very complicated... just the fact everyone was ok and there was no kinda family turmoil issues and it just allowed me to concentrate on cricket more than I had done, maybe a year before... a stable kind of family environment. I think that's massively important. I think had things not turned around the last couple of years, I'm not sure I'd be talkin' to ya... people around you in your family and you know all kind of together and them with ya, is really vital to be honest... it just gave me the ability to focus on cricket more... rather than having to think about domestic issues... that you're all right and you can concentrate on your cricket. I think it's hard to get to any significant level of cricket and you've got 101 things flyin' around your head... So I think that just a stable home and a supportive family is important... Mathew Tyson 108

Having considered the context (i.e., research aim B) and reality of Jonesy's complex circumstances (i.e., research aim A and E), one might also consider more of our exchange in relation to research aim (C). When Jonesy immediately became defensive everything from his volume, tone and confrontational manner were obvious. During these moments it would have been easier to adopt an advisory and equally confrontational perspective using the knowledge and judgments given to me by the coaches. Instead I felt I continued to listen empathically and unconditionally (see Rogers, 1957; 1961; 1980; Partington & Orlick 1991; Andersen, 2000; Brown, Cairns & Botterill, 2001). Players themselves had also advocated these listening skills in that 'The ability to listen is valuable' (NC-207) and 'Sensing empathy and a real understanding of personal experiences builds a connection' (NC-207; FW-83; DN-147), as described by one player in a quote from Study 1 below, and which Ray felt was an important skill during the focus group in Study 2;

Boy we have got deep man. You know I actually like talking like this because nobody listens man, nobody really listens, and no one is interested... It makes me feel enlightened talking properly to someone, chatting away. You know that might not be a bad thing to do, once a month just get players down and let them talk and they might be like me, thinking shit, this that and the other. I can see that with pro players especially during the season...but a lot of the time I do not get on that role ... Fran Warick 83

Ray - Listen, listen, listen comes up doesn't it? It's a skill listening, it's a skill to be able to listen, isn't it...

David - It is to genuinely listen yeah...

Ray - Aye yeah I think it is...

Then having listened to justifications for Jonesy's behaviours I report becoming 'distracted' from being able to listen. I therefore decided to question Jonesy on his manner with me and his choice of the word 'defend' in that it reflected much of our own interaction, felt right in that moment, and I wanted him to 'just talk to me' as I felt he was not. In this sense, I might again draw parallels with notions of 'congruence' (Rogers, 1957; 1961; 1980) outlined earlier. By questioning Jonesy, he seemed to change. He appeared to open up even further, was willing to share even more and began to discuss his high regard and envy of his 'gangster mates' and their illegal activities involving money, drugs and even guns. In light of this awareness it seems fair to suggest that to understand the lifestyle experiences of Jonesy and any given player, one must at times also consider some of the strong cultural and societal influences acting upon them.

In continuing to describe his close contact and fascination with performance enhancing and recreational drugs, their abundance amongst his peers and the way he dramatically manoeuvred his forearm in pretending to inject such substances, I seemed to momentarily lose my own composure and any previously held unconditional judgement. However, I doubt Jonesy would have disclosed such private thoughts or whether a more complete understanding would have been gained in a more judgemental and untrusting interpersonal environment. While players

alluded to the 'Need to be strong to resist recreational drugs with peers' (JH-186; TS-45) and how it is 'Important to know about the implications of taking drugs' (KH-139; TS-45), what followed with Jonesy, as with Laney, seemed to again transcend content analysis themes and the coaches disclosed awareness of players' issues in the focus groups. Perhaps like Laney, such issues with Jonesy may again be examples of the 'significant things' Jack had described in the focus groups, the 'important issues' Simon alluded to, but are outside the 'black and white areas' Dean preferred, and certainly require a greater awareness of players' experiences, even '24 hours a day' (Simon).

As with Hano, Jonesy's issues also seemed related to his performance as he described his liking for winding himself up, and how the way he bangs his head against walls and helmets had even been encouraged; to improve his performance by those who were now more concerned about such behaviours. Jonesy's aggressive approach to his bowling also seemed somewhat akin to his emerging disposition and peoples perceptions of him off the field. It seemed to the researcher that being physically big and intimidating, highly fashionable, and with a tongue and gait that resembled 'the man', 'the gangster', the 'big en', all fed the felonious image he craved. However, this also appeared somewhat contradictory to my own perception of the 'educated young man' who seemed to materialize with me when Jonesy wasn't trying to impress or act in the way he was often encouraged or expected too. I describe one such moment when Jonesy appeared to use his arms in deliberating some of our exchange, some of his behaviours and his current experiences. As his arms separated into two pathways that moved further and further from one another Jonesy (slowing and less aggressive in his responses) explained for himself, his own predicament. On reflection, (I would hope) in sharing more of his complete experience, however troublesome, unprofessional, worrying or easy to condemn, and in feeling his perspectives were being understood (and not corrected), I report how Jonesy seemed (all too briefly) to question the dangers of his present lifestyle and more specifically the 'reputation he and others have built'. However, this brief ethnographic exchange would be the last time I saw Jonesy during the season as he was subsequently selected for the first

team. This ethnographic experience leaves me to contemplate whether any long term influence could actually (or ever be) achieved by supportive practitioners from such brief and intermittent interpersonal exchanges.

4.3.4.3 - Specific Ethnographic Reflections on Seb

You may recall momentary but regular references to ‘Seb’ from Rinshire throughout the entire timeline. I latterly report how on showing his potential with the first team, it also became known to the researcher (and to varying degrees amongst coaches) that he was ‘going out’, and ‘sneaking out’ of hotels to night clubs and bars until 4am while travelling around the country. I also reported how he coincidentally bumped into a Woodshire player the night (or morning) of his own game for Rinshire (against another county altogether). Having already discussed the culture at Rinshire, the consuming nature of the game, players’ tendencies to escape, relax and socialise with team mates in hotel bars and the physiological dangers of drinking, players from Study 1 also reported that ‘Idiosyncratic and somewhat unprofessional lifestyle approaches work for some people’ (SB-15; TS-23, 36; HN-64; NG-85), perhaps not unlike Seb (and Laney) at this time. However whilst Tim (academy director not with the first team) was aware of such behaviours, clearly Dean (with the first team) was not. My own embedded ethnographic experiences slowly observing Seb’s career and behaviours from a distance again lead me to contemplate the *reality* of lifestyle provision. Indeed, researcher insights might suggest that whilst coaching teams and lifestyle practitioner’s might work closely together and prescribe logical and valuable (multidisciplinary) advice to a gifted player like Seb, his behaviours might also reflect the ongoing complexity and ambiguity that is likely to accompany the support of players’ lifestyles, and specifically in this instance, one talented player’s transition to the professional level.

These reflections bring this timeline and section to a close. The ethnographic source document houses the complete timeline of the 2006 season. Having reflected on the stories, exchanges, observations and (players and my own) experiences during this season, this thesis now moves onto a broader and final integrated discussion in relation to the three data sets.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 - Discussion

The following chapter explores the salient themes of this thesis. It includes theoretical synthesis and attempts to consolidate and critically reflect on findings from all three multilayered data sets. The discussion starts by addressing each specific research aim. Some research aims are discussed together in light of their similar aspirations. Methodological developments and reflections on the research journey complete this section alongside ideas for future research. The comments emerging from the data develop a series of applied perspectives and propose a number of implications for academic communities, applied practitioners (e.g., PL advisers, sport psychologists and coaches), and those who occupy operational and / or strategic positions in support of players / athletes (e.g., the ECB and UK Sport).

5.2 - Understanding the Lives and Lifestyle Experiences of Professional Cricketers

By employing a range of qualitative methodologies this research has explored the lives and (performance) lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers (i.e., aim A). More specifically, prolonged practitioner-cum-researcher engagement sought to further explore, experience and understand the lifestyle of a professional cricketer during an entire cricket season (i.e., aim E).

Firstly, given the paucity of research into lifestyle issues of professional athletes generally and cricketers specifically, Study 1 provided a framework from which to articulate, more completely and accurately, the non-performance and (more) lifestyle based experiences of professional cricketers. Indeed, at the end of Study 1, I felt that for the first time, or more accurately for the first time during my tenure as a PL adviser, I was more able to articulate the complexities of a player's life. Study 1 produced a broad framework from which it is possible to trace players' perspectives on their existence as a professional cricketer and their ideas on improving accompanying support. The framework consisted of players' perspectives related to;

- **Perceptions of a young players lifestyle**
- **Reflections on professional cricket experiences**
- **Personal relationships and performance**
- **Communication**
- **Lifestyle, well-being, welfare & performance**
- **Emotions, cognitions & performance**
- **Life after professional sport**

It appears that during certain times in their career a professional cricketer's life can become crowded by peripheral matters unrelated to their on-field performance. Players described aspects of tangible and intangible parental involvement during their younger years. This involvement seemed to include some parents being overly inquisitive, annoying, and pushy. In contrast, players also described invaluable financial and domestic support (e.g., washing and cooking) from parents who they felt had been instrumental in shaping personal qualities conducive to their playing success. During their early development it also appeared difficult for players to balance the demands of their cricket and studies. In this sense, some players seemed to foreground sport and concentrate more on their cricket (especially) when alluring opportunities arose to turn professional. For others, it seemed they were more able to successfully plan and balance their cricket and academic based commitments having had support and guidance from their school. It appeared that issues associated with a young player's transition into the professional cricket environment could become extremely multifarious. Uppermost amongst players' concerns appeared to be issues associated with having to deal with a lack of opportunity to perform whilst within (what seemed to become) an increasingly intense, competitive and distracting sporting environment. This taxing environment also appeared to have the potential to contribute to self doubt and lead to a player questioning their own ability. This appeared to be a crucial period of a player's development. As players matured and sought independence, they also seemed to be faced with more (adult) issues related to their continuing development in sport and general maturity in life (e.g., making educational decisions, coping with success and failure, increasing expectations and decreasing opportunities). On turning professional, it appeared that some players had experienced for themselves or observed in others the consequences of an unprofessional lifestyle. It

seemed that poor diets and a culture of drinking could affect a player's performance, image and future team selection. In contrast, other players' lifestyles became ever more professional within an increasingly intense and insular environment that felt somewhat consuming to players and unlike the real world. As a professional some players were required to negotiate contractual and financial uncertainties, deal with increased public and media attention, heightened domestic and international traveling and develop an awareness of recreational and performance enhancing drugs. Interestingly, and perhaps in light of these increasing demands and consuming responsibilities, it appeared that senior players also realized the value of having a degree of balance within their personal and professional lives, in terms of living a professional, but not overly intense lifestyle.

While some aspects and commitments within a player's lifestyle appeared more noticeable, others appeared more latent and elusive. For example, players described the emotional and cognitive reality of coping with their (rollercoaster) life as a professional cricketer. This reality often seemed to include the difficult nature of having to cope with the harshness of performance failures and fewer opportunities when cricket had become their livelihood. It appeared that some players also realized the impacts and affects of their own performance failures in their home life and how their own moods often reverberated with, and affected the lives of those closest to them. In an effort to ease their own mindsets and cope with the difficulties above, some players seemed to *learn* (through experience) the value of trying to maintain a (consistent) sense of personal perspective (on their difficulties and failures) by looking beyond a 'tunnel vision' perspective of success in cricket. It would also appear that maintaining an intimate personal relationship and family life in cricket is a difficult undertaking because of the games inherent longitudinal and nomadic nature. However, some players did suggest that their performances had been positively affected by the calming stability of supportive partners and relationships. In contrast, others described negative affects on their performances resulting from relationship stress and personal frustrations. In trying to cope with their personal and home life problems players seemed to realize that bottling problems up often made troubles harder to deal with, affected their cricket focus, and could often lead to a negative spiraling mindset both professionally and personally. Whilst players seemed to describe

the importance and value of talking about any mounting worries or concerns they might have, it appeared that in *reality*, they tended to guard against *sharing* and were often uncertain and afraid to communicate their troubles in the professional environment. This suggests a real tension within their existence. More specifically, it appeared that there were barriers and hesitations in communicating problems with some coaches and management. Players did not always *feel* that they could share their troubles freely for fear of jeopardizing their future team selection. In general, players believed their overall lifestyle, and general welfare and well-being off-the-field could have a positive and / or negative affect on their performance. It was also made clear that players felt that any influence would be an individual phenomenon, in that off field issues affect some, but not all players. Professionals also sought work and life experiences alongside their professional playing career. Many also seemed to believe there was merit in experiencing positive winter work experiences, believing they build life skills and self confidence, improve communication skills, improve their personal situation, offer a sense of security and help them to better appreciate their cricket career. However, other players seemed less enthusiastic and had not planned for their future because they hadn't wanted to consider a career outside that of being a professional or were worried about their coaches' perception of their post-sport career planning activities. In general, there seemed to be key moments of insecurity within the life of professional cricketer. These uncomfortable moments appeared most relevant to those who had mature life commitments, a fear about the (inevitable) end of their career and fears about their unknown life that lies beyond it.

The findings of Study 1 resonated with some of the more common and known lifestyle experiences of athletes in literature and in the public domain (i.e., within athlete lifestyle programme documentation). For example, athletes are known to experience issues with regards personal finance and balancing educational commitments. In addition, athlete lifestyle programmes seek to support athletes in terms of managing their personal finances and contracts, dealing with media attention, developing post sport career plans and an awareness of recreational and performance enhancing drugs. However, some of these findings seemed to uncover some previously unknown and unspoken aspects of a professional cricketer's lifestyle. Moreover, whilst findings in Study 3 seemed to build on

awareness gained from Study 1, at times they also seemed to transcend such awareness. In fact, in Study 3 I used the descriptive word '*noise*' and descriptive phrase '*personal mosaic*' during one reflective stop off, in order to encapsulate the collection of lifestyle based difficulties and experiences of some players. The individual experiences of some players in Study 3 therefore offer a better understanding of the lives and lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers. Indeed, they highlight a depth and breadth of contrasting and colourful experiences. For example, as a senior professional, Broady's experiences ranged from trying to deal with failure amongst young, intimidated but ambitious players, personal uncertainties over building legislation and financial dealings in property development, expectations and vulnerabilities that accompanied his salary as a 'capped player', personal relationship uncertainties and personal difficulties in communicating with Rinshire's management team. In contrast to Broady, Quinny was a young professional, but his life appeared no less complex. He seemed to find himself frustrated and bitter in the middle of a competitive season with no contact with the first team for months. He then experienced what was perceived to be 'yipping' in the nets, had contractual uncertainties with agents, didn't want to overly burden or disrupt his new girlfriend's life, had little family support close by and was being advised to stay in the game by those close to him. Quinny also seemed to find himself reflecting on his break up from his ex-fiancé, and had a variety of seemingly unheard (or even unspoken) career ideas and ambitions outside of cricket. Like Quinny, Jonesy was another junior professional. His relationship with his coaches seemed important to his development but troublesome and inconsistent. His coaches were worried about his erratic moods, head butting, punching walls, loud profanities during dismissals, hanging around with 'dodgy types' outside the game and growing suspicions over him taking drugs. Jonesy's situation also involved complications over another county's reported interest and his second driving ban. His own personal perspectives also seemed complicated in that he expressed a high regard and (almost) envy of his 'gangster mates' and their illegal activities involving money, drugs and even guns. Conversely, he held a high respect for his father's more legitimate achievements, had an awareness of his family's chequered history (i.e., his relatives being incarcerated) and his desire not to let everyone down. These lifestyle issues seemed to overshadow (but also at times relate to) the more peripheral and known lifestyle

elements outlined earlier (e.g., matters regarding balancing education and personal finance). In this sense, findings appear to highlight a lack of personal depth and a contextual gap within existing awareness of athlete lifestyle issues. Moreover, findings in Study 1, but more so in Study 3, seemed to capture some of the more esoteric, emotive, previously unspoken, interrelating and private off field issues (including events and transitions) experienced during some player's lives and careers.

As a result of the embedded and prolonged nature of the practitioner-cum-researcher's ethnographic engagement (discussed later), players appeared to become more willing to share and disclose many of their innermost thoughts and feelings (to the researcher) regarding their general struggles as people living the life they do. In terms of these struggles, Study 3 appeared to illuminate the tensions of existence alluded to in Study 1. A sense was gained for how a cricketers' life often seems highly social because of the longitudinal nature of the game and season. However, it could also become increasingly unbalanced, isolating and lonely for some during difficult periods. Indeed as this thesis progressed I believed there was a larger message housed within all its narratives, and at times an echo of loneliness resonated amongst the players and travelled along with the text. Findings from Study 3 reinforced the genuine uncertainty, unwillingness, and hesitancy players' felt (and articulated in Study 1) when deciding *whether* to share their experiences and difficulties, and *who* to share them with if inclined to do so. The way players bottled their problems up arguably compounded much of their unease, and left some feeling lonely, confused, embarrassed, isolated and at times, in turmoil. Taken together, all studies seemed to depict a sea of personal discontent and a turbulent landscape of raw angst and player survival. Running alongside players lifestyle experiences they were also always accountable to, and judged on, their eminence as performers. Indeed, having reflected on my time as a researcher and PL adviser (over 3 years), I can recall players being described in various domains as products, entities, commodities and even referred to as a number. Interestingly, it appeared that even those players who reflected on successful periods of their careers in Study 1, and those players who were performing consistently well in Study 3, still, on occasions, seemed to experience difficulties within their life. Indeed, it might be easy to assume that just

because on field performances are strong, everything is 'ok' in a player's life (e.g., see 'Some can handle problems as a performer but struggle as a person' in Study 1, and narratives regarding Laney and Seb from Study 3). In some cases, I might infer that while performing (well or badly, though it might be argued more so during the latter), levels of personal disquiet and unease in a player's life can fluctuate from more subliminal and manageable tones to increasingly uncomfortable beats. Looking over the three data sets this unease and disquiet seemed to stem from a variety of unpredictable, volatile, off field, personally unique, often extremely private and personally historic sources and contextual circumstances in their life.

Whilst existing talent / athlete development models evaluated within transitional literature were recognised for their excellent frameworks from which to understand the various transitions of athletes, it is thought that the present research offers some intimate, personal and contextual accounts of cricketers' transitions. General findings within this thesis hopefully go some way to portray the depth and breadth of complexities that some athletes experience during different developmental phases and transitions *within* their professional careers. Data also highlights some of the more subtle, day to day and seasonal transitions experienced by players as opposed to the major (forced and / or voluntary) career transition of retirement that appears to dominate transitional literature. For example, within Study 3 and as outlined above, the combination of Quinny's changing personal circumstances, poor form and eventual release by Woodshire, offered intimate detail of one young professional's experiences within all levels of the discontinuation stage of Wylleman & Lavallee's (2003) developmental model. In addition, the unique blend of Hano's personal and professional complexities offered further detail of one senior professional's experiences and transitions within the mastery stage of Bloom's (1985) model, the latter stage of Wylleman & Lavallee's (2003) developmental model, the investment years of Côté's (1999) model, and during Stambulova's (2000) transitions from culmination to the end of the sports career (5). Without returning to the depth and breadth of *every* player's issues in Study 3, findings arguably offer intricate, subtle, detailed, and contextual substance to existing (within-career) transitional research. Indeed, in terms of contextual substance, Study 3 specifically articulated some of the more overtly

worrying lifestyle elements of some players (e.g., Laney and Seb) and some of the strong cultural and societal influences that can potentially influence them (e.g., Jonesy).

Schlossberg (1981) suggested that any change, whether primarily positive or negative, involves some degree of stress. In this sense, this thesis seems to offer a sense of the personal movement, *change* and corresponding stress that occurred *within* the life and career of a professional cricketer. In essence, findings from all studies portrayed the reality of existence as a professional cricketer, and the reality of the (lifestyle based) transitions they experienced. Reflecting on all data, I have come to better understand these within-career transitional *realities*, and they often appeared personally *and* professionally challenging, endlessly complex, nomadic, insecure, arduous, emotional, intense and at times chaotic and unbalanced. Whilst this research did not directly seek out to explore cricketers coping resources during transitions, Schlossberg's (1981) model of human adaptation to transition does assess the ratio of an individuals coping resources to coping deficits as situations change. Reflecting on personal (lifestyle based) insights from players in this thesis, one might reasonably argue that players personal coping deficits *often* outweighed their personal coping resources, and this imbalance often made any corresponding adaptation to transition more difficult. Moreover, it appeared that regardless of whether someone was a young or senior professional cricketer, everyone experienced a degree of difficulty in their life, and *everyone* experienced a *degree* of change within their career. Schlossberg (1981) believed that the value of her model would relate to its usefulness as a basis for research, and eventually for intervention and counselling. In this sense, the difficult and ever changing *lifestyle* based transitional experiences of professional cricketers and the potential for personal coping resource deficits (Schlossberg, 1981), highlight the importance of, and the need to support professional cricketers' (lifestyle based) within-career transitions. The latter stages of this thesis will therefore seek to build towards, and eventually offer a critique of existing support structures, support processes and practitioner support roles interested in assisting cricketers' transitions.

5.3 - Contexts, Cultures, Environments & the Potential Influence of Coaches Perceptions

A further aim of this research was to explore the *contexts, cultures and environments* of professional cricket, and their potential influence on players' lifestyle experiences and any accompanying support (i.e., research aim B). However, to address this aim it would seem naïve to discuss the contexts, cultures and environments of professional cricket in *isolation* from a discussion about coaches' perspectives. Indeed, these two discussions seem inseparable based on the researchers understanding that contexts (and any potential influence on players and support) appeared to be largely shaped by coaches' and their perspectives on players' experiences and accompanying support (i.e., aim D). At some point I therefore intend to discuss research aim B, *using* data relating to coaches perspectives (i.e., aim D).

Following reflection and interpretation of each data set, I have come to better (but perhaps not fully) understand the contexts, cultures and environments of professional cricket. Research arguably provided a range of methodologies and findings that draw parallels with what Schon (1983) described as the swampy lowlands of the workplace. Across this research, the contexts of professional cricket have been described as masculine, macho, narcissistic, unaccommodating, uncommunicative, unwelcoming, and unforgiving, somewhat unlike the real world, pressurized, insensitive, intense, timeless, competitive, and abrasive and results oriented. Indeed, by seeking to holistically understand the lives and complete experiences of players, in context, without an inherently limiting conceptual lens, these diverse contextual findings were free to evolve. In fact one of the strengths of this thesis may be its relatively atheoretical nature, in that I was primarily interested in anything and everything (contextual or otherwise) that naturally transpired and influenced a player's life.

In parts data from Study 1 began to elaborate on the contextual, cultural and environmental realities in which cricketers' experiences occur. For example, Study 1 captured players' perspectives on what appeared to be a culture of drinking within the sport. This understanding was supplemented in Study 3, by the researcher's perception of

Rinshire's second team drinking culture, which at times appeared to have an unprofessional influence on some younger players seeking to establish themselves within the professional game. Players in Study 1 also articulated their own fears and hesitancy with regards sharing their personal troubles within the professional environment. In doing so they seemed to indirectly describe their experiences of the uncommunicative, competitive and results driven environments in professional sport. Environments in which it appears there can (at times) be underlying interpersonal barriers between players and coaches.

Study 2 explored the contexts, cultures and environments of two county cricket clubs through the lens of the coaches. Resulting data allowed the researcher to gain an initial understanding of the potential influence of these contexts and essentially what life (and support structures) might be like for players based on the coaches' perspectives. At Woodshire, coaches' appeared reflective and concerned, and their responses appeared refreshing, coherent, consistent and astute. Woodshire coaches regularly made links between a player's lifestyle experience and their performance, seemed to have picked up on and agreed with many of the issues presented in their daily practice, and regularly turned their attention to current players and how to better support them. A sense of authenticity and non-defensiveness in their responses appeared to depict a sensitive and supportive context which would seek to understand and find ways to better support the lifestyle experiences of players. Coaches at Woodshire appeared to adopt a humanistic philosophy of coaching including a deep interest and emotional investment of care and concern regarding the welfare and development of an athlete as a whole person (Vernacchia, 1995; Jowett & Cockerill 2003; Cassidy, Jones & Protrac 2005). One might infer that based on the Woodshire coaches' (apparently) sensitive perspective, the potential influence of this context on players' experiences and any accompanying support, might be a relatively positive and accommodating one. At Rinshire, coaches appeared more divisive, with some seeming defensive, somewhat self-centred and questioned a humanistic philosophy of coaching and the links between a player's lifestyle and performance. Interpersonal frictions, irritations, disagreements, and loud, coarse and aggressive language all combined to depict a tense and increasingly sour context.

Reflecting on data, one might infer that based on the majority of the Rinshire coaches' perspectives (excluding Ray), the potential influence of this (general) context on players' experiences and any accompanying support, might at times be a relatively intolerant and unaccommodating one. Interestingly, it appeared that the contrasting interpretations and reactions of coaching practitioners in Study 2 might stem from a variety of sources. In this sense, their own personal experiences and histories as professional players (together and independently), views (of themselves and others), their general beliefs, coaching philosophies and styles as well as any current frustrations and any existing performance pressures may well influence their current viewpoints and resulting behaviours. It appeared that all (or a mixture of) these variables and situational factors had the potential to influence players contextual experiences and shape any (global) lifestyle oriented support.

At this juncture, it appears pertinent to consider the apparent influence of *context, culture and environment* on a continuum of sensitivity and support in relation to a player's lifestyle based experience. At one extreme of the continuum of sensitivity and support, a club context might be plagued with tensions, infertile disagreements and divides amongst coaching staff, with some coaches' believing players' lifestyle experiences are actually excuses, a distance appearing between the players and coaches and very few ideas being formulated to improve support (e.g., Rinshire). At the opposite extreme of the continuum of sensitivity and support, a club context might appear more humanistic with a highly sensitive and supportive environment that accepts and regularly makes links between a player's lifestyle and performance and seeks to improve existing provision (e.g., Woodshire). It would appear that players' experiences do not occur within a vacuum, or devoid of contextual, cultural and environmental influence or coach involvement. Instead, players appear to develop, live and perform within ever transient live milieu, which might oscillate across the continuum of sensitivity and support according to the perspectives of those who appear to occupy, and ultimately, influence it.

Contextual findings from this research also appear to pervade the contextual gap that seems to exist in understanding athletes' lifestyles, and might also enhance the *contextual*

awareness of existing transitional models that seek to understand the various transitional experiences of athletes' (Bloom 1985; Stambulova, 1994; 2000; Côté, 1999; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalée 2003; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalée, 2004). Indeed until now, the *realities* and potential influences (for better or worse) of the *environmental context*, and in particular the contextual voices and potential influences of coaches, have rarely been explored or described in these models. More specifically, Schlossberg's (1981) earlier transition model categorized *variables* which she felt affected the outcome of any given transition on an individual. These variables included the characteristics of (pre and post) transitional environments in which an individual resides, and in particular the institutional support systems (or in this case county cricket clubs) to which an individual might turn to for support. Whilst outlining her (self-confessed) tentative and exploratory transitional model, Schlossberg (1981) hoped that further extensive discussion of the many variables influencing adaptation to transition would alert 'helping' professions (e.g., the PL programme) to the rich complexity of the process of adaptation to transition. More recently, Pummell et al. (2008) also suggested that further within-career transitional research is needed in order that support structures can be designed to facilitate athlete development, mitigate negative influences (in which the authors included institutional and organizational pressures), and minimize talent loss. In this sense, the sometimes supportive, but often extremely harsh environmental realities of professional cricket (summarised above, but described in detail throughout), and in particular the diverse institutional characteristics of county cricket clubs, offer the helping professions in general, and the existing (within-career) transitional research literature base in particular, an abundance of previously unfounded *contextual insight* and *depth*.

5.4 - A Critique of Existing Support Structures, Processes & Practitioner Support Roles

This thesis has explored the role and associated skills of *practitioners* in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers (i.e., aim C). In doing so it attempts to offer a more global critique of existing support structures and practitioner support roles concerned with the non-performance and lifestyle experiences of professional cricketers. The following section will use a combination of players', coaches' and the practitioner-

cum-researcher's own perspectives to discuss the role and associated skills of (allied) practitioners and offer a more global critique of existing support.

This section begins by firstly discussing coaches' potential roles in supporting cricketers' lifestyle oriented issues. It then leads onto a more detailed articulation of a localised lifestyle practitioner support role operating in context. During that discussion, reflections on the prolonged and embedded ethnographic researcher engagement are drawn upon to offer implications for future ethnographic researchers, lifestyle practitioners and strategic bodies (e.g., the ECB). This section finally concludes by arriving at a strategic overview of support and attempts to locate lifestyle practitioner support roles within the two existing support strands of sport psychology and PL within professional cricket. Whilst the questions raised in the following section may at times engender subjective comment and reflection, it is hoped that the text will at least encourage a wider debate on *what* might constitute, and *who* might provide, lifestyle oriented and non-performance based support.

5.4.1 - Coaches' Roles in Supporting Cricketers' Lifestyles

Players in Study 1 seemed to describe the importance and value of talking about any mounting worries or concerns they might have in their professional and personal life. However, data suggested that in *reality*, professionals guarded against *sharing* their troubles and were often uncertain and afraid to communicate in the traditional and ruthless culture of high level professional sport. Specifically, it appeared that there were barriers and hesitations in the players' minds with regards communicating their problems with some coaches' and management. Indeed, a player's uncertainty about communicating in the professional environment seems understandable given some of the seemingly intolerant and unsupportive perspectives of some coaches addressed in the previous section. It appeared that players did not always *feel* that they could talk freely or share their personal and professional troubles completely, for fear of jeopardizing their future team selection.

Coaches in Study 2 were encouraged to reflect on these potential communication barriers and hesitations and consider their own (potential) *role* in supporting players' lifestyle

issues. In these discussions *all* coaches appeared uncertain and hesitant with regards the extent of their own *role* in such support. Typical comments from Study 2 included “becoming too involved”, “you get too close” and “you don’t want to know it all do you”? However, while some coaches in Study 2 appeared to acknowledge that they may have some kind of role in supporting players’ lifestyle issues, others appeared more inconsistent in their opinion and sceptical over the *extent* and responsibility of any such involvement and role. For example, Simon (at Rinshire) appeared to be a coach who did not believe it was part of his coaching responsibility to support players with lifestyle issues “*I am not a bloody marriage counsellor*” and “*what gives them the idea it’s our responsibility*”. He appeared to believe that his role was primarily, to produce professional players, “*I could be the biggest arse whole in the world, if I produce 10 bowlers... I have done my job*”. In contrast, it appeared that Ray (at Rinshire) was a coach who was not averse to having a role in supporting the lifestyle experiences of players. He described how he had built relationships with players and endeavored to support their difficulties based on a personal empathy with their situations from some of his own troublesome experiences in life. However, he also appeared to recognize that all coaches are likely to have different skills and roles, and that some players might find it difficult to communicate with those coaches involved with team selection. Jack (at Woodshire) appeared to sympathise with both Simon and Ray’s perspectives. As a coach he appeared to believe he could play some part in supporting players’ lifestyle experiences, but also recognized that his role was connected with selection and the potential limitations of his own skill base in supporting such issues “*I have got a solution within 2 minutes of listening to someone*”... “*do I really look bothered*”... “*deep down I’m thinking you’re not bloody good enough*”.

In general, some coaches (like Simon) seemed to find the struggles of others somewhat harder to comprehend and accept and so seemed less inclined to be involved in supporting them. This maybe due (perhaps) to these coaches not having experienced the depths or affects of difficulties that other players have experienced within their playing career. However, and somewhat contradictory to the above point, those coaches who expressed skepticism, still seemed to suggest that players could, and should talk to them about their troubles should they wish too. Other coaches (like Jack and Ray) seemed more accepting

of the lifestyle based struggles of players. They also recognized the significance and influence of a player's lifestyle experience on their performance, and seemed to suggest that they could play some sort of role in supporting players. It seems fair to suggest that coaches contrasting personal perspectives (from Study 2 and then in Study 3) regarding their own *localised* roles in supporting players, seemed to have been shaped by a similar, but perhaps also subtly different mix of personal variables and situational factors that appeared to shape any (global) lifestyle oriented support. Drawing parallels with those outlined earlier, these specific variables seemed to relate to coaches previous experiences as professional players, their current perception of their own skill base, any connections they may have with selection, their experiences of previous and existing relationships with players, as well as their general beliefs, coaching philosophy and coaching styles.

Regardless of whether coaches appeared more skeptical or less inclined to have a role in supporting player issues in Study 2, even those with an inclination to be involved in the support of players' still appeared unsure over the *extent* of their involvement and role. The coaches' shared uncertainty seemed to stem from concerns over just how far they might let themselves go in supporting players with what they perceived to be significant issues, for example "*we're talking about a players well-being*"... "*you could just go off the rails*". In addition, *all* coaches from *both* clubs also acknowledged the performance pressure that accompanies professional sport and how their own (personal) coaching roles are ultimately and occupationally accountable to outcomes and performances. In this sense some coaches appeared to recognize a need for additional localized practitioner roles and expertise beyond their own skill base (as players had also suggested in Study 1). The necessity for results and winning in professional sport and the inherent pressures that accompany the industry (see Giges, Petitpas & Varnacchia, 2004; Knowles et al., 2006), seem to suggest that it would be unreasonable to expect a coach to totally remove himself / herself from the role of *judging* players (on a daily basis) on what they themselves are judged on, performance. However, data within this thesis suggests that this judgmental role appears the antithesis of the type of support (role) players sometimes need. Nevertheless, many coaches remained empathic, caring and extremely supportive of players despite the ongoing pressures and accountability of their role. From both Study 2 and Study 3, you

may remember Jack's support for Quinny and Ray's obvious support for Broady and many other players. Indeed on occasions, in Study 3, a coach role also seemed inadvertently involved in the lifestyle oriented support of players, given that performance and lifestyle based concerns often seemed interrelated (see narratives in relation to Hano and Jonesy from Study 3) and because coaches *simply* interacted with players experiencing lifestyle issues on a daily basis. It appears reasonable to suggest however, that when (supportive) coaches were involved, and did seek a role in supporting player issues (when appropriate, and seemingly unavoidable at times), their day to day and more long term decisions, styles, approaches and plans appeared more sensitive or adapted (though not necessarily eased) in light of any recognised difficulties.

It might be argued that the unavoidable bottom line that accompanies a coaches' role and the profession itself can (at times) inhibit their relationships with players and any lifestyle oriented support they are able to offer. In this sense, I suggested in Study 2 that a coach's role arguably negates the potential for any truly egalitarian relationships with players. Moreover, at times, it appears that there can be barriers to, and conditions within, their relationships. If they so wish, coaches can however do something about the incongruity and tension above. Coaches might recognize that in their role as architects trying to build highly competitive performance oriented cultures and environments that seek to push, challenge and squeeze out every measurable aspect of player performance, that players would also benefit from 'someone' removed from these realities and agendas (in their attitude and approach to support) within the environment. Such a practitioner might also possess qualities and perspectives some coaches may find difficult to demonstrate themselves because of their skill base, or perhaps even unable to provide at times because they appear to be held hostage to the accountability of their role. This would require coaches to grant a practitioner the opportunity to *be around* and provide support they sometimes cannot. Looking over the three data sets and (in particular) reflecting on embedded ethnographic experiences alongside coaches, I might infer however, that a coach would need to be secure enough in his own occupational position to look beyond his own role, trust a practitioner implicitly enough to allow him / her to operationalize such a

support role, and have the operational power, foresight and *belief* in such a support role, for it to ever be realized or effective.

5.4.2 - Clarification & Articulation of a Lifestyle Practitioner Support Role

Having discussed the coaches' perceptions of their own role in supporting players' lifestyle experiences, this discussion now seeks to integrate and reflect on data from each study in an attempt to offer a critique of existing support structures and better clarify and articulate a lifestyle practitioner role in support of a professional cricketer's lifestyle experience. Unlike in the preceding sections, the following passages of text will *primarily* reflect on the embedded and prolonged ethnographic researcher engagement of Study 3 *alongside* insights gained from Study 1 and Study 2. In doing so I hope to reflect on how the nature of the embedded and prolonged ethnographic engagement arguably allows further ideas for future research *and* practice to come to fruition.

5.4.2.1 - A Critique of Existing Lifestyle Workshop Provision

In terms of existing support structures the literature review explained how practitioners (including ECB PL advisers and those in generic athlete lifestyle programmes) currently play a role in designing and providing lifestyle workshop provision. The literature review suggested that existing terminology and accompanying notions of lifestyle support within Athlete Lifestyle Programmes around the world and within the ECB's PL programme appeared (somewhat) vague in their description and purpose. Ambiguity seemed to stem from a lack of (empirical) research that appeared to exist in firstly explaining the need for existing lifestyle support elements (e.g., workshops on budgeting and finance) and secondly how that support was to be realised by a practitioner through one to one meetings and / or workshop formats. In terms of the latter, existing examples of workshop formats within Athlete Lifestyle Programmes are briefly reviewed within the literature review (see page 33 onward), with further detail available to the reader in Appendix A. At the time of writing the ECB PL Programme currently ran a series of educational workshops in county academies to support and develop future players in terms of their lifestyle (see page 37

onward within the literature review and appendix B for workshop titles and learning outcomes).

Given the breadth and depth of experiences explored in the present thesis one might further inform the titles, content, delivery and extent of these workshops to better prepare young players for the *reality* of the life they seek. New workshops (which at the time of writing have been discussed and piloted, and can be seen in appendix J) might adapt and relate to the most common and traceable themes that have travelled through this thesis. For example, 'Parenting the Elite Cricketer', 'The Importance and Value of Perspective on Failures in Life', 'The Culture of Cricket: Alcohol Awareness', 'Understanding Relationships', 'Inflated Perceptions and Behaviours', 'Academy and Professional Cricket Transitions'). These additional sessions might be piloted, designed and delivered with young players, involve coaches and make every effort to ensure they are contextually specific. The potential value of these educational sessions is that they could highlight to young players the experiences and issues faced by those who have *actually* lived the life of a professional cricketer. However, I have tried to convey how the data and experiences of players in this thesis appear to highlight a constellation of more complex lifestyle issues experienced by professionals. The embedded and prolonged ethnographic experiences of the researcher in Study 3 fashioned insights that seemed to transcend thematics and would arguably require support beyond group based workshops (however accurate their content may be). Moreover, whilst the more common and known lifestyle elements currently covered in workshops (e.g., self organization and time management) seemed to remain in focus throughout this research, insights gained from the ethnographic engagement also seemed to overshadow them as a greater awareness was gained for each individual player's unique and endlessly complex issues (like those relating to Quinny, Jonesy, Broady and Laney). Whilst the value of a research based, proactive, innovative and evolving educational workshop programme has been suggested above, insights from this research would suggest that such support could arguably only ever be one small facet of a wider lifestyle agenda. Speaking more broadly and reflecting back on the content and modalities of workshops in relation to the data of this thesis, and in particular insights gained from the ethnographic engagement, a workshop culture would appear ill equipped and too far removed from the *reality* of life as a professional. For example, I might argue

that workshop environments, with well organised, stimulating material and interactive discussions could never replicate or prepare players for what I perceived to be an abrasive, arduous, pressurised, narcissistic, nomadic, masculine, unaccommodating, unpredictable and intensely competitive life in professional cricket. The practitioner-cum-researcher's embedded modality in Study 3 would also suggest that a workshop culture cannot pretend to offer prolonged support required to make any significant lifestyle change. Equally, workshop titles invariably remain constant, while players' lives and experiences appeared to transform and move on a daily basis. Again, I would like to stress that workshops might play a part in encouraging greater self-awareness and a preparative culture for young players. However, stood alone, workshops could arguably just become attractive (though uncontaminated) topics for practitioners to cross off of a long service list each year. Whilst such provision and 'lists' might look good to an outside observer, I might argue that generic insights from this research and my own specific ethnographic experiences would suggest that any *critical* agenda pursuing lifestyle support would always require more from a practitioner and programme.

5.4.2.2 - The Potential Value of Counselling Skills, Knowledge and Training

Players from Study 1 specifically offered implications for the provision of lifestyle support. Players did so by elaborating on their thoughts regarding the operational role and personal qualities of *practitioners* in support of players at a localized level (e.g., 'Supporting player welfare and well being', and 'Operational roles and personal qualities that encourage professional cricketers to talk'). Interestingly, (and like coaches in Study 2) players did not appear to differentiate between sport psychology practitioners or PL advisers. Players did however describe specific altruistic characteristics and personal qualities as pre-requisites for practitioners in support roles and appeared to depict the ideal of someone with knowledge of counselling and an associated counselling skill base operating in one club (as opposed to two, three or four clubs). These *skills* included the ability to listen empathically, build honest and trusting relationships, get to know players as *people* and exhibit a genuine capacity to care (e.g., 'Sensing empathy and a real understanding of personal experiences builds a connection' and 'It's important to know

and relate to the person to develop trust'). Drawing parallels with findings from Study 1, ethnographic insights emanating from Study 3 also professed the potential value of future ethnographic researchers and / or localised practitioners *patiently* building trusting relationships with players. This *process* of *building* and *earning* trusting relationships appeared to be a protracted one and might require a considerable commitment (e.g., 18 hour days, 6 days a week during a 7 month season) from practitioners. Findings in Study 1 and Study 3 also emphasized the potential value of practitioners possessing knowledge and skills related to the *application* of person centered counselling (see Rogers, 1957; 1961; 1980). More specifically, the embedded ethnographic experiences of the researcher in Study 3 reflected on the *process* and dynamics of interpersonal engagement with players. In doing so it discussed the potential value of practitioners embracing and *applying* notions of being *unconditional*, *non-judgmental*, *empathic*, *genuine* and *congruent* in their attitude and approach to supporting players.

In a vocational context, knowledge of approaches to counselling and the practical application of counselling *skills* appear to be compulsory *components* in becoming a sport psychologist (BASES, 2007). More specifically, supervisees are expected to gain a knowledge and critical appreciation of counselling approaches, including the humanistic school of counselling (e.g., client-centred therapy, self-actualisation and peak experiences and transactional analysis). Supervisees are also expected to receive formal training and a wide range of experiences in counselling skills, starting with observation of sessions and leading to autonomy in practice (e.g., evidence of attending a 15-20 hour counselling course) (BASES, 2007). In a similar sense, becoming an ECB PL adviser involves a (1 year) 'graduate certificate in *career* counselling for elite performers' (ECB, 2005). Whilst this qualification places an emphasis on aspects of career counselling and career development, general units of assessment also include counselling foundations for elite sport performers, aspects of Egan's Skilled Helper Model (2002), values and philosophy of the counselling process, microskills of counselling and their application within the elite performance environment (ECB, 2005). However training to be a PL adviser within the seven delivery organizations of the UK is not a standardized process, and based on the author's knowledge this process has recently been under review. Whilst it would appear

that counselling knowledge and the development and application of counselling skills appear to be *compulsory components* in becoming a sport psychologist and a PL adviser, they also appear relatively short-term and one-off / isolated features of a practitioner's professional development. However, references to the value of counselling in literature (Lavalley & Cockerill, 2002; Cockerill & Tribe, 2002; Anderson et al., 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006), combined with specific suggestions from players in Study 1 and insights stemming from Study 3, appear to place a greater currency on the potential value of, and need for, *long-term* and *ongoing* knowledge and skill development related to the application of person centered counselling. Moreover, findings from this research place a greater emphasis on the value of a *practitioner focused* and *counselling based* blueprint for the future roles, training and practice of supportive practitioners (whether sport psychologist or PL adviser) in support of athletes' *lifestyles*.

The researcher's embedded ethnographic experiences might further inform this practitioner focused and counselling based blueprint if readers also choose to embrace insights related to the ongoing dynamics of building and maintaining (what might be deemed supportive) relationships with players in Study 3. Having reflected on the extent of my own authenticity when with players and the intricacies of my thoughts and actions (from reflective stop off 2 onward) it seemed (to me) that players respected and accepted my engagement more when I was (eventually) more able to be myself when with them. Furthermore, it seemed (to me) that throughout a summer of prolonged ethnographic engagement players approached more (indeed as a researcher I rarely asked players to go for a chat, but would position myself where they could decide for themselves) and sought the researchers time or counsel, when I felt less self-conscious, was focussing outward, more genuine in my actions, prepared to care, and certainly more comfortable in my own skin. My own ethnographic experiences here appear to resonate with the thoughts of Petitpas, Giges & Danish (1999) who offered training implications for future practitioners (i.e., sport psychologists). Petitpas and colleagues suggested that if one accepts the premise of relationships being important, it may require a paradigm shift in training models, from an emphasis on skill based instruction to greater awareness of the self as a practitioner and the dynamics and processes involved in the practitioner-athlete

interaction. Anderson, Van Raalte & Brewer (2001) also suggested that the future education, training, and practice of (sport psychology) practitioners would come to look more like a species of counselling psychology and less like performance enhancement training.

Accepting the above may therefore encourage future training programmes (e.g., within the ECB PL programme) and practitioners offering person centred / lifestyle oriented support (e.g., PL advisers and / or sport psychologists), to turn to, and draw more from, the field of counselling in an effort to focus and reflect more on the *process* and *dynamics* of their own interactions and ongoing (building and maintaining of) relationships with players. The literature above and latter discussions within this thesis, appear to necessitate a *move towards* counselling, counselling psychology and a therapeutic literature base. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this discussion to delineate *every* aspect of such literature, one might consider how aspects of the aforementioned literature base, specifically related to therapist-client relationships, might naturally draw parallels with, and offer insights to (PL adviser and sport psychologist) practitioner-athlete relationships. Rather than expecting clients (e.g., athletes) to submit compliantly to ‘treatment’ prescribed by professionals, the field of counselling psychology advocates an interactive alternative that emphasizes the subjective experience of clients and the need for helpers to engage with them as collaborators (Mcleod, 2003). In this sense, any notion of *doing something* to clients is replaced by that of *being with and for* clients (Spinelli, 1996). Essentially, the element of a humanistic / person-centered approach thought to enable therapeutic change is based in an acceptance of the healing power of the *relationship* between therapist and client (sometimes phrased “healing through meeting”) (Friedman, 2002; Myers, 2003). In this sense, the therapeutic alliance or relationship is not merely a means to a set of therapeutic ends but is empowering and valuable in its own right (Mcleod, 2003). In humanistic therapy then, a lifestyle practitioner would strive to meet the client (e.g., the athlete) as a person, in as *genuine* a manner as possible. In his classic work, *I and Thou*, Buber (1958) distinguished between the “I-Thou” relationship that is direct, mutual, present, and open, and the “I-it”, or subject-object relation, in which one only relates to the other indirectly, non-mutually, knowing and using the other and maintaining a distance by treating them

more like an object than a person. Friedman, (2002) describes how the uniqueness that one partner (e.g., a player) experiences in genuine dialogue with another will be hidden from the individual (e.g., a practitioner) who comes merely as an objective observer, scientifically curious analyst, or prying manipulator adopting an “I-it” approach. Friedman (2002) also contests that people cannot, and will not, allow another person to see into their soul if they sense a prying, unsafe, or indifferent presence.

Friedman (2002) briefly listed those therapists who he felt associated their work through “healing through meeting”, and it is exactly this literature base that might offer invaluable insight to future lifestyle oriented support practitioners. In his extensive list, he included Carl Rogers who saw change in the client as coming about *through relationship*, who characterized that relationship in Buber’s terms as an “I-Thou” approach, and who manifested a deep concern for confirming the client (Rogers, 1961). Friedman (2002) also included Irvin Yalom, who portrayed the uncertain and spontaneous encounter necessary for effective therapy as a caring, deeply human meeting between two people. For Yalom, it is the relationship that heals (Yalom, 1989; 2006). In terms of a lifestyle practitioner’s role and specific conditions required to build relationships with athletes, Nesti (2006) described how (from an existential perspective) a practitioner must unreservedly give themselves over fully to the person with whom they are working. Nesti (2006) also described how the personal qualities of presence (an attempt to remain present to the person with whom one is working), authenticity (ensuring a real relationship) and empathy would need to be experienced in a dialogue of passion, spontaneity and reflection. This approach asks practitioners to be themselves (something I myself have tried to reflect on above), and in their own individual and unique way, throw themselves into an *encounter* with another person (Nesti, 2006).

Future practitioners and existing support structures (within the ECB, but also across all sports) might wish to consider the potential implications emanating from the data and discussions above. Moreover, practitioners and support structures might consider that training towards humanistic approaches would require any practitioner to *critically* reflect on their work with each athlete, to refrain from using ‘techniques’ within their sessions

and attempt to *immerse* themselves within their sessions (McLeod, 2003; Nesti, 2006). Indeed, as Buber (1958) pointed out fifty years ago, the deciding reality in therapy will be the therapist, not the methods employed. Nesti (2006) suggests that the adoption of such an approach will result in future practitioners educated in 'greater self-understanding of the fundamentals of good human communication, rather than a ten point step-by-step set of instructions on how to do it' (p. 121). Similarly, Yalom, (2006) also suggested that at its very core, the flow of a therapeutic-client relationship should be spontaneous, forever following unanticipated riverbeds and that it would be grotesquely distorted by being packaged into a formula that enables inexperienced, inadequately trained helpers to deliver a uniform course of therapy.

In closing, counselling psychology is primarily about helping people to function more fully, to develop their potential and improve their sense of well-being (Nesti, 2006). It might also address concerns that are causing unhappiness or discomfort in a person's life and could also be impacting negatively on their capacity to perform in a particular area (e.g., their performance in cricket). Nesti (2006) suggested that the dominant view (in sport psychology) is that counselling is about helping athletes with life crises and not equally concerned with performance enhancement. He believed this reveals a lack of understanding of the predominantly humanistic psychology base of counselling psychology, where the focus is (also) on helping healthy people achieve their potential (i.e., self-actualization) and to reach optimal performance, more often, throughout every part of their lives. On reflection (but only after widening my own awareness of counselling based literature), I have come to believe that the spheres of counselling and counselling psychology offer future practitioners and existing support structures (both within and outside professional cricket), an invaluable and grounded framework from which to learn how they might *better* support the lifestyle based *needs* of professional sportsmen and women.

5.4.2.3 - Seeking Collaboration and Contextual Awareness

Players in Study 1 seemed to offer their wider experiences of the supportive or unsupportive environments they had been part of as players. In doing so they appeared to suggest that practitioners should work to understand and inform the contextual environment (of the sport and club) and personnel (e.g., coaching teams) within it, as part of any support effort. They specifically felt that any environment could influence a player's well-being and so believed that coaching and management *teams* should see support for players as a *collective* responsibility and seek to *collaboratively* understand, accommodate and minimise player problems. These suggestions from players potentially broaden the scope of a lifestyle practitioner support role beyond one *only* concerned with interpersonal interactions with players and a workshop culture. They appear to depict a role that also has something of a *strategic* and *collaborative* arm. These findings resonate with Brown, Gould & Foster's (2005) assertion that for a practitioner to have a long lasting impact it is important to 'join' and enlist the support and endorsement of coaches. Without elaborating on how to achieve such a position or influence, it appeared that players believed that there would be value in lifestyle oriented practitioners operating to influence the more *strategic* practice of support personnel (e.g., county coaching teams) and a clubs overall supportive culture.

In a similar sense, the researchers own reflections on data in Study 2 suggested that lifestyle practitioners, who seek to understand coaches' perspectives and contextual realities (as discussed in earlier sections), would conceivably be in a more informed position from which to understand the circumstances within which players experiences were occurring and the supportive or unsupportive role coaches may or may not be playing in ameliorating players' issues. The researcher suggested that practitioners might then be in a more informed position to anticipate which coaches specifically, and contexts generally, might understand and support players' issues or perhaps dismiss and deny them as merely excuses. Data from Study 2 suggested that in lacking such knowledge and understanding, practitioners might engage in efforts or a process (e.g., workshops and one to one support) that ends up being contextually uninformed and at worst insensitive and

misplaced. Instead, and at appropriate times, lifestyle practitioners might anticipate and seek to collaborate *with* (as players appeared to advocate) specific coaches to better support players' issues whilst maintaining ethical standards and codes of confidentiality. These latter notions also seemed important given the loose and ad hoc applied settings in which a practitioner might work alongside coaches and players together (see Anderson, 2005). It might be argued that a collaborative and contextually informed practitioner (whether a PL adviser or a sport psychologist) would, at times, gain an invaluable advantage in their work. However, operating collaboratively with coaches and being contextually informed would appear to require extensive reconnaissance to firstly understand the influential characters within, and vicissitudes of, the context before (and then whilst) proceeding with any lifestyle oriented support. Having suggested the need for reconnaissance, collaboration and contextual awareness to mediate practice, practitioners might also ensure that any eventual understanding does not encourage assumption about how to approach support. For example while conceptual knowledge of player's issues (e.g., general dimensions in Study 1) and more contextual understanding (e.g., gained from Study 2 and 3) might serve to enlighten a practitioner, further reflection on my own ethnographic experiences also offer a cautionary note. Perhaps an *over* identification with players' general lifestyle issues, and / or an *over* familiarity with one context or group of coaches, might have the potential to somewhat impede the neutrality, detachment and corresponding value of a support role. Practitioners may therefore, on occasion, *choose*, or feel the need to step away from players' issues and step out of contexts in an attempt to reflect, and gain perspective and clarity on their work, before deciding (or having) to step back in.

5.4.2.4 - Occupying a Space, Dissolving Facades and Earning Trust

During the researchers *embedded* ethnographic experiences in Study 3 I often found myself deliberately fleeting between player and coach, almost occupying something of an unknown *space* whilst maintaining confidentiality and trust. I believe that such a privilege, as a researcher (with the background of a PL practitioner), required a responsible, transparent and respectful stance within such an elusive, and in my experience; demanding

(and tiring) space. This space might have felt so demanding to the ethnographic researcher as a result of genuinely listening and actively engaging in the intimate, often very private, and at times burdening experiences of players. The embedded process also meant the ethnographic researcher ended up trying to maintain and consistently communicate *his* empathic, unconditional and acceptant attitude towards players on a daily basis, for weeks and months on end. Seemingly this process (as well as writing and reflecting late at night) contributed to much of the ‘tiredness’ experienced and described in the ethnographic text. Nevertheless, and having reflected on the timeline, I have since experienced fulfillment given that I found my way into this space, but also certain levels of personal discomfort in light of some of my own, potentially self-seeking motives. For example, during the more difficult and pressured times (seemingly inevitable in professional sport), I was occasionally presented with opportunities to use, exploit even, the depths of knowledge and understanding I had gained from communicating with players and coaches, for my own personal and or professional (short-term) gain. Indeed, embedded ethnography is thought to create closeness between researchers’ and participants, where boundaries often soften, intimacies may be revealed and participants may be exposed to potential exploitation (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). Essentially, with a growing knowledge and understanding of players experiences I seemed to attain a degree of power (as intimated and predicted would be the case by Dean and Jack in Study 2). In this sense, it struck me how self-critical, self-aware, self-assured and honest (with everyone, but particularly myself) I had to be throughout the entire ethnographic engagement. Particularly given the fact there were few people who actually noticed a lot of what was I was doing. The knowledge and responsibility I am describing here seemed to stem from communicating with coaches (during a game or later during an evening) having spent time listening to *everything* a player had to say, or conversely communicating with players having just listened to *everything* a coach had to say (you may remember the volatile opening of my meeting with Jonesy who seemed uncertain of what I had just been told about his behaviours from Simon, see page 353). Whilst discussions in Study 2 emphasized the importance of confidentiality, I certainly felt that what came with the knowledge I gained (as an embedded ethnographer) was a heavy responsibility. This weight of responsibility may have additionally contributed to a lot of the tiredness I experienced and allude to

above. More obvious difficulties also arose for the researcher when confronted with (passive or aggressive) demands for information about players from coaches, or about coaches from players, for example, ‘so what did he say?’ During such confrontations I sensed when requests for such information did not hold honorable intentions and *always* guarded against any degree of disclosure. Indeed, I might argue that during similar confrontations as an immersed ethnographic researcher, or perhaps practitioner in professional sport, one should never let slip what one comes to know and should always remain guarded (further ethical reflections are discussed in relation to this matter later in the discussion).

In using the words transparent and responsible above I do so based on my own challenging experiences throughout the summer of trying to build (on my previous reputation as a PL practitioner and ensure) an honorable reputation as a researcher. Players specifically seemed to be very wary of communicating with people in general, including me. They seemed to present a socially acceptable and tough self portrait whilst working out whether they felt they could trust and talk to me. I remember Quinny’s uncertain, but perhaps thankful look toward me on leaving the breakfast table following our first discussion (see page 270). This was also particularly true when communicating with the few more senior players or those with international experience whom I spent time with (e.g., Hano and Broady). Certainly any temptation to manipulate, play games, and appear all knowing or simply boast at, or promote (through research or otherwise) what one comes to know, seems a slippery and irretrievable slope which researchers and arguably practitioners, would be well advised to avoid.

Fundamentally the nature of the *embedded* and *prolonged* ethnographic research with players and coaches would appear to involve the art of communication. Indeed, skilled communication as a core ethnographic skill between a researcher and player, and researcher and coach, might reasonably translate into practice based situations and provide a backbone to almost every notion of what might be deemed *lifestyle* oriented support. During the embedded engagement and time spent with players, I was often asked by coaches whether players opened up and was often told that players are difficult to ‘get in

to'. In fact I was told by Ray before meeting him that "Broady doesn't let you in". On reflection, I never found that to be the case, but I don't think that I ever tried to '*get in to*' anyone and also recognised that sometimes players didn't want to talk. Equally, there were times when I recognised I would not be a great listener either. However, I have considered such comments further looking over the *three* data sets and conclude that I actually don't blame players for not letting people 'get in', often keeping a distance from people and maybe maintaining something of a façade. The sport is a 'cut throat business' (Simon) a 'tough school' (Dean), players existence so insecure (3rd order), 'results oriented' (Dean) and it's "the runs they score, the wickets they take" (Jack) that often determine their reputed eminence. I wonder then if this (protective) façade might be a derivative of the variables above, and offer to players something of a shield from previous interpersonal experience or foreseeable events within their challenging life.

Attempting to dissolve such a façade I pursued a relationship of *trust*. Trust was something that took time and sincerity to develop with players and coaches (including those already known to the researcher from his experiences as a PL adviser). I have learnt that *earning* trust as an ethnographer, or perhaps as a practitioner, cannot be rushed, and may be lost in an instant. However, trust seemed to act as the strongest and most noticeable (but unspoken) foundation when with players and coaches. Mearns & Thorne (2007) described how the establishment of trust in an interpersonal relationship is a delicate and complex process, requiring a variety of conditions. Firstly, the authors explain that in a person centered approach, the aim is to establish an egalitarian relationship, where the practitioner (in this case counselor) *earns* trust rather than commands it through mystery or superiority. The trust which the *congruent* counselor then earns is that of a person who is willing to be fully present as a real, natural and spontaneous human being (i.e., willing to be himself or herself and) who is not hiding behind any kind of façade (Mearns & Thorne, 2007). Developing trust is also thought to demand reliability and consistency in a therapist's behaviors *towards* clients, whilst working ethically and responsibly (Cully & Bond, 2004). It is also thought to require practitioners to be regular, open and honest (e.g., talk straight) in order to avoid wary and suspicious clients doubting a practitioners motives or suspecting some hidden purpose (Howe, 1993). Clients also crucially need to trust that

a practitioner can stay the course with them, and know they are not going to buckle under the weight of their feelings and disclosures (Cully & Bond, 2004). Mearns & Thorne (2007) also outline how a client's readiness will affect the speed with which trust develops in any relationship, but that the establishment and maintenance of this trust is what will ultimately determine the level and quality of work that can be undertaken. However, the practitioner-cum researcher's experiences in this thesis would suggest that professional sportsmen can be swift in their ability to discern in-authenticity, and have experienced helpers who had an interest in them as performers, but perhaps no *real* or *unconditional* interest in them (purely) as people. For the hardened client, the most active ingredient for the fostering of trust is thought to be the counselor's warm and unconditional regard (Rogers, 1980; Mearns & Thorne, 2007). However, my own practitioner-cum-researcher experiences in professional sport, would suggest that it may require such an attitude to be maintained (24 hours a day) over many weeks and/or months before elite level players can even remotely *begin* to sense that such a regard is sincere, strong and enduring. It would appear to me that in order to *earn* the *real* trust of a player or coach, requires a *way of being* as a practitioner, and whilst there might be many testing moments in the professional sport environment (e.g., within the space I described above between players and coaches), these trials might also be the very opportunities when one can *be* trustworthy.

I believe that neat, easily definable and attainable recommendations for researchers, and perhaps practitioners, seem somewhat insufficient given *all* of the above. Indeed effective and sustainable ethnographic research and / or practice, sometimes seemed to the researcher to need more than recommended procedures, training or formulae, and I often found myself feeling quite bare in terms of what to do next in the 'space' I found myself in, or when presented with the façades I have described. However naive or passé the following may sound, whenever feeling such uncertainty, I would often simply trust and have faith in the virtues of sincerity, respect, integrity and nobility. Indeed, it has come to me from my own research journey that the *application* of these values could lay a sound foundation for any *immersed* and *longitudinal* research and / or support role. Reflecting on research data alongside the word nobility, I have tried to specifically articulate the application of such a word within professional sport. Reflecting more broadly on my

ethnographic engagement and in an attempt to offer potential implications for practice, it strikes me that the long term reputation and perhaps even success of someone (whether ethnographic researcher, sport psychologist or PL adviser) seeking to understand the life of another person (coach or player) in the harsh world of professional sport, may ultimately be built and sustained upon *who* they are, and how their fundamental motives, beliefs, philosophy, morals, values, self-awareness and qualities as a person are lived and evidenced through their work. These appear to be similar sentiments shared by authors within the literature review (see Simmons & Andersen, 1995; Corlett, 1996; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). In terms of recommendations for further ethnographic research, practitioner recruitment and training implications (e.g., for the ECB and UK Sport), the points above may require further consideration and debate if any sustainable research, reputation, practitioner role, or strategic programme of support is ever to be realized and maintained.

5.4.2.5 - Personal Well-being, Recovery, Case Debriefing & Increased Self-Awareness through Supervision

The tiredness I continued to describe in Study 3 (aside from being in the space I have described above) seemed to originate from 18 hour days and 7 months of what felt like intense *embedded* ethnographic engagement. My own experiences of this entrenched modality appear to suggest that there may not be any set hours or limits to a similar (full time) lifestyle practitioner support role. However, my tiredness seemed to relate to a mental weariness as opposed to a physical one. In this sense, traditional risk assessments in research are normally limited to examining the risks to research participants (Dickson-swift et al., 2008). However, there is growing recognition that undertaking sensitive research can pose emotional risks to researchers as well (Warr, 2004; Kidd & Finlayson, 2006; Wray et al., 2007; Dickson-swift et al., 2008). More specifically, it is thought that researchers provide a space for participants to tell their stories and in telling them, researchers may be taken to places for which they are not prepared (Kidd, & Finlayson, 2006). Equally, if researchers are not provided with the opportunity to debrief, they risk the possibility that they will carry their research stories around with them, which may be

detrimental to their emotional well-being (Warr, 2004). These suggestions appear relevant to my own ethnographic experiences, in that I regularly tried to provide a space for players and sought to embrace, but rarely shared with anyone else, some of their most sensitive and difficult experiences. In a similar sense, but within a clinical setting, Kidd & Finlayson (2006) summarise the first author's research based experiences in exploring mental illness in nursing. Kidd described that whilst being exhilarated by a sense of connection with nurses, he quickly found himself in un-chartered and treacherous waters as some nurses launched into telling their stories and he became increasingly distressed, sad, angry and frustrated. Interestingly, as a health nurse-cum-researcher (somewhat drawing parallels with my own practitioner-cum-researcher position) Kidd also felt his difficulties were intensified by a sense of responsibility and professional commitment towards the participants that added another complex layer to his connections with them. Matters of engagement in sport psychology also appear to draw parallels with this qualitative research literature and my own experiences of engagement. For example, Gilbourne & Richardson (2006) described how matters around engagement as a practitioner can be 'demanding work'. Gilbourne (2006) also described how a tired psychologist may not necessarily be a good listener but could not be certain when he or she may be called upon. Anderson, Van Raalte & Brewer (2001) also suggested that being on call 24 hours a day can be 'exhausting', whilst Bond (2002) described immersed engagement as being very hard work without glamour. It would appear then, that both qualitative researchers and practitioners have reflected on the potential difficulties of embedded and prolonged engagement in seeking to understand, embrace and support others. My own personal difficulties as a researcher also seemed to stem from an unrelenting vigilance, intense state of awareness and a willingness to care that often made me somewhat drawn to players and able to embrace their troubles. However, in light of the literature above and my own experiences, there appears to be a double edged sword here. Whilst being drawn to, and potentially able to draw out the difficulties of the other (e.g., players and coaches), such privileges might also (eventually) compound many of a researcher's or practitioner's own difficulties. In this sense, I have come to question, who cares for those who seek to care for others?

Personal difficulties as an ethnographic researcher also included moments of self doubt and from realising my own high expectations and standards in terms of how I might seek to support players in similar practice based situations. In this sense, I can appreciate from the nature of my embedded research experiences that the *potential* nature of a similar (full time) practitioner support role might be a tough one, where the harsh and convoluted realities of professional sport might often preclude positive outcomes and happy endings. I also felt that during *certain* ethnographic engagements with players I had an over zealous desire to help and improve performance. Not to mention what I perceived to be a definite imbalance in terms of always being physically present, but not always mentally present with players. Indeed I described how the combination of my own approaches to the engagement and my own efforts and the interpersonal privileges I experienced wore on me significantly. Andersen (2000) suggested that a question rarely shown up in articles on practice is what to do when a practitioner's 'own' problems (e.g., tiredness or professional imbalances) interfere with their service. Therefore, whilst players from Study 1, some coaches in Study 2 and my own ethnographic experiences in Study 3 all advocated greater involvement and integration as a researcher and / or practitioner (e.g., 18 hour days, 6 days a week over 7 months whilst always being on call) to achieve greater understanding, I repeatedly reflected on the need for, and potential value of, supervision. However, I did not have the opportunity to clarify its purpose or finer details.

Authors have suggested researchers should be encouraged to seek supervision (Kidd & Finlayson, 2006; Wray et al., 2007 Dickson-swift et al., 2008). Dickson-swift et al. (2008) also specifically advocated minimal standards for researcher training and supervision. They suggested training to inform qualitative researchers of the potential for the likely experiences ahead, a structured mentoring programme, and believed that supervisors and institutions should also take responsibility and develop research policies to safeguard researchers. Dickson-swift et al. (2008) specifically recommended that researchers have access to professional supervision (inside and / or outside research supervision) that could provide them with the support needed to deal with the potential stress of undertaking sensitive research. However, this supervision can also offer recipients the opportunity to develop their self-awareness and skill base as qualitative researchers. Given the potential

sympathies and similarities between a sport psychology practitioner role and a lifestyle practitioner support role, discussions relating to the potential value of supervision for a lifestyle support role can also be made here by drawing on literature relating to the training of a sport psychologist. Supervision is a relatively long term interpersonal relationship with the primary purpose to ensure the care of the athlete client, and secondary the development of the (sport psychology) trainee as a competent, knowledgeable and ethical practitioner (Van Raalte & Andersen, 2000). In the case of future researchers or lifestyle practitioners, supervision would conceivably require a financial commitment (e.g., from universities and / or the ECB) and perhaps most importantly, *scheduled* time and space (e.g., a 2 hour supervisory meeting once a month). Supervision could then act to ensure researchers and / or lifestyle practitioners make responsible decisions and commit to manageable work schedules and involvement. A supervisory relationship might also allow for case debriefing, researcher / practitioner recovery and facilitate increased self-awareness. In terms of increased self-awareness and based on my own embedded ethnographic experiences, I would anticipate that a supervisory relationship might begin to address (as I did as researcher) some revealing area's of intrapersonal and interpersonal discomfort, that at times might be challenging (painful even) and almost certainly time consuming. Whilst within a PhD supervisory context, as an ethnographic researcher I regularly found myself questioning what I was doing throughout the engagement, and essentially who I was. In this sense, supervision for future ethnographers or lifestyle practitioners could help them understand themselves, their needs, strengths and weaknesses and help them appreciate what *they* bring to relationships that aids (or possibly hinders) their work with athletes (Van Raalte & Andersen, 2000). Sport psychology consultants interviewed by Simmons & Anderson (1995) placed great importance on knowing oneself, and how a practitioner may get in his or her own way in wanting to 'help' or 'save' athletes too much whilst also highlighting the pitfalls of taking on too much responsibility. In this regard, I never assumed anyone would want or seek my time, but saw this as their choice and something I should not influence (beyond making myself available). However, I have since conceded that during the ethnographic engagement I often hoped players would want to continue the shared dialogue we might have had (as Quinny actively pursued and Broady reactively sought out) because of my genuine and

perhaps at times, *burning* desire to help (the person) and (perhaps at times) improve performance. When some players chose not to engage, this left me contemplating my own thoughts (not to mention theirs) and going over any number of assumptions to satisfy my own inquiry. I deliberate now whether my attempts to be genuine, but perhaps at times overly zealous desire to help, sometimes also acted as a catalyst to the difficult times I experienced. My own embedded ethnographic experiences therefore infer the need for personal *and* professional balance as an ethnographic researcher and / or practitioner. They also advocate *scheduled* supervision to allow for case debriefing and encourage researchers and / or practitioners to share the content of others' problems, aid personal recovery and foster greater self-awareness. These ethnographic reflections might supplement existing literature and training that seeks to better prepare and inform inexperienced ethnographers and practitioners entering applied settings who choose to employ a similar immersed modality. I certainly gained a sense from my own *prolonged* engagement that there might be few short cuts to *significant* personal development as a researcher or supportive practitioner, and that there are likely to be many miles to walk when seeking to improve your own knowledge and understanding of others, self-awareness and skill base. From my own experiences, I have come to believe that for a researcher or practitioner (like me) there would always be another game to go to (e.g., 1st X1, 2nd X1 or academy), another hotel to check into and another motorway to drive home on, another phone call and email to return or make, and another player's situation or interpersonal dynamic that plays on their mind. However, I believe these commitments and complexities cannot be at the expense of the long-term well-being, professional development or sustainability of a researcher or practitioner.

5.4.2.6 - Practitioner Role Boundaries

In Study 3 Laney's perturbing and attention seeking behaviours seemed to overtly epitomise (to the researcher) some worrying lifestyle aspects of the culture at Rinshire. His unusual behaviors also seemed to escalate despite his performances remaining strong. The researchers perception of Laney's situation, at that time, seemed to contradict many themes relating to off field issues affecting performance but supported other themes from

Study 1 (e.g., 'Idiosyncratic and somewhat unprofessional lifestyle approaches work for some people', 'Off field issues and player welfare don't affect all players' performances). His behaviours also seemed to resonate with some of the opinions expressed by coaches (at Rinshire) in Study 2 who were more skeptical as to whether lifestyle issues affect players' performances. Perhaps Laney's situation also reflects the *bottom line* alluded to throughout all data sets (by others), in that while performances remain strong, 'issues' can remain dormant, may be conveniently forgotten or even disregarded. Laney was one player whom I did not 'get in to', but who Ray remained cautious of and cared about. The researcher's perception of Laney's behaviours and evolving situation appears to provide another *example* that might offer potential implications for future research and practice. The case and issues with Laney might highlight some of the ethical and *potential* boundaries of research and support roles which any researcher or practitioner (e.g., PL adviser, sport psychologist or coach) may be faced with. Indeed, an embedded modality and holistic interest in people's personal issues and private lives might conceivably, and on rare occasions, mean researchers or practitioners find themselves operating in close proximity to, and considering, the ethical boundaries of their role. Specifically, they might question the limitations of their own skill base and refer or seek advice as and where appropriate.

Without returning to every observation, I tried to reflect in the third reflective stop off how (my perception of) the collection of Laney's behaviours *might* be perceived by some (researchers or practitioners) as those of a troubled young man, and *might* even *draw parallels* with behaviours which are clinical in nature. In such a case (not to say that was definitely the case with Laney), one might consider how researchers and practitioners might choose to approach such a situation. Given their potential sensitivity, a researcher's and / or practitioner's approach might require very careful consideration and ongoing monitoring and communication (perhaps in a supervisory context). Indeed, such sensitive circumstances might not be as easily resolved as recommending or referring a player to a qualified professional. However, a player might initially be supported by someone (e.g., a coach or allied practitioner) who has (or is able to build) a close and respected relationship with the player, acting as something of a intermediary between Laney and a more qualified

and capable professional (e.g., a counsellor or perhaps even the Professional Cricketers Associations (2007) recently established confidential helpline for players to access professional counsellors and / or therapists). Given the complexity and sensitivity of such situations, the navigation of each individual case might reasonably require individual attention.

Taking Laney as an example, sometimes the caring and potentially more therapeutic approaches described in this thesis might lend themselves to sharing connections with people that seem beyond the norm, deeper and more personal in nature. Such connections did not occur with Laney, which I believe would have been a worthwhile (practice based) supervisory discussion. On reflection, the researcher believes the potential for personal connections also warrants a word of warning. This warning also appears to relate to the coaches' own uncertainties in Study 2 with regards to the depths and extent of their involvement in supporting players. It seems right that researchers and / or practitioners are warned and are made aware of their own ethical boundaries and role capabilities. This educational process might make it more likely that practitioners would then know *when*, *how* and *who* to refer to. It is also more likely that practitioners would then be able to seek advice or supervision over such matters should (and *when*) they arise. From my own ethnographic experiences in this thesis, as a researcher, I often found myself privileged in understanding the delicate experiences (past and present) of those with whom I met. To this end I tried to maintain the premise of 'do no harm' and sought support from appropriate networks when feeling uneasy over any issues and/or interactions. Finding appropriate networks of support and making referrals are thought to be sensitive and complex issues where practitioners need to show compassion and care (Andersen & Todd, 2005). During referrals, supervision is also thought to be an important component, to ensure competence based decisions on the part of the practitioner, and enable them to make referrals and / or build referral networks (Andersen, Van Raalte & Brewer, 2000). The term 'can of worms' was mentioned during Woodshire's focus group in Study 2, as were the ethic's of dipping in and out when supporting someone with 'significant' things in their lives. It would seem that the above reflections relate to the ethical nature of embedded ethnographic research and offer potential implications for future research and

practice. They also appear to further promote the value of appropriate, financed, and scheduled supervision.

5.4.3 - Lifestyle Oriented Practitioner Support Roles & Potential Impacts on Player Performance

Players in Study 1, coaches in Study 2 and players and coaches in Study 3, all continually referred back to their ultimate and overriding objective of improving performance and winning games. However, I have come to believe from my own ethnographic experiences that the impressive performances of players are actually not wholly representative of who they are as people. Performances are just things *about* who they are. In addition, looking over the three data sets (but particularly in Study 1 and Study 3) sometimes the gravity of other issues in a players life (or increasing personal disquiet) might mean that for both the researcher and / or allied practitioner as listener, and player as discloser, performances or performance based concerns, although always acting as some kind of bottom line are simply incomplete in terms of understanding a person's issues. Whilst performance issues may appear cleaner and easier to discuss for everyone concerned (e.g., see 'Negative connotations associated with communicating problems in cricket'), occasionally players' issues throughout this research seemed to go beyond such presenting difficulties. At times the performance landscape, although unavoidable, appeared less of a priority. Given performance is ultimately the bottom line in professional sport it seems important these other landscapes outlined in Study 1, debated in Study 2 and described in detail throughout Study 3, are negotiated and supported if players are ever to fully engage in performance. In terms of negotiation and support, I report how being *unconditional* in my attitude as a researcher (an ethnographic skill that might reasonably translate to practice based situations) and somewhat separate and unattached to performance (and coaches for that matter) seemed to draw out many (but certainly not all) players' difficulties. As players themselves expressed their troubles, they themselves seemed to join the performance landscape up with their personal landscape. This might reasonably advocate a layering of support according to the needs of the player, but confirms that players are not solely their

performance, and speaking more broadly, that sometimes *life* might need negotiating before performance can be more complete.

Reflecting on all data, but particularly on the ethnographic engagement, I have come to believe that in some instances lifestyle oriented / person centered and listening support could be more preventative in nature, with players' performances either not being a problem during early interactions or just starting to falter at that time. What also struck me was how my own ethnographic experiences of *feeling* and then *hiding* how 'lonely' and 'insignificant' I felt in a boxy, magnolia, dirt and smoke stained hotel room were analogous to the way some players might also feel lonely and then use similar 'protective mechanisms' to *hide* their own difficulties as opposed to deal with or share them. In this sense, Witz (2007) recently discussed 'awakening' to deeper aspects in a person and articulating new understanding that might also offer critical implications for future researchers and practitioners in search of improved understanding and ultimately improved performance. Witz (2007) described how prolonged contact with a participant or immersion in a social context, allows one to absorb nuances of feelings, emotions, realities and consciousness that can 'awaken' in oneself a life similar to that of the participant or social context. To absorb realities, Witz (2007) advocates experiencing *with* the subject (e.g., for me with players and coaches) *all* they experience in their social context. My own experiences of *feeling* insignificant and lonely and then hiding those feelings away (firstly in my hotel room and then by maintaining my own façade in the bar later that evening), might conceivably have allowed me to better understand and essentially *feel* the loneliness of some players and my own deployment of similar protective façades. Crucially, personal understanding and subsequent awakening may then allow a practitioner to notice in others (and perhaps anticipate) similar experiences and personal difficulties and ways of hiding them. It would appear that the embedded and prolonged processes of engagement might be invaluable to future ethnographers and practitioners. Moreover, a practitioner's *time* spent sensing and experiencing *deeper* intangibles that are closer to the very *core* of players and coaches' difficulties, in their own social setting, could play a crucial role in highlighting the very essence of support they need to subsequently improve their performance. This understanding and an ability to draw other's difficulties out, may potentially prevent issues

being compounded by silence or perhaps slipping too far, and even possible performance slumps.

I gained a *sense* from exchanges with some players in Study 3 (e.g., Hano and Quinny) that their inner difficulties had perhaps gone unspoken and unnoticed for too long, grown increasingly complex and might even have become irredeemable (in their present contexts / clubs). In terms of one particular player, you may remember Hano's circumstances. Hano was a senior professional at Rinshire. He appeared to be fully aware of his own performance failures, was experiencing difficulty from fleeting appearances in first and second team cricket, had recently captained the county, turned down a contract extension and had also nearly transferred to another county. At one point Hano seemed to be confused as to how to approach his bowling, was doubting his own ability and appeared genuinely confused as to whether he had 'got over' his international experience. He also wanted something to take his mind away from cricket, had an uncertain long-term and long-distance relationship, doubted and no longer trusted his first team coach, had seen others selected above him, felt worn down and was essentially 'embarrassed'. Hano's subsequent incredulous explanations surrounding his unsuccessful use of recommended 'cue cards', 'deep breathing exercises' and 'self talk' (i.e., to help his bowling) provide an opportunity for the researcher to briefly reflect on the use of such mental skills in light of the ethnographic engagement that appeared to gain a greater awareness of the wider *lifestyle* issues within his (and other players') life. Whilst the focus of this discussion is not to directly critique the practice of sport psychology, it does hope to offer implications for those practitioners (should they be a sport psychologist) who seek to support a player's lifestyle. The researcher's embedded ethnographic experiences appear to suggest that given the density and complexity of lifestyle issues in cases such as Hano's (and as experienced by other players in Study 3), technique based symptom relief based on the administration of mental skills (like those recommended to Hano) devoid of contextual understanding, offered in isolation and in a one off meeting, may be somewhat insufficient and ill equipped. Speaking more broadly, the administration of mental skills in one off meetings to improve performance arguably depicts some of the current consultative and solution focused nature of *some* forms of sport psychology support within applied settings

(Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Nesti, 2006). However, perhaps the data and implications drawn from this thesis might encourage practitioners interested in supporting a players *lifestyle*, to adopt an approach that resembles something more humanistic and person centered with a more protracted and immersed modality of practice. More specifically, implications from the researchers embedded and prolonged ethnographic engagement appear to encourage more patient, person centered, socratic and counselling based approaches that seek to explore, understand and then work through the *complete* issues some players might be struggling with. Such practice might mean helping players make sense of their life experiences and issues and, looking over the ethnographic engagement, whilst some players were happy to unreservedly share their personal difficulties; other players appeared more gradual with their disclosures or began by only sharing performance based concerns. This would suggest that at times, a practitioner might have to work through a plethora of (performance and non-performance based) issues at a player's pace, as opposed to their own readiness.

I described in Study 3 that when fundamentally looking to support the person, one might not (during these times) always be automatically supporting any ensuing performance. In this regard, experiencing inner disparity between ambitions, feelings and reality often seemed the most difficult matters for players to come to terms with. At times, performing and even the game itself seemed to be at odds with what players intimated (albeit for the first time and perhaps even unknown to them) they really wanted at that time (amongst many quotes you may recall Quinny saying, "I would say I have lived and done things...but I cannot say that I have lived and lived", "I am not sure this is really what I want to do"). Whilst these assertions have emerged from the researcher's ethnographic engagement, they also appear somewhat dangerous in modern day performance oriented spheres of sport science support given the need for winning and a united performance focus amongst support staff. Including sport psychologists and PL advisers, who are potentially paid to realise performance increments. Van Raalte & Anderson (2007) recently described how working with athletes who improve and are successful is often professionally easier than work with 'problem' athletes whom might want to quit or are in conflict with their coaches. They also described problems when unbiased and

unprejudiced support offered in the athletes best interest (e.g., helping people understand their desire to leave sport or helping them understand why they fail) might conflict with expectations of support from result oriented coaches, similarly aligned practitioners, or NGBs. However, Van Raalte & Anderson (2007) suggested that whilst there may be conflicts of interest between multiple clients (e.g., coach, NGB, athlete), in the long run, even experienced results oriented coaches were usually most interested in hiring practitioners who focus on the whole person. The authors believed these coaches understand that practitioners helping athletes make everything right in their lives will help improve their performance. The findings of this thesis seem to support, but also question the strength of this assertion in the specific results driven context of professional cricket. Moreover, *some* coaches seemed to support the idea of lifestyle practitioners' focusing on the whole person to improve their performance, while others seemed more disbelieving and uncertain.

Van Raalte & Anderson (2007) suggested that practitioners should begin consultation by making sure everyone understands and is comfortable with the roles and agenda of the various parties involved. In this sense, and based on findings of this research, I have contemplated the potential future role, agenda and expectations of a lifestyle based practitioner in professional cricket. Indeed, I have considered how the potential results driven expectations of (some) coaches, management and NGBs when working with players might at times jeopardise a detachment that seems so crucial in hearing (in the first instance) and then supporting players experiencing disparity in their life. Looking over the three data sets I therefore offer future roles and expectations for others to digest. These roles are based on wider (and more patient) expectations beyond roles where the *only* overriding and absolute concern and ethos is immediate improved performance and winning. My own prolonged and embedded experiences lead me to believe that adopting such a definitive stance (as a NGB, coach, sport psychologist or PL adviser) might potentially, but perhaps also crucially, limit what one *hears* from players, *sees* in players and limit what one can ultimately *do* for players. There might also be time and accountability implications for all to consider here. In light of the embedded engagement, the support role I describe above is not akin to intermittent or occasional consultation

spread (thinly) over three or four county clubs, nor does it offer symptom relieving or quick fix solutions that can promise players will immediately be back out performing. Instead, the support role I describe is more localised (i.e., situated in one county) and longitudinal in nature, might often require patience and could never make resounding (performance) promises. However, for those in search of improved performance and for those more sceptical (who might be questioning how realistic or affordable the localised and longitudinal role and approaches I am describing here may be within today's impatient and results driven sports industry), I would ask them to consider the following. It is not possible to prove that any of the researchers ethnographic involvement and engagement with players and coaches affected any performances of players in this thesis (nor was it my primary concern), but crucially, it is also not possible to prove otherwise. Given the uncertainty and ambiguity in terms of outcomes that accompany lifestyle / listening / person centered type support, I have already commented on what appeared to be an equally intangible but noticeable support for the researchers ethnographic involvement that developed from some (perhaps the majority of) coaches *and* players involved in the thesis. The nature of the lifestyle support I have described throughout this section, like sport science generally takes place amidst a myriad of other support and guidance from coaches and support staff. It is always going to be difficult to understand which if any of these support inputs are salient with regards to performance at any moment in time. Looking over the three data sets it seems fair to propose however, that in the players' eyes, the importance of different support processes comes in and out of focus as issues in their lives develop momentum or subside from view. The data in the present thesis strongly suggests that lifestyle / listening / person centered support appears in no way redundant or peripheral in terms of performance, and ultimately, matters. Within the writing so far there have been a number of applied implications considered, but fundamentally, they describe a *need*. Based on my ethnographic experiences over an entire season, I have come to better understand, and believe that sometimes players need a practitioner they trust and respect to be *with* them. To metaphorically hold their hand and provide an island of non-judgment and warmth that allows them to be openly vulnerable, in which their only performance is to speak honestly and feel freely. In essence, players in this thesis expressed a need for

someone to talk to, someone to *listen*, and someone to help them as people, make sense of their challenging life in and out of sport.

To conclude this section it is worth noting that while there were some objections, hesitancy and uncertainties in Study 2 in terms of a lifestyle oriented practitioner role, there was also a great deal of support for such a role. Indeed, whilst the material presented from Study 1 resonated very differently amongst the coaches (in Study 2), even those less supportive never once objected to any further practitioner-cum-researcher involvement in Study 3 (and I assure the reader they would not be afraid to). It might be argued then, that on some level, all coaches saw *some* potential benefit of support to a player's performance without being able to, or necessarily knowing whether to, embrace a lifestyle practitioner role fully (e.g., employ a practitioner in a full time position themselves as opposed to relying on the ECB to fund the existing and more intermittent PL role that is currently shared amongst counties). In fact embedded and prolonged ethnographic engagement with coaches and players was never questioned by either club during the course of the research, and appeared to become increasingly encouraged and requested. This acquiescence seems an important implication to deliberate over if future research, practice and support structures are to be informed by what coaches and players feel they need to improve their performance. In fact the researchers ethnographic experiences would suggest that coaches and players seem to be those who can best inform the practice of personnel (whether strategic or localised in position) who are charged with deciding how to go about servicing their needs, and ultimately, who are also charged with improved performance. I might argue however, that such a stance would require those designing support services for athletes and coaches (e.g., strategic NGB personnel or localised practitioner) to have a pre-condition within their approach. My own ethnographic experiences lead me to believe that this pre-condition (or philosophy), would trust, respect and believe that players and coaches know for themselves, and are willing to articulate (to those who are willing to listen who can then interpret what needs they have) what support is best for them, which in turn, may improve their performance.

5.4.4 - Arriving at a Strategic Overview of Support: Locating Lifestyle Practitioner Support Roles

Having addressed coaches' potential roles in supporting cricketers' lifestyle oriented issues and outlined the operational nature of a lifestyle practitioner support role, I would now like to try and clarify where such a role might be located within the current applied landscape of multidisciplinary sport science support teams in cricket. Essentially I hope to address the more specific question of whether this practitioner role might be positioned within sport psychology and / or within the ECB's PL Programme. In doing so, I intend to draw on a practitioner's modality of practice, philosophical approach, training and competence, to arrive at a strategic overview of support. I will briefly remind the reader how lifestyle support is currently being provided by the ECB PL Programme, and how literature suggests some practitioners within sport psychology are currently providing lifestyle oriented and non-performance based support. During this process, I make general and broad references to programmes and practitioners from both domains to clarify my points.

Figure 1.2 within the literature review clarified that sport psychology is currently a separate support strand from PL within multidisciplinary support teams in cricket. It also clarified that at the time of writing, sport psychologists working in cricket did not operate in such programmes but operated *alongside* them as part of a multidisciplinary team. However, within the literature review I also concluded that there appeared to be some crossover in terms of *lifestyle* support being offered to athletes by (some) Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and practitioners and (some) sport psychology practitioners. This assertion was based on interpretations of the literature which, at times, seemed to suggest that both support services were trying to support (a similar niche of) issues that athletes experience when not performing and generally within their life, to in turn support their performance. To reflect on practitioners supporting this similar niche using data within this thesis, I would like to briefly differentiate between the services of the ECB PL Programme from services offered by some sport psychologists within literature.

The ECB PL Programme offers the support services of 'Education Guidance' ('to provide guidance and support for those players that are currently studying or those that wish to do so) and 'Employment & Career Advice' ('to enable a cricketer to explore career aspirations alongside the game') to prepare cricketers for life after sport *and* fulfill their performance potential on and off the pitch (ECB, 2007). Some sport psychology practitioners offer mental skills training techniques, like goal setting, imagery, self-talk, performance routines and stress management to improve athletes' performances (Morris & Thomas, 1995; Andersen, Van Raalte & Brewer, 2001). In this regard the support processes of these two programmes are conceivably quite easy to differentiate despite their similar aspirations of improving performance. On a continuum, these processes might occupy separate and distinct territories, quite distant and removed from one another. However, the modalities and what appear to be more person centred philosophies employed by some sport psychologists (e.g., Balague, 1999; Ravizza, 2002; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006) and the specific notions of lifestyle support within the ECB PL programme ('to ensure that players are combining the demands of cricket with all other personal aspirations and support them in becoming self managed professionals') arguably begin to bring these two support strands (and practitioners) closer to one another on this continuum. In addition, practitioners from both support strands (i.e., PL advisers and sport psychologists) might also employ modalities that naturally bring them closer together. For example, both sets of practitioners may choose to immerse themselves in support of athletes' lifestyles and non-performance issues, seek to develop trusting relationships and holistically support the athlete as a person. Indeed, when it comes to the eclectic notion and landscape of *lifestyle* oriented support, both programmes and practitioners arguably move closer to one another on this continuum, and towards something of a centre ground perhaps (often termed the 'grey area' amongst my applied associates). This grey area or centre ground appears to relate to issues athletes experience that are not solely related to their performance on the field, nor solely related to their life off it. It almost appears something of an unclaimed territory. Moreover, this centre ground appears to relate to the general and ongoing complexities of existence and maturation as a person in professional sport *and* life in general. The description of a 'grey area', whilst vague, is perhaps also somewhat accurate, in that the complexities housed within this area are certainly not just

related to sports performance on the field or just related to their life and experiences off it, but a combination of the two.

Much of the more elusive, previously unspoken, emotive, interrelating, personal, private and contextually informed data emanating from all three studies in this thesis (particularly the narratives within Study 3) arguably occupies the centre ground and grey area I describe above. Indeed, this data does not appear to solely relate to a player's on field performances or solely related to a player's experiences off it. Conceivably this data also occupies a territory both the ECB PL programme and sport psychology practitioners might seek out and wish to inhabit. I use the word *might* deliberately here, in that (some) Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and practitioners and (some) sport psychology practitioners might wish to remain at their respective ends of a continuum and continue to deliver the distinct and respective services I described earlier (e.g., Education and Career Advice or MST). However, in doing so both strands may be distancing themselves from what I perceive to be an endemic and vibrant landscape of player survival, littered with player needs, discontent and opportunities for support. Indeed, some authors and researchers in sport psychology have seemingly alluded to their interest and support of athletes experiences in this centre ground, that relate more to their lifestyle oriented and non-performance based experiences as people in sport (see Orlick, 1989; Neff, 1990; Dorfman, 1990; Botterill, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Loehr, 1990; Stambulova, 2000; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004; Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Nesti, 2006).

At this time the ECB has strategically created the two separate support strands of Sport Psychology and Performance Lifestyle. This is also a strategic structure thought to be representative of other organizations and NGBs within the UK (e.g., UK Sport). However, practitioners operating in these strands, at either ends of the continuum may find it difficult and impractical to employ an immersed approach that seems to lead practitioners onto the centre ground. This may be due to the high numbers of athletes they are required to support across wide geographical locations, or perhaps even because of an unwillingness to allow such a depth of immersion from NGBs, coaches, managers and

athletes themselves. Practitioners in either strand might also lack some of the altruistic characteristics, personal qualities and person centered knowledge, skill base and philosophy described throughout. Equally, some practitioners might be completely comfortable with a consultative and intermittent modality of practice, clear on their separate and respective areas of support and no ambiguity may result. However, some practitioners' may not be so comfortable with these areas and begin to *critically* question the status quo. In these instances, if ambiguity does occur between the support processes of PL and sport psychology, documentation and case studies might serve to differentiate and clarify the boundaries of these two services quite neatly on a continuum (as I proposed earlier). However, in *reality*, the embedded ethnographic engagement led me to believe that players' issues may not be so separable or independently treatable. Peoples' experiences may not be so neat. Equally, over time, *critical* practitioners may also begin to question the respective areas of support on the continuum, and through an immersed approach find themselves on the centre ground. Practitioners may then find themselves listening to players' lifestyle oriented and non-performance based issues (I described my own experience in this regard in 'The researcher as practitioner' section within the literature review, see page 22 onward). Whilst I cannot comment on other researchers' or practitioners' experiences, I can offer thoughts regarding my own practitioner-cum-researcher experiences following the ethnographic engagement. Indeed, within the live working environments and contexts I have described throughout this thesis, the combination of an immersed engagement and the approaches and skills I have described (and to some extent I believe I embrace), seemed to lead me onto the centre ground. In these instances clearly defined and uncontaminated boundaries, territories and landscapes became increasingly difficult for *me* to differentiate as players' were willing to share more and more of their difficulties. Indeed it is exactly these difficulties that future support might focus on. Players' issues seemed to me to relate to their experiences as performers in sport and their parallel experiences as people, living life in general. In this sense, the potential support for their difficulties seemed to occasionally oscillate and interrelate on the sport psychology and PL continuum I described earlier, but predominantly, occupied the centre ground.

I would therefore like to address the question of whether the lifestyle practitioner role I have described throughout this thesis might be positioned within sport psychology and / or within the ECB's PL Programme (or more generic Athlete Lifestyle Programmes). To respond to this question I have chosen to address a practitioner's philosophical approach, modality of practice and general competence, as opposed to their operational title. Indeed players and coaches did not differentiate between what title a practitioner held or might hold. I also concede that it would be unfair and speculative to make any definitive claims, given that the strategic and operational details of sport psychology support within the ECB remain unpublished. However, I would hope that the implications from this thesis at least encourage further debate amongst those who will decide upon the future provision of support. In writing this section I have come to believe that the localised lifestyle practitioner role I have described could be positioned within *either* support strand. Indeed, I believe that either support strand could inhabit a territory that arguably remains unclaimed. I also conclude that *who* provides support may be more to do with their philosophical approach to practice (i.e., believing the depths of others problems require more than intermittent and consultative involvement, technique based symptom relief or a workshop culture) and the modality of their practice (i.e., patient and vigilant prolonged embedded engagement). It might also be more to do with their commitment to work collaboratively and develop contextual awareness. Who provides support might also require a practitioner to (firstly find, and then) occupy a potentially demanding space between players and coaches, and dissolve the protective façades of players by building sincere, honest and trusting relationships which means getting to know them as people and showing a genuine capacity to care. Who provides support might also be more to do with the extent of a practitioner's self-assurance, self-awareness and self-reflections. Their willingness to focus and reflect more on the *process* and *dynamics* of their own interactions and ongoing (building and maintaining of) relationships with players, and their overall ability to *apply* (and subsequently reflect on) humanistic skills and knowledge in practice (i.e., listening, remaining unconditional, non-judgemental, empathic, congruent and caring). In association with all of the above, which support strand provides lifestyle support might best relate to *who* a practitioner is (i.e., their values, morals, beliefs, motives, altruistic characteristics, qualities and general make up as people) as opposed to

what they are. I therefore suggest that the lifestyle oriented and non-performance based territory remains somewhat open (at this time) to those who already possess the requisite knowledge and skills, or open to those who choose to train in the areas I have outlined throughout. I also invite those in strategic positions to reflect on and debate these assertions, and ensure this territory is occupied, first and foremost, but also occupied by those best *suited, positioned, philosophically aligned* and *qualified* to help those who find themselves on it.

5.5 - Methodological Reflections & Developments

The following section aims to critically reflect on the methodological developments within this thesis. In doing so it reflects on the synthesis (and development) of data from Study 1, Study 2 and Study 3. The section also draws on potential implications for future research and practice from reflecting and writing as a practitioner-cum-researcher. Discussions then turn to notions of trying to develop trust and respect in research processes and their potential relationship with data. Ethical reflections on the practitioner-cum-researcher's relationships with participants' then offer critical thoughts for future researchers' engaging in embedded and prolonged ethnographic research. The discussion concludes by reflecting on the research (and researcher's) location, representation and evaluation, before offering thoughts for future research.

5.5.1 - Synthesizing Data from Study 1, Study 2 and Study 3

A common criticism of content analysis is the way in which experiences and dialogue are often de-contextualised from an individual's own story to be compared with other similarly de-contextualized sections of data (Tesch, 1990; Côté et al., 1993; Biddle et al., 2001). As a consequence of the process of content analysis in Study 1, tabular representations emerged and brought together intrapersonally insular themes. These themes were unconnected in terms of individuals within the subject group but connected across the group as each person's story moved (in some way and at some time) to embrace a specific issue. As a result, data and interpretations risked appearing detached from a player's global narrative or interview, and could become personally and contextually neutral (Biddle et al., 2001). Despite this limitation the content analysis did allow large amounts of data to be managed and presented in a way that was accessible and thematically coherent. In addition, different elements of the content analysis in Study 1 have 'traveled' through the analysis of Study 2 and the narrative of Study 3. Thus de-contextualised segments are grounded in the language and culture of any given context as the thesis progresses. More specifically the process of 'pulling' Study 1 data (represented as raw quotes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd order themes and general dimensions) through into Study 2 and Study 3 also allows a more coherent, evolving and consistent understanding of a

professional's lifestyle to emerge. Equally, data from Study 1 *and* Study 2 were also synthesized within the ethnographic Narrative in Study 3. This occurred within the reflective stop offs so that all three data sets could be discussed together. The researcher felt this configuration would more accurately reflect the interconnecting nature of the data within the entire thesis. Indeed, the process itself seemed a straightforward one to the researcher, with themes of data naturally coming together for discussion. In this regard, Bloor et al. (2001) contended that analysis of different kinds of data bearing on the same topic (e.g., content analysis themes from player interviews alongside focus group data and ethnographic narrative) serves to deepen and enrich a researchers understanding of an area. This unique configuration and synthesis of data might also be embraced in future research projects when seeking to understand, highlight and discuss the nature of an inquiry in its entirety (in this case relating to lifestyle issues and accompanying support provision for professional cricketers).

5.5.2 - Implications from Reflecting & Writing as a Practitioner-cum-Researcher

Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne (2004) built a case for the value of reflective practice and writing as approaches to professional training and development that can assist practitioners in effectively managing themselves in practice. Many authors recognise the central role of the practitioner in humanistic and athlete-centred approaches that are based more on counselling skills (Poczwardowski et al., 1998; Petitpas et al., 1999; Holt & Streat, 2001) and would naturally evoke reflective activity. My experiences of reflecting and (religiously) writing as a practitioner-cum-researcher appeared to enhance my own personal development. Indeed, I often found myself reflecting back on what at times felt like my own *distorted* thinking. In this regard it seems that reflecting, writing and committing thoughts to paper on a daily basis encouraged and strengthened my own listening and observation skills. This (demanding) process not only allowed me to accurately recount and make sense of shared dialogue later in the day, but perhaps ensured I *really* grasped the extent of someone's feelings and experience. This form of reflection might be deemed 'reflection-on-action' incorporating the active processing of experience after the event (Knowles et al., 2001). As I continued to write throughout the course of the

season and became something of an ethnographic insider, I might argue that I was also more able to illuminate some aspects of research and implications for practice that might otherwise have been hidden from the spotlight of (scientific) evaluation (see Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). For example, through reflecting and writing during the ethnographic engagement I felt myself increasingly more open to understanding and sharing the despair or confusion of others. Equally, during 'reflection-in-action' (Knowles et al., 2001) when with players, I found myself more attuned to the hitherto hidden messages behind subtle facial expressions, changes in tone, volume or arcane body movements that might often be ignored or go unnoticed. I also found that certain words or phrases seemed more obvious to me, engaging, and caught my attention as I really *listened* to (and felt) what players were saying. On reflection, these words and phrases did not seem overt signs of player's reaching out for help, but more like subtle requests to be heard and understood, masked by a camouflage of masculinity and professionalism. Witz (2007) recent descriptions of research awakening to and articulating aspects of the other seem relevant again here. Moreover, my experiences of prolonged ethnographic practitioner-cum-researcher engagement seemed to afford me the opportunity to absorb the nuances of feeling, emotion and consciousness in some players, through micro-analytic and discourse analytic nuances in speech (Witz, 2007). However, I believe I was only able to absorb, reflect (via 'dual staged reflection' using a combination of immediate and delayed reflection-on-action) and be awakened to and / or learn from these experiences because of my embedded and prolonged ethnographic (practitioner-cum-researcher) role.

This notion of reflective practitioner-cum-researcher is interesting in that when the former is working well then it appears to work in a symbiotic and inseparable manner with the latter, and vice versa. For example, when with players and coaches at games, in hotels, or simply when 'things happened', such (chaotic) *moments* often required spontaneity, intuition and readiness in forecasting, noticing, positioning oneself beside and engaging with others. It was during these unprompted moments that the in-depth connections offered in the ethnographic timeline came about, which might also draw parallels with notions of practice. However, these sudden and chaotic *moments* and interactions with players offered little time, personal resource or objective feedback to deliberate or review

their broader implications. In balance and following such moments, research, and in particular the process of embedded ethnographic engagement and reflective writing, provided a platform for a more introspective mindset to step away from the chaos, step away from inter-personnel connections and cultures, and try and make sense of such moments. This embedded and reflective research process also provided me with invaluable solace as a practitioner-cum-researcher. More specifically, a rhythm of writing and reading allowed me time to reflect on the efficacy of what might resemble practice on a daily basis and a more objective review of the contexts within which the experiences of players were occurring. In essence this rhythm and process offered me space and time and a *practical* avenue to (breathe and) make sense of ‘everything’ that materialised in different clubs and at different times over an entire season.

Reflecting further on the potential benefits and lessons of being an embedded ethnographic practitioner-cum-researcher, I often returned to words and passages from players which I had written perhaps a day, week, even month previous, at the start of a new exchange with any player. However, I did not (or very rarely) re-read any notes before any exchanges with players given that these exchanges were so difficult to predict. The recitation process seemed to retrace our shared exchanges, communicate I had (cared and) been contemplating his plight (indeed I had) and certainly encouraged further flow between us. Time spent reflecting and writing also began to structure, organise and reflect on the many patterns and (more consistent) signs of discomfort that were becoming increasingly evident in others, and how best to use, position and offer my own time (and self) in light of such awareness. It seems important to point out here that I was also reflecting and writing in a purposefully *creative* and *detailed* manner. Creative and detailed features of the writing appear important, as merely making reflective notes after exchanges with players (e.g., bullet points of issues) might not have been able to capture the intimacy or what appeared to be the more telling minutiae within any exchange (e.g., players looking down towards the floor during their more private disclosures). However, whilst I am promoting the value of my own experiences as a reflective ethnographic practitioner-cum-researcher, I am not suggesting that all practitioners (e.g., sport psychologists and PL advisers) *must* write (creatively) about or reflect on their practice on

a daily basis. Equally, writing into the early hours of the morning after 16 to 18 hour days over 7 months would seem an unreasonable request on anyone. However, reflective practice and writing can be a catalyst for action (Gilbourne, 2006), and I do advocate that any practitioner regularly reflects on the *process* of their practice. In fact reflective practice and writing are arguably beneficial at both a personal level, by facilitating self development, and at an institutional level by challenging the context of practice and improving the way support is developed, coordinated, managed and funded (Ghaye, 2001; Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne 2004). Based on my own experiences I might therefore advocate that practitioners are (ideally) given (e.g., by the NGB) or specifically make *time* and *space* themselves for self-reflection (within supervision and / or outside it). I also support the value of self-reflection through the medium of writing, and detailed creative writing in particular, but would encourage others to find the most suitable and practical technique for them. Gilbourne (2006) suggested that the development of self reflection techniques and a capacity to articulate the consequences in print form would appear critical. The British Association for Sport & Exercise Scientists (BASES) has also recognised the value of reflective practice by incorporating it into the supervised experience and accreditation criteria for sport and exercise scientists (BASES, 2007). However, Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne (2004) also warned that becoming a reflective practitioner is more than a collection of techniques, but involves an all encompassing *attitude* to practice that requires a practitioner to be open and questioning and commit to professional and personal development. Whilst Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne (2004) also suggested that reflective examination may lead to feelings of discomfort or vulnerability, as they did with me, they also believed that if practitioners are committed to improving practice, then challenging thoughts and emotions should ultimately enable them to learn from their experiences and understand the context of their practice. Given the demanding, chaotic and fleeting nature of the timeline and season, I might therefore argue that engaging in the prolonged and embedded ethnographic engagement and the self reflective process of writing; appeared to enhance my own personal development as a practitioner-cum-researcher and might also serve to enhance the personal development and practice of others. Other suggestions for training to encourage reflection and increase self awareness in future practitioners, include being a client as practitioner, video taping

sessions, recording verbal interactions, training logs (perhaps like my own ethnographic timeline) and a focus on the process of sessions in a trainee-supervisor relationship (Petitpas, Giges & Danish, 1999). Specifically, reflecting and writing (creatively) allowed me the opportunity to process some of my own learning and increasing self awareness, cope with the burdening nature of players' issues, the season itself, and over time offered substance from which to move my conceptual and applied perspectives forward. In many ways being a reflective practitioner-cum-researcher was like putting myself under the microscope and encouraging myself to write and rationalise why I acted as I did. Perhaps my own difficulty in expanding on the separateness of myself as practitioner-cum-researcher also reflects the delicate and fruitful interplay between such undertakings, and how they might encourage increasingly beneficial outcomes when embraced together.

5.5.3 - Reflections on Trying to Develop Trust & Respect & their Potential Relationship with Data

Research has been described as being co-constructed, a joint product of the participants, the researcher and their relationship (Finlay 2002; Polkingthorne, 2007). Without trusting relationships, participants will not be willing to open their lives to the researcher (Krane & Baird, 2005). On reflection, the nature of the interpersonal reaction and connection between the researcher, players and coaches during the interviews, focus groups and ethnographic engagement, seemed to directly feed-into the quality of the data sets. For example, when the dynamic had tangible trust then the material that came forth appeared more genuine, insightful, and authentic. I felt there were very similar 'moments' of trusting engagement during each phase of data collection. For example, the deeper levels of players' self reflections during interviews in Study 1 as they disclosed some of their most private experiences regarding their personal lives (e.g., their personal relationships and marriages). Equally the more telling and self critical moments from coaches' during trusting and even inflammatory phases of the focus groups in Study 2. In fact these moments appeared to occur when the focus groups and coaches seemed at their most constructive and honest. Lastly, I felt the authentic interactions and depth of exchanges

with players and (some) coaches during Study 3 also appeared to be a result of (what I believed to be) my close, strong and trusting relationship with them.

All of these moments obviously required me to earn (what I believe to be) peoples trust and respect. I would like to emphasize the importance of securing (to some degree) these elusive ingredients because they seemed to provide a passport to richer data. I might argue that much ground work had been done during the 2 years (as a PL adviser) leading up to such moments and of course during the following 3 years of research. This ground work in actual fact, would often mean me doing little more than patiently observing and listening, because I always felt that I *firstly* needed to earn the right to be in the players' and coaches' world. On reflection I feel those 2 formative years, and critical reflections throughout the remaining 3 years of research (hence Jack's comments 'the David Priestley that I first met wouldn't be able to do that') quite simply, but importantly, awarded me the opportunity and privilege to *be around* in professional sport settings which were often so abrasive, private and protectively insular. Having gained this opportunity I have tried to convey how it then appeared to be my own commitment, choices, personal sacrifices and approach to 'being around' that seemed to nurture more trusting and respectful relationships with players and coaches. I feel these opportunities I was privileged to experience would not otherwise have been granted to someone more unknown, uncommitted and impatient, or granted to someone embarking on a research project without first laying the foundations I describe above. This degree of acceptance as well as something of an honourable reputation (I would like to think) seemed to lead to a sense of being an 'insider' and arguably contributed to many of the levels, depths and overall richness of the data sets.

5.5.4 - Ethical Reflections on Practitioner-cum-Researcher Relationships with Participants

It appears pertinent to outline how I have also engaged in further critical reflection regarding the ethical development of trust, respect and data with regard to my researcher role *and* my operational role as a PL adviser (i.e., my practitioner-cum-researcher role). At

the beginning of this thesis it was made clear to the reader that throughout the duration of this research, the author worked as a full time member of staff within the ECB Performance Lifestyle Programme. It was hoped that by clarifying this position in advance, the reader could travel through the thesis with knowledge of the author's additional operational role during that time. Throughout the thesis the author has also made repeated attempts to clarify his position as a researcher, believing that throughout this research, I have always felt I was a researcher, but one *with* the privileged knowledge, experiences and relationships gained from my time as a PL practitioner. This acknowledgement began in Study 2 where I elaborated on how my previous operational role had provided time and fostered varying degrees of rapport and relationships with players and coaches at both clubs. This appeared to partly explain a sense of my occasional emergence as 'PL practitioner' within the coaches' dialogue, whilst also addressing how I felt able to respond and even challenge certain coaches' perspectives during the focus groups. Essentially, the practitioner-cum-researcher's pre-existing knowledge, experiences, relationships and possible acceptance of role appeared subtle parts of the research process. However, it also appeared that these features became increasingly influential in the way the ethnographic engagement (and existing or newly formed relationships with players and coaches) developed. More specifically, the author feels these features and subtleties cannot be ignored and actually warrant ethical consideration.

Ethics is an ever present concern for all researchers; it pervades every aspect of the research process and requires consideration from conception through to dissemination of results (Goodwin et al., 2003). It is recognised that certain dilemmas can develop unexpectedly, and there seems to be an acknowledgement amongst ethnographers that dilemma's of this kind are an accepted, almost obligatory, feature of fieldwork, where the researcher is but one element in a complex and dynamic research setting (Goodwin et al., 2003). In terms of entering this setting, the process of ethnographic engagement in Study 3 required the researcher to gain access through gatekeepers (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). These gatekeepers appeared to be the coaches at the two clubs and given the researchers pre-existing relationships and arguably a degree of role acceptance, access was readily

granted and supported by all concerned. To ensure players and coaches were aware of the researchers involvement and research, and in an effort to adopt more overt, humanly involved and politically correct research practices (Tedlock, 2000), all the second team players at each county were informed at the first game of the season by second team coaches (Jack and Geoff at Woodshire, and Ray at Rinshire). Building rapport was then essential to the success of the fieldwork (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), and the preceding points emphasize how the researcher's previous relationships and experiences as a practitioner, and growing (newly formed) relationships with players and coaches from more embedded and intense involvement, were thought a major strength of this phase of the research. In addition to rapport, I was also careful not to allow my own presence to change the culture and behaviours of players' and coaches' (see Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). To do so I attempted to maintain a low profile, sought to be unobtrusive, achieve researcher role transparency (Krane & Baird, 2005) and acted as I had previously in my role as a PL adviser (i.e., what players were used to) to encourage players and coaches to act naturally (see Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Krane & Baird, 2005). However, I have since come to question whether all of the above features could also have inadvertently combined to create (the potential for) subtle elements of practitioner-cum-researcher concealment, deceit, and even exploitation. The unique combination of my previous experiences, relationships and role acceptance, combined with my efforts to develop rapport, attempts to ensure my own presence did not change cultures and behaviours, and efforts to achieve researcher role transparency, might at times have left some players and coaches, not to mention the reader, contemplating who I was. Whilst I used a number of distinct arguments to classify Study 3 as prolonged ethnographic practitioner-cum-researcher engagement and also used arguments to differentiate my practitioner and researcher roles, I also felt it would have been somewhat disingenuous to claim *complete* differentiation and maintain I was only ever an ethnographic researcher in my own eyes and those of the players and coaches. I would imagine that it might even have been difficult for others to notice that I was operating in a research capacity at times, and might suggest that my presence as a practitioner-cum-researcher had possibly become an accepted (and possibly even welcomed) feature of the players' and coaches' lives.

Ferdinand et al. (2007) suggested that ethnographers who are aware of the above tendencies may actually use them to gain advantages in their research. The authors suggested that ethnographers often intentionally seek to develop a good rapport with research subjects to help them relax (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and behave naturally as they would if the researcher was not present. However, in doing so it appears that the researcher's previous role and the ethnographic process might have transposed me onto ethically uncertain ground. In this sense, Ferdinand et al. (2007) also recognised that remaining ethical *during* the research process is sometimes ambiguous. For example, although at the outset players and coaches were made fully aware that I was conducting ethnographic research and interested in their lifestyle experiences, it is not uncommon for participants to quickly forget about the researchers presence and, as they come to know the researcher as a person (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), drop their guard about what they may or may not have wanted the researcher to know or observe. I would certainly concur with these sentiments as (most) players and coaches appeared to become increasingly comfortable with me and my presence and began to disclose and share more of their experiences. However, I might question whether players and coaches had become more comfortable and trusting of me as an ethnographic researcher, or as a PL practitioner? Or perhaps, they were simply becoming more trusting of me as a person, and maybe in certain extreme cases, as a friend.

In a similar sense, Goodwin et al. (2003) discussed an ethical dilemma faced by the first author during the fieldwork of an embedded ethnographic study of expertise in anaesthesia. Drawing parallels with my own researcher / practitioner identities, Goodwin described how she had an identity as an ethnographer *and* an identity as an anaesthetic and recovery nurse and how the bearing of these identities brought with it a legacy that was simultaneously advantageous but potentially detrimental. Goodwin described how, as ethnographic researcher, she was able to find her way around a familiar setting (i.e., hospital), gain entry to wards and departments as necessary and how her presence in the anaesthetic rooms and theatres went almost unnoticed. In a similar sense, I was also fortunate to know the contexts of Rinshire and Woodshire, and was able to be present in changing rooms, gyms, bars and anywhere else players and coaches frequented without

my presence seeming to draw too much undue attention. Goodwin et al. (2003) also described how working for anaesthetists as a nurse for the previous 5 years had helped to develop good relationships. However, she found herself reflecting on the ethical implications of her identities and position, as consultants began to hold discussions in her presence on the relative merits of junior anaesthetists or talk to her over lunch about the details of their morning's work. Although considering this informal data collection, and fundamental to ethnographic fieldwork, Goodwin also wondered whether anaesthetists *realised* their unprompted, natural conversations were contributing to her data, and felt her existing relationships compounded her concerns. During the initial stages of my own ethnographic engagement I did not overtly experience these concerns, perhaps, because of the explanations regarding my research that were made clear to all players at the beginning of the season. I had also not had that many direct interactions with players during the initial stages of my engagement (i.e., up to stop off 1). However, as the engagement evolved (i.e., post stop off 1) and some players seemed to share some of their more intimate experiences and personal difficulties (e.g., Quinny sharing his experiences of breaking up with his ex-fiancée and Broady discussing what appeared to be his relationship uncertainties) I did begin, but perhaps more subconsciously, to share Goodwin's concerns. Essentially, concerns related to whether players (and coaches) whom I already knew or had come to know, *realised* our natural conversations were contributing to my data. In addition, and specifically during the writing up (and therefore dissemination) of this thesis, I find it difficult to distinguish whether players and coaches were talking to me as a researcher or as a PL adviser (or both), or perhaps even in extreme cases as a friend, whom they had known for the previous 2 or 3 years or had come to know throughout the season. I also wonder whether players and coaches had simply come to put their trust in me, in terms of what I would, or would not do, with the information they were disclosing. At no stage did any player make any *direct* reference to whether they realised they were contributing to my data. I can only recall Broady on a couple of occasions, make some seemingly covert references to whether I had finished my 'book'. I have therefore come to wonder whether players *seemed* to assume that based on my previous reputation, and their current perception of me, that I might be trusted. In this sense, it appears that where a researcher's rapport is at its best and their identity might be

at its most enabling, this might also be the point at which it becomes most disabling and where concerns emerge about exploiting relationships (Goodwin et al., 2003).

I would now like to briefly digress and discuss the specific notion of friendship. To seek understanding of some of the more personal experiences of players and coaches without being somewhat friendly seems inconceivable to me. Indeed I might suggest that trying to be empathic, unconditional, non-judgmental, compassionate and caring are assets I would welcome in any friend. I also might question why else players and coaches would have wanted me around or been prepared to share anything more than their superficial experiences or concerns. Ellis (2007) suggested that it is unthinkable to spend so much time with community members and not develop some friendships and caring relationships. I would also be honest enough to say that I even welcomed a degree of acquaintance from some players to ward off feelings of being the lone individual amongst a united team (perhaps another worthwhile supervisory discussion). However, whilst I might have been friendly and perhaps grew to be perceived by some players as a friend, was I actually a friend? Whilst the ethical implications of researchers developing friendships with participants appears to be a complicated and wide ranging discussion (Tillmann-Healey, 2003; Ellis 2007), I feel it important enough to very briefly discuss it here. Ellis (2007) suggested that the problem comes not from being friends with participants but from acting as a friend but not living up to the obligations of friendship. The benefits of friendships appear obvious in one respect in that they might bring a greater level of understanding and depth of experience researchers might otherwise find difficult to achieve. However, ethical matters of exploitation appear equally obvious when, for example, one considers dissemination of findings. Authors have suggested that while researcher and friendship roles weave together, expand and deepen one another, they are not for every study or researcher, and bring with them their own set of complicated ethical dilemmas (Tillmann-Healey, 2003; Ellis, 2007). However literature does not appear to offer any concrete suggestions in terms of researchers dealing with any emerging friendships. Tillmann-Healey (2003) explained how 'friendship as method' requires ethics to remain at the forefront of research and research relationships, where confidentiality and informed consent become ongoing negotiations. My own experiences of developing what I

perceived to be friendships with some players and coaches in this thesis (in my eyes), would suggest that if friendships do naturally emerge, then the symbiotic nature of that friendship and the research process need to be discussed. I might also add that with such privileges, there might be no leaving the field, and (for some) loyalties and obligations to those friendships might even supersede loyalties towards a research venture.

In order to overcome the identity concerns above, Goodwin et al. (2003) suggested researchers' regularly reiterate their research identity to participants and openly take copious field notes. Ellis (2007) also suggested researchers negotiate process consent before each conversation or observation with participants. In fact, if I were to be fully committed to be ethical at all times, it might follow that I should also warn players and coaches if and when they appeared to be treating and, seemingly trusting me as they would one of their own (Ferdinand et al., 2007). It is not hard to imagine the potential affect this might have had on my relationships with players and coaches and the data itself. To have to give warnings (e.g., 'remember I am a researcher') or gain informed consent each time I engaged in a conversation (in already unwelcoming environments), would undoubtedly have restricted relationships, perhaps strengthened the protective façade I already perceived professionals to have, and would arguably have restricted the depth and breadth of understanding and implications gained. I might also suggest that such warnings might have made players question why I was saying such things and whether they could really trust me, or any other researcher for that matter. In this sense, authors have suggested that gaining consent and applying such *rules* are clearly impractical and no serious ethnographic research could ever be done if they were to be enforced (Ellis, 2007; Ferdinand et al., 2007). Equally, as an ethnographic researcher I could not control the flow of informal observations and insights absorbed by virtue of my position, nor erase my own presence when conversations occurred (Goodwin et al., 2003).

Like many ethnographers I seemed to find myself negotiating the ordinary 'everyday dilemmas' that are thought to be part of the practice of ethnography (Fluehr-Lobban, 1998). Ferdinand et al. (2007) remained clear in their view that the tricks of the trade used by ethnographers to put their research subjects at ease might be relatively harmless, but are

still undoubtedly a mild form of manipulation, if not exploitation. They go on to suggest however, that whilst these mild forms of manipulation are of course very different from openly revealing names and information, what they do show, is that the concept of ethics in socially oriented research is a 'social construct' that is open to both interpretation and contestation, depending on one's standpoint. In this sense, Hallowell et al. (2005) described how the dominant view of research ethics is based upon the mistaken assumption that morality can be bracketed off from other aspects of human life and reduced to generalisable *rules* of conduct that are applicable to all researchers in all research situations. In a similar sense, Punch (1994) indicated that ethical dilemmas are so diverse and inextricably bound to the specific context in which they arise that often they are difficult to anticipate and must be resolved *situationally*. It would appear that my own 'situational dilemmas', were mediated by the specific context in which they arose and seemingly contingent on my own unique identity, which by their very nature were neither reducible nor amenable to codified rules. Instead, my own experiences would suggest that ethnographers, and in particular those with practitioner laden identities who find themselves becoming increasingly accepted by participants within the setting, might also find themselves negotiating ethical and moral labyrinths, in which there are no definitive rules or universal principals.

Perhaps however, more reflections on research experiences might help inform future ethnographic researchers to carefully deliberate their options and negotiate their experiences. In this regard, Ellis (2007) reflected on her ethnographic experiences and offered guidance to future ethnographers. She suggested researchers should think things through, improvise, write and re-write during dissemination, anticipate and *feel* a project's consequence. Whilst acknowledging there are no set rules to follow, she encouraged researchers to seek the good, but also warned them of situations in the field that will make their heads spin and hearts ache, and how in these situations researchers should make ethical decisions the way they make them in their personal lives. In light of this guidance, there were times during the ethnographic engagement (and therefore in the resulting timeline) where I *chose* not to write about or include certain personal disclosures of players and coaches despite realising their potential interest to readers, and despite players

and coaches not making any specific requests for confidentiality. As there appear to be no rules to follow (Punch, 1994; Hallowell et al., 2005; Ellis, 2007), I would like to think that I made these *choices* in a way that resembles those I made in (what I perceived as) similar practice based situations outlined earlier in the discussion, in which personal virtues (of sincerity, integrity, respect and nobility) come forth. However, one might hint at issues of collusion here, and question whether I was actually maintaining players' and coaches' privacy or keeping their secrets (Goodwin et al., 2003). In response to this, I would emphasise the former and suggest that it was my responsibility as an ethnographic researcher to make conscious decisions on what was included as data, and base these decisions explicitly on careful consideration of ethical dimensions (Dewalt et al., 1998). Above all, I did not want to misuse or exploit the trust (I believe) I had been so fortunate to earn from players and coaches.

Ellis (2007) also encourages students to consider ethical considerations *before* writing and dissemination and that sometimes it may not be appropriate to allow participants to read their work, or appropriate for researchers to publish. In this regard, I did offer players and coaches the opportunity to read my reflections but few seemed interested at that time, nor since. However, whilst I have made every effort to ensure anonymity, I do feel a slight sense of unease at the prospect of some coaches (involved in the thesis) possibly working out their own identities and reading about how I perceived their perspectives. However, I also felt a stronger sense of obligation and responsibility to try and write and convey how I *genuinely* perceived their perspectives and contexts. I do not feel such unease over the prospect of players reading my reflections given that I have essentially already shared with them everything that I have written (i.e., my interpretations of our exchanges and their situations). However, I cannot escape the fact that lifestyle based subject matter appears inherently sensitive in both form and nature, and that a fine and difficult balance appears to exist between honouring ethical / relational responsibilities whilst presenting truthful accounts. Indeed, what to reveal and what to conceal appears an intrinsically difficult decision within ethnography. With regards to publication, at this time, I harbour no such ambitions, but would imagine that ensuring participant and county anonymity (see Sands, 2002) would *remain* at the forefront of my concerns, particularly given the fact that a few

players, coaches, fellow practitioners and NGB personnel would know (or be able to work out) the region (and therefore clubs) where I worked and researched.

I would lastly like to consider the role of the players and coaches in my own situational research dilemmas above. Indeed, I might argue that whilst my practitioner-cum-researcher role was not a covert one, nor did it overtly change, what did appear to change and grow was their acceptance of me. Players and coaches were made aware of my practitioner-cum-researcher role but still shared their experiences and made me party to their behaviours. Therefore, however I might have chosen to alleviate the potential for ethically dubious research conduct, such conduct might not be entirely within a researcher's control (Goodwin et al., 2003). The community being researched is not a passive component but has a bearing on what the researcher is included in and excluded from. In this sense, the players and coaches were essentially agents in shaping the data, the data-collecting opportunities, and the course and final form of the ethnographic timeline (Goodwin et al., 2003; Ellis, 2007).

It appears then that ethical research, from start to finish, is not a fixed enterprise, but a personally, socially and contextually constructed *process*. Above all, it would be wise for future researchers to remember that they have to live in the world of those they write about, write for, and write to, and that they should research from an ethic of care, as that is one of the best things they can do (Ellis, 2007).

5.5.5 - Reflections on Research Location, Representation & Evaluation

Within the following reflections the researcher intends to draw upon the thinking of Lincoln & Guba (1998) by making reference to the specific *paradigms* of each Study. However, this is also done alongside more recent classifications that bracket research in terms of different *tales* (Sparkes, 2002). The decision to delay this discussion stems from the researchers desire to foreground the research data and to reflect on the research journey as a whole.

Prior to Sparkes (2002) proposing a continuum of different tales, researchers may have only sought to locate their qualitative research through reference to the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions aligned with specific paradigms. However, the arrival of a different classification system, based around the notions of different tales, provides the opportunity for 'definitional expansion' (Gilbourne, manuscript in progress). Locating the three Studies of this research through such a combination (or cross-classification) seems tempting given the researchers belief that the endeavours in Study 3 do not (at times) appear to fit neatly and exclusively into any specific classification matrix (Gilbourne, manuscript in progress). While tales appear to be predominantly associated with ways of *presenting* findings, paradigms appear to be philosophical positions that underpin *how* a research exercise is both undertaken and represented. The differentiation and discussion that follows may help clarify how different ways of presenting and conducting this research have come in and out of focus at different moments of the research journey.

A research paradigm can be described as a basic belief system or worldview that guides the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The research paradigm or worldview is inextricably linked to the researcher's ontological (beliefs about the nature of reality), epistemological (the relationship between the knower and the known) and methodological (methods of obtaining knowledge) stance. Lincoln & Guba (1998) discussed qualitative inquiry through reference to a paradigm matrix. In their clarification they choose to bracket research into positivist, post-positivist, criticalist and constructivist lists. According to Lincoln & Guba (1998), positivism denotes the received view that has dominated formal discourse in social sciences. In terms of its ontology, an apprehensible reality is assumed to exist, driven by immutable natural laws. Within this paradigm, research can, in principal, converge on true replicable findings. The investigator and object of study are assumed *independent* entities, and the investigator is *thought* capable of studying the object without influencing it or being influenced by it. Hypotheses are stated in propositional form and subjected to empirical test(s) to verify them (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). Post-positivism represents efforts over the past few decades to respond in a limited way (whilst remaining within essentially the same set of beliefs) to the most problematic

criticisms of positivism (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). Post-positivist assumptions accept (to a degree) that reality is a rather more obdurate phenomenon (i.e., harder to get at) that requires a range of methods (including qualitative techniques) to enable imperfect and approximate apprehension (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). In their review of qualitative research, Biddle et al. (2001) specifically noted that qualitative research papers, when viewed collectively, demonstrated a dependence on semi-structured interview and content analysis protocols. In this sense, Study 1 is thought to employ *protocols* that are associated with a post-positivist view of research. More specifically, the methodological *process* of constructing a semi-structured interview in Study 1 involved the researcher being guided by a theoretical literature base. The resulting (predominantly) deductive analysis and discussion of findings (i.e., players' experiences) then involved extensive synthesis with existing literature. Thus Study 1, might, by proxy, become an extension of previous positivist work and draw parallels with notions of post-positivist research. However, the author might also contemplate a *degree* of engagement with interpretivism within Study 1 and also within Study 2. This degree might stem from *elements* of inductive interpretation of interview and focus group data where knowledge was socially constructed (e.g., understanding players experiences through interviews and contexts through coaches debates in focus groups) and both studies sought contextualised meaning (Greene, 1994). However, interpretivism retains the positivist assumption that the goal is *value free* description and evaluation of phenomenon (Bain, 1989). In this sense, while interpretivism celebrates the permanence and priority of the subjective experience, it also seeks to *disengage* from that experience and objectify it. The paradox of how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experience thus arises (Schwandt, 1994). Both Study 1 and Study 2 might draw further parallels with interpretivism in that they both sought to authenticate interpretations as empirically based representations of experiences and meanings rather than a biased inquirer opinion (Greene, 1994). Like most interpretivist evaluation, Study 1 and Study 2 utilised *procedural guidelines* to enhance the credibility of inferences. In this sense, Lincoln & Guba (1985) indicated that qualitative research should be judged by its trustworthiness, or how the investigator persuades others (including him/herself) that the findings are worthy of attention. A number of procedural criteria for establishing trustworthiness have been proposed and the suggestion is that

qualitative research should be evaluated relative to these procedural criteria. Drawing on notions of post-positivism and interpretivism, trustworthiness criteria have been aligned with research processes of Study 1 and Study 2 below, followed by critical reflections and discussion on their application in this research.

1. The research processes of Study 1 and 2 aligned themselves with notions of credibility through prolonged engagement and persistent observation as outlined previously in terms of the researcher as practitioner over a 2 year period prior to the research.
2. Credibility is associated with the process of investigator triangulation or triangular consensus which were processes undertaken during data analysis procedures of both studies with experienced qualitative researchers within the supervisory team. However, McFee (1992) argued that whilst 'triangulation *within* a method' brings to bear two or more viewpoints on a particular area, it does not offer a useful way of thinking about research. Mcfee (1992) suggested that triangulation *within* a method does not bring together a number of independent data sources, because the object under investigation is a whole situation comprised by the combination of such viewpoints and genuine data for such a method is only to be had from that combination. Mcfee (1992) also warned that care is needed in the use of the term 'triangulation' in research and its value would be easy to overestimate.
3. The techniques of negative case analysis (constantly examining individuals and themes that did not follow the pattern of the group), referential adequacy (ways of recording data so others can check its accuracy in the form of recordings, transcriptions and data analysis tables) and peer debriefing (consulting with independent investigators within the supervisory team regarding methodological and data analysis) were also used to align research processes with notions of credibility. Member checking (having participants read results to ensure interpretations were correct) is also associated with the criterion of credibility. However, this process was deliberately omitted from both studies, on the grounds that such a technique would not act as a means of validation rather, allow the researcher more reflective moments, but still require a choice of which responses would influence final data representation in each study and which would be ignored (see Davis 2000).
4. Research processes also aligned themselves with notions of transferability by providing thick description in both write up sections (i.e., detailed quotes and discourse from participants) and also by providing a database (i.e., complete content analysis tables and complete focus group transcriptions) for the reader to judge transferability.

5. The criterion of dependability has been associated with the researchers' competence and experience. In this sense the researcher had experience of qualitative research methodologies (including interviews and focus groups) from conducting both a qualitative undergraduate and postgraduate thesis and from describing methodological and data analysis procedures in depth. Dependability is also associated with the techniques of multiple methods (which were not employed) and stepwise replication which involved the researcher noting consistent patterns across participant's data. By having members of the supervisory team study methods, procedures and results of Study 1 and Study 2 (i.e., arguably inquiry audits), this process also aligned itself with the criteria of dependability and conceivability.
6. Lastly, the processes of ensuring detailed records (i.e., an audit trail) are made available regarding the data and data analysis procedures aligned research processes of Study 1 and Study 2 with notions of conceivability.

In referring to a *list* of procedural criteria this research draws on notions of post-positivism and interpretivism and seeks to report the degree of its methodological rigour in meeting trustworthiness criteria. However, in Sparkes (1998) critique of qualitative research, he suggested that by aligning with such criteria qualitative researchers adopt a *parallel perspective* on validity (i.e., parallel to positivist notions of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity) when seeking to legitimize their work. Sparkes (1998) also described how the parallel perspective led to criteria that were consistent with positivistic standards, which have been *fitted* to a qualitative research context in response to the legitimization problem. The way of understanding what constitutes trustworthiness is to briefly refer to its application in qualitative research in relation to this thesis. Trustworthiness criteria are referred to interchangeably and inconsistently across the literature (Biddle et al., 2001) where legitimization is associated with elements of the interview process (Bloom et al., 1998) or implied through the interviewer's technical expertise (Côté et al., 1995). This methodology demonstrated that the researcher had taken steps to meet trustworthiness criteria, by for example, ensuring someone with an appropriate skill base had undertaken (clearly defined) data collection and analysis procedures. However, this is thought to be problematical as there is presently no benchmarking for this research in these respects (e.g., pre-interview / focus group training) (Biddle et al., 2001) and no rationale for selecting certain criteria over others (Sparkes,

1998). Therefore some of the techniques or criteria for establishing trustworthiness outlined above are not thought to be appropriate (by some) for the logic of qualitative research (see Sparkes, 1998). Moreover, the attempts to specify criteria that could be met by procedural means was not possible because the assumptions of multiple realities and reality as mind dependent, seriously undermines the notion of applying foundational criteria to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy results (Smith, 1984). For Smith (1984) these assumptions and foundational criteria are incompatible. Whilst the criteria outlined above might “calm the nerves” (Sparkes, 1998, p. 373) of post-positivists and interpretivists who seek security in tightly controlled procedures; they are also thought to be self-defeating in that criteria cannot resolve the inherent philosophical contradictions on which they are based (see Sparkes, 1998). Essentially, criteria cannot resolve the paradox of how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experience (Schwandt, 1994). Whilst qualitative researchers readily accept criteria (Biddle et al., 2001) in that there is a need for rigour regardless of method, notions of trustworthiness have been challenged by qualitative researchers who reside in other social science disciplines (Biddle et al., 2001). Smith (1993) pointed out that judgment about the quality of qualitative research should not be made according to these abstract standards or rules. Nevertheless procedures and methods were not abandoned in the research processes of Study 1 and Study 2 (Sparkes, 1998) as these criteria appeared to the researcher to be part of the current qualitative research climate. Instead methods and procedures have been outlined and recognized for what they are, and the jobs they can do, in specific contexts and for certain purposes (Smith, 1993).

The process of reflexivity was not restricted to methodological procedures in Study 1 and Study 2, but occurred throughout the research as a whole. As a researcher I could not help but bring my own involvement and fore-understandings and prior knowledge (i.e., academic, professional and experiential) into the research (Krane et al., 1997; Finlay, 2002; Krane & Baird 2005). To increase the integrity of the research, I therefore employed the process of reflexivity (see Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity offers a process for methodological evaluation and is where the researcher engages in explicit self-critical awareness and analysis of the human as instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This process

occurred at various stages of the research process by acknowledging the existence of my own bias and bracketing out beliefs to attend genuinely and attentively to participant's views (Finlay, 2002). It also signalled my acceptance of Krane & colleagues (1997) methodological critique that questioned the limitations of espousing purely inductive research. My own experiences involved trying to recognise and acknowledge previous experiences and knowledge as a PL practitioner (alongside conceptual knowledge from my academic background) whilst attempting to capture the subjective experiences of others. The sections entitled 'The researcher as practitioner' (within the literature review), 'Further positioning of the researcher' (within Study 2), 'Autobiographical narrative' (within the data authenticity file), 'Experiences as researcher / ethnographer within the setting' and finally 'The process of biographical positioning' (both within Study 3 methods) offer the reader some biographical context. In doing so these sections demonstrate how I was aware of, and acknowledged, my own conceptual bias, personal experimental bias and critically acknowledged my perceptual lens throughout this research. Throughout this portrayal, readers have been offered the perspective through which I have collected and interpreted the data, and as a result are thought to be better situated to judge and interpret the research (see Finlay, 2002).

Sparkes (2002) explored the different forms of writing available to qualitative researchers and in doing so allows for further classification of this research. These classifications included scientific, realist and confessional tales (amongst others including autoethnography and poetic representations for example). Realist tales are thought to dominate a great deal of the qualitative research (i.e., products) that has been published in sport and exercise psychology (Sparkes, 1995). According to Biddle et al. (2001) the realist tale, as a genre, has a number of compositional conventions. These conventions can be linked to the form of writing across sections and chapters of this research. In this research, there is a marked absence of myself as narrator with a first person presence throughout Study 1 and (discussion sections in) Study 2. In these sections I become author evacuated and appear as a traditional scientific narrator who acts as a dispassionate, camera like observer (Biddle et al., 2001). Moreover, in Study 1 and Study 2 (but also within reflective stop offs in Study 3) I also appear to seek *experiential authority* by

promoting the view that only what the players and coaches say and do, and think, are visible in the text (Biddle et al., 2001; Sparkes, 2002). Further to this, extensive, closely edited quotations / data in the text suggest to the reader that the views put forward are not my views, or just those views closely related to a specific theoretical problem (e.g., exploring players lifestyle experiences), but are actually the authentic and representative remarks of the players and / or coaches in the study (Sparkes, 2002). It would appear that I was seeking to construct 'interpretive omnipotence', in which I would have the final word as to how the culture will be interpreted and how it will be presented. In this sense, Van Maanen (1988) recognised that the realist tale can only offer one reading, and culls its facts with care to support that reading. Biddle et al. (2001) proposed that such tendencies might be partly explained through a range of personal and technical factors. For example, they cited Krane et al. (1997) who argued that a researcher's prior knowledge of salient theory is likely to result in work housing deductive qualities. Indeed, throughout the results and discussion *sections* of Study 1, Study 2, and within the stop offs of Study 3, I tended to look (deductively) backward towards positivist assumptions (and prior theory established from the same source) to guide and support the research venture. Within these sections it might be argued that a deductive, distal post-positivist mind set seems operational and realist tales may have been produced. Moreover, as a qualitative PhD researcher, it seemed difficult to not be associated with the procedural rigour and theory laden security offered by the landscape of post-positivism and interpretivism. These insecurities also created certain dilemmas, in that theoretical grounding seemed to be found within sport psychology literature when the focus of this research was more lifestyle in orientation. However, this needn't be seen as entirely negative, as elements of post-positivist / interpretivist research and realist tales within this research might also be deemed credible and useful precisely because they refract light back onto established theory (Gilbourne, manuscript in progress). One must also remember that post-positivist / interpretivist research and realist tales, amongst other forms, tend to be informed by different philosophical assumptions and so have different purposes and ends in mind (Sparkes, 2002). To this end, Study 1 and Study 2 were able to offer a *certain* degree of understanding in terms of the lifestyle experiences of players, coaches' perspectives and accompanying notions of support. However, Study 3 had similar, but also further purposes

and ends in mind. Moreover, the author has since reflected further on *how* Study 3 was conducted and the kind of tale *presented*. It would appear that during certain moments as an *embedded* ethnographic researcher, *interactions with* coaches and players and my own experiences in their social setting allowed me to *construct* and describe undiscovered aspects relating to the lifestyle experiences of professional players and the culture and context of professional cricket. Within these sections there appeared to be a (degree of) leakage, or movement away from the procedural rigour and theory laden security of the post-positivist / interpretivist paradigms, and markers associated with the realist tale. Instead, representation within the ethnographic engagement required more of an inductive lens and an author involved form of writing that (at times) seemed to navigate toward more *confessional* (ethnographic based) tales with arguably more *constructivist* paradigmatic aspirations. It would seem fair to suggest that classifying this qualitative text as post-positivist, interpretivist and / or realist, constructivist and / or confessional is not a straightforward or absolute act (Gilbourne, manuscript in progress).

Krane & Baird (2005) described how methodological engagement in ethnography entails a departure from positivism and entry into paradigms uncultivated in much (sport psychology) qualitative research. Krane & Baird (2005) explained that when researchers shift from positivism to alternative epistemologies, ethnography provides an avenue for further advancing knowledge. While the epistemology and methodology of ethnography may vary widely, some common beliefs are thought to guide it, and fundamentally, ethnography is non-positivist (Krane & Baird, 2005). Instead, knowledge in ethnography is historically and situationally bound, where human behaviour is a product of *interactions* with other people and the social world (i.e., it may not be replicable or generalizable and in different social circumstances different behaviours will be observed). In this sense, ethnographic research in Study 3 was based on the belief that there are *multiple* truths and multiple ways of seeing and interpreting things (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). This principle of ethnography infers that there are no *absolute* truths in Study 3. To assume that there was a singular knowable truth, the researcher ran the risk of over-generalizing or dismissing important and insightful versions of reality (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). Rather, the multiplicity of reality is acknowledged in Study 3 where each person

socially *constructs*, interprets, and reacts to social settings. In essence, individuals with different social, contextual and / or biographical positions may interpret the same situation differently. In seeking to understand the experiences of people, ethnographers also realize that the world must be viewed through the eyes of the participants under study (Krane & Baird, 2005). In a similar sense, constructivism is thought to study the rich, deep and complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1998). Thus determining whose reality is correct is not the focus of ethnography, but understanding the social setting through the perspectives (or perhaps constructions) of the participants is a primary goal.

More specifically, ethnography also tends to embrace the influence of the researcher on the research (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1995). As an ethnographer in Study 3, I was inextricably linked with, and was experiencing the culture of professional cricket myself, in order to then describe and interpret it. This meant that in Study 3, cultural findings were *literally created* as the investigation proceeded (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). This ‘investigator’ and ‘object of investigation’ link is thought to be a major feature of constructivism, which sees the investigator (i.e., ethnographic researcher) as an orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process. In both ethnographic research and constructivist inquiry, realities are thought to be apprehensible in the form of *multiple*, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, and dependant for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding them (Lincoln & Guba, 1998; Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). In this sense, within Study 3, my own understanding and reconstructions of others are not more or less true in any *absolute* sense, but are more or less informed, and are open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve. The value of such cultural findings enable a connection between the culture of sport to athletes’ thoughts and behaviours and will provide new avenues for consideration of applied issues (Krane & Baird, 2005).

Study 3 appeared (in places) to move away from markers associated with the realist tale to seemingly offer more *confessional* (ethnographically based) tales. This suggests that a

mixture of realist and confessional tales seem to be represented in Study 3. Indeed, the confessional elements of the study appear to be signaled in its opening title, in that I attempted to be ‘first at breakfast, last in the bar’ as a practitioner-cum-researcher throughout the summer. Sparkes (2002) explained that *confessional* tales foreground the voice and concerns of the researcher in a way that takes the reader behind the scenes of the author evacuated and *cleaned up* methodological discussions of realist tales. In contrast, confessional tales tend to be highly personalized and self absorbing (Sparkes, 2002). In this sense, my own ethnographic reflections attempt to explicitly demystify fieldwork by revealing what actually happened in the research process from start to finish (Sparkes, 2002). Moreover, the details that appear to matter in confessional tales are those that constitute the field experiences of the author and include stories of fieldwork rapport, mini dramas, hardships endured, and accounts of what fieldwork did to the fieldworker (Van Maanen, 1988). At times the ethnographic text and sections within the stop offs draw parallels with features of confessional tales, where I describe, as a visible actor (Van Maanen, 1988) the dilemmas and conflicts of my own ethnographic research experiences.

Sections within the ethnographic timeline, the reflective stop offs (i.e., see ‘personally oriented reflections’ from I to III), and the final discussion naturally draw and reflect on the researchers personal experience (or confessional tales) and in doing so attend to some of the methodological and ethical issues encountered in the research process (Sparkes, 2002). For example, confessional reflections chronicle my research experiences as a practitioner-cum-researcher and how the embedded and prolonged modality of ethnographic research slowly began to wear and take its toll on me. In this sense, Punch (1994) called for the research community to tell more stories about actions and events that reveal the stress, the deep personal involvement, the role conflicts, the physical and mental effort, and the discomfort of qualitative research so that researchers might be better prepared for such realities in their own research endeavours. Within the timeline and within each personally oriented ethnographic reflection (i.e., I to III), many of my own, most enervating, difficult and personal experiences and emotions were laid bare for the reader to feel. On a more cautionary note authors have identified the dangers to producing such confessional tales, with criticisms ranging from them being narcissistic, self pitying,

self indulgent, paranoid and even distasteful (Brackenridge, 1999; Sparkes, 2002). Nevertheless, such charges appear to be based on misunderstandings of the nature of the genre and its purposes (Sparkes, 2002). Indeed, Van Maanen (1988) suggested that the reader who wonders why the confessional writers don't do their perverse, self-centered, anxiety work in private and simply come forward with an ethnographic fact or two are, quite frankly, missing the point. I tried not to reflect on these feelings in a self-pitying manner (Sparkes, 2002); instead I tried to use them as a personal resource for understanding and reflect on what they might mean for future neophyte ethnographic researchers and practitioners. More specifically, I reflected on the ethnographic research process, and what it might actually *mean, require* and *be like* to build trusting relationships with players and coaches, and be embedded and remain unconditional, non-judgmental and empathic on a daily basis over an entire season in what felt like a harsh, masculine and results driven cauldron of professional sport. These reflections and discussions arguably led to a worthwhile ethical discussion relating to future researchers and practitioners well-being and the potential value of supervision to aid personal recovery, case debriefing and increase self-awareness. A further critical theme within my own reflections related to the perceptions (i.e., of myself and others) of my role and identify as a practitioner-cum-researcher. Sparkes (2002) suggested that all too often, the personal, political, *ethical*, and *messy* realities of qualitative research (including role conflicts) are not formally documented. Instead, the perils and pitfalls of the research experience are often smoothed out in a tidy final report. In this sense, post research reflections (confessional tales) allowed for a discussion on the potential value of trying to gain participants' trust and respect. However, they also critically discussed the potential for subtle elements of practitioner-cum-researcher concealment, deceit, and even participant exploitation. Moreover, it appeared that future ethnographers with similar practitioner identities might come to find themselves ethically negotiating 'situational dilemmas' in which there are no universal principals to follow.

It would seem that the nature of confessional tales might be somewhat transformative in nature (Sparkes, 2002). More specifically, by not coming forth with personal difficulties, researchers might aspire to the mantle of scientific credibility. As a consequence however,

their realist tales (by definition and for appropriate reasons given their purposes), have the potential to gloss over the very ethical and methodological dilemmas that confessional tales set out to expose (Sparkes, 2002). It might be argued then, that the exposure of fieldwork experiences is of vital importance if a critical stance is to be adopted towards both the process and the products of qualitative research enterprises. In this regard, Sparkes (2002) believed that by working in the spirit of self-reflexivity, producers of confessional tales are able to provide a personal voice that can be a gift to readers. In addition, Van Maanen (1988) noted how confessional tales can become a self-reflective meditation on the nature of ethnographic understanding and allow the reader to come away with a deeper sense of the problems posed by the enterprise itself.

5.5.6 - Legitimation and Alternative Criteria for the Narrative of Study 3

The narrative entitled 'First at Breakfast, Last in the Bar' aspired to inform, engage and invite the reader to draw his or her own judgements and interpretations (Davis, 2000). To offer the reader an opportunity to reflect on the timeline, I offered my own interpretations within the four reflective stop offs. Tedlock (2000) suggested that the success or valued interpretation of a text is tied to a readership that accepts the endeavours as meaningful, and that concerns are not so much about objectivity, neutrality and distance, as they are about risk, the possibility of failure, and the hope of success. In terms of a reader's interpretations, new ways of writing and knowing also invoke conversation about criteria for judging ethnographic work (Richardson, 2000). In that sense, much has been written about how to deal with issues such as reliability, validity, inter-subjective judgement, plausibility, credibleness, trustworthiness and data analysis (Tierney, 2002; Polkingthorne, 2007). For example, whilst calling for a widening of the paradigmatic lens in qualitative research, Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne (2004) suggested that rejecting a reflective narrative on the grounds that people are 'fuzzy' about judging it should be a response of the past. Moreover, traditional trustworthiness criteria used to evaluate ethnographic and narrative studies have been treated with suspicion (Smith 1993; Sparkes, 1992; 1998; 2000). Given that different epistemological and ontological assumptions inform qualitative and post positivistic inquiry, it would have made little sense to impose the criteria used to

pass judgement on one, upon the other (see Sparkes, 1998). The process of validation regarding knowledge claims that follow is therefore not a mechanical process but, instead, an argumentative practice. The purpose of the validation process is to convince the reader of the likelihood that support for the claims I make are strong enough that the claims can serve as a basis for understanding and action in the human realm (Polkingthorne, 2007).

Sparkes (2002) noted that judgement (and legitimisation) of a creative non-fiction text should relate to whether it manages to engage readers emotionally or whether the material carries any sense of *authenticity* or *credibility*. These and similar terms can be embraced under the term *verisimilitude*, which might also refer to an evaluation of the evocative power of the writing or a judgement as to a text's capacity to draw readers into an experience (Schwandt, 1997). Within the narrative of Study 3 I attempted to align the writing with the criteria above in various ways. Attempts were made to draw the reader into an understanding of what *being* a professional cricketer (and embedded ethnographic researcher) is *really* like. This was a difficult and protracted process but I truly believed it required an extensive narrative. This process also required me to go beyond a commentary or transcription of unfolding events where writing became a form of discovery (i.e., discovery of the participants, discovery of the research issue itself, and discovery of things about myself) (Richardson, 2000). More specifically, writing within Study 3 tried to convey how days, weeks and months were draining and yet passed quickly, and how some characters slowly emerged as central to the entire narrative, whilst others appeared momentarily before disappearing from view. I also tried to engage readers emotionally by offering accurate, unedited and colourful accounts of (player and coach) dialogue. I felt this dialogue, and our shared interactions would offer the reader the most *real* and authentic sense of players' (and coaches') emotive experiences. During this process I also tried to portray the feeling and tone behind players' (and coaches') words and any accompanying, subtle, but often telling facial expressions and corporal movements during moments of intense personal and professional difficulty. Initially recounting these moments and dialogue often placed a great strain on my own memory and a commitment to be true to, and not downplay nor overplay what players and / or coaches had said, or

how they said it. I took time with this writing, often closing my eyes to reflect on and re-run scenes and feelings before committing thoughts to paper.

Lincoln (1993) argued that *authenticity* emerges when a text is not only faithful to the story lines of the teller, but also when the text conveys the *feeling tone* of the life or lives as lived. Consequently, the reader can come away from such a text with a heightened sensitivity to the life or lives being depicted and with some flavour of the kinds of events, characters, and social circumstances that circumscribed those lives (Lincoln, 1993). I tried to heighten the reader's sensitivity to the lives of players and coaches by describing their varying personalities and their diverse characteristics in as much detail as possible. In doing so I hoped to convey to the reader a sense of the *characters* (including myself) within the Study. A flavour of players, coaches and my own social surroundings and circumstances were also offered by regularly (though briefly) painting a realistic picture of our ever changing environments, as we all flitted between changing rooms, games, hotels, bars, restaurants, teams, successes, failures, visits home, phone calls and face-to-face conversations. Ellis (1995) argued that as a form of knowing, the 'validity' of evocative story telling is best judged by whether it evokes, in the reader, a feeling that the experience described is authentic, believable and possible; the story must have *fidelity* (i.e., what it means to the teller of the tale) (Sparkes, 2000). Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) recounts the criteria of *believability* (in relation to fidelity), where a narrative is believable when it can be credited with conveying convincingly that events occurred and were felt in ways the narrator asserts. I attempted to align the narrative with these forms of judgment by being truthful to unfolding events regardless of their often abrasive, masculine and at times highly private nature. I also tried to genuinely convey how drawn out and protracted the entire ethnographic engagement felt. Whilst this may have led to an *extensive* narrative and timeline, I truly believe its current form is far more accurate and truthful than any intermittent short stories or isolated case studies could have been. I also tried to remain honest about my own personal struggles as an ethnographic researcher. Sharing my own experiences often required a willingness and acceptance on my part to write with a sense of vulnerability, by admitting to the reader my inner thoughts, interpretations, misinterpretations, values, motives, principals, feelings, and at times, inner turmoil.

In summary, the assertions I make above do not require simple acceptance or non-acceptance, and I do not claim that my own interpretations are the only ones possible. However, I do argue for the likelihood and probability of claims and that they are viable interpretations grounded in the assembled texts (Polkingthorne, 2007). In calling upon open-ended and fluid criteria (Sparkes, 1998) as characterising traits or values that change over time and context (Smith, 1993), I lose the security of foundations and methodological prescription that accompany positivist and postpositivist notions of criteria. Nevertheless, in doing so, I also seek more literary forms of judgement from the social sciences (Sparkes, 2000) like those of evocation, authenticity, fidelity, believability and verisimilitude. It appears that as things change, so will the stories that researchers tell and the criteria they use for evaluating them (Biddle et al., 2001).

5.6 - Future Research

Second team professional cricket appears unique in that academy, professional and senior professionals can play in the same, ever changing team which undoubtedly houses issues associated with not playing in the first team. Broady's comment in Study 3 that I, as researcher, 'need to experience what I (Broady) am striving for, what we are missing, be with the first team, realise what it can be like, how good it can be' also highlights the somewhat incomplete nature of Study 3 in only following players at this sub-level of competition. Whilst Study 1 explored first and second team professional's experiences, an extension of this thesis might involve following the lifestyles of players in first team professional and even international cricket. Doing so would enable a researcher to understand the unique issues that accompany players living within higher echelons of competition. Each level of competition is also likely to have its own contextual uniqueness that would arguably affect the experiences (and behaviours) of those competing and living within it. Indeed, recent publicized examples within the media relate to England players social activities and general drinking on tour (The Times, 2007).

From a constructivist point of view all phenomenon are thought to be time and context specific, where insights can only be a reconstruction of the subjective experiences of people in specific situations (Mayring, 2007). In this sense, the situational and geographical limitations of this thesis offer opportunities for further research and conceivably even greater understanding. Mayring, (2007) believed generalisation is important and necessary for scientific research, but suggested that researchers specify what sorts of arguments or inferences are being aimed at with their generalisations. The *modest* forms of generalization (see Mayring, 2007) in this research have aimed at context specific statements and explored and described similarities and differences in the players', coaches' and the practitioner-cum-researcher's own experiences in the contexts (i.e., specific clubs predominantly in the north of England but also including clubs from the midlands) in which they occurred. These more modest forms of generalisations are however, a matter of interpretation, and might be *tested* for their situational generality in future studies across different contexts (i.e., the remaining first class counties that make up the professional county circuit). Whilst one might hypothesise parallels across people's experiences, clearly every persons (situational) experience is also unique and *invaluable* when seeking to improve support. In addition, contexts have already been shown to potentially influence any given experience, and in that sense might influence people (i.e., players, coaches, allied practitioners and researchers) differently as geographical regions, demographics, cultures, coaching structures, coaching styles and agendas, coaching personnel, multidisciplinary support teams, overseas and youth policies, and a club's status, history, tradition, size and wealth differ.

Each phase of this research was also conducted during an English county cricket season. Outside of this season, are pre and post season periods, where players' lives have to adapt to such changes. Research may seek to explore such a change, how players' experiences differ and how they might be best supported according to the choices they make (e.g., studying, playing abroad, or resting) or are forced to make (e.g. winter training, overseas tours, relocation or retirement).

This research is also restricted to professional male cricket. Women's cricket in England is growing and girls also occupy limited academy places and compete (in winter training) amongst boys throughout county academies. Women's cricket also has established summer competitions and numerous domestic and international tournaments and fixtures (ECB, 2007). Clearly the gender of players might be a significant variable in exploring their non-performance and lifestyle based experiences and in seeking to improve any support. For example, given that women's cricket has an unprofessional status its players might experience a higher degree of socio-economic and vocational juggling compared to male cricketers. Having briefly alluded to my own gender in relation to exchanges with male players during one stop off, further research may also wish to consider the influence of gender on the part of the researcher / practitioner. In this regard, Henschen (1991) suggested cross sex consulting contains inherent problems that must be addressed by adhering to appropriate ethical standards and that there are situations in which gender may influence the consulting situation (Yammarino & Connelly, 1991). Indeed, a number of male athletes have reported feeling as if men (e.g., male practitioners) are always competing with one another on some level and therefore are not as supportive or caring as women (Yammarino & Connelly, 1991). Equally, Yammarino & Connelly, (1991) suggested that being female causes some men to feel uncomfortable or untrusting in the sport psychology setting, partly because sport continues to be a male preserve in which females lack automatic credibility. At the time of writing the PL team in cricket is made up of 3 female and 2 male full-time practitioners and both male and female sport psychology practitioners operate within counties. Therefore, future research might explore how gender could help or hinder levels of immersion, acceptance and involvement, and the depths and range of disclosure from players. In doing so, valuable implications may emerge for the community of male and female practitioners offering non-performance and lifestyle support amongst sportsmen and sports women. In this regard, Petrie et al. (1996) believed that developing a pool of qualified male and female (sport psychology) practitioners would not only contribute to gender equity, but would also increase the likelihood of meeting the varied needs of male and female athletes across a multitude of situations.

When exploring player's experiences in this thesis, unpredictably, coaches like Ray (from Study 2 onward), began sharing their difficulties. In fact a coach's experience appears equally as complex as those of players (Zitzelsberger & Orlick, 1998). Coaches also live the occasionally unstable, insecure and nomadic life of a professional, have pressures and expectations to perform themselves and of course have their own lives away from the game. Given professional county coaches increased levels of maturity, their lives may also in fact be even 'fuller' than those of some players. What also became increasingly clear in Study 2 and Study 3, was the way in which, having been professional players themselves, each coach's experience as a player seemed to have affected them, to this day, in very different ways. Indeed, I do allude to very brief moments during Study 2 when they too appeared to reflect further on lifestyle issues that may affect players (e.g., 'I will admit this'), and perhaps had even affected them. Future research may adopt similar non-imposing, protracted and person centered approaches in following the experiences of coaches. In doing so research might seek to explore coaches' experiences and struggles in such roles, and how their previous experiences as players might affect their current practice in terms of coaching and man-management. Again, such involvement must be desired on their part, but understanding might help their practice (primarily), perhaps offer beneficial insight to the coaching profession, and as a consequence, also support players.

Ethnographic engagement in Study 3 occasionally seemed to lend itself to players expressing to the researcher their inner ambitions, goals and desires for improvement and achievement. These thoughts appeared equally private and difficult to disclose for players, and also related to all aspects of their life. Future research may wish to continue such conversations with players and explore the various ways in which players might wish or choose to live their life in sport. One example within the ethnographic source document involves one player's interest in Buddhism, Zen and Eastern philosophy. In many ways I felt this was a good example of one individual's personal quest for self understanding and avenues outside the norm in terms of his own personal development in sport and life in general.

Whilst this research engaged players and coaches in debate regarding players' non-performance and lifestyle based experiences and discussed existing support structures and practitioner roles, it did not (formally) *record* the opinions of (localized) PL advisers and sport psychologists or more strategic personnel at the NGB level (e.g., the national lead for sport psychology, PL, sport science, sports medicine, coaching, or the ECB Performance Director). In terms of personnel at the NGB level, Brown, Gould & Foster (2005) suggested that if a practitioner hopes to have a long lasting impact, it is important to 'join' and enlist the support and endorsement of those at the top of the hierarchy. They widened a practitioner's operational lens and believed that if a practitioner has not gained the support of the national governing body (e.g., the ECB), efforts may be short lived due to funding limitations. In this sense, a strategic level of engagement was not achieved in this research but might provide an important avenue for future research given the likelihood that personnel at this level might ultimately decide on, and influence, the future provision of lifestyle oriented support.

I would like to suggest that one frustration and limitation of this research relates to the volume of qualitative data collected, but unrepresented in Study 3. The manner in which valuable stories, characters and cultural insights had to be curtailed arguably limits the value and knowledge attained from this research. However it also highlights the ability of ethnographic research to uncover a mass of undiscovered experience.

Lastly, sportsmen and women actively compete in a number of different individual, team based, professional, Olympic and amateur sports all over the world. Considering that each country is likely to have its own culture; and that sport, and each type of sport is likely to have has its own culture, there appear to be many opportunities for further research within these settings. Ethnography appears well suited for investigating sport settings and individuals' unique experiences within them (Krane & Baird, 2005) and more ethnography could be conducted to enhance understanding, theory and practice. Indeed, for those seeking to research and understand the uniqueness of each athlete's / person's life in sport, in different contexts, and those looking to improve accompanying support, there appear to be valuable opportunities ahead.

6.1 - Conclusion

This research set out by outlining how the lifestyle experiences of athletes generally and professional cricketers specifically; both inside and outside sport, were predominantly undiscovered details within literature. In this regard, this research is arguably the first of its kind to explicitly explore and represent the lifestyle and non-performance based experiences of Professional County Cricketers within the contexts, cultures and environments in which they reside. Alongside this exploration each study has also (at times and to differing degrees) explored the potential roles and associated skills of allied *practitioners* (including PL advisers, coaches and sport psychologists) in supporting the (performance) *lifestyle(s)* of professional cricketers. These discussions offer a wide ranging critique of existing support structures and practitioner support roles in professional cricket. Study 1 explored and represented players (n = 17) lifestyle experiences and perceptions of support through interviews and content analysis (Biddle et al., 2001). Study 2 used focus groups (n = 2) (Basch, 1987; Lederman, 1990; Murphy et al., 1992; Kitzinger, 1994; Bloor et al., 2001) to engage coaches at Rinshire (n = 5) and Woodshire (n = 3) county cricket clubs in debate regarding their perspectives on players experiences and the associated provision of support. Study 3 utilised longitudinal ethnographic engagement and creative writing (Tedlock, 2000; Foley, 2002; Tierney 2002; Krane & Baird 2005) to further explore, understand and experience the lifestyle based experiences of players, in context, and as they happened over a competitive season. Each Study offered findings that naturally built on, and interrelated with each other. These findings were presented in a unique and integrated fashion throughout, to offer more coherent, detailed and integrated discussions.

Through these qualitative methodologies and with a latter emphasis on narratives, this research has articulated the endless complexity befitting a professional cricketer's life. Indeed, this research draws parallels with Nasser Hussain's (2004) assertion which was offered in the introduction, he suggested that "sportsmen have personal problems, like anyone else... sportsmen are not machines" (p.264). Findings highlighted that at certain times, and during certain transitional phases, players' lives could become crowded by an

ever increasing number of peripheral matters unrelated to their on-field performance. Some of these lifestyle based matters (e.g., financial, educational and career planning) resonate with some of the more common and known lifestyle experiences of athletes in the public domain, which are currently being supported by Athlete Lifestyle Programmes and more specifically the ECB PL programme. However, while some lifestyle based experiences appeared more generic and noticeable, others appeared more idiosyncratic, latent and elusive. Moreover, Study 1 and Study 3 highlighted how, in *reality*, players' lives and performances might be affected by a plethora of more personal and private concerns (e.g., loneliness) that relate more to their general experiences and struggles as a *person in sport*. Viewed collectively, all studies seemed to depict a sea of personal discontent and a turbulent landscape of player survival where *both* junior and senior professionals all experienced (differing degree's of) difficulty and change. These findings highlight a lack of depth and a contextual gap within existing knowledge and support structures and offer critical insights and opportunities for improvement to any organisation (e.g., UK Sport, the ECB, or professional clubs) or practitioner seeking to support players (or athletes).

Across this research, the contexts, cultures and environments of professional cricket have been described as masculine, macho, narcissistic, unaccommodating, uncommunicative, unwelcoming, unforgiving, insensitive, somewhat unlike the real world, pressurized, intense, competitive and abrasive, and finally, results oriented. These diverse contextual findings were free to evolve throughout this research. They also highlighted the value of further embedded and protracted ethnographic engagement (Krane & Baird 2005) with athletes and coaches in contrasting sports milieu, to appreciate their potential influence on athletes. Players appeared to develop, live and perform within ever transient environments, with individual county club environments / contexts appearing to oscillate across a continuum of sensitivity and support according to the perspectives of coaches who occupied, and ultimately influenced them. The contexts, cultures and environments of professional cricket were therefore discussed *alongside* findings relating to coaches' perspectives of players experiences. In this sense, Study 2 exposed how coaching practitioners *could* play a part in influencing and shaping the contextual sensitivity (or

insensitivity) and lifestyle oriented support experienced by a player. In all, players' experiences did not occur within a vacuum or appear totally detached from coaches' influences, but were influenced by what appeared to be a harsh cauldron of professional sport. Study 2 highlighted how some coaches may be supportive of players lifestyle oriented experiences and recognise their influence on performance. However, Study 2 also found other coaches more dismissive, intolerant and unaware of players' experiences, leading them to question the value and outcomes of supporting a player's lifestyle. Each coach's perspective seemed to stem from a number of personal variables (e.g., their own history as a professional player) and current situational factors (e.g., performance pressures). Whether supportive or unsupportive in their outlook, *all* coaches in Study 2 appeared uncertain and hesitant with regards the *extent* of their own role in the future support of players lifestyle experiences. The coaches' shared uncertainty seemed to stem from concerns over just how far they might let themselves go in supporting players with what they perceived to be significant issues. Findings across all studies also suggested that the unavoidable bottom line that accompanies coaching at the professional level, could inhibit coaches' relationships with players. More specifically, their own accountability and results oriented judgements may create barriers and conditions to coaches' relationships with players that may affect any lifestyle oriented support they are able to offer. Whilst respecting coaches ultimate performance objectives, and their own occupational accountability to performance outcomes, they should still be encouraged to look *beyond* their own role and empower (and perhaps at times work alongside) localized lifestyle oriented practitioner support roles.

At some point across each Study players' reflections, coaches' contributions and insights emanating from the practitioner-cum-researcher's own ethnographic engagement, offer implications and recommendations for localized practice as well as the wider and more universal provision of lifestyle oriented support (e.g., within UK Sport, the ECB, and other professional sports). A digest of these implications and recommendations are summarised below.

- Whilst acknowledging the value of a proactive educational workshop programme for academy players (i.e., within the ECB PL programme), data exposed how a workshop culture

could only ever remain one small part of a wider lifestyle agenda. In light of findings, a workshop culture would appear ill equipped, too far removed from the *reality* of life as a professional cricketer and could not pretend to offer prolonged support required to make any significant lifestyle change.

- This research emphasised the potential value of future localised practitioners (i.e., in one county as opposed to three or four) *patiently* building trusting relationships with players. This *process of building and earning* trusting relationships appears a protracted one and might require a considerable commitment (e.g., 18 hour days, 6 days a week during a 7 month season) from practitioners. In addition, a practitioner's *time* spent sensing and experiencing *deeper* intangibles that are closer to the very *core* of players and coaches' difficulties, in their own social settings, could also play a crucial role in highlighting the very essence of support they need, to subsequently, improve their performance.
- Players described specific altruistic characteristics and personal qualities as pre-requisites for practitioners in support roles and appeared to depict the ideal of someone with knowledge of counselling and an associated counselling skill base. Study 1 and Study 3 emphasised the need for practitioners to *operationalize* counselling knowledge and counselling skills in applied settings to support players' lifestyle based needs. More specific reflections on dialogue from Study 3 advocated the potential value of *person-centered* counselling skills (see Rogers 1957; 1961; 1980). These skills would require practitioners to embrace and *apply* notions of being *unconditional, non-judgmental, empathic, genuine* and *congruent* in their attitude and approach to supporting players.
- Based on current information available regarding the training and professional development of PL advisers and sport psychologists, findings from this research placed a greater emphasis on the value of a more *ongoing* and *long-term, practitioner focused* and *counselling based* blueprint for the future roles, training and practice of supportive practitioners (whether sport psychologist or PL adviser) in support of athletes' *lifestyles*. On reflection (but only after widening his own awareness of counselling based literature), the author has come to believe that the spheres of counselling and counselling psychology offer future practitioners and existing support structures (both within and outside professional cricket), an invaluable and grounded framework from which to learn how they might *better* support the lifestyle based *needs* of professional sportsmen and women.
- This research also recognised the potential advantages to be gained from lifestyle practitioners engaging in extensive reconnaissance to gain contextual awareness and (at times) work *collaboratively* with (specific) coaches to better support players' issues whilst

ensuring ethical standards and codes of confidentiality. It was argued that a collaborative and contextually informed practitioner would, at times, gain an invaluable advantage in their work.

- Effective and sustainable lifestyle oriented support appeared to need more than recommended procedures, training or formulae. Inferences suggested that the long term practice and success of any lifestyle practitioner (and ultimately any programme) may be built and sustained upon *how* they philosophically approach their practice, and fundamentally, *who* they are (see Simmons & Andersen, 1995; Corlett, 1996; Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). It was argued that *applying* the personal virtues of sincerity, respect, integrity and nobility could lay a sound foundation for any *immersed* and *longitudinal* practitioner support role in professional cricket.
- Findings might supplement existing literature and training that seeks to better prepare and inform inexperienced practitioners entering applied settings who choose to employ an immersed modality. In this regard, the researchers own experiences inferred the need for personal *and* professional balance as a practitioner. The researchers own experiences also stressed the need for, and value of, financed and *scheduled* (time and space for) supervision. Practitioner supervision could act to ensure lifestyle practitioners make responsible decisions and commit to manageable work schedules and involvement. It could also allow for case debriefing, encourage practitioners to share the content of others' problems, aid personal recovery and foster greater self-awareness.
- An embedded modality and holistic interest in people's personal issues and private lives might conceivably, and on rare occasions, mean practitioners find themselves operating in close proximity to, and considering, the ethical boundaries of their role. Specifically, they might question the limitations of their own skill base and refer (e.g., to a more qualified professional) or seek advice (e.g., within a supervisory relationship) as and where appropriate. The navigation of each individual player's situation might reasonably require individual attention.
- Findings across all studies emphasized the importance of practitioners and organizations looking beyond an *absolute* performance oriented ethos. Adopting such a definitive stance might potentially, but perhaps also crucially, limit what one *hears* from players, *sees* in players and limit what one can ultimately *do* for players. Moreover, it appeared that the gravity of non-performance based issues experienced by some players means that they may (at times) require negotiation before any performance can be more complete. In this sense,

lifestyle support appeared in no way redundant or peripheral in terms of support designed to improve performance, and would ultimately matter.

- **Given the density and complexity of lifestyle issues experienced by some players in Study 3, technique based symptom relief based on the administration of mental skills devoid of contextual understanding, offered in isolation and in a one off meeting, may be somewhat insufficient and ill equipped to support players. The data and implications drawn from this thesis encourage practitioners interested in supporting a player's *lifestyle*, to adopt an approach that resembles something more humanistic and person centered with a more protracted and immersed modality of practice.**
- **This research contemplated the future roles, agendas and expectations of lifestyle based practitioner support roles in professional cricket. The discussion looked to address the overall provision of lifestyle oriented support in cricket, and arrived at a need for a strategic review of support. This research invited the ECB, and NGBs in general, to *stop*, and take time to reflect on existing support structures (namely PL and sport psychology). As a consequence of this review, primary importance was placed on meeting players expressed needs. These needs appeared to stress the importance of supporting cricketers overall *lives as people in and outside sport*. Without differentiating between the proficiency of PL or sport psychology programmes in meeting players' needs, the researcher did conclude that a practitioners' operational philosophy, modality of practice, training and competence, and general make up as person, would act as useful guides in debating future provision.**
- **Experiences of reflecting (and religiously writing in a purposefully *creative* and *detailed* manner) as a practitioner-cum-researcher appeared to enhance the authors own personal development and might also serve to enhance the personal development and practice of other practitioners. It was suggested that practitioners' should regularly reflect on the *process* of their practice and should (ideally) be given (e.g., by the NGB) or specifically make *time* and *space* themselves for self-reflection (within supervision and / or outside it). The value of self-reflection through the medium of writing was suggested, but future practitioners are encouraged to find the most suitable and practical technique that suits them.**

7.1 – References

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8.1 – Appendix

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APPENDIX A

A REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL ATHLETE LIFESTYLE PROGRAMMES

The Australian ACE Programme

Anderson & Morris (2000) outlined that by 1997 the Australian ACE (Athlete Career Education) programme, although something of an exception, was delivering the most comprehensive athlete lifestyle programme in the world. The Programme had been coordinated on a national basis since 1995, between the Australian Institute of sport (AIS) and the Victorian Institute of sport, and by 1996 ACE advisers were appointed in each state institute / academy of sport with a national manager to coordinate the programme. The overall aim of the ACE programme today is to assist athletes to balance the demands of their sporting careers whilst enhancing their opportunities to also develop educational and vocational skills. This involves developing a 'practical package' / career plan that integrates both sporting and non sporting components so athletes can achieve success in sport and life (AIS/ACE leaflet, 2007). The Australian leaflet currently advocates that:

"...ACE focuses on performance enhancement by concentrating on the holistic view of athlete development..."

Strategies and support services include individual athlete assessments, personal development training courses, career and education planning including access to career referral networks, online services, lifestyle management, post career transitional support and efforts to ensure programme integration (AIS/ACE leaflet, 2007). A national network of 24 Career Counselors currently support over 4000 athletes across more than 50 sports (AIS, 2005), and although Anderson & Morris cited high numbers as a strength back in 2000, this was also perceived as a weakness in that full and part time staffs were trying to service such a large number of athletes. The philosophy of the program was to create an environment where athletes were encouraged to be independent, self reliant and to have a capacity to meet the demands associated with elite sport. It was described by Anderson & Morris (2000) as being the 'pre-eminent programme of its kind in the world', and was about a proactive approach as opposed to a reactive one resulting in nothing being left to chance. More recently, Australian athletes have received access to 'Counseling Support Services', an extended network of personal and clinical counseling specialists in addition to the support afforded by ACE and Sport Psychology networks. The 'Athlete Counseling Support Services' leaflet (Australian Sports Commission, 2007) states that:

"...It is recognized that the counseling support available through the existing resources of the ACE program and sport psychology networks provide excellent guidance in identification and clarification of key issues athletes may be facing. However, the spread and depth of the issues that arise at times may be beyond the professional boundaries, available resources and specializations of these roles..."

In outlining support services available through ACE (i.e. those outlined above) they also outline Sport psychology support for 'Performance related issues' including, 'focusing skills, development of self belief and confidence under pressure, pre competition routines and post competition debrief strategies'. However the leaflet also outlines 'General Counseling Support' via the network of specialists, including, trauma support, grief and loss, change management, eating disorders, relationships, depression and anxiety, addictions, adolescent issues and sexual abuse. Such developments and evolution of services, in line with those that follow in other programmes later, suggest a growing trend and increased awareness of the 'spread and depth of issues' that can arise at times for athletes. Although not clinical in orientation like the services mentioned here, this thesis hopes to shed further light on 'additional issues' aside (but not exclusive) from those labeled as 'Career Counselling' and 'Performance Related issues', within context, in an athletes lifestyle. Lastly the National Coach and Athlete Career and Education program, in conjunction with the University of Southern Queensland, is currently conducting a longitudinal study exploring the relationship between participation in the program and sporting performance. This is anticipated to be completed in 2008 (AIS, 2007).

The Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre (COACC) - Canada

Similar to Australia, the Canadian system was made up of the Olympic Council and Sports Federation and incorporated provincial sporting associations. It created its first life skills programme in 1985, as part of its support for Olympic athletes, to assist their career and educational needs (including career counseling, retirement assistance, job searching, CV preparation, letters of support, job referrals, business cards, interview preparation etc) (Anderson & Morris, 2000). In 1990 the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre (COACC) introduced 'The Shadow Programme', designed to give athletes the opportunity to explore career options by shadowing professionals for 2 to 5 days and ran sport specific seminars every 2 years. Several other centre's were planned throughout Canada leading to a more decentralised approach. The only criticism put forward by Anderson & Morris (2000) was the lack of service integration, despite possessing an athlete driven programme with a sound philosophy.

The New Zealand ACE Programme

Little information was available with regards the New Zealand ACE Programme so the researcher used his position as an athlete adviser to find more information. By consulting with the ECB PL team, it came to light that within an ECB strategy document (2006-2010) information relating to the ACE programme in New Zealand was available, while further information can be found on their website (www.nzas-c.org.nz) and in a document entitled 'ACE Services' (2003) sent directly to the ECB PL Coordinator. According to these sources the programme was modeled on the Australian ACE programme but has since developed a more independent programme for its athletes. The ACE programme provides support services to 'carded' athletes through the New Zealand Academy of Sport (the Academy), and was established to help all carded athletes

achieve their sporting aspirations alongside their career, education, and personal development ambitions. The document entitled 'ACE Services' (2003) outlines the finer details of the programme, and states that ACE is designed to help athletes integrate the sport and non-sport aspects of life, with more specific goals including;

- To identify and seek to maximise opportunities and minimise constraints that influence sporting performance.
- To facilitate athletes' development of life skills in order to perform to their sporting potential.
- To encourage the athlete to communicate with their coach.
- To help athletes maximise and prolong their high performance sporting life.

(NZ 'ACE Services', 2003; p1)

ACE Services included in the (2003) document include an 'ACE Performance profile, integration of performance and other goals, helping athletes use and integrate support networks, financial planning, budgeting and sponsorship, living / relocation, retirement, career, education and employment advice, time management, goal setting and decision making'. Advisers also refer athletes in dealing with the media, public speaking, contracts, cooking skills and counselling.

Programmes in the United States

In contrast to the previous programmes the structure of sport in the US means that most athletes come through a college based scholarship programme (Anderson & Morris, 2000), with different organisations offering differing programmes as outlined below. Unlike some other programmes the latest information in relation to these programmes was not readily accessible via the internet. The Women's Sports Foundation, were investigating the introduction of an athlete career and education programme to promote the importance of education amongst African American females. The programme operated using workshops and social functions, but didn't offer individualised support at that time (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Since 1990, the National Football League (NFL) had introduced four new programmes related to athlete career preparation, including a Continuing Education Programme (CEP) for those about to retire or re-enter education, a Career Transition Programme (CTP) providing practical seminars on dealing with retirement, a Financial Education Programme (FEP) providing information on financial issues, and a Family Assistance Programme (FAP) for assistance in non-football matters, such as marriage counseling, parental care and alcohol and drug counseling. Although commended for designing such programmes, the NFL was criticised for only offering workshop formats (aside from individual support within the FAP) and for being reactive in nature (Anderson & Morris, 2000). The United States Olympic Education Centre (USOEC) supported athletes to combine a college degree with elite sport, and at that time was the only residential Olympic centre in the US to combine such demands. The centre employed an education officer who at the time of the research serviced 80 athletes, although seemingly lacked a framework to work with them on a consistent basis. The education

officer spent a considerable amount of time attempting to deal with problems that student athletes face, such as scheduling and tutoring (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Approximately 25,000 athletes from more than 40 countries have participated in USOEC programmes since the centers inception (United States Olympic Education Centre, 2007). The National Basketball League (NBL) in conjunction with the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) introduced a career and education programme in 1987 with a budget of \$5 million, providing services to over 320 athletes, including internship, degree completion / education training, and professional athlete career education. However, Anderson & Morris (2000) reported that no documentation was available on the nature of the services at all. The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and the NCAA division I Athletic Directors Association introduced a new programme called CHAMPS/Life Skills offering life skills education to elite athletes. The programme was based on five areas including, academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, service and career development. The emphasis was on life skills education specific to the individual institution within which it operates (i.e. the context) and the athlete in question. Carr and Bauman (1996) believed the programme had great potential but was doomed to fail unless it had complete support and recognition from university and athletic administration, coaching staffs and student athletes.

Selected Overview of Career Transition Programmes

In a more recent paper, Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalée (2004) also offer a concise summary of what they call transitional programmes, including many of the programmes developed by governing bodies and sport institutes outlined above. Table 8.1 offers a review of existing programmes, excluding the ECB PL Programme, and is taken directly from their paper. However, Table 8.1 does not accommodate the name change associated with the UK PL Programme, which perhaps reflects the changing and elusive nature of such programmes at this time.

Table 8.1 - Selected overview of career transition programmes (Taken from Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004, p.14)

Program	Institution	Country
Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program	Australian Institute of Sport	Australia
Athlete Career and Education (ACE-UK) Program	UK Sports Institute	UK
British Athlete Lifestyle Assessment Needs in Career and Education (BALANCE) Program	University of Strathclyde	Scotland
Career Assistance Program for Athletes	US Olympic Committee	USA
Making the Jump Program	Advisory Resource Centre for Athlete	USA
Olympic Athlete Career Centre—National Sports Centre	Olympic Athlete Career Centre	Canada
Olympic Job Opportunities Program	Australian Olympic Committee	Australia
Study and Talent Education Program (STEP)	Vrije Universiteit Brussel	Belgium
The Retiring Athlete	Dutch Olympic Committee	Netherlands
Wales Lifestyle Management Program	Sports Council for Wales	Wales
Whole-istic	American College Athletic Association	USA
Women's Sports Foundation Athlete Service	Women's Sports Foundation	USA

While acknowledging that there may never be an ideal framework or approach, Anderson and Morris (2000) were the first to provide details of emerging international programmes and in doing so described varying degrees of success and progression. A notable more recent development has been the extended networks of personal and clinical counseling specialists being made available to athletes by governing bodies and or player unions (see Australian Sports Commission, 2007, the PCA, 2007). The details outlined above reflect the unique differences across these programmes, but a degree of similarity appears to exist in ethos, given they all seek to support athletes in the present, in preparation for their future. Speaking more generally, many programmes appear to be coordinated on a national basis, and have localised advisers working with athletes to proactively balance their sport and life commitments through either one on one or group based workshops. It appears that the programmes outlined above grew from research which championed services in some form or another (e.g. career guidance and education support), to support athletes in exploring, developing and balancing parallel careers and / or personal development opportunities, alongside their sport, in preparation for their future. Expanding on the authors own summary, Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee (2004) also elaborate on how many programmes vary in format (including workshops, seminars and educational models) and methods (including presenting information, providing guidance and skilled learning), and summarise topics covered in these programmes as;

- **Social aspects** – including quality of relationships (e.g. family, friends) in the context of sport and of an academic / professional occupation
- **Aspects relevant to a balanced style of living** – self image, self esteem, and self identity, social roles, responsibilities, priorities, and participation in leisure activities.

- **Personal management skills** – such as education, academic skills, skills required in professional occupation, financial planning, transferable skills from the athletic career and coping skills
- **Vocational and professional occupation**, including vocational guidance, soliciting (e.g. CV, interview), knowledge of the job market, networking and career advice.
- **Aspects relevant to career retirement**, such as possible advantages of retirement, perceived and expected problems, physical/physiological aspects of retirement and decreased levels of physical activity (Wylleman et al, 1999).

SOME PARTS
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