

TRANSITIONS TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE NET:
TALES OF TENNIS PLAYERS WHO BECAME COACHES

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature is emerging on the topic of athletic retirement. In particular, there are numerous reports about the adjustment difficulties many athletes experience at the end of their sporting careers. Despite the recent profusion of retirement research, there is still much more work to be done in terms of understanding athletes' retirement transition experiences, and more specifically, determining what paths lead to successful adjustments. One path that has been suggested to influence the quality of athletes' retirement experiences is staying involved in sport by becoming coaches. Unfortunately, little is known about the athlete-to-coach transition because few researchers have investigated this area. This research used a qualitative approach to explore the transition experiences of three retired tennis players who became coaches. Participants' stories were collected using in-depth interviews and presented as case studies, with attention given to how their stories related to the literature. The case studies illustrate that the athlete-to-coach transition is a multifaceted idiosyncratic process and is best understood on a case-by-case basis. The Athlete Apperception Technique (Gibbs, Marchant, & Andersen, 2005) was also administered to the third participant to determine if this new tool could complement, illuminate, or add to the information gathered in the in-depth interview. By sharing the stories of retired athletes who became coaches, this research provides information that might potentially be helpful in athlete development, career transition, and coach education programs, and may assist other athletes navigating through their retirement journeys.

DECLARATION

I, Tarah E. Kavanagh, declare that the Doctor of Applied Psychology (Sport) thesis entitled Transitions to the other side of the net: Tales of tennis players who became coaches is no more than 40,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature

Date

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband Matthew – I would not have made it through this journey without your unconditional love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for tolerating me and listening to me moan, and for understanding the amount of time I had to dedicate to complete this thesis.

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“Once you commit to a life of sport, you can never fully escape that part of your life.”

(Tinley, 2003, p. 2)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, retirement from competitive sport has received considerable attention from sport scholars, sporting organisations, and the media. Interest in this area is due to numerous anecdotal and empirical reports, sport biographies, and media coverage of athletes experiencing adjustment difficulties following the conclusion of their sporting careers. These difficulties range from struggles with identity (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Brewer, 1993; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007; Sparkes, 1998), depression (Steele & Carne, 2007), and eating disorders (Blinde & Stratta, 1982; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982), to decreased self-confidence (Cecić Erpič, 1998; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986) and substance abuse (Mihovilovic, 1968; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Tinley, 2003). Although the proportion of athletes who encounter difficulties remains unclear, these accounts suggest that retirement adjustment problems are a significant and widespread issue for athletes today.

To understand the challenges that modern day athletes face at the end of their sporting careers, it is necessary to appreciate the way in which they enter into such occupations, and the lives that they lead. Almost all elite-level athletes begin their involvement in sport at a young age and build their lives and identities on early dreams of “making it to the top” (Tinley, 2003). The large proportion of their time is dedicated to intense training and competition (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Steinaker, Lormes, Lehmann, & Altenburg, 1998), often at the expense of their emotional, intellectual, social, and personal development (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Nicholi, 1987). From an early age, their lives are managed and

regimented, and people from within their support networks often protect them from the external world, so that they can focus completely on their sports (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignieres, 2003; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Once they experience success, they benefit from a high socio-professional status due to extensive media coverage and substantial financial rewards (Stephan et al., 2003; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). They are revered and idolised by fans, and some become superstars (Adler & Adler, 1989; Loland, 1999; Werthner & Orlick).

Retirement begins a transition where athletes descend from the heights of the extraordinary, into the mundane world of ordinariness (Sparkes, 1998). They may be suddenly confronted with a loss of income, attention, structure, social support, physical prowess, and identity (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Due to the relatively young age at which most athletes retire, the vast majority require new sources of income (Cecić Erpič, 1998; Werthner & Orlick). Sadly, a large number of athletes lack sufficient education and skills to function outside of sport, and so they find themselves as beginners in the occupational world with no means of entry into alternative occupations or professions (Cecić Erpič; Thomas & Ermler, 1988; Werthner & Orlick; Wylleman, De Knop, Menkehorst, Theeboom, & Annerel, 1993). Although one of the only inevitabilities in high-performance sport is that eventually competitors will have to terminate their sporting careers (Taylor & Lavalley, 2010), most athletes are somewhat resistant to suggestions that their sport careers are likely to be brief, and so do not develop any contingencies or post-career plans (Lavalley, 2006; McPherson, 1980). Retirement, therefore, is often a sad, painful, and confusing journey for athletes.

The Current Research

Despite recent research efforts, there is still much to be learned about the retirement transition experiences of athletes (Gordon & Lavalley, 2004; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). In particular, there is a need to learn more about what paths lead to successful and unsuccessful adjustments. One pathway that remains relatively unexplored is relocation *within* sport after athletic retirement. Researchers have suggested that many elite athletes never fully exit their sports. Rather, after retirement from competition they continue to stay involved, and transition into other professional sport careers such as sport coaches, managers, administrators, officials, or media commentators (Torregrosa, Boixados, Valiente, & Cruz, 2004; Young, Pearce, Kane, & Pain, 2006). For this thesis, I specifically focused on the transition from athlete to coach in an attempt to learn more about relocation within sport after athletic retirement. Given the limited research and knowledge about this transition, I used qualitative methods to construct in-depth pictures of athlete-to-coach transition experiences.

The Research Questions

For my exploration of the athlete-to-coach transition, I was guided by the following research questions: Why do retired athletes choose to stay involved in sport as coaches? How do retired athletes experience their transitions into coaching? How do their athletic experiences and skills transfer into their coaching careers? How do they feel and think about their careers and life satisfaction as coaches? My main goal was to present realistic in-depth picture of the athlete-to-coach transition journey. With this goal in mind, I developed another research question that revolved around different qualitative data-gathering techniques: Can projective tests (an emergent qualitative data collection

technique) provide data that complements, illuminates, and adds to the information gathered from interviews?

Choosing a Context

Tennis was selected because I am somewhat of an insider and know the sport well. I was a serious competitive tennis player when I was young, and later transitioned into coaching. My husband, brother, and many of my friends also made the same transition. Although I had a positive transition experience, I have heard about and witnessed many negative transitions into coaching. I have also observed the damaging long-term effects that negative transitions have had on coaches' lives, their families, and their athletes. Throughout the years, I have had a sense that there is a lot more going on in the context of athletic retirement that is not being tapped by research. I hoped that I might conduct research that could help me better understand my experiences and observations, as well as help other athlete-to-coach transitioners reflect on and understand their own experiences.

The sport of tennis is also one that is increasingly becoming more professional. To play on tour, most young players abandon education and work opportunities, and reduce social networks to concentrate on tennis training, competition, and travelling. The commitment that is required is such that they may be under-prepared for the real world when it comes to retiring from competitive tennis (Young et al., 2006). Furthermore, tennis coaching is a professional occupation in Australia, requiring formal training and certificates. All of these factors make the sport of tennis a suitable context in which to explore the transition from athlete to coach.

Expected Implications

A need to help athletes prepare and navigate through their retirement journeys has been clearly recognised in the sport psychology literature. Over the past 20 years, various

career assistance and counselling programs have been established to help athletes throughout the world (e.g., the Athlete Career and Education Program in Australia and the United Kingdom, the Career Assistance Program for Athletes in the United States, the Retiring Athlete in the Netherlands, and the Study and Talent Education Program in Belgium). Most of these programs target athletes early in their careers to try to prevent problems later on. The overall aim of these programs is to reduce post-career adjustment difficulties by enhancing athletes' educational and vocational skills, and by helping athletes plan for their lives after their competitive careers end (Gordon & Lavalley, 2004; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). As an example, the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program in Australia offers athletes individual needs assessments, personal development training courses, individual career and education planning, community recognition, and transition guidance that is delivered by personnel who are appropriately trained and qualified (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

Because little is known about the transition from athlete to coach, it is unclear whether athlete development and career assistance programs should recommend and prepare athletes (among other options) for such relocations within sport. By listening to the stories of athlete-to-coach transitioners, and having them share their experiences, this research provided useful information for practitioners about what motivates retiring athletes to embark on coaching careers, how retiring athletes experience their transitions into coaching, how athletic experiences and skills can be transferred into coaching careers, and how coaches think and feel about their new careers and life satisfaction. This information might be valuable in athlete development, career transition, and coach education programs, and may assist other athletes navigate through their retirement journeys.

This study may also be helpful for sport psychology researchers. Although the qualitative approach has gained popularity and credibility since Martens (1987) issued a call for qualitative research to be included in sport psychology, researchers have been relatively conservative in their efforts to include the qualitative approach (Culver, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2003). Sport psychology researchers have relied extensively on the interview method, and have only recently become more open to alternative data collection techniques (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001; Culver et al.). By illustrating the usefulness of established (interviews) and emergent (projective tests) approaches to qualitative inquiry in sport psychology, this study may increase researchers' awareness of different data collection techniques, and encourage them to step outside their comfort zones and explore different approaches.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Perspectives on Athletic Retirement

Since the issue of athletic retirement began to attract attention, attempts have been made within the sport community to provide a formal conceptualisation of the retirement process. Most investigators have drawn upon models outside of sport, and have tried to apply these frameworks to the concerns of retiring athletes (Taylor & Lavallee, 2010). A brief overview of the most widely used models, their application to athletic retirement, their strengths and weaknesses, and relevant research findings are provided in the following section.

Social Gerontology Models

Gerontology is the study of the aging process (Atchley, 1991). More specifically, social gerontology models describe the lives and social activities of people during and after the retirement process. Several theorists have applied social gerontological models to retirement from competitive sport (e.g., Lerch, 1981; McPherson, 1980; Rosenberg, 1981). The most common include activity theory (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953), disengagement theory (Cummings, Dean, Newell, & McCaffrey, 1960), continuity theory (Atchley, 1976), social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973), and social exchange theory (Homans, 1961).

Activity theory. Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) originally proposed this theory and suggested that individuals strive to maintain levels of activity throughout the life span. If adjustment to retirement is to be successful, the once active roles that are lost upon retirement need to be substituted with new ones. Although this theory may explain how some athletes adjust to retirement, it does not apply to many athletes. For some

athletes, maintaining their activity patterns is difficult because their levels of activity are hard to duplicate outside of sport (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Rosenberg, 1981). Furthermore, many athletes do not retire from the work force when they retire from sport. Rather, they pursue second careers and often stay involved in their sports. Not surprisingly, there is limited empirical support for activity theory in the sport literature, raising doubts about its applicability to athletic retirement.

Disengagement theory. Cummings and colleagues (1960) originally introduced disengagement theory as an extension of Erikson's (1950, 1968) model of life-span development, and in opposition to activity theory (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953). This theory suggests that society and the elderly withdraw from one another to the mutual benefit and satisfaction of both. It is a system-induced mechanism that ensures equilibrium. In other words, society gets younger workers into the workforce, and the elderly disengage and enjoy their remaining years in leisure.

Because most athletes do not leave the work force permanently upon retirement from sport, several theorists have suggested that athletic retirement does not fit with disengagement theory. Furthermore, Lerch (1981) demonstrated that a large number of athletes hang on to their sport long after they should have disengaged. Gordon (1995) has also suggested that many retiring athletes cannot afford to withdraw from society, due to the relatively young age at which they retire. For these reasons, it has been argued that disengagement theory offers little insight into the transition out of competitive sport (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985).

Continuity theory. According to continuity theory (Atchley, 1976), individuals are predisposed and motivated to strive for continuity as an adaptive strategy to confront changes associated with the aging process and the pursuit of life satisfaction. Upon

retirement, the energy devoted to the work role is redistributed between remaining roles. No specific substitution is needed, but rather a shift of energy and interests. The best adjusted individuals experience minimal change and greater continuity in mental frameworks and life patterns following retirement.

In the case of athletic retirement, this theory may apply if the athletic role is not the only aspect of an athlete's identity, and sustaining the athletic role is not a priority. For many athletes, however, a simple redistribution of energy is extremely unlikely because they have strong, exclusive athletic identities, and are enmeshed in their roles (Rosenberg, 1981). Looking at this model from a different perspective, it does account for athletes' tendencies to want to stay involved in their sports. Remaining in the sport allows for a sense of internal and external continuity and, by implication, a more satisfactory adjustment.

In terms of empirical support, researchers have found mixed results. In support of continuity theory, Haerle (1975) surveyed former baseball players and found that their athletic careers influenced their first post-athletic careers, with many players choosing to stay involved in sports. Allison and Meyer (1988) surveyed retired female tennis players and found that 50% expressed satisfaction upon retirement. These authors concluded that the high level of satisfaction among their participants could be explained by most of the sample continuing to be involved in sport after retirement. In contrast, Lerch (1981) tested the applicability of continuity theory with a sample of retired male baseball players. He hypothesized that participants would report optimal adjustments to retirement if their post-athletic careers remained connected to sport, their incomes remained relatively stable after retirement, and their levels of commitment to sport were maintained. The results revealed that none of these variables were significantly related to

adjustment to athletic retirement. Arviko (1976) and Reynolds (1981) also reported similar findings in their studies with professional athletes. Overall, these results suggest that continuity theory may be applicable to some, but not many, retiring athletes. They also reveal the need for further research in this area.

Social breakdown theory. In this theory, which Kuypers and Bengston (1973) developed, the focus is on the process of social reorganisation after retirement. They proposed that with any role loss, individuals become increasingly susceptible to external labelling. If the social evaluation is negative, individuals tend to withdraw or reduce their involvements until the role is completely eliminated from their lives.

Few researchers have tested this model in sport-related contexts. Despite the limited research, several theorists have proposed that social breakdown theory can be applied to retirement from sport (e.g., Edwards & Meier, 1984; Rosenberg, 1981). They have suggested that the process of social breakdown reflects what often happens in sport when athletes' skills deteriorate and they begin to perform poorly. Sports organisations, coaches, the media, and fans assign athletes with negative labels, promoting negative self-evaluations and withdrawal from the sport environment. Theorists have suggested that to avoid this potentially negative experience, athletes should engage in early pre-retirement education and planning in order to help them redefine and reconstruct their self-concepts before their skills decline.

Exchange theory. According to Homans (1961), successful adjustment to retirement can be achieved by rearranging social networks and activities so that an individual's remaining energy generates maximum return. This framework has some merit, in that it explains how retiring athletes exchange their physical talent, knowledge, and experiences for meaningful rewards from the sport system, such as working in the

media or coaching. Several theorists (e.g., Lavallee, 2000; Rosenberg, 1981) have supported the application of this model to retirement from sport, as well as the results from Johns, Linder, and Wolko's (1990) study with retired gymnasts.

More recently, however, there have been theorists who have criticised this model (e.g., Gordon, 1995; Koukouris, 1991). They have suggested that it does not stand up because it denies the possibility of a career after sport (Koukouris), and that an athlete's resources will inevitably deteriorate (Gordon).

Review of social gerontological models. Despite their intuitive appeal, few researchers have tested social gerontological models in sport-related contexts, and little research evidence exists. This limited empirical support has led researchers and theorists to raise concerns about these models' applicability to athletic retirement. Many authors have argued that athletic retirement cannot be compared to retirement from the work force because athletes retire at much younger ages, and often pursue post-sporting careers (Curtis & Ennis, 1988; Murphy, 1995; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Furthermore, the application of social gerontology models has been criticised because they were not developed within sport populations, and do not take into consideration the usual career life histories of athletes (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985).

Overall, most contemporary researchers and theorists have argued that social gerontological models do not capture the nature and dynamics of the athletic retirement process, and question their applicability in sport (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Murphy, 1995). I believe, however, that no conclusive statements can be made about their utility until more empirical testing is conducted. Although not perfect, these models appear to be valuable in that they help us understand some athletes' experiences, especially the athletes in this study who chose to stay involved in sport following retirement.

Thanatological Models

Thanatology is an area of study concerned with the processes of death and dying (Lavalley, 2000). Some sport scholars have suggested that thanatological theories, such as social death theory (Kalish, 1966) and stages of dying (Kübler-Ross, 1969), explain athletes' responses to retirement (e.g., Blinde & Stratta, 1982; Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984).

Social death theory. Social death is a concept that Kalish (1966) developed. It has frequently been employed to describe the dynamics of athletic retirement (e.g., Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984). This analogy, which refers to the condition of being treated as if one were dead even though still biologically alive, describes the loss of social functioning and ostracism that may accompany athletic career termination.

Stages of dying theory. Several theorists have suggested that the emotions people experience when facing death or loss (as Kübler-Ross, 1969, outlined) are similar to the different emotions that retiring athletes experience (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Gordon, Milios, & Grove, 1991; Grove et al., 1997; Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984; Wiese-Bjornstal & Smith, 1993; Wolff & Lester, 1989). These psychological reactions, as applied to retirement from sport, include: denial and isolation, in which athletes initially refuse to acknowledge their inevitable career terminations; anger, in which retiring athletes become disturbed at their overall situations; bargaining, in which individuals try to negotiate for lengthened careers in sport; depression, in which athletes experience distress reactions to retirement; and acceptance, in which individuals eventually come to accept their career transitions. Although a number of theorists have used this model to describe the process of athletic retirement, only a few researchers have systematically tested it (e.g., Blinde & Stratta).

Review of thanatological models. In general, thanatological models have been described as inadequate when applied to athletic retirement. The main criticisms that have been raised include: (a) the models cannot be generalised across athletes, (b) they do not indicate the factors that influence the quality of adaptation to retirement and, (c) the theories assume that the retirement process is an inherently negative event (Gordon, 1995; Lavalley, 2000; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). As with social gerontology models, thanatological theories' application to sport have also been criticised for not taking into consideration the developmental history of athletes, for being developed with non-sport populations, and for having limited empirical support (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). Despite these weaknesses, thanatological models can be valuable descriptive tools if used in a flexible way. Although there is limited research in this area, there are enough anecdotal reports to suggest that these models do have some merit in describing the distress that some athletes experience upon retirement.

Transition Models

Transition models focus on life events that result in a change in one's relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Schlossberg, 1981). A transition has no end point; rather, a transition is a process over time that includes phases of assimilation and appraisal as people move in, through, and out of it (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). A number of transition frameworks have been employed to examine athletic retirement. The most frequently used is Schlossberg's (1981) model of human adaptation to transition.

Model of human adaptation to transition. In this model, Schlossberg (1981) outlined four factors that interact to influence the ability of an individual to cope during a transition. These factors include: (a) the characteristics of the situation (e.g., trigger,

timing, controllability, role change, duration, concurrent stress, previous experience with a similar transition, and assessment of the situation); (b) the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition (e.g., personal and demographic characteristics, and psychological resources); (c) the support available (e.g., the types of support available, and the function of the support); and (d) an individual's coping strategies (e.g., type and range of coping responses).

This model has generated substantial support from both researchers and theorists (Lavalley, 2000). It has been praised for acknowledging that retirement is a process, not a singular abrupt event. It has also been supported for recognising that adaptation to retirement depends largely on an athlete's life history, and has the potential to be a crisis or a positive experience, depending on the athlete's perception of the situation. Furthermore, it includes some of the different individual, situational, and social factors that may influence the quality of the transition experience. In addition, a number of researchers have applied this model and provided strong empirical support for its use in sport (e.g., Baillie, 1992; Parker, 1994; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Swain, 1991).

Review of transition models. Overall, retirement transition models have generated substantial support from both theorists and researchers in sport (e.g., Baillie, 1992; Hill & Lowe, 1974; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; McPherson, 1980; Parker, 1994; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Swain, 1991). They are more helpful than social gerontological and thanatology models, in that they allow for the possibility of both positive and negative experiences, and incorporate a range of influences related to adjustment (Crook & Robertson, 1991). Despite these strengths, they have still received some criticism. For example, Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) have suggested that transition models do not provide a flexible, multidimensional approach that is needed to adequately study athletic retirement.

Coakley (1983) has also suggested that these models do not acknowledge the diverse factors influencing the athlete in transition. For these reasons, several researchers within sport have proposed more comprehensive sport-specific models, which are described in the following section.

Sport-Specific Transition Models

There are two sport-specific transition models that feature prominently in the literature (Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). These models were developed recently, and are based on the theoretical framework of Schlossberg (1981), empirical research, and the researchers' own applied work with athletes. Unlike the previous theories that were described, these models were created to address the specific concerns of athletes.

Model of adaptation to career transition among athletes. In 1994, Taylor and Ogilvie developed the first sport-specific transition model for athletic retirement (see Figure 1). For the first time, some of the unique factors relating to athletes, and their experiences of retirement, were taken into account. This model offers a schematic form, and is made up of five different levels. It begins with the *causes of athletic retirement* at the top level, and descends to include *factors related to adaptation to retirement* and *available resources* at the second level. The factors noted above result in what Taylor and Ogilvie described as the *quality of the career transition* (third level), leading to either a *healthy career transition* or *career transition distress* resulting in adjustment difficulties (fourth level). According to the model, an *intervention* (fifth level) should follow career transition distress. Most current researchers use this model as a framework for studying athletic retirement, and substantial empirical support for this model can be found in the literature (see Lavalley, 2000, for a review).

Sport career transition model. Stambulova's (1997, 2003) model positions athletic retirement as a process of coping with a set of specific challenges that are necessary for adjusting to life after sport. During this time, athletes need to mobilise resources and find ways to cope. The effectiveness of coping depends on the dynamic balance between transition resources and barriers (internal or external factors that facilitate or inhibit effective coping). This process can result in two different outcomes: positive transition or crisis-transition (see Figure 2). This model is a relatively new addition to the literature, but has already proven useful for studying athletic retirement (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008).

Review of sport-specific transition models. The recent development of two sport-specific models is a positive step. The two models offer holistic and multidimensional views of athletic retirement processes, emphasize individuality in experience, and address some of the specific challenges athletes face. Although there is not an overarching theoretical framework from which to study athletic retirement, these two models are probably the most useful and applicable at present. There is, however, still scope for further conceptual development in this area because these models do not account for some athletes' retirement experiences (Gordon & Lavallee, 2004).

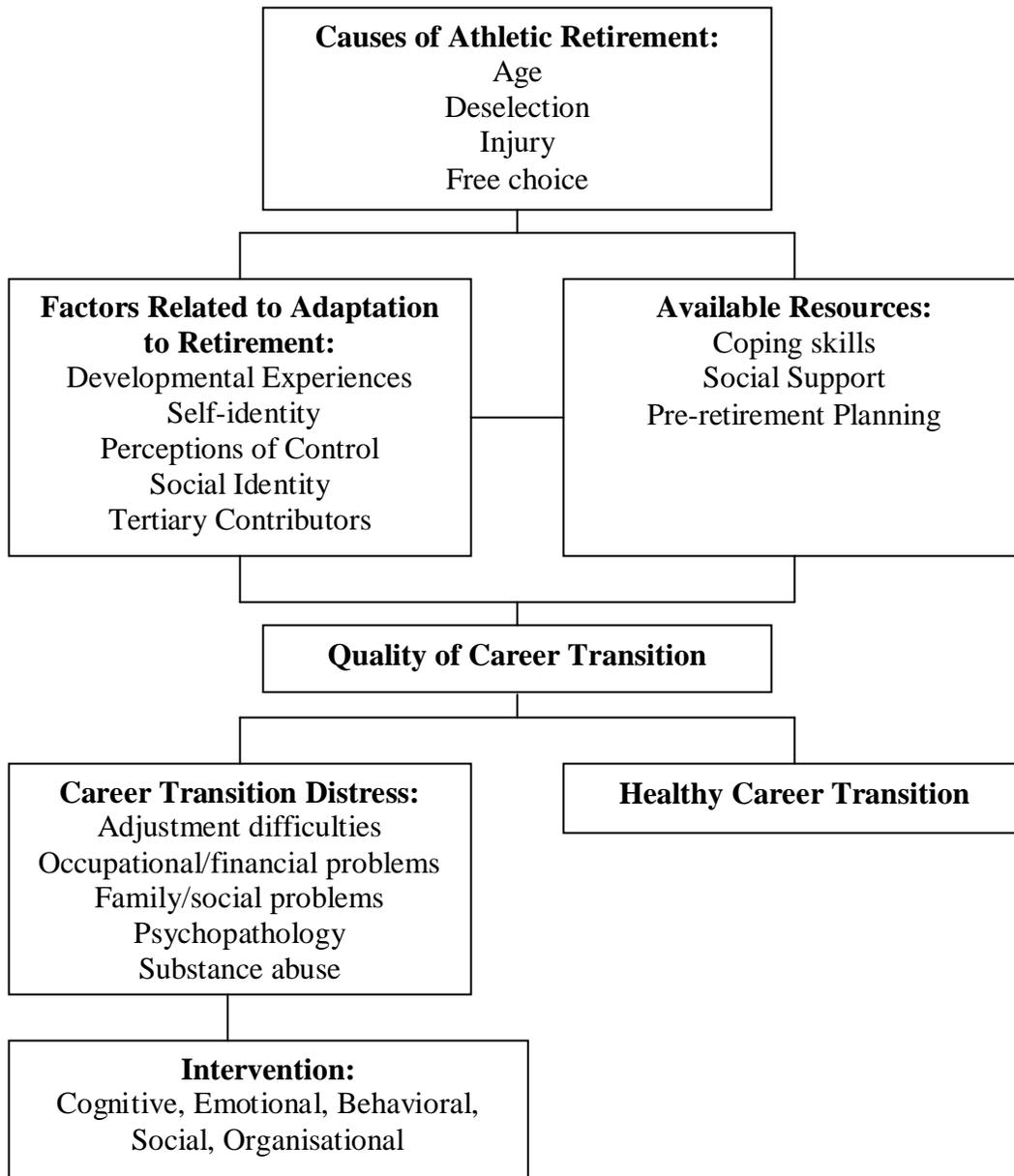


Figure 1. Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) model of adaptation to retirement among athletes.

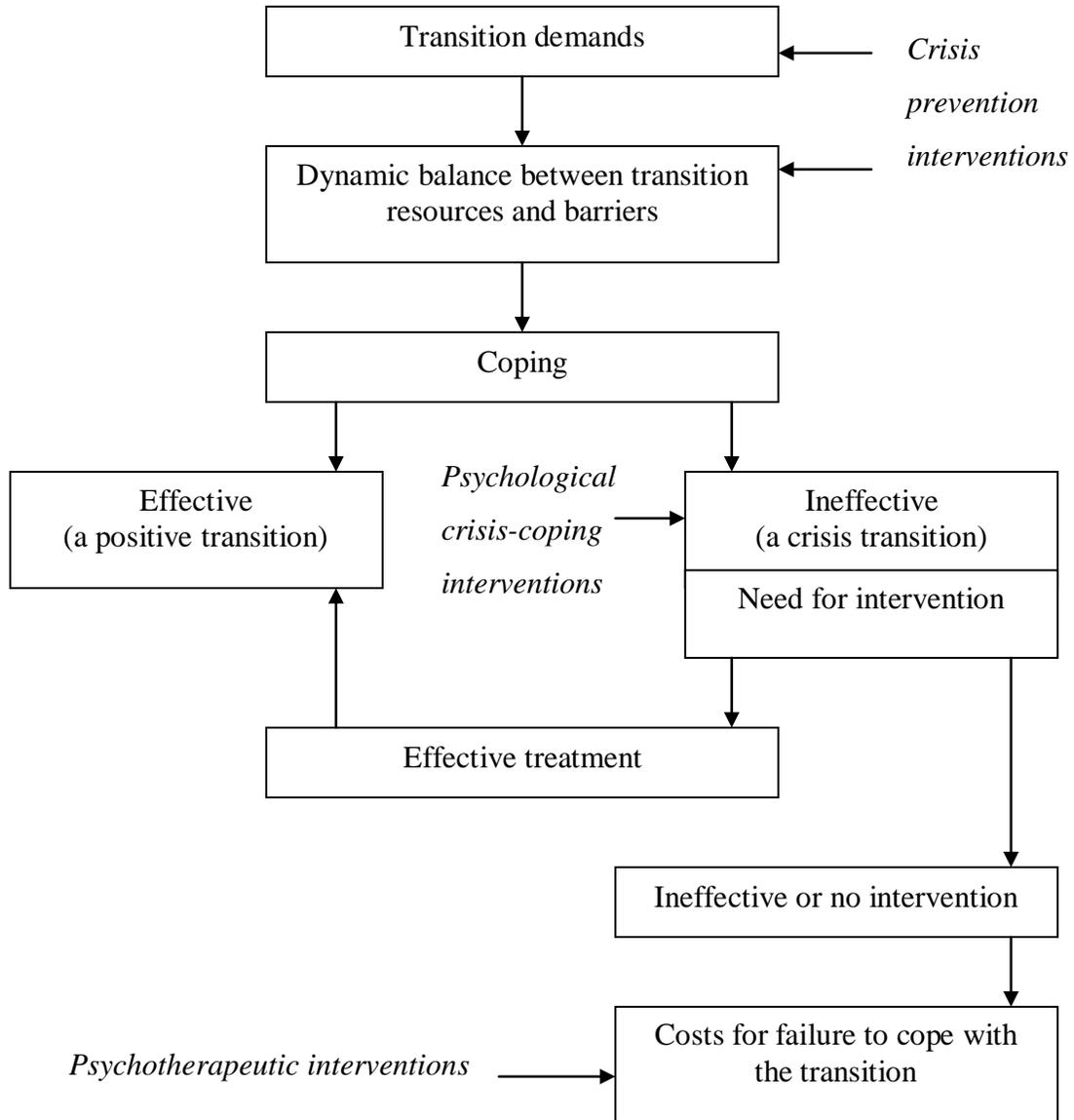


Figure 2. Stambulova's (1997, 2003) sport career transition model.

Review of Research on Athletic Retirement

Opportunities to study and address the retirement needs of athletes have proven to be difficult. Many sport organisations and coaches have not allowed sport psychologists to address career termination and life after sport, possibly from fear of distracting the athletes from their competitive focus (Taylor & Lavallee, 2010). Once athletes retire, applied sport psychologists have limited contact with them, as their attention turns to the still-competing athletes (Taylor & Lavallee). Furthermore, relatively few elite athletes have wanted to discuss post-athletic career concerns (Lerch, 1981; Taylor & Lavallee). As a result, athletic retirement research is still in an emergent stage, with many more questions than answers. I have summarised the main research findings of the last 3 decades have been summarised in the following section.

Reasons for Retirement

It appears that no single factor is primarily responsible for ceasing participation in sport (Koukouris, 1991, 1994). Rather, the reasons that athletes give for retirement are numerous, diverse, and individual (Stambulova, 1994). Researchers have found that the most common factors are age, deselection, injury, and personal choice (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). Other less common factors include work, family, and study commitments, problems with coaches, lack of success and motivation, the politics of sport, decreases in performance and enjoyment, inadequate athletic facilities, financial difficulties, and time commitments (Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1997; Mihovilovic, 1968; Taylor & Lavallee, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Researchers have suggested that the reasons behind athletic retirement play a major role in determining adjustment to post-career life (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004).

Quality of the Transition Process

There is considerable debate in the literature about the proportion of athletes who experience distress due to retirement. The conflicting findings are probably due to researchers using different athletic samples (i.e., different age, sport, gender, performance level). For example, Werthner and Orlick (1986) found that 78% of the high-performance athletes in their study encountered some degree of difficulty during their transitions. In Svoboda and Vanek's (1982) study, 83% of participants (former Olympic athletes) reported experiencing a variety of psychological, social, and vocational conflicts upon retirement from sport. Furthermore, McNally, Cavin-Stice, and Knoth (1992) reported that 88% of the former athletes in their sample indicated that they found the career transition process to be extremely problematic.

In contrast, some researchers have revealed that many athletes experience positive transitions. For example, most of the athletes in Sinclair and Orlick's (1993) study indicated that retirement changed their lives in positive ways. In Allison and Meyer's (1988) study, 50% of female tennis players expressed relief and satisfaction upon retirement, and viewed retirement as an opportunity to re-establish a normal life. Overall, these research findings demonstrate that the quality of the adjustment process is variable and idiosyncratic.

Factors Related to Adaptation to Retirement

Several researchers have proposed that ending an athletic career does not necessarily cause distress (Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). Rather, there are a number of factors that contribute to the likelihood and intensity of post-career distress.

Identity. One factor that strongly influences adaptation is the degree to which athletes define their identities in terms of their sport participation and achievements

(Lavalley, 2000; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). Put simply, identity is the perception of oneself (Lally, 2007). Although an individual identity may contain numerous dimensions, it is possible for one particular aspect to become dominant or preferred (Lally). This identity narrowing often occurs as athletes immerse themselves in their sports at early ages to the exclusion of other activities.

Based on a review of the literature, Brewer and colleagues (1993) suggested that there are both positive and negative consequences associated with an identity based strongly on sport involvement. This identity can act as either “Hercules’ muscles” or “Achilles’ heel.” The potential benefits include: the development of a salient self-identity or sense of self, positive effects on athletic performance, and greater likelihood of long-term involvement in sport. In contrast, the potential risks for individuals with strong athletic identities relate to the emotional and social difficulties they might encounter in sport career transitions, such as being deselected, injured, or reaching the end of their playing careers. Furthermore, those who strongly commit themselves to the athlete role may be less likely to plan for post-athletic career opportunities and may experience delayed career development after athletic retirement (Gordon, 1995; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).

Marcia (1966) used the term *identity foreclosure* to describe the closing off of alternative identities due to an early over-commitment to one specific role. Identity foreclosure is common among athletes, as they devote themselves to their sports at young ages, often at the expense of academic pursuits. Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1993) noted that identity foreclosure in itself is not harmful, but becomes problematic when identity exploration is impeded. Petitpas (1978) suggested that without such exploration, an

athlete's self-esteem could be too narrowly circumscribed and subject to severe threat in the face of possible loss.

Perceived control. The degree of perceived control, or voluntariness, that athletes have with respect to the ends of their careers, can also influence how they respond to retirement (McPherson, 1980). Researchers have shown that involuntary retirement often creates a highly aversive and threatening situation and negatively affects the adaptation process (Alfermann, 2000; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; McPherson, 1980; Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Wheeler, Malone, VanVlack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). Involuntary retirement has been shown to lead to psychological difficulties such as lower self-control, lower self-respect, and more frequent feelings of anger, anxiety, and depression (Alfermann & Gross, 1997; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). On the other hand, subjective feelings of control over retirement seem to foster mental health, increase feelings of self-efficacy, and facilitate the transition to post-career life (Alfermann et al., 2004; Seligman, 1991).

Another factor that can influence how athletes respond to retirement is the gradualness of the process (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). According to Mihovilovic (1968) and Werthner and Orlick (1986), a gradual transitional process may lead to fewer difficulties related to adaptation and is most preferred by athletes. A smooth transition for athletes can be facilitated by maintaining contact with their former teams and support networks, by public recognition from their teams, or by coaching or acting in other sport capacities that make use of their experiences (Mihovilovic).

Health. Following retirement, many athletes alter their eating and exercise habits, leading to changes in body composition and body image (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). Not only can these changes affect self-esteem, but there may also be

biochemical and behavioural changes, which in turn have emotional and psychological effects (Stephan et al.). Furthermore, the health of the athlete at the time of retirement may affect the adaptation process (Hill & Lowe, 1974; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). It is not uncommon for elite athletes to leave their sport permanently disabled to varying degrees (Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). These physical disabilities may negatively influence retired athletes, producing a range of psychological and emotional problems, as well as limiting their choices of new careers.

Coping resources. The quality of athletes' adaptation to retirement depends largely on the resources that they have available to help them overcome the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural problems that may arise (Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). It appears that individuals with substantial coping resources tend to experience less stress than athletes possessing few coping skills (Murphy, 1995; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Researchers have demonstrated that accepting and interpreting retirement positively, planning, focusing on other interests, keeping busy, maintaining exercise regimens, and staying in touch with friends from sport are effective coping strategies for facilitating the transition process (Grove et al., 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

Support. Although little research has been conducted on the issue of support, many athletes have commented about their feelings of loneliness, lack of social contacts, and difficulties building new relationships outside of sports once they have retired (Botterill, 1988; Cecić Erpič, 1998; Mihovilovic, 1968). Anecdotal and preliminary findings suggest that support can facilitate the retirement transition process (e.g., Brown, 1985; Bussmann & Alfermann, 1994; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Support may be defined as social or family support, coach support, or financial support. In Werthner and Orlick's (1986) study, the participants commented that the support of family and friends was a

positive factor in their transitions. On the other hand, poor coaching and uncertain financial support generally led athletes to leave their sports with a sense of bitterness and contributed to the decision of several athletes to retire.

Pre-retirement planning. Researchers have shown that pre-retirement planning broadly influences the quality of adaptation to life following competitive sport careers (Coakley, 1983; Fortunato, 1996; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Schlossberg, 1981). Planning for life after sport may include a variety of activities, such as education, occupational endeavours, and activities related to social networks. Although a relation between planning and a less difficult adaptation to post-sport life has been empirically supported (e.g., Stambulova, 1994; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982), approximately 45% of athletes do not think about their lives after active sports involvement for fear of distraction (Wyllemann et al., 1993). Contrary to this avoidance, many athletes who have engaged in pre-retirement planning have commented that planning lessened their anxieties about the transition process and allowed for a better focus on their goals (Petitpas, Champagne, Chartrand, Danish, & Murphy, 1997).

Career opportunities. Due to the relatively young age at which most athletes retire, the vast majority require new sources of income (Cecić Erpič, 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Unfortunately, many retiring athletes face difficulties finding an alternative source. Athletes often abandon their education at an early age in pursuit of their athletic goals, leaving them with little or no professional qualifications. As a result, many of them are faced with limited occupational choices and opportunities when they retire, leading to struggles with adjustment (Cecić Erpič; Werthner & Orlick; Wylleman et al., 1993). On the other hand, researchers have shown that retiring athletes who do have alternatives to sport participation, or are presented with opportunities to redirect their energy and focus,

have better transitions out of sport than those who have limited options (Cecić Erpič; McPherson, 1980; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick).

Achievement. The evaluation of achieved goals, which is subjective, is one of the less studied mediating factors associated with athletic retirement. Cecić Erpič (1998) found that some retired athletes experience difficulties relating to their unaccomplished athletic goals. Conversely, Werthner and Orlick (1986) found that athletes who achieve the greater part of their goals and feel a sense of achievement, often experience less difficulties following athletic retirement and adapt better to post-sports life than those who left their sports with their goals unfulfilled.

Relocating Within Sport after Athletic Retirement

Another factor that has been suggested to influence the quality of the retirement transition process is continued involvement in sport (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Gordon & Lavalley, 2004; Hearle, 1975). Anecdotal and empirical reports have suggested that this within-sport transition is common, with a large number of athletes staying involved in sport in some capacity following the conclusion of their competitive careers (Lavalley, 2006; Torregrosa et al., 2004; Young et al., 2006). A role that many former athletes move into, especially in high-profile sports, is that of becoming a coach. Despite its popularity, this transition has received little attention from researchers within the field of sport psychology. There are, however, some studies from other disciplines that shed light on the transition from athlete to coach. The relevant research findings are summarised and critiqued in the following section.

Motivation

Why do retired athletes choose to stay involved in sport as coaches? Some sport theorists have suggested that retired athletes select careers in coaching by default because

of poor pre-retirement planning (Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, & Petitpas, 2004). Other researchers have suggested that athletes, who have strong athletic identities and unfulfilled expectations to compete at the professional level, choose to stay involved in sport in order to alleviate the negative consequences of the retirement process (Blustein, Ellis, & Devenis, 1989; Lavalley et al., 1997). There are some investigators who have suggested that athletes transition into coaching because of fear. According to Orlick (as cited in Van Neutegem, 2006), entering an employment environment other than sport, where their talents may be of little use, frightens athletes. The thought of starting at the bottom of a field, years behind their peers, leaves athletes frustrated and with diminished self-esteem. They feel like they have no other options but to stay involved in their sports. Finally, some authors believe coaching is a natural and obvious transition for retired athletes. They already possess the knowledge, experience, drive, and expertise that are required, and they are often encouraged to remain in the sport and give back to the sport system (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000). Although all of these reasons seem sensible, they are highly speculative, and few researchers have explored this area.

Within the literature, there appears to be only one published study that examines differences in vocational behaviour between retired athletes who became coaches, and retired athletes who chose non-sport careers (Shachar et al., 2004). The results of this study revealed that retired athletes who chose to become coaches reported a stronger tendency to foreclose and less engagement in exploration of career possibilities other than coaching. According to existing career decision-making models (Blustein et al., 1989; Blustein & Phillips, 1994), an adaptive approach toward making a career choice involves phases of increasing awareness, exploring career options, reflecting on and narrowing options, committing oneself to a single career goal, and implementing the chosen career.

The retired athletes who decided to stay involved in sport did not engage in this career decision-making process. Accordingly, the authors tentatively suggested that the decision to stay involved in sport as a coach following retirement might be based on maladaptive characteristics.

There are also a handful of studies that have broadly examined motivation in coaches. Unfortunately, the participants in these studies were not all former athletes. Despite this sampling issue, the findings still provide some insight into what drives coaches to be in their chosen profession.

Stevens and Weiss (1991) were some of the earliest researchers to examine motivation in coaches. These researchers identified motivators that led female coaches to coaching or kept them in the profession. These motivators included the enjoyment associated with working with athletes, as well as the pleasure gained from coaching and teaching. In a follow-up study, Weiss, Barber, Sisley, and Ebbeck (1991) interviewed female coaches and found a number of positive and negative motivators present in their sample. Positive motives included the satisfaction of working with young sport performers, the development of coaching skills, and the associated fun, whereas negative motives included poor quality interactions with mentor coaches, low perceptions of competence, negative relationships with athletes, and limited administrative support.

In 1993, Tamura, Davey, and Haslam explored coaching motives across four countries (i.e., Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Japan). The results revealed that the main motives for coaches included fun and enjoyment, a means to continue sport involvement, a sense of pride, achievement and success, as well as fitness and health (Tamura et al.).

In a national study conducted for the English Sports Council in 1993 (as cited in Jowett, 2008), coaches reported that the most popular reasons for *becoming* involved in coaching included natural progression from competitive sport and a general interest in sport. The most popular reasons for *maintaining* involvement in coaching included helping others to improve, enjoyment from teaching, and making a contribution to sport.

Frederick and Morrison (1999) found that coaches had five broad coaching motives: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, social motivation, educational growth motivation, and professional relations motivation. They found that coaches who were more intrinsically motivated were more connected with their athletes. These researchers concluded that coaches' motives significantly influenced athletes' satisfaction and performance.

The results from the studies described above are difficult to analyse and compare because the researchers used different samples (i.e., coaches of different gender, age, sport, culture, length of career, athletic background). Nonetheless, they do suggest that there are a range of factors that motivate coaches, and that many of these factors are intrinsic. Within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), intrinsic motivation can be loosely defined as being motivated into doing something that one finds genuinely interesting. According to the theory, a coach who is intrinsically motivated is driven by the satisfaction, happiness, and sense of achievement they experience when coaching. This type of motivation is a desirable driving force for coaches because it can positively affect their behaviour, performance, wellbeing, and relationships with athletes. Although extrinsic motives may not necessarily undermine coach motivation, some forms of extrinsic motivation (e.g., narcissistic need for praise, need to dominate others, need to win at all costs) might be damaging for coaches and athletes. Exploring coaches'

underlying motives is important because it provides valuable information about what positive or potentially damaging factors stimulate, maintain, and drive their behaviours and interactions (Jowett, 2008).

Quality of the Transition Process

How do retired athletes who choose to stay involved in sport experience their transitions from athletes to coaches? Is it a process that results in a crisis or, more positively, in a chance for development and personal growth? Only one group of researchers appear to have specifically explored this question. In the study described earlier, Shachar and colleagues (2004) used quantitative measures to assess differences in adjustment difficulties between retired athletes who became coaches, and those who chose careers not related to sport. They hypothesized that retired athletes who chose to stay involved in sport as coaches would report fewer adjustment difficulties than retired athletes who chose other careers. They believed that some of the reasons for choosing coaching were to stay close to a familiar environment and to avoid the stress and anxiety that often accompanies exploration of unfamiliar alternatives. Their hypothesis, however, was not supported by the results. They found no significant differences between the two groups with regard to emotional, social, and time management adjustment difficulties.

The authors provided several possible explanations for their results. First, they suggested that the degree to which retired athletes perceive their transitions out of sport as difficult might not be related to their career choices. Second, the scale that was used to measure adjustment difficulties might not have been a psychometrically sound measure. Third, factors associated with adjustment difficulties, such as involuntary retirement, difficulties with coaches, and goal attainment, were not examined. Fourth, the period of time between retirement and the decision to coach was not assessed and might have been

different across the groups. Fifth, there was a sample size discrepancy between the two groups, with less non-coaches than coaches. Finally the study was conducted in Israel, and there may be some cultural issues at play. Given the above considerations and limitations, no definitive conclusions can be drawn from this study about the quality of the transition from athlete to coach.

Sport Experiences and Transferable Skills

What helps mould an athlete into a coach? Researchers have suggested that there is a great deal of individuality with regard to what factors affect coaches learning (Erickson, Côté, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2005). In general, coaches acquire a lot of their knowledge and skills from actual coaching experiences, from coach education programs, and from observing and modelling their coaching peers (Côté, 2006; Gilbert, Côté, & Mallett, 2006; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Van Neutegem, 2006).

Some researchers have argued that another important learning source is past sport experience (Côté, 2006; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009). A coach's sport history includes their experiences as an athlete and their previous athletic relationships. O'Leary and Way (as cited in Van Neutegem, 2006) have suggested that these experiences are important because they manifest in coaching styles and behaviours and affect athlete-coach relationships. This idea is highly speculative, however, because how sport experiences influence coach development has not yet been explored (Bowes & Jones, 2006).

Petitpas and Schwartz (1989) have claimed that sport experiences help athletes to develop qualities or skills that are important for success in other facets of life. Skills that can be applied to other domains are described as transferable skills (Bolles, 1996; Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000). Intuitively, athletes transitioning into coaching would

have a multitude of skills that they could transfer into their new careers. Furthermore, the transferability of their skills would most likely increase their feelings of competence and positively influence their transition experiences. Although the transferability of skills within sport has been recognised as an important research topic (Gordon & Lavallee, 2004; Van Neutegem, 2006), few investigations have been conducted in this area.

Career and Life Satisfaction

Life and career satisfaction refers to individuals' feelings and attitudes about their lives and career experiences (Spector, 1997). Although many athletes experience distress in the period immediately after their retirement, most researchers have found no long-term reductions in levels of life satisfaction following retirement from sport (Klieber, Greendorfer, Blinde & Sandall, 1987; McPherson, 1980; Snyder & Baber, 1979). It seems that over time, most athletes find new ways to lead satisfying lives.

In contrast, researchers who have focused on sport coaches' career and life satisfaction have found that coaches experience, on average, only moderate levels of satisfaction (Chelladurai & Ogasawara, 2003; Drakou, Kambitsis, Charachousou, & Tzetzis, 2006; Li, 1993; Singh & Surujlal, 2006; Surujlal, 2004). Researchers have shown that there are many factors that contribute to coaches' levels of satisfaction. Among these factors are achievement, duration of career, supervision, external support, role conflict, responsibility and level of seniority, the job itself, athletes' performance levels, compensation, administrative work, job security, working conditions, and communication within the organization (Drakou et al.; Oshagbemi, 1997; Rogers, Clow, & Kash, 1994; Singh & Surujlal). It is important to investigate coaches' experiences in terms of career and life satisfaction because they may influence their coaching performance, motivation,

wellbeing, and mental health as well as the welfare, achievements, and performances of their athletes.

Conclusions of Literature Review

A growing body of literature is emerging on the topic of athletic retirement. In particular, there are numerous reports about the adjustment difficulties athletes experience at the end of their sporting careers. Despite the recent profusion of retirement research, there is still much more work to be done in terms of understanding athletes' retirement transition experiences, and more specifically, determining what paths lead to successful adjustments. From the literature, it seems the difference between successful transitions and maladjustment depends on many factors, and that these factors are different for each individual athlete.

Rationale for the Current Research

One factor that has been suggested to influence athletes' retirement transition experiences is staying involved in sport after retirement. Many reports have suggested that retiring athletes often stay involved in their sport by becoming coaches. From the above examinations of the literature, it appears that there have been only a few researchers who have initiated investigation into this transition. Furthermore, the majority of these investigations have taken a quantitative approach. Because it is a common transition among retiring athletes, and little is known about how this transition influences athletes' retirement experiences, it seems the time is right for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of retired athletes who transitioned into coaching.

Choosing an Approach

In deciding what approach to take, I was primarily guided by my research questions (see Chapter 1). I believed a qualitative approach would be the most suitable

way to conduct in-depth explorations of the transition experiences of retired athletes who became coaches. Furthermore, because adjustment to athletic retirement is multifactorial, I felt that exploring retirement experiences at an individual level using a holistic lifespan approach (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) might provide more insight than quantitative measures. I was aware that this type of research would not necessarily provide definitive answers, but I was hopeful that it would allow a deeper understanding of the lived experience, and provide the groundwork for future research.

Because the focus was on depth, I chose to gather stories from only three individuals. To collect the tales, I used an in-depth interviewing approach. Interviews have been described as a conversation with purpose (Merriam, 1998). Interviewing forms a cornerstone of qualitative data collection in sport psychology (Biddle et al., 2001) and yields data that provides depth and detail to create understanding of phenomena and lived experiences (Bowen, 2005). For these reasons, I chose interviewing as my primary data collection method.

In deciding how to present the information I collected from the interviews, I reviewed several resources to explore the different ways that qualitative researchers in sport and physical activity have represented their findings (e.g., Andersen, 2005; Biddle et al., 2001; Culver et al., 2003; Hopper, Madhill, Bratseth, Cameron, Coble, & Nimmon, 2008; Sparkes, 2002). Initially, my intention was to use a post-positivist approach and illustrate the participants' experiences using realist tales. Realist tales are characterised by extensive quotations and the absence of the author from most of the text (Van Maanen, 1988). They connect theory to data in a coherent text, and when constructed well, can provide compelling, detailed, and complex depictions of the lived experience (Sparkes, 2002).

When I began the interviews, I realised that I was not a disembodied and passive researcher. My experiences as a competitive tennis player, a tennis coach, and a neophyte sport psychologist positioned me as an active participant in the research process, and affected the way that I was collecting, interpreting, and representing the data. Rather than providing a “cleaned up” account of the interviews and reporting the participants’ stories, I decided that I needed to modify the realist tales. I shifted to a constructivist research paradigm and a narrative inquiry (Carless & Douglas, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2009a; Smith & Sparkes, 2009b) by including my voice and a confessional element in the tales.

One of my main goals for this thesis was to provide realistic in-depth picture of the athlete-to-coach journey. With this goal in mind, I decided to go into greater depth with the third participant using a different measurement approach. In addition to the in-depth interview, I administered the Athlete Apperception Technique (AAT). The AAT is a projective test designed for athletes. Gibbs, Marchant, and Andersen (2005) developed it using the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943) as a blueprint. It is designed to tap into athletes’ personality features, relationships, anxieties, motivations, and perfectionism. It involves presenting athletes with ambiguous images relating to different sport situations. Athletes are asked to create stories based on the images, and their responses are analysed using sport psychology and psychodynamic formulations and interpretations.

The Projective Hypothesis

Like all projective tests, the primary rationale underlying the AAT is the *projective hypothesis*. This hypothesis, which is intimately linked to psychodynamic theory, proposes that human beings tend to view and interpret the world in terms of their own experiences, needs, motivations, feelings, fantasies, and thought processes

(Chandler, 2003). For this reason, when people interpret ambiguous stimuli in projective tests, their responses are assumed to be reflections of their inner worlds. That is, they *project* onto the ambiguous stimuli (ink blots, TAT images) their own inner hopes, fantasies, anxieties, dreams, conflicts, and desires. It is believed that most people are relatively unaware that they are projecting their inner landscapes, making projective tests a means of gaining access to information that individuals otherwise find difficult to voice openly or access (Rabin, 1986).

Many factors can influence people's responses to ambiguous stimuli (e.g., a recent event, an early childhood experience one has forgotten) making it somewhat difficult for psychologists to interpret projective material and draw valid conclusions (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2008). Consequently, many researchers and practitioners are sceptical of projective tests. Nevertheless, two of the top 10 assessment instruments clinicians use in daily practice are the Rorschach (1921) and the TAT (Murray, 1943). These two instruments have stood the test of time, and proponents of their use suggest that they should not be used as a sole source of information and diagnosis, but rather as components of a wide assessment (i.e., along with interviews, self-report personality tests, and other measures).

Although projective tests are rarely used in sport settings and are not standard research tools, I decided to explore the usefulness of the AAT as a data collection technique. I used the AAT as an adjunct to an in-depth interview, mirroring, in a limited fashion, how projective tests are used in practice. My goal was to determine if the AAT could elicit projective material that complemented, illuminated, and added to my insights from the in-depth interview. My hope was that this projective test would allow me to present a more in-depth picture of the lived experience than using just interviews.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

I recruited three male participants for this study through colleagues within my professional coaching network. I used purposive sampling, as opposed to random sampling, to select the participants. The sampling method was designed to select retired athletes, with similar life histories, who had transitioned into coaching. My selection criteria included: (a) the participants must be over the age of 18 at the time of the interview, (b) the participants' athletic and coaching careers must be in the sport of tennis, (c) the participants' early athletic development must have been in Australia, (d) the participants must have reached competitive levels where tennis participation was a dominant part of their lives, (e) the participants must be working as professional tennis coaches in Australia at the time of the interview, and (f) the participants must have been coaching for approximately 5 years.

Interviews

I gathered the participants' tales using semi-structured interviews. The reason I selected this method was that it ensured participants and I remained focused on the topic, and made sure there was consistent depth of questioning across interviews. The interview guide (see Appendix A) contained the main topics that I wanted to cover: (a) their lives as athletes, (b) the details surrounding their retirement experiences, (c) their preparations and responses to retirement, (d) their transitions from athletes to coaches, (e) the influence that their athletic career and skills had on their coaching career, (f) their current careers and life satisfaction, (g) their lives as coaches, and (h) their advice to other athletes. I developed the interview questions based on the retirement and coaching

literature, my own prior experiences as a tennis player and coach, and the advice of an experienced qualitative researcher. I encouraged participants before their interviews to elaborate, and even deviate from these questions, if they wished. If I felt their responses were brief, I followed up with probes for further expansion of relevant issues. After the interviews, I took field notes based on my observations, including descriptions of appearance, mannerisms, conversational style, and gestures. I also recorded my reflections, speculations, ideas, and impressions of the participants, their stories, and our relationships.

With the third participant, I wanted to delve deeper into his journey. In addition to the in-depth interview, I administered the Athlete Apperception Technique (AAT: Gibbs et al., 2005). This projective test provides an in-depth understanding of athletes' characters, motivations, anxieties, and hopes. I selected a combination of 10 images from the adult image set and the supplementary image set. I based my selection on images that evoked material on specific themes such as motivation, athletic identity, confidence, injury, retirement, external demands, and interpersonal interactions. The adult and supplementary set images, and the stimulus properties of each image, are included in Appendix B.

Procedure

After receiving permission to conduct the study from the Faculty of Arts, Education, and Human Development Human Research Ethics Committee at Victoria University, I completed several interview training sessions with an experienced qualitative researcher. I also conducted a pilot interview with a coach who did not meet all of the selection criteria. Once I felt confident with my interviewing skills, I contacted potential participants and discussed with them my research project. My background

allowed me to establish rapport, trustworthiness, and acceptance with the potential participants. If they expressed interest, I sent them an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix C and D). All of the participants I contacted agreed to participate, and I obtained written informed consent from each of them prior to conducting the interviews. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, with the participants' permission. The interviews lasted between 1 – 2 hours, and were conducted in a quiet and private space at the participants' work places. I completed my field notes within 48 hours after the interviews.

With the third participant, I also administered the AAT. I administered this test during a second session several months after the in-depth interview. Prior to administration, I completed several training sessions with one of the researchers who helped develop the AAT. I administered the test in a quiet and private room at the participant's work place in a single session lasting approximately 1 hour. Each image was presented to the participant on an A4 card. I instructed the participant to view each image and then verbally identify the central character, describe what preceded the moment being captured, what was currently happening, what he expected to happen in the near future, and the relationships between the central character and other depicted characters. The participant's responses were recorded and transcribed, with his permission.

Ethical Considerations

There was a small risk of distress, with participants recounting anxiety-producing moments as a result of the exploration and discussion of their athletic retirement, or difficult experiences in their athletic and coaching careers. To minimise this risk, I thoroughly explained to participants what the study was about before asking them to decide whether they wanted to take part in the study. I informed them that participation

was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw at any time without the need for reason or explanation.

During the sessions, I encouraged participants to progress at their own pace. I tried to refrain from non-relevant, intrusive, or voyeuristic questions, and reassured them that I was willing to terminate their sessions at any time. I thanked and debriefed participants at the end of their sessions, and offered them free counselling to deal with any feelings of anxiety or depressed mood that may have resulted from the interviews.

I invited participants to review, amend, clarify, and add to their interview transcripts. I also reassured them about the confidentiality of the information they shared. I adopted the following procedures to ensure confidentiality: (a) pseudonyms were used in the transcriptions and thesis, (b) all identifiable information was removed from the transcriptions and thesis, (c) the data would be stored in a locked cabinet at Victoria University for 5 years, and (c) only my supervisor and I had access to the transcripts.

Data Analysis

In-Depth Interviews

The transcriptions of the in-depth interviews were reviewed several times as part of the analysis process. During these reviews, I identified the main themes from each participant's story, and pieced together their interview responses to form a coherent journey. I also reviewed my field notes, and noted how the participants' stories related to the literature. I analysed and interpreted the participants' stories based on my experiences as an athlete and coach, and my training in sport psychology. I used cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic models to analyse the material from their stories. I also presented and discussed my interpretations with my research supervisor.

Athlete Apperception Technique

Due to the word limit of this thesis, I chose 6 of the 10 images to analyse and present. I analysed the participant's responses with the help of an experienced qualitative researcher that was trained in sport psychology and psychodynamic interpretation. The analysis of each AAT response began with the verbatim story the participant told. I used a content import method, where each story was analysed based on five key elements: (a) the *circumstance* (what is happening); (b) the *intention* of the characters (motives, goals, and feelings); (c) the *complication* facing the characters (anticipated or unexpected turns of events and internal barriers); (d) the *means* (actions and other coping strategies of characters); and (e) the *outcome* (how things turn out). Following the content analysis, I identified the *moral* (message, meaning, lesson) of the story (the import). The import is essentially a qualitative interpretation of the content and is largely based on my knowledge and experience. I also completed a brief qualitative analysis and interpretation (using a sport psychology and dynamic perspective) that served to highlight how the participant's image responses complemented, illuminated, and added to his in-depth interview. My interpretations were not based solely on the participant's responses, but rather supplemented with the insight that I had developed from the in-depth interview.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY 1

Liam's Tale: For the Love of the Game

Introduction

My first impressions of Liam were of an easy-going and happy person, with a casual manner. He was immediately friendly and made an effort to make me feel comfortable. In contrast to his tall and intimidating stature, Liam was warm and engaging when he spoke. As a neophyte researcher, his demeanour instantly put me at ease.

When I sat down with Liam, he was enthusiastic and eager to share his story. He was here to tell me a tale about his one true love. During the interview, he was animated and spoke quickly. He seemed to enjoy recounting his experiences, and did not require much prompting. His descriptions were elaborate and colourful, and he appeared to be able to identify and articulate his thoughts and feelings. There were times, however, when his tone and demeanour shifted to sadness and melancholy. He was open and readily shared with me his heartache.

At the time of the interview, Liam was 31 years old. He was living with his fiancée, and was in the midst of wedding preparations. His transition into coaching had occurred 6 years prior to the interview. When we met, he was operating his own full-time tennis coaching business at a local suburban tennis club.

The Beginning of the Love Affair

Liam's love affair with tennis spans a period of 23 years. It started at the age of 8 when his parents bought him a racket and encouraged him to play. They were "big into tennis," and played competition at the local tennis club. He described with fondness how he would spend his weekends at the tennis club watching them play. His parents became

his model for sport participation, and he soon found that like them, he loved the game of tennis.

I got the bug where I just wanted to play, and play, and play. Even if I was, of course I was going to school, but I was madly into it. As soon as I got home, I'd go out to the garage and have a hit of tennis.

This statement is just one of many examples in which Liam described his attraction and passion for the game. When I asked Liam what it was that he loved so much about tennis, he replied:

Good question. I don't know if I can answer it. I just dead set loved it. It wasn't something I could put my finger on. I don't know [pauses] I just dead set loved it. Every time I got out on the court, I loved it. Like I said before, if I could get that again with anything I do right now [pauses] but I think you might only have it as a child, to be able to put myself, to throw myself into it every single day, and just wanting to do it.

It seemed that Liam's early love for tennis was based on the pure enjoyment and happiness he experienced when playing. I wondered at this point whether his intrinsic motivation continued to be a main driving force throughout his athletic career, and into his coaching career. For many athletes, early intrinsic motivators are replaced by extrinsic factors as they develop (Baillie & Danish, 1992).

Early Days

Liam spent the early years of his career developing his skills at the local tennis club with the club coaches, his parents, and his two siblings. He began competing in local competitions and tournaments at the age of 11 and experienced early success. This success ignited a dream – to become a professional tennis player.

I always wanted to be a professional tennis player. I had that goal, and that's where I wanted to be, and that's what I wanted to do. I don't know what was so appealing about being a professional tennis player, but I just loved the sport generally, I just loved it.

Like most athletes, Liam's early dream lured him into the sport, and he became completely devoted. By the age of 14, he was undertaking professional-like training, playing at least 6 days a week. When reflecting on his teenage years, he described them as, "pretty hectic, I suppose *scheduled*," as he tried to squeeze in training, competition, and school. As I sat there listening to Liam describe his early days, I thought his development sounded typical of an elite athlete. Tennis was the centre of his world, and it became the foundation on which the rest of his life, and his identity, were built.

Chasing True Love

During his final year at high school, Liam was offered an athletic scholarship at a university in the United States. He accepted the offer, and spent the rest of the school year "mucking around" because he felt his whole life was "mapped out." Liam's admission gave me good insight into how deeply committed he was to tennis. At the age of 18, he appeared to have stopped planning for his long-term future and begun closing off alternative career paths and professional identities. I could not help but think there was going to be trouble ahead.

Liam spent the next 4 years training and competing in the United States. He did not elaborate on his achievements during this time, which was odd because I later found out that he received many accolades. Liam chose to speak to me about his time during summer breaks, when he would travel to Europe to compete on the professional tour, with the hope of earning money and gaining some valuable experience.

Midway through his scholarship, Liam enjoyed a measure of success on tour while in Europe, and earned a professional ranking of around 600 in the world. Instead of capitalising on his success and remaining on tour, he decided to return to university, and

consequently, he lost his ranking. Liam spent a lot of time talking about and rationalising this decision, as the following examples highlight:

To this day, I still don't know if it was a good decision or not. I forfeited the right to go into qualifying of a Grand Slam tournament, because I would have got in, to go back to college and further develop my game. I went back to college, and felt like I got stronger. I worked really hard in college, and I had a really good coach and really good facilities. That's probably, I believe, I probably cut short my professional career because I worked hard at college. I thought that's all I had to do, to get myself a little stronger. I'd seen what it was like, and I thought, "Yes! That's what I want! Bigger, stronger, and not succumbing to the elements." So I went back there, and worked my butt off for the last 2 years.

I look back and think that maybe it would've been a good time to leave then, because I'd stuck my hand up, and I'd been noticed by selectors, and I was probably going to get a little bit of help from some people. But you know, who knows! I could've fizzled out. I could've gotten injured straight away because I wasn't as strong as when I left college at the end of that 4 years.

I don't regret anything that happened there. But what I sort of meant when I said I wasn't sure if it was the best decision [pauses] you know, I got softer instead of harder, in the sense of being independent.

As I sat there listening to Liam, I sensed that he was reaching out to me. I felt like he wanted my approval. It was as if he wanted me to reassure him that he had made the right decision. Although Liam said he did not regret his decision, I felt that he did. He then went on to tell me about how at the end of his 4-year athletic scholarship, he set out on his own to compete on the professional tour full-time. Initially he struggled, and it took him 15 months to re-establish his previous ranking of 600 in the world. When I asked him to tell me more about this period, he provided numerous explanations as to why it took him "so long" to regain his ranking. His reasons included: his comfort and security were gone, he lacked structure, he did not enjoy travelling, and he played a limited schedule. But there was one other reason that really stood out:

I went into it saying, "Well, I've worked hard to achieve this, and this should just come to me now."

I came back out and expected to do well, and probably even played a little bit tighter. I was playing for real, and I did not have this thing to fall back on.

I watched players around me really get on and get their rankings quickly, and I think that might have put extra pressure on me to do well. I was looking at them, and it might have almost been somewhat of a jealousy thing. I mean, that might have been motivating, or should have been motivating, but I don't know what it was.

From what Liam was saying, it seemed his main performance barrier was his expectations. Before I had finished processing my thoughts, he said to me in a quiet tone:

I still look back and think [pauses] I still had a lot more to give. I think I still had a lot of opportunities there to have done better, but you know [pauses] you don't have regrets in life.

Liam had removed his armour and given me some insight into what was lying underneath his tough exterior. I suspected that, in his mind, he did not fulfil his expectations of himself. I began wondering what impact this weight of regret might be having on his coaching career and current life satisfaction. I also started to wonder about his expectations and personal standards, and whether they were unrealistically high. At this stage, I was unsure and needed to hear more of his story.

The Peak of the Love Affair

Liam eventually overcame his performance barriers through “sheer perseverance” and enjoyed great success on tour. By his mid-20s, Liam had reached a career high of around 300 in the world and had won several professional tournaments. Although I was impressed by his achievements and eager to hear more, he tiptoed quickly through this part of his story, and downplayed the pinnacle of his career. Why was this successful professional player, with an enviable tennis career, not pleased with his achievements?

I started to piece together the interview so far: his need for approval, his expectations, his perception of success, and his lack of satisfaction in his accomplishments. I realised that Liam was exhibiting a number of perfectionist

tendencies. This awareness gave me a new perspective and a deeper understanding about Liam and the story that was unfolding.

Rose-Coloured Glasses

Up to this point, Liam had painted a relatively positive picture of his athletic career. I was interested to know about the times, apart from those long 15 months, when life as an athlete was not so great. He mentioned that he found travelling extremely difficult. He felt uncomfortable in foreign countries, and did not like being away from family and friends. He also commented about some minor conflicts he had with other tennis players. Overall, he did not feel these difficulties were major issues, and generally viewed his athletic career in a positive light. It seemed that even later in his career, his love for the game was still strong.

Heroes

As I sat there listening to Liam's story, I noted how often he mentioned his parents. When I asked him to tell me more about their involvement, his eyes lit up. He described how his parents provided a strong supporting role, making financial and time commitments to his tennis, even when their help meant making personal sacrifices. He talked about how they provided great emotional support, often acting as a buffer to alleviate stress, and how they modelled positive values, attitudes, and behaviours toward sport participation. It appeared that they showed a great interest in his tennis by attending all of his training and competitions, but at the same time did not get over-involved. In the end, he attributed a lot of his success to his family. He stated: "The support from my family is why, and how much opportunity they gave me was the reason why I got to where I was." I could not help but think how wonderful his family sounded, and how

lucky he was to have such positive early experiences. It seemed to me that they allowed him to truly love and enjoy the game.

On the Sidelines

On the other hand, I was amazed by how little he mentioned his coach. I found this omission particularly odd because the coach is normally such a powerful influence on a young athlete's life (Scanlan & Lewthaite, 1988). When prompted, Liam went into detail about the six different coaches he had worked with throughout his career.

Between the ages of 8 and 11, Liam was coached at the local tennis club. During this time, he had three different club coaches. He talked about how he felt he did not get the right guidance and support from these coaches, and expressed disappointment about the instability during these early years.

I was jumping all over the place, and they are the so-called, these days you know, everyone's looking at it saying they are the "development years" where you can become the best player in the world. I just feel like for me, I could've done with some more at stages. If I [had received] a lot more information, then who knows?!

In the end, Liam stated: "There's not much credit to be given to those coaches." I sensed some bitterness and hostility in his tone. At the age of 11, Liam left his local club in search of a new coach. He was not particularly impressed with his new coach, as the following quote highlights:

The coach that I ended up going to was a guy that I think was probably, looking back now, was not very good: 30 minutes was 30 minutes. He was a great motivator, and he did try to help a few aspects of my game, definitely. I always played a little better [pauses] but 30 minutes was 30 minutes. He never came and watched me play in tournaments at all. Once I went to college in America, mate, there was never a conversation.

Liam had some nicer words to say about his coach in the United States, but there was still some criticism that filtered through:

I went to the States, and the coach [pauses] no, he was a ball machine! He's not a tennis coach! A lot of them over there are exactly like that. They organise some

drills, like the best of us can. We can all go on a computer and get a drill, that doesn't take skill, you know. But the best thing about him was he knew how to laugh. We knew how to give him shit, and he'd join in with everything. We'd play golf on our days off. And if I said to him, "Mate, can we get out there at 6.00am?" we'd get out there at 6.00am. He was really good like that. My college coach was brilliant, but he never travelled with me either.

I began wondering what was underlying Liam's dissatisfaction. From his descriptions, it seemed that he subscribed to high standards and had stringent evaluations of his coaches. He wanted them to be perfect – but they were not. Towards the end of his career, Liam described how he finally found his "perfect" coach.

He just decided to put his hand up. He had so much time, so much time for you. If I was going to have a session with him, just don't organise anything else for the afternoon because I'd be there for 3 hours. We'd talk for you know, an hour and forty-five minutes [pauses] just goal setting, and he really motivated me to just go out and run, and really motivated me to get back on the right thing, eating the right food and everything like that. He was just fantastic.

Overall, it appeared that Liam had both positive and negative coaching experiences throughout his athletic career. I wondered how these experiences might have influenced his coaching development. I took note of his comments, and waited to see if he might elaborate later in the interview when we discussed his own coaching.

The Descent

At this point in the interview, I detected some sadness in Liam. He quickly deflected this emotion by turning to humour. He jokingly told me, "this might be my hard luck story, so get this one on tape!" before describing to me his descent from the top. Several months after reaching his career high, Liam sustained a shoulder injury. Having little experience with injury, he pushed through the pain and continued to play, as any strong athletic warrior would. He felt compelled to continue because there were some major tournaments and opportunities coming up that could catapult him into the big time.

Liam pushed his body too hard, and within a few months he sustained a second debilitating injury to his elbow. He described this time as: “The downfall of pretty much my career.” Like many athletes, Liam persevered and fought hard to prolong his career. He continued playing doubles for the next 10 months, until he finally could not play anymore. He booked himself in for surgery, and then spent the next 6 months in rehabilitation. At this stage, he still gave himself a chance to come back. He stated: “I didn’t think it was over. I didn’t think it was over. People have come back many times with injuries.” He decided to keep persevering, and made one final attempt at resurrecting his ailing career.

I tried to come back and play. But the elbow and the muscles around the arm just took a lot longer than 6 months. You know looking back, I thought I was right to go. I did all the training [pauses] I was actually playing tennis left-handed for some of that 6 months with my coach, and doing a lot of fitness stuff, and it went away. But I had no success.

Game Over

Liam struggled to return to his previous form, and his ranking slipped. Life as an athlete suddenly became really hard. Liam vividly described to me the day when he made the decision to retire voluntarily. He had just lost a match that he believed he “should” have won.

I called up my coach, just absolutely beside myself, didn’t know what I was going to do. That was by far the toughest time of my life. That day, I was sitting in a car park near a beach, just sitting there thinking, “What the hell am I going to do with my life!” That was really, really tough, and I talked to him and he was really good. He was trying to say, “Mate, you’ve got to give it some time.” I was saying, “I want to give it time, but I’m in qualifying and I’m 25, 26 years of age.” Everyone in the qualifying draws was young, and everyone my age was in the main draw. I was realistic [pauses] if I worked my arse off, I could get back to main draw by the end of the year. I didn’t see that as being a problem. I still had optimism. I still thought I could get there. But then I looked at it and thought, “Is that getting me to where I actually want to be?” And it wasn’t. I wanted to get higher than that. I wanted to get higher than what I was before, and I just started thinking, “That’s another few years. Do I want to do this when I’m 28 years old, starting all over again?” It sounded good if I could click my fingers and be there,

but there was no guarantee of that. And to come out of it just year-in and year-out, just making enough money to travel.

There were a few things here that Liam said that struck me. First of all, he described some strong perfectionist tendencies. For example, his decision-making was based on all-or-none thinking – he either wanted to be more successful than before, or not try at all. His high standards and expectations were again explicit, and he evaluated his performance and goals against others. The second thing I noticed was that for the first time, Liam had a future orientation. He was thinking about his life beyond tennis. As I sat there taking in his story, I felt like there was a strong sense of hopelessness and frustration coming through in his story and his body language.

I was surprised when later in the interview Liam revisited his reasons for retirement and gave me some alternative explanations:

I'm not trying to justify it, but I don't think it was the elbow injury that did it for me. I think it was the things I didn't do before that. Like not doing the fitness and conditioning that's needed, that my body was used to, and then 4 years down the track it came to a head. And I believe that if I was mentally tough enough, that I could have come back easily. So I don't think the elbow injury destroyed my career as such. I don't blame it on that. I blame it on if I could have done things a little bit more professionally, then my career could have lasted a lot longer.

I could have also said my excuse is age [pauses] I'm this age and I don't have a career. I want to own a house, and I don't want to wait until I'm 40. These are the things that were coming into my head, so I suppose I started to get a little bit more, I suppose mature in the head about life [pauses] starting to think about what I wanted to do in a couple of years. I think that's possibly what made me mentally weak, whereas I think it's a bit of a cop out if I just said I was injured. I never got the strength back in my arm to make that level, but I think more than anything I didn't have the strength in my mind to get back.

I sensed this interview was one of the first times he had honestly verbalised his reasons for retirement. He was still trying to make sense of it all and accept his decision to retire.

Letting Go

In the initial period after his retirement, Liam enjoyed his new freedom and life. He began “partying like a maniac” and would go out most nights. His enjoyment did not last long. Soon he hit “rock bottom,” and like many retiring athletes, experienced significant distress and adjustment difficulties. He admitted: “For the next month, I was really down. I probably should have seen someone, like that was a bad time.” Liam did not provide details of this period, and as a researcher I did not feel comfortable to probe deeper into his psychological distress. I got the sense though, that this was a dark time for him. He did share with me the heartbreak and turmoil he experienced once it sunk in that his dream was over:

I just loved the game. I just wanted to get there, wherever there was. I don't know where there was. Everyone says, “I want to be number one in the world” but whether I wanted to be number one in the world I can't recall. I just wanted success, and I wanted to do it by tennis. So that was definitely hard. I had a dream for almost 20 years, and that dream's over. People would ask me about it, and I just had hatred I had everything, all these sorts of things going through me.

I was moved by his honesty and willingness to share with me his heartache. Given his developmental history and strong athletic identity, his high performance standards, his evaluation of his achievements, and his lack of pre-retirement planning, I was not surprised by Liam's negative retirement experience. Liam mentioned, however, that looking back he was surprised by his reaction. He said: “I look back now and think, what were you worried about? What is the big deal? There are so many people out there with more problems. How could that have affected me so much?” I could not help but think he was trying to manage the impression of himself and live up to the stereotype of the big, tough, mentally strong athlete.

Coping with the Heartache

Liam talked a lot about how the support, encouragement, and acceptance he received from his parents and coach helped him during this time. He also described some strategies he employed to help himself cope. First, he kept busy by engaging in some part-time tennis coaching. He found this work useful because it re-established some structure in his life. Second, he continued to play tennis in a lower level competition. The continued involvement helped him stay busy, maintain some level of exercise, and keep in touch with his social network and friends.

The Redirection of Self

After Liam made the decision to retire, he said that he felt “lost” and did not know what to do with his life. He was completely unprepared, and did not feel like he had many options. He did not receive a good grade in Year 12 because he did not take his schooling seriously, and he failed to complete his university degree in the United States because he enrolled in the minimum amount of classes so that he could spend maximum time on court. An apprenticeship was out of the question because he would be in his 30s when he finished.

He never thought that he would become a tennis coach. He was doing some coaching part-time, and thought he would use it to earn some money while he was planning his second career. In the meantime, he decided to enrol in a coaching course, and he also picked up some hours working retail. During this time, he won the tender for a small tennis club, and launched his own coaching business. After 18 months, he said he still felt like he was “in limbo” and had not made any definite decisions.

It was at this time that he began taking notice of other people's lives, their careers, and their incomes. He started researching a career in tennis coaching, and realised the benefits and potential earnings.

That's when it sort of hit me. I love tennis, and I've done it all my life. Why would I want to go outside the tennis industry?

I thought tennis coaching is a no-brainer. It's what I know, and I feel as though I am somewhat respected in it, so listen to that. So that's what I did. I think it was a relatively easy decision.

He decided to replace his lost love with the closest thing – tennis coaching. Although his main driving force seemed to be his intrinsic motivation and love of the game, he did hint that he also made the transition into coaching because of poor pre-retirement planning, the ease of the move, not having to deal with threats to his competence and self-esteem, not wanting to start at the bottom of the occupational world, and the potential earnings involved in coaching.

He quit his retail job, and won the tender for two more tennis clubs. He recruited an assistant coach, and began coaching full-time. Over the next 12 months, two of the clubs were not "firing" so he decided to let them go and base his business at the one venue. At the time of the interview, Liam's business at this club was thriving, and he was making a full-time living from coaching.

Love is Blind

At this time in the interview, I could not help but think: "How could you *not* have planned for retirement?!" I realised, however, that my internal judgement of Liam was stemming from a lack of appreciation for the mindset of a devoted athlete. Liam tried to explain it to me:

How do you have career options, when in your head, your career's going to be as a professional tennis player? If that's what you want to do, why would you want to think about doing anything else? That's the really, really hard part about it. You

can try to educate people as best you can, but when you truly love something, and someone's trying to tell you this stuff, and all you're doing is sitting there going, "It's time for me to hit you know!"

I sat there nodding my head. The tennis player in me understood where he was coming from. I could not answer his question – *how* do you come between an athlete and his one true love, and tell him that it is not going to last forever?

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

I wanted to know whether Liam was still in love with the game. When I asked him what he thought the best parts of being a coach were, he confirmed to me that his passion was still alive: "The best part is teaching a sport that I truly, you know, love. There's still obviously that aspect of tennis: it's still what I like, or love." There was also continuity in the way he viewed his life. When I asked him to describe what his life was like as a coach, he replied in a similar way to when I asked him about his life as an athlete: "hectic." In the 12 months prior to our interview, Liam had been coaching 7 days a week, and had been closely guarding the day-to-day operations of his business. He stated: "At this stage in my life, I want to be there, and I'm not trusting anyone else to do it because the way I do it, I feel like I can do it." I sensed that he was grappling with some issues relating to proving his competence and worth as a coach. He later went on and explained his comments further:

The whole reason why I'm not getting someone else to coach for me, and me off to the side and just not even be here, is the fact is that I want to still coach them. I want them to still be able to say you know, "he's taught me this"...I just want the kids to make sure that I've still taught them to the best of my ability I suppose.

Even as a coach, he still appeared to be setting high performance standards and expectations for himself. These standards were even more evident when I asked him about his coaching business. He repeatedly talked about wanting the business to run smoothly, and how he was not satisfied. When I asked him if he was happy with where

his coaching was at now, he replied: “Yeah, I’m happy with the business. I don’t know if I’m happy with the coaching side of things yet.” I needed to know more.

I’m not happy as to whether the kids are improving. There’s a lot of self-doubt there. Whether I’m doing a better job than Joe around the corner, or whether you’re teaching the right things at times. That’s the mental thing. I don’t know [pauses] like, I look at a lot of coaches who are friends of mine, who just have supreme confidence, and the ability to talk themselves up, and they seem to truly believe that. I don’t know if I’m sort of one of those guys.

The confident tennis player, who had been in front of me for the past hour, suddenly disappeared and was replaced by a vulnerable young tennis coach. Liam’s comments reminded me of many athlete-coaches I have met and talked to. Although they performed at an elite level as athletes, it does not automatically follow that they will perform as coaches at the same level.

Liam’s biggest criticism of coaching as a career was the time of day. He commented that, “starting work at 4 o’clock when you’ve had a full day is an absolute nightmare.” Overall though, Liam seemed quite content with where he was professionally. But, like always with Liam, there was still some room for improvement!

Life is extremely good. I’m not worried about money, we have a home, car, everything seems to be in place for it to run smoothly. But as far as if I have enough fun in my life? Absolutely not. I haven’t had any real, you know, my social life is taken away during term. So that’s something that needs to be changed.

How Long Will the Love Affair Last?

Liam seemed unsure about how long he was going to stay involved in coaching, and made the comment that he could not see himself doing it in the long-term. He expressed dissatisfaction with the time of day that the business operates (after school hours) because it interfered with his family time. He said he was thinking of staying involved in coaching for another 5 years, before considering another career. It seemed to me that the game of tennis did not have such a firm grip around Liam anymore.

In 5 years time, I don't know whether I'd want to do something different. It's hard. That will be a crossroad again, but I'll do a better job this time at preparing myself for that. You know, I might start looking into some sort of course, or might look in to some other type of business opportunities that might arise.

It was good to hear that he had learned from his past athletic retirement experiences, and was already starting to engage in pre-retirement planning for his next career. When I asked him about his coaching dreams and aspirations, he made it clear that he had no intention of getting involved with elite coaching:

I think in the next 5 years I want to do coaching here, and I'm always accepting of being a grass-roots coach. I do feel like I've got some knowledge to impart [pauses] but [elite players] take up too much time. They take up a lot of time, and there's loyalty to some degree. But gee, the best environment for them to get into I think is one of the sport institutes, or otherwise the parent should hire you full-time, and that's just not going to happen. So that's why I'm steering myself away from that.

I found Liam's above admission strange because he is a former elite-level player, and possesses an enormous amount of knowledge and expertise. In my mind, I thought he would be an ideal coach for elite players. I began to wonder if his comments stemmed from his doubts and insecurities about his competence as a coach. I could not help but think that maybe he was afraid of taking on the responsibility of an elite player, of being criticised by others, and of not being able to meet his own personal standards and expectations of the "perfect" coach.

Past Life

I was interested to know what Liam thought had influenced his coaching development. As expected, the biggest influence on his coaching career was his deep love for the game. He described how his coaching philosophy was primarily based on inspiring his athletes to love the game and have fun, as the following examples highlight:

Just having fun. I try to look at the kids to see if they are loving the sport like I loved the sport. Like, if they're just loving it, then great.

I teach them the textbook grips, absolutely, no worries. But for me, it's not [pauses] the personal enjoyment has got to be there for the kid as well. Now, if I can teach them the continental grip, brilliant. But some kids are just never going to get the continental grip, and they're never going to enjoy the sport if they can't serve the ball in. So that's been influential.

He also described how his level of achievement had helped boost his confidence in his coaching ability. He felt like he could answer any questions about playing, travelling, and competition pathways. He also commented about how his experiences with his coaches and parents significantly influenced how he approached his coaching. For example:

You know, giving them an opportunity [pauses] I suppose it's almost, maybe I get the guilts [pauses] if you're not teaching kids in the right areas, if you're not getting them to where they have to be, and if they don't get there, then is it your fault? Because I look at my previous coaches as not being that good, and that influential. Whereas, if I'm only offering it as a grass-roots thing, or I'm just introducing the sport to them and they can take it wherever from there, maybe that's the way I'm [pauses] first time I've ever sort of said that. Maybe that's the way I look at it, that it's just teaching them just the complete basics and fundamentals of the sport. If they really, really love it, then they'll take it to the next level, and hopefully will have some champions here who I'll see at the beginning of every day, and they'll want a lesson with me every now and then, and I'll just try to do the things I felt that the coaches never did for me, and I'll probably give it to them I suppose. They're only kids I suppose, all the opportunities your parents give you, you want to give them as little kids.

As I listened to Liam talk about his coaching style, I sensed that he was trying to fix his past by coaching how he wished he had been coached. His comments also made me think about Erikson's (1950, 1968) psychosocial stage of generativity. During this stage, adults feel motivated to nurture, care, and give back to the next generation. Liam's need to make a difference in his athletes' lives made me think that he was at this stage in his life.

Liam also talked about the things he was not prepared for and skilled at when he made the transition into coaching:

The coaching side of things now, nothing prepared me for that. My tennis career didn't get me to feed little 7-year-olds; my tennis career didn't get me to talk to parents. A lot of my friends, not a lot but a few of my friends who have played tennis from so young have no personal skills whatsoever. A lot of them, they don't get their licenses until 22. Like, these things, you're just sheltered from it.

You don't get those conversations and things like that. So I don't think that my career was that influential to the grass-roots style of thing.

Liam's description highlighted to me the need to better prepare athletes for their post-athletic careers. His comments also reinforced my belief that athletes do not always transition easily into coaching. From my own experiences, coaching requires a different skill set than playing tennis does. Although a lot of skills can be transferred, it cannot be assumed that tennis players have the necessary skills that are required to coach the game.

Passing on Wisdom

After Liam had finished sharing his story, I wanted to know whether now, after everything he has experienced, he would recommend a coaching career to a retiring athlete. He stated that he thought coaching was a good career option for an athlete because it was what they know, and they do not have to do too much training. He did suggest that athletes needed to be more prepared for retirement, and should not expect that they can "do anything." Liam's final words of wisdom cemented in my mind his love for game, the regret he was carrying around, and how much he was missing his one true love:

If someone were contemplating retirement, I would give them advice to really think about it. If they still have something they really want to give, because they still really love the sport, I'd tell them if they still really love the sport to probably not retire.

Liam's Tale in Relation to the Literature

Theoretical Perspectives on Athletic Retirement

Liam's retirement experiences fit with several of the frameworks presented in the literature review. In terms of social gerontological models, continuity theory (Atchley, 1976) provides a plausible account of Liam's decision to transition into coaching. Following his retirement, Liam explored and experimented with several alternative

careers. During this period, he described feeling “lost” and “in limbo.” Liam’s move into coaching can be viewed as an adaptive strategy that helped evoke feelings of familiarity and stability, and assisted him through his sad, painful, and confusing retirement journey.

Exchange theory (Homans, 1961), which is also from the field of social gerontology, offers another reasonable explanation of Liam’s transition into coaching. This theory proposes that Liam exchanged his athletic talent, knowledge, and experiences for meaningful rewards from the sport system. In other words, coaching allowed Liam to continue his love affair with the game of tennis, and re-experience the enjoyment and happiness he felt when playing.

The two models described above provide some insight into why Liam might have chosen to stay involved in sport following his retirement. They do not, however, account for a lot of his story. For example, they do not explain why Liam experienced significant distress, how his development and past experiences contributed to his cognitive and emotional problems, and how he overcame his adjustment difficulties.

With regard to thanatological models, Kübler-Ross’ (1969) stages of dying provides a useful framework for understanding some of the different emotions Liam experienced upon retirement. Liam described how he refused to believe his career was over after sustaining his injuries (denial), how he persisted playing doubles despite his injuries (a possible kind of bargaining coupled with denial), how he experienced a whirlwind of emotions including “hatred” (anger), how he “hit rock bottom” and was “really down” at the end of his sporting career (depression), and how he is finally coming to terms with his retirement (acceptance). Again though, this model only focuses on one element of Liam’s story.

In contrast, the transition models (Schlossberg, 1981; Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) seem to provide a more complete picture of Liam's retirement. First, they account for many of the factors that influenced the quality of Liam's transition experience, such as his reasons for retirement, his developmental experiences, his narrow athletic identity, and his perfectionism. Second, they account for some of the different problems he confronted, such as his adjustment difficulties and occupational conflicts. Third, they emphasize the delicate interplay between Liam's resources and the barriers to his adjustment. Most important, these models stress the individual nature of his experience. They do not, however, reveal why Liam moved into coaching. Individually, the models described above shed some light on the different aspects of Liam's story. These models seem to be more useful, however, when woven together.

Research on Athletic Retirement

Reasons for retirement. The reasons Liam gave for retirement were age, injury, lack of success and motivation, financial pressure, and personal choice. These reasons are common among athletes, and support the findings of other researchers (e.g., Lavalley et al., 1997; Mihovilovic, 1968; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

Quality of the transition process. Liam openly expressed that he experienced significant distress and a variety of psychological and vocational conflicts upon retirement. His negative retirement experience supports the findings of numerous anecdotal and empirical reports, sport biographies, and media coverage of athletes experiencing adjustment difficulties following the conclusion of their sporting careers (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Blinde & Stratta, 1982; Brewer, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Steele & Carne, 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

Factors related to adaptation. Throughout his story, Liam described a number of factors that, according to the literature (e.g., Coakley, 1983; Lavalley, 2000; McPherson, 1980; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), inhibit effective coping and most likely contributed to his career transition distress. He developed a strong athletic identity early in his life and seemed to close off alternative identities. His self-esteem was intimately tied to his sporting involvement and performance. He did not engage in much pre-retirement planning and did not feel like he had many career options when he retired. He seemed to possess a number of perfectionist tendencies that probably contributed to his distress, such as high expectations and performance standards and a harsh evaluation of his achievements. Finally, although Liam chose to retire, I got the sense that he felt the decision was somewhat out of his control. His body let him down, and there was a sense of hopelessness and frustration that came through in his tale. Considering all of these factors, it is not surprising that he experienced some distress at the end of his athletic career.

On the other hand, Liam also described some factors that facilitate coping (e.g., Murphy, 1995; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Stephan et al., 2007; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). For example, his retirement appeared to be a gradual process. He was able to maintain his physical fitness because of his continued involvement in tennis. He also seemed to use a number of functional coping skills and had strong social support to help him deal with some of the cognitive and emotional problems he experienced. Although Liam initially experienced distress, he described how he eventually adjusted to his retirement from competitive sport. It is likely that in the long term, his resources and coping skills helped him adjust to his retirement.

Relocating Within Sport after Athletic Retirement

Motivation. Liam's main driving force for moving into coaching seemed to be his intrinsic motivation and love of the game. This finding supports the results of several researchers (e.g., Frederick & Morrison, 1999; Stevens & Weiss, 1991; Tamura et al., 1993) who have found intrinsic motivation to be a strong driving force for coaches. As suggested in the literature review, this type of motivation is desirable because it can positively affect behaviour.

Liam also commented that tennis was "what he knows," and that he had already been doing some part-time coaching. He mentioned some other motives, such as poor pre-retirement planning, not having to deal with threats to his competence and self-esteem, not wanting to start at the bottom of the occupational world, the need to give back to the next generation of athletes, and the potential earnings involved in coaching. These motivators support the speculations of several theorists (e.g., Blustein et al., 1989; Lavallee et al., 1997; Van Neutegem, 2006) and the research results of Shachar and colleagues (2004). Although not optimal, there was no evidence in Liam's story to suggest that these motivators were damaging his coaching career. These motivators, however, did seem to be influencing his career choices (i.e., not wanting to work with elite players due to threats to his self-esteem).

Quality of the transition process. As stated earlier, Liam eventually adjusted to retirement from competitive sport. In addition to his resources and coping skills, it seemed that his move into coaching helped him to adjust. For example, coaching appeared to give his life structure, helped him maintain his feelings of competence and worth, gave him the opportunity to stay in close contact with his social network, and allowed him to continue his love affair with tennis. This finding supports the notion that

staying involved in sport can act as a buffer to alleviate some of the anxiety and negative consequences associated with the retirement process (Blustein et al., 1989; Lavalley et al., 1997; Shachar et al., 2004). Overall, it appeared that his transition into coaching was a positive experience, and gave him the chance to develop and grow (to some degree).

Sport experiences and transferable skills. Liam's story supported the idea that coaches transfer many of their athletic experiences and skills into their coaching (Côté, 2006; Petitpas & Schwartz, 1989; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Van Neutegem, 2006). For example, he commented about how his coaching philosophy was based on inspiring his athletes to love the game, just as he did when he was an athlete. He perceived some of his coaches as poor models of coaching, and tried not to follow in their footsteps. He spoke about wanting to provide his athletes with opportunities to fulfil their goals, like his parents did for him. He also mentioned how he had continued striving towards high performance standards and how he felt somewhat confident in his coaching ability because of his athletic achievements and knowledge. Overall, Liam's descriptions revealed that both positive and negative athletic experiences had influenced his development. Furthermore, his athletic experiences and skills seemed to have manifested in his coaching philosophy, his coaching style, his expectations, his behaviour, his interactions, his career choices, and his coaching business.

Liam also mentioned that he experienced some difficulties when he first moved into coaching. He said that he needed to develop and learn some new skills, and that he was not completely prepared for the transition. In other words, although he transferred a lot of his athletic skills and experiences into his coaching, he did not possess some of the skills that he needed. This finding suggests that coaching requires a different skill set to playing tennis, and that retiring athletes do not necessarily transition easily into coaching.

Career and life satisfaction. On the surface, Liam's career and life satisfaction appeared to be moderate. He mentioned several factors that have been shown to influence satisfaction, such as the job itself and staying involved in the sport, the responsibility of operating his own business, the stable income and financial security, and his working conditions (Drakou et al., 2006; Oshagbemi, 1997; Rogers et al., 1994; Singh & Surujlal, 2006). I was intrigued, however, that he was not committed to coaching in the long term and that he advised other athletes not to retire if they still loved the game. I wondered if he were truly happy or whether he was coaching in order to hold onto his one true love for just a little longer. I sensed that it was the latter. Liam made it clear throughout his tale that his connection to tennis was powerful. It appeared to me that at the end of his athletic career he could not break free from his attraction to tennis. He did not venture into coaching because he loved the job or wanted to build a long-term career. Rather, maybe he moved into coaching so that he could slowly grieve and let his love for the game fade.

Liam and I: Reflections on the Research Process

As I sat and listened to Liam tell his story, I was extremely aware of the transference between us. His natural style was to interact with me as a peer, and it seemed he often omitted details in his story based on the belief that I understood, or already knew, what he was talking about. On several occasions, he commented about my own coaching experiences, which made me feel uncomfortable. As a neophyte researcher and fellow coach, I was not sure how to juggle my dual roles or how to respond to him. I tried to be as natural and human as possible, but sometimes I caught myself interacting in a robotic and cautious manner.

There were several occasions when I felt the power imbalance shift, and I got the sense that Liam was seeking me out for expert approval regarding his decisions and experiences. His need for approval was also evident when he offered numerous explanations for his experiences, in the hope that one of them would be “right.” Sometimes I was unsure whether he was telling me what he thought I wanted to hear or recalling his actual experiences.

As a perfectionist, I identified a little too closely with Liam. I understood his desire for approval, his high performance standards, his high expectations of others, his perception of success, and his lack of satisfaction in his accomplishments. The problem with my countertransference was that I often reframed his experiences and imposed my own view. For example, there were times throughout the interview when I caught myself being judgmental, like when Liam commented that he did not have any post-athletic career plans. I needed to step back and keep reminding myself to listen openly and not let my perfectionist beliefs cloud my interpretation and representation of his story.

Being a neophyte researcher, I found myself constantly categorising the information Liam was presenting, and letting my own agenda creep in. I asked Liam some clumsy and leading questions in the hope that he would give me information that fit neatly with the research literature. Because few researchers have investigated this topic, I was anxious about what I was going to discover, how I was going to explain my findings, and whether my research was going to be worthwhile. I did not want Liam’s story to be messy – I wanted it to fit neatly in a box. I later realised that approaching the interview in this way interfered with my ability to listen, be present, and appreciate Liam’s story. When I was transcribing the recording of the interview, I noticed several things that I had

missed. It struck me that I needed to accept the participants' stories how they told them and focus more on being attentive and interacting therapeutically.

As a perfectionist, I ruminated for a while about my mistake and inexperience. I referred back to Sparkes (2002) and found some comfort in his acknowledgement that qualitative researchers often feel lost and ill at ease when conducting research. He suggested that researchers should not ignore their feelings of discomfort or wish them away; rather, researchers should use these feelings as a resource to develop texts that highlight the problematic worlds we study. In other words, I needed to accept that there was no single way, much less one "right" way, for experiencing retirement. Each athlete's retirement journey was messy. I needed to explore that messiness so that this research was reflective of what really happens when practitioners sit down with retiring athletes.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY 2

Tony's Tale: The Easy Road

Introduction

When I first met Tony, I instantly noted the casualness in his manner. He seemed to be a laid-back, easy-going person, and did not appear concerned about my impressions of him. When I arrived, he was friendly and welcoming. He had a meeting to attend after the interview, so we did not engage in any small talk and got straight to the interview.

When we sat down to begin the interview, I noted that Tony positioned himself a fair distance away from me. He kept his body language open and relaxed throughout the interview, and often made eye contact. His responses were concise and straight to the point. There were times when he became distracted (e.g., answering his mobile phone), but he was able to return his focus to the interview. Initially when recalling past events, he focused on his thoughts and behaviours and did not mention his emotions. He seemed to be reporting his story, rather than re-experiencing his journey and letting me walk along beside him. Later in the interview, when we both had the opportunity to become more comfortable with each other, he started to uncover more about himself and shared some of his feelings.

At the time of the interview, Tony was 34 years old. He was happily married and had one child. His transition into tennis coaching had occurred 6 years prior to the interview. When we met, he was operating his own full-time tennis coaching business at a local tennis club close to his home.

The Journey Begins

Tony first started playing tennis at the age of 8. His father introduced him to the sport because he wanted to get him “off the streets.” Initially, Tony played socially at the local tennis club. He acquired his skills quickly, and within 12 months he began getting coached and competing in club competitions.

At the age of 10, Tony won his first tournament. He described how exciting it was bringing the trophy home to his parents and how winning motivated him to keep playing. Over the next few years, Tony continued competing in local tournaments and performed well. His coach recommended that he start entering some bigger, state-level tournaments. He had some good results in these bigger tournaments, and was selected for the State Training Squad and State Representative Team.

A Bump in the Road

When Tony was 16 years old, he took the next big step and entered the Under-16 Nationals. He had high expectations of himself, and thought he would at least make it to the semi-finals. Unfortunately, he did not perform as well as he expected and was knocked out in the quarterfinals. Because of this result, he was not selected for the National Junior Touring Team. He described how both he and his father were disappointed, and how he “got pissed off” and decided to stop playing tennis.

Listening to Tony talk about his early experiences set off alarm bells in my head. He had painted me a picture of a young athlete who had high performance standards and was results-orientated. He did not cope well with failure and used maladaptive coping strategies in response to disappointment. His early motivation for playing was based on extrinsic rewards, such as trophies, recognition, and approval from his parents. As I sat

there reflecting on this image, I could not help but think I did not have the complete picture. I sensed that there was more to Tony's story.

Travelling Companion

After having a few months off, Tony decided to pick up his racket again. He went back to his local club and took a more casual approach to his tennis. He described how he began doing everything on his own and how his motivation for playing tennis changed – he just wanted to *enjoy* tennis. I wanted to know more about what triggered this change and need for independence, so I later asked Tony to elaborate on this significant period in his life.

Tony recalled that when he was 10 years old, his father sustained an injury that prevented him from working full time.

Tony: What greater way to occupy his time than to take me everywhere [pauses] and that's what he did, from 11 or 12 years old, when I started playing tournaments, and getting into state squads. He would pick me up and would be with me every day, and go to the tournaments. We even went away, took a couple of trips interstate. That was great for him because he was filling up his life watching his son develop in tennis, and keeping him interested, keeping him busy. That was great, very supportive, which was great. And at the age of 16, back then when I had a disappointment [pauses] I wasn't only disappointed, my dad was. I sort of broke away from my dad, meaning that I didn't want him to come anymore. I wanted to take myself.

Tarah: What do you think that was about?

Tony: That was a personal issue because I sort of said, "Well, if I'm going to fail, I'll fail by myself. I don't want you to make a comment about how I'm failing as well." Because we both did look at the 16s Nationals as a failing thing. I thought I would be set up for 16s onwards. It was a really big deal back then, and I thought I was prepared for it, but I wasn't. And he was disappointed. I was disappointed, but then I was disappointed as well with him adding that extra disappointment. So I said, "That's it! I don't really want you there any more."

I was beginning to develop a more complete picture. Tony's previous comments had a strong family dynamic present. He revealed how he felt responsible for his father's happiness. Children often take on the responsibility for their parents' emotional states.

Parental happiness gets tied to what a child does, or does not do. When a child's actions or inactions result in negative parental emotions, then the child feels like he (in this case) has failed. Tony described how he failed to make his father happy at the 16s Nationals, and shame and disappointment came crashing down on him. In the end, he decided that he could not carry the weight of responsibility on his shoulders anymore, and he broke his tie with his father.

From that time on, Tony's father would only come and watch him play occasionally. Tony believed that he performed better and was more successful as a result of his father's reduced involvement.

Not because he wasn't there [pauses] that was silly to think that. It was just because I worked harder, and my own mental side was fixed up. Yeah, he just sort of didn't recover from that, by me coming back and not asking him back.

As I looked over at Tony, I expected to see sadness as he described his father and their broken relationship. But in talking about his father, Tony voiced irritation and resentment. His anger signalled to me that his conflict with his father was not resolved. I imagined that he was still dealing with feelings surrounding his responsibility for his father's happiness, his father's love being contingent on his performance, and his father's severe negative response to his loss at the 16s Nationals.

I sensed that Tony began to feel guilty about his anger because he quickly tried to rationalise his decision to cut ties. He argued that his father was going to have to reduce his involvement *anyway*, because it was time for Tony to begin travelling interstate and overseas. Tony did not reveal much more, but I sensed that I only had one small piece of the puzzle.

Another Bump

Tony experienced great success when he returned from his brief retirement. At the age of 17, he won the Nationals, travelled overseas and represented Australia in the Junior Davis Cup, received some funding, and was awarded a scholarship at one of the sport institutes. Tony stated that he had “a bad experience” at the sport institute, and going there was “a bad mistake.” He was only there a few months, but during that time his relationships with the coaches were strained. He recalled how the coaches wanted to change his game style and how he did not agree with their suggestions because he believed they made his game weaker. He was strong-minded and refused to listen.

They were taking care of me, and I didn't do whatever they said I had to do. I wasn't a bad boy, don't get me wrong, because I wasn't playing up or anything like that. They were just saying to do this, and I sort of wasn't listening because I didn't believe in them. They didn't see that side of it. So yeah, not happy with them.

What struck me at this point was Tony's massive resistance to his coaches despite them “taking care” of him. He had suddenly developed a strong need to be independent and wanted to complete his journey on his own. I began to think his resistance and need for independence was a defence against developing another dependent and conditional relationship.

Tony did not cope well at the sport institute, and ended up “exploding” and leaving on “bad terms.” Looking back on his decision, he still believed that he did the right thing by leaving, and said that he did not regret returning home. When he got back home, Tony decided to take another “break” from tennis. I could not help but notice that “taking a break” was starting to become a recurring pattern in Tony's story.

After a few weeks, he picked up his racket and started training again with the State Squad. He trained hard and had some good tournament results. Despite his results, he was

overlooked for selection for the next Junior Touring Squad. He rationalised their decision by saying: “It all came down from the institute for me leaving and making them look bad.” He decided not to let their decision “worry” him, and he played in some senior professional tour events in Australia. He performed well, and felt it was time to start travelling and competing overseas.

Arriving at the Destination

At the age of 19, Tony left Australia and travelled around Europe with a fellow player to compete on the professional tour. Although he was earning enough money to “keep life going,” he found the financial side of playing on tour difficult. Fortunately, during a tournament in Italy (the original country name has been changed to protect Tony’s privacy), he realised that he could transfer his citizenship because of his Italian family background. Once he transferred, he became one of the top ranked players in the country and received many benefits, including substantial financial support. For the next 6 years, Tony had an easy road.

I was flying off to the islands: the Greek Islands, the Caribbean. I was picking all these destinations that you normally couldn’t afford, and wouldn’t go. I would just go because it was for free. Bad choices. I didn’t have any guidance at that age, between 19 and 25 to select the right road, and do the right stuff. I still had a great life though. I really enjoyed it, and had a good amount of victories.

Tony went on to describe his career achievements: reaching about 300 in the world in both singles and doubles, representing Italy in numerous international events, and playing in several Grand Slam tournaments. Overall, he seemed happy with his achievements and enjoyed his life as an athlete.

I don’t look back at it any more saying I still want to play because I’ve actually played enough. I could have done a lot better, I know that inside me, but the life that it gave me was great, so I’m not regretting anything. I’m just happy that I did it.

I was not completely convinced that Tony had no regrets. When I asked him about regrets later in the interview, he said that looking back he did regret not taking the “right road” in his 20s, and not doing “the right stuff” and fulfilling his potential. He made poor choices in terms of his tournament schedule and prevented himself from potentially earning more ranking points. He said that he was guiding himself, “which was not the right person to do it.” I noted that Tony had mentioned “guidance” a few times up to this point. I was curious to find out more.

Tour Guide

Like Liam, Tony did not mention much about his coach when he was telling his tale. Again, I was amazed at this omission. Later in the interview, I felt compelled to ask Tony about his coach. He told me that he had a few different coaches throughout his career. His first coach at his local club taught him the basics. At the age of 11, Tony began working with another coach, who was well known and had a good reputation. This coach focused heavily on Tony’s technique, and in his words, “did a great job.” Tony said that he felt forced to leave this coach 3 years later though because his game began to stagnate. This coach “couldn’t look past” the technical side and kept working on and changing Tony’s technique. Tony felt that he did not need any more work on his technique, just tactics and hard training, and that this coach was doing damage to his game. Between the ages of 14 and 19, Tony did not have a personal coach, and mainly got advice from state squad coaches.

When Tony began travelling full-time at the age of 19, he still did not have a coach. Looking back, he was disappointed that he did not put his funds towards a travelling coach. He said that he did not need a coach to teach him how to play, but rather, a coach to “keep him in check” and give him guidance. He felt that he would have

experienced more success if he had had a coach or mentor during his 20s. When I asked him why he did not invest in a travelling coach, he replied that no one told him to hire one. I found this response a little odd and wondered if perhaps he had been told but had not listened. In the end, Tony recalled his father telling him to organise a travelling coach, but he ignored him because he thought his father was wrong.

At this point, I could not help but notice the contradiction in Tony's story. He had described to me a strong need to be independent and in control of his career. He even highlighted how he pushed people away within his support network who were willing to help him. Then in his next breath, he said that he regretted not having more support and guidance during his athletic career. It seemed to me that Tony's fierce internal parent-child conflict got in the way of his career, and possibly prevented him from fulfilling his sporting potential.

The End of the Athletic Journey

At the age of 27, Tony's motivation to play tennis began to decline. He lost interest, stopped training as hard, and let his performance slip. He decided gradually, and voluntarily, that it was time to retire and do something else. Later in the interview, Tony shared with me some other factors that influenced his decision to retire:

That top age of those 20s, you're still playing and not earning much money as well, so you look into your future and say, "Well, how much more can I do of this? I'm not really earning that much. Whatever I'm making I'm spending, and I'm not building a wealth for later on to say, you know, I can take it easy for a couple of years, to go into something and have more choices." I knew I wasn't going to build any wealth at that age, not when I didn't have that drive, a true drive.

Injuries didn't help either. I was getting very sore, a very sore shoulder with elbows, and sort of restricted in my power game. I remember it was a turning point [pauses] I think I was in Germany, and I'd just played a match. Lost the final, and that night my arm was killing me, and I had to pop some Voltaren just to sleep. After all the icing and trying to take care of it, it was just basically damaged. The only way to have a good night's sleep was to pop 100 or 200mg of

Voltaren, which is a big dosage just to get a night's rest. After that I just knew that it wasn't good, you know, and it was more of an ongoing injury that just kept getting worse.

Lifestyle as well. I just thought I had enough of enjoying that life. Like, how could you get sick of it? But you did [pauses] I did. It was great, but the buzz left.

In other words, Tony was getting old. He described some of the implications of ageing in sport, such as loss of motivation, change in priorities, decrease in performance, and increase in injuries. Tony's life as an athlete was not fun or "easy" anymore. He employed the same coping strategy that he had used in the past when things got hard – he put his rackets away and retired.

Planning the Next Journey

When Tony retired, he did not have any post-athletic career plans. While searching for a new career, he was presented with an opportunity to do some coaching in Italy. He liked the idea of coaching, and had already done some part-time coaching during his athletic career.

I thought I'd try that out first. It was the easier thing to do. The easiest thing for a tennis player to do when he comes off tour is just get into coaching, so I thought I'd give that a go. If it doesn't work out then I'll move into something else, and I'll think about that then because when you spend 15 or 16 years in just one sport, it's hard to think outside the box, and you're sort of stuck.

I have heard many retiring athletes report feeling "stuck" like Tony. In my experience, it is a common reason that retiring athletes give for moving into coaching. Rather than exploring other career options, they remain "stuck" and take the "easy road" into coaching.

Tony then went on to describe how he wanted to return to Australia to complete his coaching qualifications. He also decided that before embarking on his new coaching career, he wanted to withdraw slowly from tennis by doing a "farewell tour." He spent the next 12 months travelling to tournaments around the world, courtesy of the Italian

government, but not playing much tennis! He ended his career on a high note, and did not experience much distress upon retirement.

The Beginning of the Coaching Journey

When Tony returned to Australia after his farewell tour at the age of 28, he started doing some assistant coaching work. Within a few months, he was asked to take over the tender for a tennis club close to where he grew up. He set up his own coaching business there and quickly completed his coaching qualifications. Six years on, he is still operating his coaching business at the same club, and lives nearby.

The Highs and the Lows

Tony loves the life that coaching allows him to live. In particular, he is happy with the hours of operation and the freedom it gives him, the school holiday breaks, the social aspects, the stability and being in one place, the independence and being in charge of his own business, the working conditions, the continued involvement in tennis, and his engaging with people who also enjoy playing tennis.

On the other hand, he finds coaching interferes with his relationship with his spouse. His working hours conflict with hers, and they rarely get to spend time together during the coaching term. To overcome this problem, Tony ensures that he does not work over the school holiday breaks, and dedicates this time to his wife. He also mentioned that he finds the business side of coaching a bit overwhelming because “there’s a lot to do.” Overall though, Tony stated that the positives of coaching outweigh the negatives, and that his life and career satisfaction are currently high.

Similar Journeys

Tony believed that his athletic career had not influenced his coaching development. As I sat there listening to Tony describe his life as a coach, I could not help

but notice the similarities between his athletic and coaching experiences. For example, he commented that he does not feel he has sufficient “guidance” as a coach, just like when he was an athlete. He then stated that in his role as a coach, he endeavours to provide athletes with the right advice and guidance. He also spoke about his ongoing need for independence and control, as the following quote highlights:

One thing I really look back at now is I’ve always been my own boss. I’m telling myself what to do, and now the same thing. I’m not working for anyone. I am the boss of what I do.

The casual, easy-going approach that he had when playing later in his career was also evident in his coaching style:

Sometimes I could be doing more, but I don’t have anyone pushing me because I’m going as far as I want to go. But unfortunately, when you don’t, you don’t go as far as you should be going, or could be going a lot further. But maybe that’s in a couple of years to come, to consider that avenue. Can I get someone to push me, get something to push me more? Maybe that’s an option as well later on but, at the moment, I’m currently happy with the way things are going.

He also described how his coaching philosophy was based on ensuring his students were enjoying the game, just like he did when he was an athlete:

It’s a sport; it’s fun, and that’s the way I sort of take it. And if it does get to that, you’ve still got to enjoy the sport to take it further. So some kids that want to take it further, they need to keep enjoying it, still enjoying it. They’ve got to want to do it.

Although Tony did not acknowledge the connection, the above examples highlight how he had transferred some of his positive and negative athletic experiences into his coaching.

Current Stage of the Coaching Journey

Tony seemed to have a high level of confidence in his current coaching ability. He mentioned that he had a lot to offer young players in terms of advice, guidance, and sharing his own experiences. He stated that he possessed the right personality, attitude,

and skills for coaching, such as patience, understanding, a relaxed attitude, and excellent communication skills. He seemed to fit well in the coaching box.

At the time of the interview, Tony made it clear that like Liam, he only wanted to focus on grass-roots coaching:

I'll tell you one thing [pauses] I don't want to get into elite coaching at the moment. It's too demanding. I've got a couple of good kids, and I tell you what [pauses] it does my head in. It is so demanding because they need [pauses] they demand stuff. They are very demanding. They just ask a lot from you, and you've got to give a lot as well, which is just the higher end. So I prefer coaching younger kids at the moment, just because they come, they play, they enjoy it, they leave, and that's it. The higher end [pauses] it sucks a lot out of you. Sorry to say but it does, and if that's the road you want to take, take it. I don't want it at the moment. I'm happy to just keep with the development age, that fun age. Kids that want to play, keep improving...I do have a couple [of elite players and] that's nice, but I don't want more. I personally don't want that. It's just not what I want at the moment, and you can spread yourself out too thin, I think, if you have too many. I don't know what too many is. You just get exhausted, and it's too much, and I won't be enjoying it.

Considering Tony's casual manner, I was not surprised by his response. He was in coaching mainly for the life it allowed him to live, not for the recognition or for achievement. He seemed to be taking the "easy road" again. I began to wonder whether he would regret not taking the "right road" and fulfilling his coaching potential later on down the track. I also began to wonder whether there was something else that was underlying Tony's resistance to elite coaching. It seemed to me that he did not want to give too much of himself and risk facing rejection and resentment – like he rejected (and now possibly resents) his father and coaches. Again, I sensed that his past athletic experiences were influencing his coaching career.

The Road Ahead

I was curious about Tony's plans for the future. I was surprised when he stated that coaching was not a long-term career, and that he would probably consider doing

another career in 10 years. When I asked him what career path he was interested in taking, he replied:

Options are always there within the sport. I just think I can move around within the sport. You can do administration within a sport, could be travelling within the sport, you know, I don't know. Again, I'm within a box and it's hard to see myself doing something else completely different...so I'm sort of like, limited really...I think I'm stuck within this sport unfortunately. Not unfortunately, but that's what's happened. I can't avoid it [pauses] not that I'm unhappy about it. I'm happy about it, and I'll just keep going forward. As long as I'm enjoying it, I think that's the main thing.

Advice from an Experienced Traveller

In his role as a mentoring professional, Tony had some advice to offer retiring athletes who were thinking about moving into coaching: "I would recommend it, but I would recommend it later on. I would recommend they play their tennis, enjoy it, and just have that as a job." I found it intriguing that like Liam, Tony emphasized not giving up on an athletic career too early, and living the dream as long as possible before transitioning into normal, everyday life. Also like Liam, he seemed to have lost some of his passion for the game, referring to coaching as just a "job."

Tony's Tale in Relation to the Literature

Theoretical Perspectives on Athletic Retirement

Several theoretical frameworks seem to shed light on some of Tony's retirement experiences. In terms of social gerontological models, disengagement theory (Cummings et al., 1960) provides a reasonable account of Tony's decision to retire. According to this theory, Tony and the game withdrew from one another to the mutual benefit and satisfaction of both. In other words, Tony was on the way down – he was getting older, he was sustaining more injuries, he was lacking motivation, and he was performing poorly. By disengaging from the game, he paved the way for new young players to enter

the professional tennis tour and launch their careers. He withdrew from the game and is enjoying his remaining working years “in leisure.”

Social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973) is also useful for understanding Tony’s decision to retire. As described above, Tony was getting older, he was sustaining more injuries, he was lacking motivation, and he was performing poorly. According to this theory, Tony’s decline made him susceptible to external labelling. He gradually reduced his involvement (i.e., his 12-month “farewell” tour) in order to avoid negative social evaluation from his peers.

Continuity theory (Atchley, 1976), on the other hand, can account for Tony’s decision to move into coaching. By staying involved in tennis, he experienced minimal change and disruption. His transition allowed him to continue living a casual, easy-going life. For example, he transferred most of his tennis skills into coaching; he did not have to complete much training; he maintained his social networks; he remained independent and unrestricted; he maintained his health and fitness, and he maintained his level of income. This sense of easiness helped Tony transition with little distress.

Exchange theory (Homans, 1961) also offers a plausible account of Tony’s transition into coaching. According to this theory, Tony exchanged his athletic talent, knowledge, and experiences for something meaningful from the sport system. In other words, Tony gave back to the game of tennis by sharing his expertise, and in return, he was able to continue living a casual, easy life.

In addition to the above social gerontological models, the transition models (Schlossberg, 1981; Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) provide useful frameworks for understanding Tony’s reaction to retirement. According to these models, his positive response was facilitated by many factors relating to his retirement situation,

his personal qualities, his development and past experiences, his support, and his coping resources. For example, he had complete control over his retirement and his decision to stop playing tennis; he had accomplished most of his goals; he had an easy-going temperament and approach to his retirement; he was presented with an immediate opportunity when he retired, and he had the support of the Italian government.

Individually, all of the models described above are limited in that they shed light on only some parts of Tony's story. When combined, however, the models provide a more complete picture of Tony's retirement experiences. In contrast, none of the thanatological models described in the literature review account for Tony's retirement experiences, as they assume his transition was a negative event.

Research on Athletic Retirement

Reasons for retirement. Tony described several reasons for his retirement. The most salient reason was his age. An athlete's age is one of the most common reasons for sports career termination (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Researchers have found that ageing in sport leads to decreases in motivation for training and competing, decreases in performance, increases in injury, and changes in values and priorities (Cecić Erpič, 1998; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Most of the reasons Tony provided for his retirement fit with this research finding.

Quality of the transition process. In contrast to Liam, Tony painted a positive and healthy career transition experience. Although his retirement experience supports the findings of several researchers (e.g., Allison & Meyer, 1988; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993), it is contrary to what the vast majority of researchers have found. That is, retirement from competitive sport is often an inherently negative and traumatic experience for athletes (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Blinde & Stratta, 1982; Brewer, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn,

2000; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Steele & Carne, 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

Factors related to adaptation. Tony's tale highlighted that ending an athletic career does not necessarily cause distress. Rather, there are a number of factors that facilitate and inhibit an athlete's ability to cope with the transition process (Lavalley, 2000; McPherson, 1980; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). In Tony's case, the factors that assisted coping far outweighed the factors that interfered. For example, he had a high degree of control over his decision to retire and the retirement process appeared to be gradual; he had substantial social and financial support, and he seemed to have achieved the greater part of his goals. Tony also used several coping strategies that probably facilitated the transition process. His "farewell tour" allowed him to continue his involvement in tennis, remain busy, maintain his exercise regimen, remain in touch with friends from tennis, and begin to plan for his next career. He also seemed to display acceptance and had a positive interpretation of his retirement. He was fortunate in that he was presented with an immediate opportunity to coach. This opportunity might have alleviated the potential distress that he may have experienced as a result of his poor pre-retirement planning and his narrow athletic identity. Overall, it appeared that Tony's resources adequately met the demands of the transition process, and that it is possible to have a positive transition experience out of competitive sport.

Relocating Within Sport after Athletic Retirement

Motivation. One of Tony's main reasons for transitioning into coaching was that he felt "stuck" in tennis and found it difficult to "think outside the box." He was also offered some coaching work, and knew what was required of him because he had engaged in some part-time coaching during his athletic career. This finding supports

Shachar and colleagues' (2004) and Orlick's (as cited in Van Neutegem, 2006) suggestions that retired athletes choose to stay in coaching in order to stay close to a familiar environment and to avoid the stress and anxiety that often accompanies exploration of unfamiliar environments. It also lends support for Sinclair and Hackfort's (2000) idea that many retired athletes possess the knowledge, experience, drive, and expertise that are required, and they are often encouraged to remain in the sport and give back to the sport system. According to existing career decision-making models (Blustein et al., 1989; Blustein & Phillips, 1994), Tony's motivation for staying involved in tennis can be interpreted as maladaptive, and might possibly lead to some long-term problems.

Quality of the transition. Tony described his transition into coaching as a relatively easy process. For example, he was immediately presented with an opportunity to coach; he launched his own coaching business straight away; he was able to complete his coaching qualifications relatively quickly; he was earning a good income from the beginning; he was able to maintain his levels of self-esteem, and he was able to continue living the easy life. Like Liam, it seemed that Tony's move into coaching acted as a buffer and contributed to his positive transition experience (Blustein et al., 1989; Lavalley et al., 1997; Shachar et al., 2004). Furthermore, his transition into coaching resulted in a chance for him to develop and grow (to some degree).

Sport experiences and transferable skills. Tony described how he had transferred a lot of his athletic knowledge, skills, and personal qualities into his coaching (i.e., patience, understanding, relaxed attitude, excellent communication skills). His story also highlighted how his coaching development had been strongly influenced by both his positive and negative past sport experiences. For example, he mentioned how his coaching philosophy was based on providing guidance and enjoyment, which were strong

themes in his athletic story. He also commented about his casual approach to both his coaching and his athletic career. He said that he enjoyed coaching because it made him feel independent and in control, which is what he craved during his playing career. Most important, he revealed how his conflict with his father still continued to influence his career choices.

Overall, Tony's tale supported the idea that coaches transfer many of their athletic experiences and skills into their coaching careers (Côté, 2006; Petitpas & Schwartz, 1989; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Van Neutegem, 2006). These experiences and skills appeared to manifest in his coaching philosophy, his coaching style, his expectations, his behaviours, his interactions, his career choices, and his coaching business. Furthermore, he pointed out that in the future he might possibly transfer his sport experience and skills and "move around within the sport."

Career and life satisfaction. Tony stated that, 6 years into his coaching career, his career and life satisfaction was moderate to high. He mentioned several factors that have been shown contribute to satisfaction such as responsibility, security and stability, and working conditions (Drakou et al., 2006; Oshagbemi, 1997; Rogers et al., 1994; Singh & Surujlal, 2006). I sensed, however, that like Liam he was not truly happy. His advice to other athletes made me think that coaching was a "good enough" job for now, and that maybe he was using it to buy him time – time so that he could let go, plan his next adventure, and continue to live the easy life just a little bit longer. I also could not help but think that his intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment was lacking because of his primary motivation for moving into coaching. It seemed that he did not *really* want to coach, but he felt like he was "stuck," and it was his best (and only real) option.

Tony and I: Reflections on the Research Process

Of all the participants, I felt the most uncomfortable with Tony. After the initial introduction and formalities, we went straight to questions and answers without the small talk or rapport building that might have put us (or at least me) at ease. I could not shake the feeling that his involvement in the study, although voluntary, was somehow an infringement – on his time and his privacy. The effect that this uncomfortableness had on me was that my questions were rigid and structured, and our conversation lacked flow. I felt like I was interviewing, not conversing. I seemed to miss things he said and did not follow his lead, which became apparent to me when I transcribed the recording of the session. Although both of us seemed to relax somewhat towards the end of the interview, I felt that there was a distance between us (both physically and emotionally).

There were instances during the interview, however, when my uncomfortableness subsided for a fleeting moment. During these times, I felt a strong reaction to Tony. For example, his recurring comments about feeling “stuck” made my heart sink. I wanted to put on my applied sport psychology hat and encourage him to explore his options. I found my desire to help Tony difficult to manage. Because I had watched my husband and brother battle for years feeling “stuck,” I understood a little too well the consequences of that state of affairs.

At the completion of the study, I ruminated the most over Tony’s story. I felt disappointed with my own performance. I was not able to shake my uncomfortableness and be therapeutically present during the interview. As a result, I felt that I missed out on getting real depth. Deep down, I was also disappointed because I felt that I was not going to be able to create a masterpiece from the information Tony shared. If I did not create

masterpieces, then what good was this research? Oh no, my own psychopathology rears its head again!

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY 3

Craig's Tale: Unfulfilled Dreams

Introduction

When I first met Craig, I instantly noted the contradiction between his stature and his demeanour. His physical composition was strong and muscular, and he had a broad sturdy frame. In contrast, his tone was soft, and he had a gentle manner. He was immediately warm and friendly and went to great lengths to welcome me and make me feel comfortable.

When we sat down to begin the interview, Craig positioned himself close to me. I felt that there was a level of intimacy and trust between us from the beginning. As he started to tell his tale, I sensed that he was experiencing some anxiety. When he spoke, he would look to me for approval and would often finish his responses with a nervous laugh, nod, or comment. His responses were brief and sometimes cautious, and he required a lot of prompting. Of all the participants, Craig needed the most help to tell his story.

At the time of the interview, Craig was 22 years old. He had a long-term partner, and was living at home with his parents. He had transitioned into coaching 4 years prior to the interview, and was operating his own coaching business from home.

The Beginning of the Dream

Craig's athletic dream began at the age of 7 when he moved with his family to a new house that had a tennis court in the backyard. Over the next few years, he played tennis socially at home with his father and his cousins. At the age of 9, Craig ventured down to the local tennis club for some coaching lessons. When he first started lessons, Craig commented that tennis was "not much fun." He was "quite overweight" and shy,

and he was “always put in with the girls.” I sensed that there was some deep issues underlying Craig’s previous remarks. I interpreted his comments to mean that he felt somewhat inadequate and inferior as a child (as overweight children often do). I filed these comments away in the hope that he might elaborate later.

Craig stated that he “got serious” with tennis a year later when he played in his first tournament and came runner-up. This success motivated him to increase his training load, and the following year he entered the Under-12 Nationals. He performed well in the Nationals and revealed some promising potential. It was at this point that Craig’s athletic dream came alive – he committed himself full-time to becoming a professional tennis player.

Reaching for the Dream

At the age of 12, Craig’s athletic career took off. He was selected for the State Training Squad and Representative Team, he received a scholarship at one of the sport institutes, he completed numerous trips overseas to represent Australia and play in international events, and he had some good tournament results. At this young age, he said he already had his sights set on the “bigger picture,” as the following passage highlights:

Craig: That would always be in my mind; like the good life, the money, the fame, everything.

Tarah: That was your ambition?

Craig: A tennis player? Yeah, I honestly thought top hundred I could make. And then from there, it was up to me.

At this point in the interview, I began to feel concerned about Craig’s high extrinsic motivation in conjunction with his low intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment. Most children his age are involved in sport because it is fun and they enjoy it – but not Craig. In my mind I began to question what function tennis served in his life. I reflected on

Craig's earlier comments about feeling inferior and Adler's (1929) concept of compensation. I wondered: Did Craig play tennis to compensate for his feelings of inferiority and enhance his self-worth? Did Craig set athletic goals that were too high and unattainable in an effort to compensate for his feelings of inferiority and be accepted by others? At this early stage in the interview, I sensed the answer to both of these questions was "yes."

Rewards and Costs

When I asked Craig about his life as an athlete and what he loved the most about playing tennis, he stated: "I just loved competing. And because I got to travel, I got to meet a lot of new people." He said that he developed several long-lasting friendships through tennis. On the other hand, he did not enjoy travelling on his own and being away from home. He felt lonely, especially when he was going through a "rough patch." He mentioned that his life was "full on" as a young athlete, and he found it difficult to balance his schooling and tennis. I was surprised when Craig commented that like Tony, his experience at the sport institute also "wasn't so good." He stated that he did not get along with the coaches: "Pretty much as soon as I walked in there, they didn't like me. I'm not too sure why." I was unsure at this stage what he meant by "they didn't like me." I needed to hear more.

Craig went on to tell me about how the coaches had "favourites" and how he was not one of the "in" players. He felt that the coaches "pushed him to the side," "picked on" him, and did not "look after" him. The coaches rarely acknowledged his good performances, and he was often unfairly overlooked for selection. Craig emphasized that the coaches imposed unrealistically high expectations on him and were extremely critical, as the following example highlights:

[They would say,] “Craig you’re not doing this! Craig you’re lazy!” And it’s like, “I’m doing everything you’re asking me to!” Then I’d go home and get a bad report, and it’s like, “What more can I do? I’m trying to do everything you guys are asking me to do, and it’s not good enough!”

Craig suggested that the institute coaches might not have “liked him” because of his “colour” (his cultural background). Craig was again expressing strong feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. He had revealed to me that he considered himself an “outsider.” At this point in the interview, I felt sad for Craig – and for myself. I understood how it felt to feel inferior and to be considered an outsider. I understood how it felt to have to constantly strive to be better than everyone else to be considered acceptable. I also appreciated the long-lasting influence that early experiences of inferiority (being overweight, being put in with girls in physical activity, being non-Anglo) could have on an individual. I realised Craig’s story was stirring up my own “stuff,” and I had to work hard to try to manage my emotions and stay present for Craig.

Craig then described how he often felt conflicted because the institute coaches taught him differently than his private coaches and wanted to change his game. He commented about how frustrated he felt because the institute coaches would only see him a couple of times a week and were not really focused on him, but still tried to make major technical and tactical changes that he did not agree with. He managed this difficult situation by “doing their thing” and pleasing them while he was at the institute, and then doing what he was used to and believed in when he was on his own. It was evident from Craig’s comments that he possessed a strong need to please others, and felt that he had to work hard to be considered acceptable by others.

Craig also spoke about how he went on many trips with the institute coaches, and that he did not enjoy travelling with them. He described how he felt quite scared and nervous around them, and how he coped by “keeping quiet.” He recalled one trip where

he “got ripped in to” by one of the coaches after losing a tough match. He was at a stage where he could not deal with their criticism anymore, and he voiced his frustration. This event was significant for Craig because it was the only time that he “stood up” for himself. I found this admission intriguing, and began to construct an image of Craig as someone who lacked confidence and was submissive, especially to people in positions of authority or power.

Although his time at the institute “wasn’t good,” Craig said that he “stuck through it because of the financial benefits.” He used several strategies to help him cope, such as making up excuses in order to avoid training sessions. Looking back, he stated that he would not have gone to the institute if he had his chance again. He said: “It’s not worth it in the long run. It didn’t help me at all. Besides the financial benefits, the coaching didn’t help me at all. It actually made me worse.”

As I sat and listened to Craig recall his experiences at the institute, I could not help but wonder what damage these early relationships caused to his development. I imagined that his admission about the coaching “making him worse” had a double meaning: worse in the sense that it damaged his tennis, but also worse in that it damaged his view of the world. His world became full of people who were judgmental, unfair, directive, and easily dissatisfied with a less than perfect performance. Rather than enhance his feelings of worth, his tennis environment seemed to reinforce his feelings of inferiority and further decrease his self-worth.

Support Network

I was intrigued by Craig’s mention of “coaches” in his tale about the institute. When I asked him how many coaches he actually had, he stated that he worked with three different private coaches (one “technical” coach and two “hitting” coaches) and three

coaches at the institute. Although his relationships with the institute coaches were negative, he said that he had good relationships with his private coaches. From my own experiences as a coach, I could not help but imagine how confused, overwhelmed, and conflicted Craig must have felt having so many different inputs.

My concerns about Craig's social inputs were further reinforced when he started talking about his family and their involvement in his tennis. He stated that his father "played a big part." His first comment was that his dad "wasn't a pushy dad" and was always there for him. In his next breath, he contradicted himself and said:

My dad did play a big role. He motivated me a lot. Like, he pushed me in the sense that he told me you should be doing this and that, which was true...Most of the time my dad didn't have to push me...Sometimes I'd be lazy, and that's when he'd push me. But other than that, he was pretty good.

He spoke about how his father would watch most of his matches and would not get "mad" if he won or lost. He would only get upset when Craig would "give away" matches and not give his maximum effort. He finished by saying: "He just pretty much wanted the best for me." I noticed that Craig bounced between painting a positive picture and a negative picture of his father. In the end, the image Craig created was not coherent, and I felt a little confused. I sensed that he was trying to conceal the *real* image (the "pushy" dad) and manage my impression of his father.

Craig went on and spoke about his mother, and how she "got on his nerves." He described how she was similar to the coaches at the institute: "She'd come to tournaments and say, 'Why are you not doing this? Why are you not doing that?' It was the same thing, like she'd never watch me and just criticise me." Listening to Craig, it appeared that he perceived both his home and training environments to be full of people who imposed perfectionist demands and expectations. I began to wonder how this socially

prescribed perfectionism affected Craig, and how it was going to manifest later in his story.

Shattered Dreams

At the age of 15, Craig sustained a serious shoulder injury while away competing in Europe. He continued to play with the injury, and by the end of his 12-week trip he said that he could not lift his hand past his hip. When he arrived home, he consulted several specialists in the hope that one of them could “fix” his shoulder. They just gave him “quick fixes,” and his shoulder did not recover. He battled on like a true hero, mainly competing in Australian events. The shoulder kept getting worse, forcing him to “play for a month and then stop for a month, play for a month, stop for a month.” He stated: “That’s pretty much when I started going, not downhill, but I didn’t take my tennis any further. I tried to, but with the injury it was just too hard.” He did not mention much more about this period in his life or his career achievements. Later in the interview, I asked him why he omitted this period. He replied:

I guess I didn’t talk much about that part because I didn’t feel as though, like my expectations were a lot higher than what I did. I made finals [of major international junior tournaments], but again, I believed that I should have been winning them.

People say, “What did you do?” And I say, “Not much!” because I don’t think I did much. I would’ve said I did a lot if I made a men’s grand slam or something. But to me, being number one in juniors, it doesn’t mean anything to me because I don’t feel I achieved much. I always tell the kids that no-one’s going to remember who won the local tournaments, or who won the Nationals. People are going to remember who won Wimbledon, who won the Aussie Open, and stuff like that.

Craig was peeling off his layers and getting naked in front of me. He had exposed to me the influence that his support network had on him. From his last comments, it seemed that Craig had internalised their unrealistic expectations and formed a harsh internal critic.

Sadly, he revealed that he was now passing on these unrealistic expectations to the next

generation of athletes. He also gave me a peak at the baggage he was carrying around – his unfulfilled dreams of making it to the top.

When I asked Craig if he had any regrets, he said: “I don’t *really* have any regrets. But looking back, I’d probably do things differently. I try to not regret anything in life.” He said that if he had his time again, he would have taken more time off when he first sustained his shoulder injury, and he would have done more strengthening work when he was younger. I started to sense that he was feeling uncomfortable and did not want to venture any further down this path. I retreated and got back to helping him tell the next part of his story.

When Your Body Decides for You

When Craig was 18 years old he decided his only option, if he wanted to continue playing, was to have surgery on his shoulder. The surgeon recommended that Craig have 3 months off tennis, and was hopeful that Craig would make a full recovery. Craig decided to take an additional 3 months off, just to make sure. He completed all of his rehabilitation and expected to return from injury and fulfil his dream.

But after pretty much double the rehab, with double the amount of time off, it still wasn’t good...the shoulder was no good, it didn’t fix it at all. The surgery didn’t help, so maybe he didn’t find the problem.

I got the sense that Craig felt his body and his surgeon failed him. Six months after his return to tennis, Craig said that he decided it was time to stop “lying” and face reality. He vividly recalled the day when he felt forced to let go of his dream of becoming a professional tennis player:

I was playing a match, and it just got to the stage like, I wasn’t playing that much because of my shoulder because I couldn’t...and it just got frustrating. I was doubting myself then. I knew I had the talent, but again, because I had the shoulder. It was hard to give it up. I cried for a few days because it’s pretty much been my life. I guess it wasn’t meant to be.

I could hear the devastation in Craig's voice and see his body slump as he re-experienced the end of his dream. Later in the interview, I asked Craig what was so difficult about this time in his life. He stated: "The only thing hard was just the emotional factor, just to get over that I'm not going to play anymore, that I'm not going to actually *do something* with my tennis." I felt Craig was saying to me that he found it hard to deal with the realisation that his dream of *being somebody* was over – as if he was worth nothing without his tennis. Craig's comments reinforced my belief that his self-worth was intimately tied to his tennis. Tennis served to prove his worth as a human being.

Craig then went on and told me how in addition to his own emotions, he also had to deal with the reactions of the people within his support network. On the day he retired, he called his coach and told him that he wanted to play, but that his shoulder "wouldn't let him." I could not help but note Craig's disassociation here between his self and body. He said that his coach "understood." His parents on the other hand, were "disappointed" because "they had put so much time, so much money, so much effort" into his tennis, and believed that he could make it to the top. Years later, he said his family were still encouraging him to continue reaching for his dream:

Even at my 21st birthday, like my dad was still talking to my coach, and my coach said to me, "Your dad still really wants you to play." It's not like I didn't want to again. I know I had the talent and the ability. But if your body doesn't hold up, there's no point in going through all that [pauses] going through all the training, going through travelling, everything.

As I sat there listening to Craig, red flags were going up everywhere. I realised that Craig was telling me a sad story about how he failed his parents. I wondered if perhaps in addition to proving his worth, Craig also played tennis to make his parents happy.

Dealing with the Pain

To numb his pain, Craig initially spent time with his friends and partied hard. His parents were “quite strict” when he was young and did not allow him to have a social life (Craig attributed his parents’ “strictness” to their cultural background). When Craig retired, he took advantage of his new freedom. He began going out five times a week, and slept all day. His other coping strategy involved accepting and reinterpreting the end of his athletic career: “I just said, ‘It wasn’t meant to be. It’s not for me [pauses] I guess, God didn’t want me to play tennis.’ That’s the only way I got over it.” Craig commented that 4 years on, he was still trying to accept and come to terms with his retirement. He said it was difficult for him seeing all the players he grew up with doing well on the professional tour: “And yeah now, like I think, I should be there, I should be there. But I don’t like dwell over it anymore.”

I began to think about the realm of the hungry ghosts in the Buddhist Wheel of Life (Epstein, 1995). The hungry ghosts are beings that are tormented by old unfulfilled needs. They are beings that have uncovered a terrible emptiness within themselves, and they cannot see the impossibility of correcting something that has already happened. Their ghostlike state represents their attachment to the past. Although hungry, their attempts to satisfy themselves cause pain. I sensed that both Craig and his parents were hungry ghosts and were still searching for gratification for old unfulfilled needs whose time had passed.

A New Dream

During his athletic career, Craig “did a little bit” of career planning, but stated: “I didn’t take it too seriously because my goal was to become a tennis player [pauses] so I

didn't see myself doing anything else." Even when he sustained his injury and had surgery, he said: "I thought I'd be able to play, so I didn't even think about retirement."

Craig was fortunate in that he had options when he retired. He had completed his high school education; he had begun a university degree, and he had been doing some part-time coaching since the age of 16. But Craig was not interested in exploring his options, and he immediately moved into coaching.

I just straight away thought I want to be like my coach and develop my business, because I knew he was making quite good money at that time. And I knew because of my tennis background, because I've travelled so much, because I've experienced so much, I knew pretty much as soon as I got into coaching it was cash to me straight away. Yeah, like I had to learn a few things here and there, but again because I was around it so much [pauses] it wasn't like rocket science to me.

From Craig's description, it seemed his reasons for transitioning into coaching were the ease of the move, the transferability of skills, poor pre-retirement planning, not having to deal with threats to his competence, and the potential earnings involved in coaching.

Later in the interview, he revealed his *real* reason for pursuing a coaching career:

"Because I got into coaching, [retirement] wasn't too bad, because [tennis was] still a part of me." I felt that Craig was saying coaching was an adaptive strategy that helped him cope with retirement, and that it allowed him to feel a sense of worth again. I imagined that in his mind he could still *be somebody* through coaching. He could also make his parents happy and "do something" with his tennis.

Craig stated that he found the transition into coaching "quite easy." He immediately started working as an assistant coach at a local tennis club and began to develop his coaching skills. He said that he did not have high expectations of himself, but he thought that eventually he could become a good coach. After some time, he was

earning good money and had built up lots of coaching hours. Deep down inside though, he felt frustrated.

It was like with kids that were spoiled or had no respect. Not only that, it was just like more of a social thing. Like again it was ok, like at the time it was o.k. For me, it was just the money. I wasn't that passionate about it, and that's when I had to make the decision on what I wanted to do.

Craig went on and spoke about how he felt that he had so much knowledge and expertise, but that he could not share it because his athletes were "just social players." He said that he did not want to be "stuck at club level" and wanted to coach "better players." I could not help but think that a hungry ghost and the need to prove his worth were influencing his career path.

Craig decided it was time to take a risk and abandon club coaching and follow his passion. He contacted his old private coach and started working as one of his assistants at an elite tennis academy. I asked Craig about his experience working for his mentor:

Tarah: What was that like, working for your coach?

Craig: It was good because he believed in me. But as you get older you learn a lot more, and he's really about the money so he didn't look after me that much...and I didn't get that many hours...

Tarah: How was your relationship with him when you were working for him, compared to when you were an athlete?

Craig: As an athlete, it was more like I looked up to him as a father figure. He was always there for me with the support, everything. And as a coach, it was more so as a friend. Like, a lot more joking around I guess, but then you sort of get to see more of what he's like. When I first started coaching, I would always want to be like him. But towards the end, I didn't want to. Like, not going into too much depth, but just the way he runs things. It's not what I want to do.

Craig said that he felt forced to leave in the end because he was not earning enough money. He realised that the only way he was going to earn enough money, and also coach elite players, was if he worked for himself. He decided to set up his own coaching business from home and focus on attracting elite players. At the time of the interview,

Craig was coaching several good players at his home; he was travelling with players to tournaments around the world, and he was working with some high performance squads.

The Ups and Downs

When reflecting on his coaching career, Craig described both positive and negative aspects of the job. He stated that he enjoys travelling with players to tournaments and still being involved with tennis: “Because of being involved with the sport for so long...it’s just the love, just love being out there, love playing I guess.” On the other hand, he dislikes “dealing with parents, pushy parents expecting a lot.” This comment did not surprise me, and I imagined that there would be a lot of negative transference in his relationships with parents.

Overall, Craig said that some days are “a bit of a grind, like you go through your ups and downs I guess, like with everything, but you just have to guts-it-out at the end of the day.” He stated that he felt happy with his current coaching career and was satisfied with his life. He is working a lot of hours and doing well financially. He finds coaching enjoyable and challenging and feels highly motivated. Most important, he feels that being on his own is giving him the opportunity to prove himself as worthy to others:

I think that’s one of the best things now [pauses] just being able to prove to myself, and to others, that I can do it...I can coach; I am a good coach. Like yeah, I can still learn; I’m not saying I’m the best coach I can still learn; I guess everyone can still learn. But I can do things for myself now.

I was unsure whom Craig was referring to when he said “others.” Later in the interview, it became a little clearer when he stated: “My [private] coaches are probably doubting me as a coach to make my athletes better because they haven’t shown any results.” At this point in the interview, I began to appreciate the lasting impact of Craig’s early interpersonal environment. Craig still perceived enormous pressure to be perfect and was still striving to gain approval from “others” and demonstrate his worth.

Dreams for the Future

Not surprisingly, Craig described big dreams for his future. He had again set goals for himself that were extremely high to offset his feelings of inferiority. He said that he wanted to continue travelling with players for the next few years while he was still young. He stated that his ultimate goal was to coach and travel with a professional tour player ranked in the top hundred (extremely difficult to accomplish!). When I asked Craig if he could see himself coaching long-term, he replied: “Yes, definitely. I can’t see myself doing anything else.” He mentioned that eventually he wanted to settle down and have a family. At that stage, he said he would consider coaching at a local club because travelling would interfere with his family life. But there were conditions:

Just as long as, I want to build myself up as well to have a good reputation, where a lot of the top players will come to me. I don’t want to have a club where it’s just social players and I’m just doing it for the money. Like yeah, I’d still love it or whatever, but I’d love it even more if I ran like good squads or coached good players. So I don’t know, maybe in 5 or 6 years or so, that’s probably what I’ll do.

Model of Coaching

Craig believed that many of his athletic experiences and skills had transferred into his coaching. He said that the most valuable thing he learned from being an athlete, and now passed on to his athletes, was the importance of confidence and belief.

Just a lot of belief, I guess. If you have belief, then there won’t be much fear...I like to teach my kids like with that, just to go out after it, and don’t think about the result, because I did as a junior.

What struck me here were the words: “If you have belief, then there won’t be much fear.”

I reflected back on Craig’s story, and how he revealed that he did not have much confidence in himself. I wondered if he was telling me that his athletic career was filled with fear – fear of letting down the people who believed in him and not making them happy. I began to think that perhaps his life as an athlete was not so great.

Craig also spoke about how his relationships with his coaches had influenced his coaching style:

Tarah: What about your relationships with your coaches when you were an athlete – how have they influenced the way you try and have a relationship with your students?

Craig: I just try and be really honest with them, like especially the ones that want to do something with their tennis. I'm pretty tough on them, again because I know what it's like to be out there. There's no easy way to get to the top. You've got to work hard; that's the bottom line. If you don't want to work hard, don't play pretty much. Like, I'm not a pushy coach...if they don't want to play, I'll tell them: Don't play! If you want to play socially, tell me. I'll coach you as a social player. If you want to make it, you have to trust me and believe in what I have to say. And you've got to put the hard yards in otherwise it's not going to happen! Like, I think a lot of the kids these days are too spoilt, and they get everything given to them.

Tarah: What about the way the institute coaches treated you. How has that influenced your coaching?

Craig: I don't want to push people aside. If someone comes to me I'll do my best to make them as good as what I can. Even if they're a social player, I'll teach them as much as I can. I could just like go out and say, do this and that. But I don't think there's anything fulfilling in that, and to run a business you can't do that. Like, if you want to be good, you've got to prove yourself pretty much. I guess that's why...I sort of went out there and proved myself. But yeah, just treating everyone equally I guess, no matter who they are, what colour they are, if they have a disability, whatever. I always try to do the best for them, however I can.

I noted a few things in this exchange. First, when he said, "I know what it's like to be out there. There's no easy way to get to the top," I felt that he was again telling me that his life as an athlete was not great. Second, his denial about being a "pushy coach," and his comments about being tough on his athletes, made me wonder about his coaching style. It sounded like he had adopted a hard-hitting approach, and did not have much compassion or understanding for his athletes. His comments highlighted to me how coaching practices and damage gets passed down through the generations – coaches' coach how they were coached. Third, he again commented about how "kids these days are too

spoilt.” At the time of the interview, I was unsure what these comments meant. Fourth, he highlighted the immense pressure he felt to prove himself to others. Finally, he revealed the long-lasting influence of his inferiority complex, and how he still carries with him the feelings of being an “outsider.” Listening to Craig, I began to appreciate the complexity of our lives. He had revealed so much, and yet I felt that there was still so much more to his journey.

Advice to Other Dreamers

At the end of the interview, I was interested to know whether Craig would recommend a coaching career to other retiring athletes. He replied: “I think it’s up to the individual on what they want to do.” He also offered some advice for current athletes, or athletes that are in various stages of their retirement:

I’d probably push them to do schooling, like university, even college... just try to make them do something they want to do [pauses] but like don’t like waste their lives, like have fun but I guess still do something on the side.

As I sat there reflecting on Craig’s story, I could not help but think his final statement summed up how he felt about his athletic career, and perhaps his life – that it was waste and that he was still trying to compensate and “prove” himself.

Craig’s Tale in Relation to the Literature

Theoretical Perspectives on Athletic Retirement

Craig’s retirement experiences correspond with several of the frameworks described in the literature review. With regard to social gerontological models, continuity theory (Atchley, 1976) provides a reasonable account of Craig’s transition into coaching. This theory proposes that Craig stayed involved in tennis to maintain a sense of internal and external continuity. By maintaining his involvement, he was able to continue reaching for his dream of being somebody, continue feeling competent and worthy, and

continue striving to “do something” with his tennis and make his parents happy. This sense of continuity helped reduce some of his transition distress.

Exchange theory (Homans, 1961) also offers a logical explanation of Craig’s move into coaching. Through his coaching, Craig shared his athletic talent, knowledge, and experiences with the next generation of athletes. In return he received the opportunity to prove his worth and keep his (and his parents’) dream alive.

As mentioned in the previous case studies, the two models described above only account for Craig’s transition into coaching, and do not provide much insight into his actual experience of retirement. In contrast, thanatological models shed more light on his lived experience. Kübler-Ross’ (1969) stages of dying in particular provides a useful framework for understanding some of the different emotions Craig experienced upon retirement. Craig described how he kept playing and refused to believe his career was over after sustaining his injury (denial), how he had surgery and completed double the rehab (bargaining), how he felt his body and his surgeon let him down (anger), how he experienced distress following his retirement (depression), and how he is still coming to terms with the end of his athletic career (acceptance).

The transition models (Schlossberg, 1981; Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) on the other hand, focus more on the factors that might have influenced Craig’s experience. For example, his developmental experiences, identity, social support, unfulfilled dreams, perceptions of control, and coping skills. They reveal why Craig might have experienced a sad and painful transition. Overall, Craig’s retirement journey needs to be viewed through several lenses in order to appreciate the complexity of his lived experience.

Research on Athletic Retirement

Reasons for retirement. Craig stated that he retired from competitive sport because of his debilitating, long-term injury. According to the literature, this reason is common among athletes (Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). I noted that Craig's story differed from the other participants in that he only offered one reason for his retirement. I also noticed that Craig was the only participant who described his retirement as involuntary. He seemed to disassociate himself from his body, and he blamed his body and his surgeon for letting him down. He made it clear that he felt forced to retire, and that the decision was out of his control. Several researchers have suggested that involuntary retirement often creates a highly aversive and threatening situation and negatively affects the adaptation process (Alfermann, 2000; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; McPherson, 1980; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

Quality of the transition process. Craig did not go into great depth, but his story contained evidence to suggest that his transition out of competitive sport was distressing. He mentioned that he "cried for a few days" and that the "emotional factor" was difficult to deal with. His experience supports the findings of several researchers (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Blinde & Stratta, 1982; Brewer, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Steele & Carne, 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), who have found athletic retirement to be a traumatic and painful process.

Factors related to adaptation. Craig described many factors that, according to the literature (e.g., Lavallee, 2000; McPherson, 1980; Stephan et al., 1997; Taylor & Lavallee, 2010; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), may have inhibited his ability to cope with his retirement: (a) he immersed himself in tennis at a young age and developed a narrow athletic identity; (b) he perceived his retirement as involuntary and out of his control; (c)

he described how he was “overweight” when he was young and that he “had to do the extra stuff” because he was “always quite a big boy.” Following retirement, he would have had to deal with changes to his eating and exercise habits; (d) he never completely recovered from his injury leaving him permanently disabled and limited in terms of his future career; (e) he did not engage in much pre-retirement planning; (f) he did not achieve his athletic goals and his self-worth was intimately tied to his tennis performance; and (g) he had enormous pressure from his support network to make it to the top and continue striving even though his “body wouldn’t let him.”

In contrast, he only mentioned a few factors that have been shown to reduce levels of distress (e.g., Gordon et al., 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). For example, he had good social support (friends), he had an immediate career opportunity, and he used acceptance as a coping strategy. Overall, it is not surprising that he experienced some level of distress because there was no real balance between his transition resources and barriers.

Relocating Within Sport after Athletic Retirement

Motivation. Craig mentioned several motives for moving into coaching including the ease of the move, the transferability of skills, poor pre-retirement planning, not having to deal with threats to his competence, and the potential earnings involved in coaching. He also mentioned that he had already done some part-time coaching during his athletic career. These motives, which were similar to Liam’s, correspond with what other researchers have found (e.g., Blustein et al., 1989; Lavalley et al., 1997; Van Neutegem, 2006). Craig was the only participant to acknowledge that he also moved into coaching because it helped him cope with his transition out of competitive sport. I sensed from some of his comments, however, that his main driving force for moving into

coaching was to prove his worth as a human being and to make his parents happy. I was concerned about his motives because they seemed to be influencing his coaching behaviours, his decisions, and his interactions in a potentially damaging way.

Quality of the transition. Craig described his transition into coaching as “quite easy” and acknowledged that it alleviated some of the anxiety and negative consequences associated with retirement (Blustein et al., 1989; Lavalley et al., 1997; Shachar et al., 2004). The start of his coaching career seemed to take off a little slower than the other participants, and he was not offered as many opportunities as the other participants. I felt that he had to work a little harder to establish his career. Overall, his transition seemed to be positive and gave him an opportunity to develop and grow (to some degree).

Sport experiences and transferable skills. Craig described how he had transferred many of his athletic experiences and skills into his coaching. For example, he described how as a coach he stressed the importance of belief and fairness (which were major issues for him during his athletic career). He also stated that although he “isn’t a pushy coach,” he works his athletes hard, just like he was pushed when he was an athlete. He also spoke about how he used his own coaches as models of how he did not want to coach. I believed his major coaching influence, however, was his unfulfilled dream of “making it to the top hundred” and his need to overcome his feelings of inferiority. His descriptions highlighted how many of his past experiences and skills seemed to have manifested in his coaching philosophy, his coaching style, his expectations, his behaviour, his interactions, his career choices, and his coaching business. In contrast to the other two participants, Craig’s story revealed how athletic experiences can potentially manifest in maladaptive ways.

Career and life satisfaction. Like the other two participants, Craig stated that he was satisfied with his coaching and his life. He mentioned several factors that have been shown to contribute to levels of satisfaction such as achievement, athletes' performance levels, responsibility, compensation, working conditions, and the job itself (Drakou et al., 2006; Oshagbemi, 1997; Rogers et al., 1994; Singh & Surujlal, 2006). These factors were not present, however, early in his coaching career.

In the end, I was sceptical of Craig's levels of career and life satisfaction despite his declaration that he was happy. It seemed that he was engaging in the futile task of trying to satisfy his unfulfilled needs from the past through coaching. I began to wonder whether Craig would ever become aware of his hungry ghost and realise the impossibility of his longing. I also began to think about the pain he would experience in the future as he continued to try to gratify his cravings and prove his worth as a human being.

Craig and I: Reflections on the Research Process

Of all the participants, I felt that I had to do the most work with Craig. Despite the interview process being harder, I seemed to connect the most with Craig. I felt comfortable with him and engaged with his story. I noticed that I empathized and listened better to him, and picked up on most of the comments he made. I let themes arise rather than imposing my agenda, and I did not find myself categorising or interpreting his responses. The interview seemed more like a conversation than a question and answer session, and it was a more relaxed and natural process than the previous interviews.

Although I gathered enough information from Craig during the interview to write about his journey from athlete to coach, I sensed that there was more to his story. At the time of the interview, I noticed that he was little anxious and had a strong desire for approval from others. With these characteristics in mind, I treaded lightly. I did not want

to probe or threaten him or direct him towards self-disclosure on uncomfortable topics. I began to wonder how I could obtain more depth and tap into some of his underlying issues. At this point, I decided to administer the AAT in the hope that it would provide a more in-depth understanding of Craig's character, motivations, anxieties, and hopes.

Taking a Second Look: The Athlete Apperception Technique

Introduction

When I met Craig the second time, he again welcomed me and made an effort to make me feel comfortable. He seemed more relaxed and easy-going than the first time I met him, and he was keen to engage in small talk. He appeared excited and eager to complete the AAT and was pleased that he could be of more assistance.

Included below is a breakdown of Craig's responses to six of the AAT images (see Appendix B). The analysis of each image begins with the verbatim story composed by Craig. I then "pull" quotes from his story into one of the five key content import elements (circumstance, intention, complication, means, and outcome). Using content import analysis, the moral (message, meaning, lesson) of the story is then identified (the import). Next, I provide a brief qualitative analysis and interpretation that serves to highlight how Craig's story compliments, illuminates, and adds to his transition tale. In the final section I discuss my observations and impressions of Craig during the research process.

Image 3

Craig's response. It is a group of girls who are all on the same team. It looks like they scored, and are happy and having fun. It looks like they are in a winning situation. They look like maybe they have not had much other experience, so anything like scoring a goal brings them happiness straight away. I am not sure if the third girl is part of the

team because I do not know if she is smiling. I am guessing she is not part of the team because the guy on the side does not look too happy with her, maybe because she did not defend well. He is not showing any positive body language towards her. The guy looks like he has come from a pretty strict background, from the way he is standing and his facial expressions. It seems like he would draw a pretty hard line with his players, which is good in a way I guess. The other two girls will come off feeling pretty happy about their performance, and will be a lot more cheerful than the other girl and the coach on the side. The two girls will be happy doing whatever they choose to do. Whereas the third girl, she might be a perfectionist, maybe like the coach. The coach looks like, by the way he is standing, that everything has to be done right. Maybe that is the line that she is sort of taking, so she will be a lot tougher on herself than the other two girls.

Table 1

Image 3 Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	girls on a team; they scored; they are in a winning situation; third girl is not part of the team
Intention	two girls are happy and having fun; I don't know if the third girl is smiling
Complication	guy on the side does not look too happy with the third girl; she did not defend well
Means	guy looks like he has come from a pretty strict background; he would draw a pretty hard line with his players; coach looks like everything has to be done right; the third girl might be a perfectionist like the coach
Outcome	two girls will come off feeling pretty happy about their performance; two girls will be happy doing whatever they choose to do; third girl will be a lot tougher on herself than the other two girls

Import: When I won, others were happy. When I lost, others were disappointed. I failed as an athlete and disappointed others. I could not perform up to the high standards of others. I internalised their high standards, and formed a harsh internal critic.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. Craig seemed to identify with the female athlete (the "third girl") walking away from the opposition players who were celebrating. Initially, he told a happy story about a team that was winning and having fun. He then changed his story and said that he was not sure if the "third girl" was part of the

winning team or not. His interpretation of which team the female athlete was on was based on “the guy’s” (coach) emotional response and body language, not from hers. Craig then weaved a story about how the demands of the coach influenced the central female character. He described how the coach came from a “strict background” and imposed perfectionist demands of his players. The female athlete introjected the coach’s high standards, and became critical of herself.

Initially, I felt that Craig was describing how his coaches at the institute imposed unrealistically high expectations on him, and how he internalised their high standards and formed a harsh internal critic. After some reflection, I began to wonder if the “guy” was actually his father. He mentioned that the “guy” came from a strict background. Craig alluded to his father’s strict upbringing and cultural background in the first interview. The most interesting moment of Craig’s story, however, was when he said: “He would draw a pretty hard line with his players, which is good in a way I guess.” Craig appeared to be defending the coach’s hard-hitting approach, just like he defended his father’s (and his own) approach during the first interview. I began to think that I was right in that Craig’s initial picture of his father was constructed to manage my impression of him, and that perhaps Craig’s father was a “pushy dad.”

I felt that Craig’s link between athletic performance and the happiness of others supported my initial view that Craig felt responsible for making his parents happy. By not making it to the top, Craig had possibly failed at making his parents happy. A sense of emptiness and worthlessness might have come crashing down on him. Pursuing a coaching career might have been his way of trying to make his parents happy, and prove his worth.

Image 4

Craig's response. He has run the race of his life and given everything he can. He has been working hard for this day. It looks like he is in a race because he is on a track, or he could even just be training. Maybe every time he steps out on to the track he gives it everything that he has. He is so physically spent that he has just collapsed, because he has put in that much effort. He has given it all he could. I guess he knows that he has done everything that he could. Mentally you can tell that he is pretty strong. In the future he will work hard to get what he wants. If he really wants something, he will go out and get it no matter how hard it is. He will never give up. If something knocks him down, he will probably get up and keep trying.

Table 2

Image 4 Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	he has run the race of his life and given everything he can
Intention	he has been working hard for this day; he knows that he has done everything that he could
Complication	he is so physically spent that he has just collapsed
Means	mentally you can tell that he is pretty strong
Outcome	in the future he will work hard to get what he wants; no matter how hard it is; he will never give up; if something knocks him down, he will probably get up and keep trying

Import: I worked hard as an athlete. I gave everything I could. Mentally I was strong but my body let me down. I will continue to work hard and be a successful coach.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. It appeared that Craig strongly identified with the male athlete in the image who is laying on the track. The most interesting element of Craig's story is his description of how the "hero" (athlete) progressed to that position. He stated that the athlete "gave everything that he could" but that his body just collapsed and let him down. His response to this image directly corresponded to his own injury and retirement.

Reflecting on his response, I felt that his story contained traces of anxiety and defensiveness. It was as if he was trying to convince himself (and perhaps me) that he gave his athletic career "everything he could." I began to wonder about his retirement, and whether he was "mentally strong" and did actually give "everything he could." After all, he did only pursue his career for 6 months after he returned from surgery. Furthermore, he hinted in the first interview that his life as an athlete was not great. Did he use his injury as an opportunity to escape the external pressure of being somebody and making something of his tennis?

Image 6

Craig's response. Two guys picking their own soccer teams. They have got to pick players. The guy on the left looks confident with his leg on the ball, arms crossed. The two kids that have not been chosen yet, they look really shy with no self-confidence. They just want to be on a team. They do not want to be picked last. The guys that are on a team, they have probably been a lot more outspoken in the past, and get along with each other. They probably have been leaders, or have not really been outcast when they were younger. The two that have not been chosen look like they do not have many friends. They have been shy and have not been confident with themselves, confident with who they are. They just want to get picked. So as they grow up, they might get bullied a lot.

They will not be able to say no, will get picked on, will not have the courage to stand up for themselves; they will not have the confidence to confront people if things are not right, or if they do not want to do something. If someone tells them to do something they will probably go along and do it. Whereas the other guys, they look the total opposite. If someone comes up to them, and they do not want to do it, they will not do it. If they want to do something they will do it. In the end, they do not know who to choose because they probably think the two kids are just as bad as each other. They are making them feel really bad, making them feel low. They will have to choose someone I guess, and then that last kid will think, "I am the worst guy here, and they are picking me because they have to. They did not really want me, but I have got to be on someone's team.

Table 3

Image 6 Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	two guys picking their own soccer teams
Intention	they just want to be on a team; they do not want to be picked last
Complication	the two kids that have not been chosen yet, look really shy; no self-confidence; they do not have many friends; they do not know who to choose because they probably think the two kids are just as bad as each other
Means	they are making them feel really bad; making them feel low
Outcome	they will have to choose someone; that last kid will think I am the worst guy here; they did not really want me; as they grow up, they might get bullied a lot; they not have the courage to stand up for themselves; they will not have the confidence to confront people

Import: When I was young, I was shy and I had no self-confidence. I had no friends, and I felt like an outcast. I was treated unfairly by coaches/selectors and did not have the courage to stand up for myself.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. Craig told a sad story about exclusion and rejection. He probably identified with the two children who were waiting to be chosen, and described how the leaders did not select them because the children were shy and possessed little confidence. There was a clear link between these characters and his transition tale. I felt that Craig's response reflected his experience at the institute. In his in-depth interview, Craig mentioned that he was shy and quiet. He was not one of the

coaches “favourites,” and was “picked on” and treated unfairly because “of his colour.” He kept quiet and only once stood up for himself.

Through his story, I felt that Craig was telling me that he felt inferior and was treated like an outcast because of his introverted personality and because of his cultural background. He was also telling me that the coaches at the institute made him feel worthless, and that this early experience had a long-lasting influence on his confidence. I also sensed that this image evoked some anger in Craig. I felt that perhaps he was angry for not having the courage to stand up for himself and demand that he be treated fairly.

Image 8

Craig's response. He might be a baseball or a softball player. He might have been run out, or struck out, or had a bad game. He looks a bit depressed, a bit sad, down on himself. The team could have been relying on him. He could be a star player, or he might not be a star player. He might have been blamed for something, for not making a home run or something. In the past, he might have made it, and everyone loved him. He could have been a guy that was not confident when he was growing up, and he wanted to show someone that he is something, and he failed, and he is disappointed in himself. Or it could be the opposite, where he is a star and everyone always relies on him, and he let the team down. Either way, I guess now he is feeling down on himself with whatever he did. He is probably contemplating what happened. In the future, he might feel bad if he lets people down, or if he does not succeed. He might just look at all the negatives instead of the positives that he can take out of whatever he is doing.

Table 4

Image 8 Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	baseball or softball player; he might have been run out, or struck out, or had a bad game
Intention	he looks a bit depressed, a bit sad, down on himself; disappointed in himself
Complication	might have been blamed for something; team could have been relying on him; he wanted to show someone that he is something, and he failed
Means	contemplating what happened
Outcome	in the future, he might feel bad if he lets people down, or if he does not succeed; he might just look at all the negatives instead of the positives that he can take out of whatever he is doing

Import: Others were relying on me to make it to the top. I wanted to prove my worth to them and show them that I could be somebody. I failed and felt depressed. I cannot let them down again. I need to succeed at coaching.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. It seemed that Craig identified strongly with the central character in this image. He described themes of inadequacy, guilt, disappointment, depression, and failure. I interpreted this story to be about his athletic retirement. His initial description about the character's emotions confirmed to me that he did experience a negative transition out of competitive sport and most likely experienced some degree of depression.

An interesting part of his story was the complication element. I felt that he was describing his own support “team.” He seemed to be saying that his team invested a lot into his tennis and were expecting him to make something of himself. He wanted to show them that he was worth the investment by becoming a superstar player. When he retired, he failed and let his team down. They were unhappy, and they blamed him for their unhappiness.

Craig’s outcome of the story provided insight about the influence his team had on his decision to move into coaching. Through his story, he confirmed my belief that one of Craig’s main driving forces for moving into coaching was to prove his worth and not let down his parents. I felt that the central message of the story was that he was determined not to fail at coaching. He did not want to let his parents down again and re-experience feelings of guilt, depression, and inadequacy.

Image 10

Craig’s response. I am guessing it is a 100-metre sprint. It is the finals. There are four guys, one winner. The second guy is a winner. He is showing it. He is showing that he is really happy with what he has done. He is the only one celebrating. In the past, they have all been working hard, again from a young age. They probably always dreamed of being a sprinter, always wanting to win that race. Emotionally, I cannot see too much from the other three. I guess not many people celebrate second and third, even though that is still a good achievement. It is usually only the winner that celebrates. Every now and then you get people that celebrate second and third as well. The race looks like it meant a lot to all of them. Maybe that is why they are not celebrating. I am not too sure what is going to happen with them in the future because they are not really showing too

much emotion. It might have been different if they won. I am guessing whoever won would be showing the most emotion.

Table 5

Image 10 Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	100-metre sprint; it is the finals; there are four guys
Intention	they have all been working hard; they probably always dreamed of being a sprinter, always wanting to win that race; the race looks like it meant a lot to all of them
Complication	the second guy is a winner
Means	he is really happy with what he has done; he is the only one celebrating; not many people celebrate second and third, even though that is still a good achievement; it is usually only the winner that celebrates
Outcome	not too sure what is going to happen with them in the future; might have been different if they won

Import: I worked hard and dedicated my life to tennis. I believed I achieved something from my tennis. Because I did not make it to the top, no one recognised or celebrated my achievements. My life and my future would have been different if I had of made it to the top.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. In his story, the central character (the winner) is enjoying his success while the other runners (the losers) are despondent or at least "flat." Craig seemed to clearly identify with the losers in the image.

He described how all the runners had worked hard and had dreams of winning. In the end, their dreams amounted to nothing because they did not win the race, much like his athletic career.

The most interesting part of Craig's story was when he stated: "Not many people celebrate second and third, even though that is still a good achievement." He seemed to be saying that no one celebrated his achievements, even though he felt that he did well. This statement is in contrast to his comments in the first interview about how he achieved nothing because he did not make it to the top. I began to wonder whether he truly believed he did not achieve anything, or whether his earlier statement was the voice of his harsh internal critical.

Craig's story ended with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. He described how the athletes' futures were uncertain, and how their lives would have been different if they had won the race. I interpreted Craig's outcome to be a reflection of how he was feeling about his life, his athletic career, and his future.

Image 2S

Craig's response. This could be before a match in the NFL in the United States, where they all get down and say a prayer or something; they get down on one knee. They go through what they are going to do and how they are going to play. The coach, or whoever the other guy is, looks pretty passionate. He might be saying a prayer as well for everyone. They all look pretty committed to what they want to do. All their heads are down, focusing on what the man is saying. The self-discipline is there. You can tell they focus on what they have got to do. They could be visualising and seeing how they want to play. The guys are respecting the coach. You can tell because he is above them. He is a lot higher up than them. Because they respect their coach, it looks like they are going to

do exactly what he said. Whether they win or lose, it is up to them. The respect is there. In the future, whoever their boss or their leader is, it looks like these guys will respect what they say, take it on board, and just go out and do it.

Table 6

Image 2S Content Import Analysis

Element	Narrative Import
Circumstance	Before a match in the NFL in the United States; they get down on one knee
Intention	go through what they are going to do and how they are going to play; the coach looks pretty passionate; look pretty committed; focusing on what the man is saying
Complication	guys are respecting the coach
Means	they are going to do exactly what he said
Outcome	in the future, whoever their boss or their leader is, it looks like these guys will respect what they say, take it on board, and just go out and do it

Import: It is important to respect your elders. I want my athletes to respect me.

Craig's response in relation to his transition tale. Craig's story was a positive story about young athletes who respected their coach. Although there is not a great deal that can be drawn from his story, I included it in the analysis because I thought it contained a strong message about Craig's interpersonal style. His story seemed to reflect a strong core belief about respecting one's elders. I imagined that his belief stemmed from his "strict" cultural background. It may explain why he never stood up to the

institute coaches, and why he found it difficult to talk negatively about his father. It also sheds light on Craig's frustration early in his coaching career when he was working with players who he believed "had no respect." In his story, he seemed to be expressing his desire to be respected by his current athletes. Overall, this story is a good example of how the AAT can provide data that is not easily accessible through interviews.

Craig, the AAT, and I: Reflections on the Research Process

When I presented Craig with the first AAT image, he paused briefly and then exploded with a multitude of questions about what he was supposed to do. I froze and began to panic. I reflected back on my initial instructions and began to question myself – had I explained the process correctly? I tried to reassure myself that I had, but I could not help but feel foolish and embarrassed. His questions fuelled my doubt about my competence and my ability to complete the assessment. I switched my focus internally and became completely self-conscious, and did not *really* listen to Craig throughout the assessment.

On reflection, I realised his initial behaviour was possibly a sign of his anxiety about his performance and his need to please others. Looking through my notes and the transcript, I noticed that his behaviour and responses were replete with evidence of his anxiety and his need to please. For example, in the majority of his stories he gave multiple plots in the (what seemed to me) hope that one of his stories would be "right." He often showed embarrassment and disappointment at the end of his stories, and was apologetic about the responses he had given. He continued to ask me questions throughout the interview, and tried to get a sense of my interpretations of the images. There were instances when I mistakenly answered his questions and gave him

instructions (I wanted to help him out), but I also reassured him that his responses were fine. This assessment was a performance for both of us. We both wanted to perform well.

At the time of the interview, I did not appreciate my role. When I began to analyse his responses, I realised that I was a critical component of the process. He seemed to desperately want to please me (or at least “do the right thing”), and it appeared that he treated the assessment as an evaluation of him. My insecurity and doubts affected my demeanour, and I did not conduct the interview in a therapeutic manner (i.e., a human, accepting, caring, loving manner). I believe I contributed significantly to his perception of being evaluated, and I probably intensified his anxiety. His anxiety responses to the projective technique may be reflective of much of his evaluation anxiety and wanting to prove himself that came out in the interviews.

I also noticed that my analysis and interpretations were strongly influenced by my own needs. Initially, I searched through his responses trying to find something that “fit” with his transition tale. I wanted to prove my competence as a researcher, and show that this research was worthwhile. I realised, however, that I was interfering with the research and not providing an accurate representation of Craig’s journey.

Despite my mistakes and inadequacies, I felt the information I collected using the AAT deepened my understanding of Craig. His responses to the images complemented his in-depth interview and shed light on some of his underlying issues. The AAT allowed me to view Craig through a different lens. In the following chapter, I will discuss the advantages of using the AAT as another source of information about athletes’ lives and experiences.

CHAPTER 7

OVERALL DISCUSSION

The Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to learn more about the athlete-to-coach transition. Because little research had been conducted in this area, I took an exploratory approach rather than making predictions or testing hypotheses. I used qualitative methods to collect real-world stories and get a sense of the lived experience. This in-depth exploration centred on the following research questions: Why do retired athletes choose to stay involved in sport as coaches? How do retired athletes experience their transitions into coaching? How do their previous athletic experiences and skills transfer into their coaching careers? How do they feel and think about their careers and life satisfaction as coaches? My aim was to determine whether staying involved in sport by becoming a coach was a path that could lead to successful adjustment. Another aim was to explore whether projective tests could provide data that complements, illuminates, or adds to the information gathered from interviews. My main goal was to present realistic in-depth picture of the lived experience.

The Research Process

According to Kluge (2001), qualitative research is about process, rather than product and outcomes. In view of this assertion, I have dedicated the first section of this discussion to a review of the research process.

In-Depth Interviews

Overall, the information I collected from the interviews helped me to understand the process of athletic retirement. It also gave me insight into the athlete-to-coach transition, a phenomenon that has been relatively unexplored. Furthermore, it revealed

how the life histories of the participants contributed to their reactions to retirement and their transitions into coaching. Most important, it highlighted the messiness and complexity of the lived experience.

Although the interviews were useful, they were also limited in some ways. First, interviewing requires particular competencies and skills such as listening, reflection, empathy, genuineness, patience, and probing. Furthermore, researchers need to have a good understanding of the phenomena of transference and countertransference, self-disclosure, resistance, and defence mechanisms (Andersen, 2005). As a neophyte psychologist and researcher, I was not particularly skilled or knowledgeable in all of these areas at the outset of this research, and I fumbled my way through some parts of the interviews. Like many students, I did not appreciate how difficult it was to conduct good in-depth interviews (Andersen). For interviews to be *really* useful, the instrument (the researcher) needs to be well trained, knowledgeable, and experienced.

Another consequence of my inexperience was that I relied too heavily on the interview guide. My rigidity in the interview process interfered with my ability to capture the participants' in-depth, lived experiences. On reflection, I also realised that by asking all the participants the same questions from a preconceived guide, I was assuming that all the participants shared similar experiences, and that each topic was relevant for them. In retrospect, I should have used an open-ended interview approach, and given the participants greater influence over the direction of their interviews (Dale, 1996).

Furthermore, I did not establish the depth of rapport and trust that was needed with each participant because I only conducted one interview. Not surprisingly, I sensed the participants were hesitant and somewhat inhibited as they recalled their journeys. Ideally, I should have conducted several interviews with each participant. In reality

though, it would have been difficult because interviews are time-intensive (for the researcher and the participants) and the transcription process is tiresome.

Another major challenge I faced during the interview process was how to present my findings. I started with the intention of illustrating the participants' experiences using realist tales. My initial choice was a reflection of my strong affinity for the post-positivist approach. The traditions that shape the realist tale are more conventional, and enabled me to write the tales as a behind-the-scenes researcher. This way of writing made me feel comfortable, and of all the qualitative genres seemed to be, for me at the time, the most legitimate form of representation.

When I began the interviews, however, I realised that it was impossible for me to be a disembodied and passive researcher. My experiences as a competitive tennis player, a tennis coach, and a neophyte sport psychologist positioned me as an active participant in the research process, and affected the way that I was collecting, interpreting, and representing the data. Rather than providing a tidy descriptive report, I decided that I needed to acknowledge the reality of the process and modify the realist tales.

I shifted to a constructivist research paradigm and a narrative inquiry, and included my voice and all the messy realities of qualitative research. Adding this confessional element to the tales presented many challenges. When writing up the stories, I had to think hard about: my hidden agendas, biases, and vulnerabilities; how to represent myself, and write myself into the text without being unduly narcissistic; how to write so that the participants' voices were not only heard, but also listened to; why I decided not to include certain information; how to share my struggles and excitement during the research process; and how to write stories that were worthy, insightful, coherent, and good to read. Although the confessional element increased the difficulty of

the writing process, it allowed me to reveal the dilemmas and tensions contained in the research process and create more natural, intimate, and identifiable stories.

Athlete Apperception Technique

After my interview with Craig, I had a strong sense that there was more to his story. At the time of the interview, I did not feel comfortable encouraging him to disclose sensitive information because he appeared anxious and seemed to have a strong desire for approval from others. I began to think about how I could possibly gain a greater, and clearer, understanding of Craig and his journey. Based on my supervisor's recommendations, I researched the AAT as a potential tool that could help me uncover more about Craig.

Initially, I was hesitant about using the AAT. In particular, I was unsure about the psychometric adequacy of the tool. Even the most rigorous projective test scoring systems yield only modest psychometric reliability and validity data (Gibbs, 2006). This hesitation was another example of my pull toward "hard" science and I missed the point of what projective tests are used for. Another doubt I had was my competence as a neophyte researcher and psychologist. Projective tests are difficult to interpret, and I was unsure if I was experienced or psychologically-minded enough to be able to extract anything useful from the responses.

Any doubts that I had vanished after the administration and analysis of the AAT. I found the interpretation to be challenging, but achievable, and I was completely convinced of its usefulness. Craig's AAT responses complemented, clarified, and added to his in-depth interview. They revealed valuable clues about his characteristics, motivations, and anxieties that would have been difficult to access with an interview or another assessment tool. Furthermore, the AAT images were helpful for engaging Craig.

The intent of the test was not particularly obvious, and it gave him considerable freedom to generate responses. He seemed generally more relaxed than during his in-depth interview.

On the other hand, there were some cautions or limitations that I noted during the research process. First, I would not have been able to interpret Craig's AAT responses without the insight from his in-depth interview. Consequently, it is my opinion that the AAT should not be used as a stand-alone instrument, but rather, in conjunction with other sources of information. Furthermore, the AAT images evoke material of a highly emotional and personal nature. For this reason, psychologists need to be aware of their own knowledge limitations and take reasonable care when interpreting the information from projective instruments. I believe the AAT has the potential to be over-interpreted and could be used irresponsibly. Finally, psychologists need to be mindful of the role they play in the process, and take steps to understand how their own "stuff" contributes to the administration and interpretation of the AAT. One of the major lessons I learned was that projective tests allow the interpreter to project as much as the participant.

Despite these concerns, I was genuinely excited by the AAT. The sport psychology field is starting to become more inclusive of alternative theories, methodologies, and forms of assessment. There are many recent examples of different approaches to sport psychology research (e.g., Culver et al., 2003; Gordon & Lingren, 1990; Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; Hopper et al., 2008; Partington & Orlick, 1991; Sparkes, 2002). Hopefully the sport psychology field embraces the AAT. I believe it could be a useful technique that researchers and practitioners could use to access processes that are not easily studied using common data collection methods.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

During my undergraduate and graduate coursework, I learned all about quantitative research and how to write a well-written scientific report. Like many students, I was drawn to the power of numbers and suspicious of qualitative research. When I began this research, I had to let my research question dictate the methodology. I must admit I was not prepared for the journey ahead of me. Conducting and writing a qualitative thesis demanded a different set of skills and offered some special challenges. Reflecting on that experience, I can identify various lessons learned along the way.

The first major lesson I learned was to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. There were many times throughout the research process when I felt uncomfortable. For example, I felt uncomfortable uncovering different stories and multiple realities, rather than discovering one singular reality. I felt uncomfortable using the authorial voice and being an active and visible researcher. I felt uncomfortable trying to juggle my different roles and interact with the participants on many levels. I realised, however, that the only way I was going to make it through my research journey was if I let go of my tight grip on structure and stopped thinking in black-and-white. I needed to just embrace the qualitative research process.

The second major lesson I learned was to manage my expectations about what this doctoral research could and could not be expected to achieve. I started out wanting to craft the participants' stories into masterpieces. How else was this research going to be accepted as adding to the sport psychology literature? After all, I did not have numbers or hard evidence to rely on to make a statement. I soon realized, however, how difficult it was to write a "good" story, let alone a masterpiece. Towards the end of the research process, it struck me that I had overlooked two important points: (a) this research was not

about *me*. Just by sharing the participants' real-world experiences with practitioners and researchers made this research useful; and (b) this minor research was only one small piece of the research puzzle, regardless of how brilliant my writing was.

The final lesson I learned was that qualitative research has “goodness” and “strength,” and that researchers can accomplish a great deal by using it (Strean, 1998). Throughout the research process, I battled with the qualitative methodology. It seemed loose and illegitimate. I had doubts about its credibility, its validity, and its transferability. But every research method has potential strengths and inherent weaknesses (McGrath, 1984). No research strategy can accomplish everything researchers would like to do. I realised that by continually trying to justify and defend the value and credibility of qualitative research, I was moving farther away from what I was trying to accomplish with this research. In the end, I learned that qualitative research is an important part of sport psychology and adds tremendous value to the literature.

What the Research Revealed

Athletic Retirement

Over the past few decades, athletic retirement has become a topical area within the field of sport psychology. Since the issue of athletic retirement began to receive attention, various theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain the phenomenon, and numerous investigations have been conducted. The following section provides a brief summary of how the findings from this research contribute to the extant theoretical and applied literature on retirement from competitive sport.

Theoretical frameworks. The participants' stories supported several of the theoretical frameworks that have been applied to athletic retirement. In terms of social gerontological models, continuity theory (Atchley, 1976) and social exchange theory

(Homans, 1961) were useful for understanding why the participants might have moved into coaching. Disengagement theory (Cummings et al., 1960) and social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973) offered plausible explanations for why Tony retired from competitive sport. In contrast, activity theory (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953) did not increase my understanding about any of the participants' retirement experiences. All of the participants described their lives as "hectic" and "full on" when they were athletes. They did not mention wanting to maintain their activity levels once they retired from competitive sport. On the contrary, Tony commented about being tired of the "athletic lifestyle," and expressed relief upon retirement.

The thanatological model of social death (Kalish, 1966) also did not explain any of the participants' experiences. This finding might be due to the participants being involved in an individual sport, and also maintaining their social networks through coaching. On the other hand, Kübler-Ross' (1969) stages of death theory was extremely useful for explaining Liam and Craig's emotional responses to retirement, with both participants progressing (roughly) through the five stages. This model, however, was not applicable to Tony's experience.

Finally, the three transition models (Schlossberg, 1981; Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) proved useful for explaining the process of retirement. These models allowed for the possibility of either a positive or negative transition experience, and explained why the participants responded the way they did. Furthermore, the three models showed how the participants' life histories affected the retirement process and offered a more holistic perspective of athletic retirement.

Of all the "useful" models described above, none of them stood out as the "most useful." They all contributed to my understanding of the participants' experiences in

different ways, and provided insight into different aspects of their stories. To appreciate the complexity of the retirement journey, these models need to be used in conjunction.

Research findings. Although each participant shared a unique tale, the information contained within their stories reflected common themes in the research literature. First, as Stambulova (1994) suggested, the participants' stories confirmed that retirement from sport occurs for a combination of reasons. These reasons are diverse and specific to each individual athlete. Furthermore, they seem to play a role in determining adjustment to post-career life (Alfermann et al., 2004).

The participants revealed how various factors either contributed to their distress or helped them cope with retirement. These factors included: identity, perceived control, health, coping resources, pre-retirement planning, career opportunities, and achievement. The participants also highlighted some additional factors that did not feature in the literature, such as personality characteristics (i.e., Liam's perfectionism), the reactions of others, and self-worth. As suggested in Stambulova's (1997, 2003) transition model, there seemed to be a delicate interplay between these factors, and the ability of an athlete to adjust depends on the balance between them.

Athlete-to-Coach Transition

Although popular among retiring athletes, the transition from athlete to coach is a relatively unexplored research area within sport psychology. I was guided by the little research that has been conducted and also by related research from other fields. In terms of motivation, the participants willingly shared with me their motivations for pursuing a coaching career. The main motives for all three participants were: poor pre-retirement planning, ease of the transition, not having to deal with threats to competence, and potential earnings involved in coaching. Liam was the only participant who mentioned

wanting to coach “for the love of the game.” Although they had not engaged in any formal pre-retirement planning, they all mentioned doing some part-time assistant coaching work before they retired.

A common theme running through the stories was how the participants’ athletic goals and achievements influenced their motivation for moving into coaching. Liam and Tony, who achieved the greater part of their athletic goals, did not seem to be strongly motivated by the need to achieve. Craig, whose athletic career was cut short because of injury, seemed to be strongly motivated to achieve and “become somebody” through coaching.

In terms of the quality of the athlete-to-coach transition, all three participants described their move into coaching as relatively easy. They possessed many of the necessary skills to transition into coaching, and the move seemed to act as a buffer to alleviate some of the negative consequences of the retirement process (Shachar et al., 2004). Overall, the transition seemed to give the participants opportunities to develop and grow. I felt their professional growth was somewhat limited though, because they were still “stuck within the sport.”

They all described how they transferred many of their positive and negative athletic experiences, and their athletic skills, into their coaching careers. By transferring their athletic skills and experiences into their coaching, they (possibly) were able to maintain their feelings of competence and self-worth. Their experiences and skills manifested in their coaching philosophies, their coaching styles, their expectations, their career choices, their behaviours, their interactions, and the way they ran their coaching businesses. Their stories highlighted how coaching practices, behaviours, and philosophies get passed down through the generations.

Although I was sceptical, the participants described their present levels of career and life satisfaction to be moderate to high. Does this mean that their transitions into coaching were positive? Does this mean that the transition into coaching is a path that might lead to successful adjustment? On the surface, yes I think so. But underneath it all, I think it is difficult to say. I do not believe Craig is happy. The case studies illustrated that each individual journey from athlete to coach is different. You can only look at individual cases and form your own opinion.

At a broader level, the case studies provided insight into the socio-cultural context of the participants. Taken together, the participants' stories highlighted common patterns in the careers of male athletes, of athletes from Australia, of tennis players, and of tennis coaches. For example, they revealed the stages that tennis players tend to progress through during their professional careers (i.e., specialisation stage, mastery stage, discontinuation stage), the ages at which male tennis players tend to reach each stage, how the Australian sport system works (i.e., opportunities and resources provided to athletes in Australia, paid coaching opportunities after retirement in Australia), and what Australian culture is like (i.e., importance of schooling, individualist culture, focus on self-worth, importance of financial security). This finding illustrates that in addition to being an idiosyncratic process, the transition from athlete to coach is also a multidimensional, multilevel, and multifactor process in which culture and context play important roles (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009; Stambulova, Stephan, & Järphag, 2007).

Implications for Applied Practice

The purpose of applied sport psychology research is to provide more knowledge and skills for practicing sport psychologists to use to enhance the experience and

wellbeing of people in sport and exercise. This research represents a step in gathering knowledge about the athlete-to-coach transition. The knowledge gained from this research could potentially be useful for current athlete development and career assistance programs (e.g., the Athlete Career and Education Program in Australia and the United Kingdom, the Career Assistance Program for Athletes in the United States, the Retiring Athlete in the Netherlands, and the Study and Talent Education Program in Belgium). More specifically, the results of this study could be beneficial for programs in Australia, programs targeted at tennis players, and programs designed for male athletes. Based on the findings from this research, it seems that these programs should consider recommending and preparing athletes for relocations within sport. Furthermore, these programs need to focus on building athletes' non-sport skills so that they do not feel "stuck" within their sport at the end of their sporting careers, and have more career options.

Most important, the information collected from this study could be useful for coach education programs. In particular, the findings from this research highlight the need to increase coaches' awareness of their influence on athletes' lives. They should be encouraged to assist their athletes with career planning, and to help their athletes develop skills that can be used in their post-athletic careers. Furthermore, they should be urged to mentor athletes who are considering a coaching career and to help them develop coaching skills. Finally, coaches should be encouraged to engage in more self-reflection about their motivations, needs, anxieties, and aspirations.

Directions for Future Research

Because retirement is one of the most significant experiences in sport (Murphy, 1995), it is important for sport psychology researchers to continue investigating this area.

To add to the current study, I would suggest several areas seem pertinent for further research. First, more real-world stories about the athlete-to-coach transition need to be collected to appreciate the wide array of experiences. Second, larger scale quantitative studies seem warranted in this area. More specifically, these studies should target issues such as coach motivation, transferable skills and experiences within sport, quality of the athlete-to-coach transition, and levels of satisfaction among coaches. This suggestion is not aimed at trying to legitimise the current study. Rather, quantitative research would *add* to the findings from this study. Third, a relatively unexplored area that would be worthwhile investigating is the transition out of coaching. Finally, the participants in this study were relatively new to coaching. It would be interesting to follow up with the participants later in their coaching careers to see how their coaching philosophies, motivations, priorities, and levels of satisfaction have changed, and whether they have different perspectives on their athlete-to-coach journeys.

Final Thoughts

Liam, Tony, and Craig are in some ways like other athletes. But in other ways, they are unique and like no one else. Their stories contain some common athletic experiences, but they also contain their own unique experiences. Their stories are a good start – they point us in the direction of how athletes experience relocation within sport after retirement. But there is still a long way to go!

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Building Rapport

- To get to know you a bit better, please tell me how you got involved in sport?
- Can you tell me what life was like as an athlete?
- Please tell me about your family and their involvement in sport?
- What do you love most about your sport?
- Please tell me about what parts of sport are not so great?
- If you have any regrets about your career as an athlete, please tell me about them.

Details Surrounding Retirement

- Please describe the circumstances surrounding your retirement from competitive sport?
- Can you describe your thoughts and feelings during this time?
- Can you describe the actions and thoughts of those around you at the time?
- Do you think you were you prepared for retirement? What plans did you have?
- What did you do between your career transition from athlete to coach (if anything)?

Transition to Coach

- Can you tell me about the time when you made the decision to become a coach?
- Was it an easy or hard decision? Why?
- Can you tell me about the factors that helped (or did not help) you make this decision?

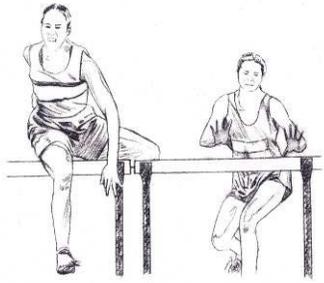
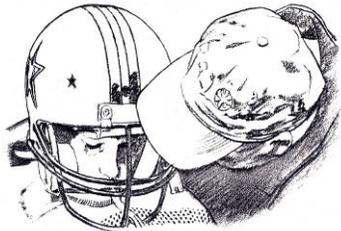
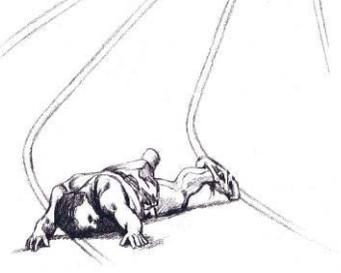
Post-Athletic Career/Life Satisfaction

- Can you tell me what life is like as a coach?
- Please tell me about the best and worst parts of being a coach?

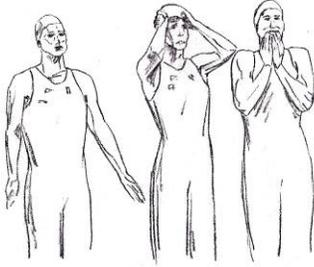
- How has your career as a coach been influenced by your career as an athlete?
- Please tell me about your life satisfaction both in and outside of coaching.
- What are your plans for the future?
- Do you have any advice for current athletes? Or for athletes who are in various stages of the retirement process?
- Would you recommend a coaching career to an athlete?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your retirement experience that we haven't covered?

APPENDIX B

AAT ADULT AND SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGE SETS*

	Image	Sport Psychology Themes (SPT) / Latent Stimulus Demand (LSD)
1		<p>SPT: competitive anxiety, confidence, fear of failure-success</p> <p>LSD: hierarchal relations, attitudes towards confidence and challenge versus exhaustion and envy, influence of external demands (expectation, motivation, and relief)</p>
2		<p>SPT: achievement motivation, athletic identity, confidence</p> <p>LSD: hierarchal relations, attitudes toward authority, attitudes toward the influences of external demands, attitudes of personal activity-passivity, father-son relations, attitudes toward rules and regulations</p>
3		<p>SPT: competitive anxiety, social and task cohesion, competitive attributions, self efficacy</p> <p>LSD: coach and peer interpersonal relations, feelings towards interpersonal interaction, attitudes toward sibling or parent-child relations</p>
4		<p>SPT: responses to injury, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, confidence</p> <p>LSD: despair versus elation, relationship of personal demands to those of outside agents, familiarity of negative emotions, attributional style, passive or assertive nature of personal defences</p>

5



SPT: social-task cohesion, team dynamics, social loafing

LSD: interpersonal interaction, the influence of external demands (expectation, motivation, and relief)

6



SPT: group cohesion, leadership and team dynamics, confidence, inclusion-exclusion, rejection

LSD: interpersonal relations, relationship of children, inclusion, relationship with siblings, feelings towards interpersonal interaction

7



SPT: confidence, competitive anxiety

LSD: hierarchal personal relations; attitudes toward authority, expectations of others, attitudes of personal activity or passivity, impersonal authority, attitudes toward rules and regulations, mother-daughter relations

8



SPT: confidence, competitive anxiety, retirement, achievement motivation

LSD: hierarchal personal relations, attitudes toward authority, attitudes toward the influences of external demands, attitudes of personal activity-passivity, impersonal authority, attitudes toward rules and regulations

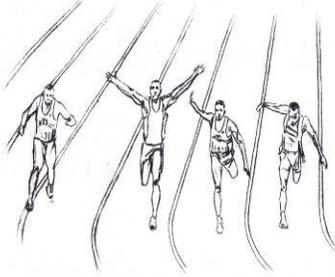
9



SPT: social and task cohesion, leadership, hierarchal relations

LSD: peer interpersonal relations, feelings towards interpersonal interaction, hierarchal person relations, apprehension over body contact, lesbian issues

10



SPT: intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, fear of failure-success, attributional style

LSD: attitudes towards latent competitive inadequacies, personal attitudes (e.g., arrogance, self-importance, superiority).

1S



SPT: competitive anxiety, confidence, vulnerability

LSD: peer interpersonal relations, dependency and passivity towards superior uncontrollable force, attitude towards a controlling force, apprehension over body contact, gay male issues

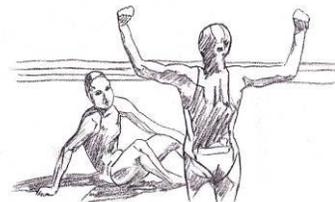
2S



SPT: social-task cohesion, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation

LSD: interpersonal relations, faith, attitudes toward authority, attitudes toward the influences of external demands, attitudes of personal activity-passivity, impersonal authority

3S



SPT: achievement motivation, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, confidence

LSD: hierarchal person relations, attitudes towards confidence and challenge versus exhaustion and envy, influence of external demands (expectation, motivation, and relief), envy, gloating, and boasting

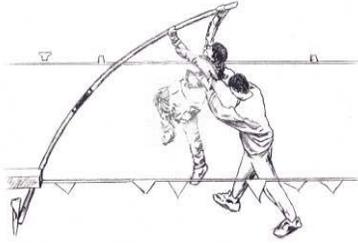
4S



SPT: conflict, arousal, authority consequences

LSD: peer interpersonal relations, attempt to deny and cover up aggression recognition (or rationalise), familiarity with the passive-assertive nature of personal defences

5S



SPT: achievement motivation, confidence

LSD: hierarchal personal relations, attitudes toward authority and influences of external demands, attitudes of personal activity-passivity, impersonal authority, attitudes toward rules and regulations

*Presented here with permission from Gibbs (2006)

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE: Transitions to the other side of the net: Tales of tennis players who became coaches

This study is part of Tarah E Kavanagh's doctoral degree in applied sport psychology under the supervision of Professor Mark B. Andersen at Victoria University. The aim of this study is to explore and describe the retirement and transition experiences of athletes who chose to stay involved in sport as coaches. Of particular interest are experiences as an athlete, details surrounding retirement, preparation and response to retirement, the transition from athlete to coach, the effect that an athletic career may have on a coaching career, current career and life satisfaction, and advice to other athletes. Your contribution to this study is highly valued and will help our understanding of athletic retirement and transition processes.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to free to withdraw at any time without the need for reason or explanation. A semi-structured interview will be used to allow you the freedom to describe your own experiences. Interviews will be conducted at Victoria University (or a place of mutual convenience), and will take approximately 2 hours. This interview, with your permission, will be audio taped and transcribed. After transcription of the interview, the tape will be destroyed or returned to you if you wish. The descriptions provided will be analysed to identify common themes. Your identity will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used to label the transcript. Any other identifying data will be deleted. You will be invited, and encouraged, to read your transcript to check that it is a valid account of your experiences.

There is a small risk of distress from recounting anxiety-producing moments in our conversation about your retirement and transition to coaching. If you experience distress, we will stop the interview and have a discussion about your reactions. If you feel you do not wish to continue, then you are welcome to withdraw from the study. If you would like to speak to a counsellor about your reactions, then a registered psychologist is available to you free of charge. Dr. Harriet Speed is not connected with this study and can be contacted for counselling on 9919-5412.

Thank you for your participation,

Tarah E. Kavanagh and Mark B. Andersen

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to Professor Mark B. Andersen: (03) 9919-5413. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into athletic retirement and transition to coaching.

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the retirement and post-career experiences of former athletes who chose to stay involved in sport as coaches. Of particular interest is your experience as an athlete, details surrounding your retirement, your preparation and response to retirement, your transition from athlete to coach, the affect that an athletic career has had on your coaching career, your current career and life satisfaction, and your advice to other athletes. Semi-structured interviews will be used to allow you the freedom to describe your own experiences. Interviews will be conducted at Victoria University (or a place of mutual convenience), and will take approximately 2 hours. The descriptions provided will be analysed to identify common themes. We believe the information provided by you will be valuable to other athletes in various stages of the retirement process.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, _____ of _____

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study Transitions to the other side of the net: Tales of tennis players who became coaches being conducted at Victoria University by Tarah E. Kavanagh (doctoral degree student) and Professor Mark B. Andersen.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Tarah E. Kavanagh and that I freely consent to participation involving an interview:

- You will be invited to take part in an interview about your athletic retirement and transition to coaching, which will be audio taped and transcribed.
- After transcription of the interview, the tape will be destroyed or returned to you if you wish.
- Your identity will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used to label the transcript.
- You will be invited, and encouraged, to read the transcript to add or make changes to what you have said.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not have any personal consequences.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to Professor Mark B. Andersen: (03) 9919-5413. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710.