

1 **“Hey, look at me” An {auto}ethnographic account of experiencing ADHD symptoms**
2 **within sport.**

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1 Using an autoethnographic approach, the first author, an individual diagnosed with ADHD in
2 early childhood, explores his lived sporting experiences with the help of the second author.
3 Although there is a tendency for research into ADHD to be confined largely to clinical
4 evaluation and subjective interpretations, this fails to advance cultural understanding and
5 ultimately maintains the status quo. Therefore, by sharing and exploring experiences, both as
6 an athlete and a coach, we aim to address this in-balance within sport and give a voice to the
7 voiceless (Holt 2003). By endeavouring to reveal the thoughts and feelings attached to key
8 episodes within the first author's experience as a player and a coach, the study functions to
9 provide preliminary evidence to showcase how ADHD can impact upon those who
10 participate in sport. Furthermore, the vignettes presented act as a vehicle to signpost the
11 reader in accessing the available academic literature. As a result, it is hoped that this
12 manuscript will (1) bring further meaning to this often misunderstood condition, (2)
13 showcase how ADHD symptoms may present themselves within a sporting environment, and
14 (3) enable coaches to better support those who experience similar episodes.

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16 **Keywords:** Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD); Sport; Mental Health;
17 Coaches; Anger.

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1 **“Hey, look at me” An {auto}ethnographic account of experiencing ADHD symptoms**
2 **within sport.**

3 As a behavioural disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is
4 usually characterized by abnormal behaviour, impulsiveness, inattention and forms of
5 hyperactivity (Putukian 2011). As such, youth athletes with ADHD are often singled out by
6 coaches as trouble makers (Beyer et al. 2009, Vargas et al. 2012, Braun and Braun 2015).
7 Although scholars frequently describe the condition as an excuse for aberrant behaviour,
8 ADHD has more recently become accepted as a unique disorder of brain connectivity
9 (Timimi 2005, Kutcher 2011). According to White et al. (2013) prevalence rates of ADHD
10 are currently as high as 10% of all children. Furthermore, scholars suggest that higher levels
11 of ADHD are experienced in males with symptoms such as an inability to focus attention
12 reported well into adulthood (Harpin 2005, Benkert et al. 2010, Karam et al. 2015).
13 According to Beyer et al. (2008) ADHD diagnosed athletes are often faced with an inability
14 to follow directions and remember strategic information. Therefore, when supporting athletes
15 experiencing ADHD symptomology, Connant-Norville (2012) suggests enjoyment focused
16 activities and patience when working with young children. Connant-Norville (2012) also
17 advocates the importance of support and understanding when working with athletes during
18 adolescence. Although sage advice, Beyer et al. (2008) note that coaching education
19 programmes often omit such information. With this in mind, Beyer et al. (2008) call for the
20 adoption of a more varied approach to coach education that better supports coaches in
21 assisting those with ADHD along with other hidden disabilities and disorders.

22 Although research examining the consequences of ADHD in sport has begun (see
23 Beyer et al. 2009, Moya et al. 2012, Braun and Braun 2014), as with other mental health
24 research, qualitative inquiry has lagged behind (Peters 2010). As such, interpretive
25 approaches may play a central part in shaping, questioning, and enlightening populations

1 (Fuermaier et al. 2014, Defenbaugh 2008, Bochner and Ellis 2016). Moreover, although
2 diverse views are offered by practitioners as to what ADHD represents (Barkley 2002), first-
3 person accounts from subcultural “natives” are required to gain a deeper level of
4 understanding (Denzin 2000). As a result, this autoethnography adds to what is a growing
5 pool of research using narrative approaches in sport (e.g. Douglas 2009, Zehntner and
6 McMahon 2013, Mitchell et al. 2016).

7 Diagnosed with ADHD at age 5, the first author has found himself battling many
8 invisible challenges of the condition. Although his symptomatology has gradually improved
9 as he has progressed into adulthood, sport was always an integral part of his development.
10 With this in mind, we will utilise an autoethnographic approach to draw upon his lived
11 experiences in an effort to contribute to the understanding of how ADHD symptoms may be
12 presented within sport (Sparkes 2000). Despite criticism (Buzard 2003, Anderson 2006, Wall
13 2008) autoethnographies have received support in their ability to highlight human
14 experiences at both an individual and group level (Ellis and Bochner 2000, Carles and
15 Douglas 2013, Mills 2015). Within the present manuscript, we seek to tackle deep-seated
16 stigma in society by addressing and exploring the first author’s experiences of “feeling
17 misunderstood” (Mueller et al. 2012, Michielsen et al. 2015).

18 Although individuals with ADHD may be predisposed to organisational memory
19 difficulties when recalling personal experiences (Klein et al. 2011), formal discussions
20 between the first and second author helped to bring structure to the events and increase the
21 vividness of reflections (Ellis and Bochner 2000). Through the process of collaboratively
22 writing the manuscript, loose descriptions of lived events were developed with creativity into
23 thoughtful vignettes that effectively communicate and represent the first author’s experiences
24 (Smith et al. 2015, Emerald and Carpenter 2016). The stories told explain fragments of
25 individual experiences and the dramatisation of feelings; projecting silent stories of hopes,

1 fears and vulnerabilities (Purdy et al. 2008, McMahon and Dinan-Thompson 2011, Carless
2 and Douglas 2013). It is hoped that the vignettes presented provide support to those
3 experiencing ADHD and allow others to closely feel conditions as they are experienced
4 (Bochner and Ellis 2016).

5 Adams (2006) suggests successful autoethnographies show rather than tell readers
6 what the story is meant to theoretically convey. Building on the recent recommendations of
7 Wall (2016, p. 8), the current manuscript aims to “combine the power of the personal
8 perspective with the value of analysis and theory”. As such, it is hoped that the stories
9 presented here will connect and guide the reader to relevant literature (Wall 2016). Further,
10 as Minge and Zimmerman (2013, p.13) suggest, autoethnography is best “understood [by]
11 sharing, discussing and reflecting with a trusted friend”. Although the primary author can be
12 traced as “I” throughout the vignettes, to gain clarity on issues faced by individuals with
13 ADHD and theoretically guide the reader, the vignettes are critically analysed and
14 evocatively crafted with the support of a trusted other (Minge and Zimmerman 2013). In
15 doing so, “we” marks the collaborative “reflexive and theoretical unpacking of the narrative
16 journey”” (Minge and Zimmerman 2013). However, adopting the approach used by Mills
17 (2015), we have employed Sparkes’ (2004) personal and academic voice framework. We do
18 this with the aim of distinctively highlighting the differences between relived experiences
19 (i.e., personal voice) and sections that provide explanation and signpost the reader to useful
20 scholarly content (academic voice[s]).

21 The first vignette offered is called “losing it”, which documents the first author’s
22 experiences of losing control while playing competitive youth football aged 10. The second
23 vignette discussed, “it’s not just me”, is an account of the feelings attached entering
24 adulthood, while starting a new coaching position within a football academy and working

1 with young athletes. Like Smith (2013), throughout the manuscript we utilise vernacular
2 language in the interest of being easily understood by both academic and lay audiences.

3 **Losing it: Personal voice**

4 It is match day. I arrive to the game guilt ridden. Yet again I am the last to arrive.
5 Today feels different though, we play the nemesis, the so called “cool kids” at school. They
6 have mentioned this fixture all week, so a solid performance from me may go a long way in
7 finally proving myself. They call me the “naughty kid”. The headmaster always tells me the
8 same when my parents are summoned to the school. At least, that’s when I am allowed to
9 attend. Last week they asked my parents to keep me home as they had the inspectors in. I
10 hate it and I hate them. I shouldn’t be singled out for things I cannot control.

11 I appear onto the pitch to be greeted by my opponent’s leering grins. I look at the
12 grass and petulantly shuffle my body towards my coach. To stay out of trouble, you have to
13 keep your space. In position, I hear the coach calm and collectively state the following “if
14 you believe you will win today, you will win”. For many kids my age this would be a
15 pointless statement lost in the wind, but from a guy who understands me, who I trust and
16 respect, it means a lot. I cling to the words, replaying them in my mind. I absorb his
17 confidence in me. As my team-mates now welcome my arrival, I briefly smile as I feel
18 acceptance from the group. There is no time for greetings though, as we are ordered to run
19 in circles around dirty plastic cones in preparation for the fixture.

20 The game eventually starts and we immediately find ourselves on the back foot. After
21 a few minutes of sustained pressure, we promptly concede the first goal. It feels inevitable.
22 They have everything and we have nothing. I stoop my head and trudge towards the centre
23 circle. On my way, however, I am halted by a member of the opposition. He knows me from
24 school. He is smiling and excessively celebrating directly in my face. “Dick”. How dare he!
25 It’s not fair, why must life... My eyes dart from side to side as my mind tries to keep up with

1 the waves of emotion. Wherever I hide, I am always found. I stop myself, I know he yearns
2 for a reaction. I tell myself to not award him the pleasure. But, there is nothing I can do. My
3 teammate puts the ball down in the centre circle and the game resumes. I, however, am not
4 ready. Again, I remind myself of the need to ignore what has happened, but I cannot. I am the
5 innocent victim, plagued by the past and unsure of the future. I can feel my frustration
6 developing as my brain decides retaliation is the only available option. I need to defend
7 myself. I now feel my mood turning as the red mist gushes like a waterfall. It's involuntary.
8 Like a bull charging at a matador, I slide along the cool wet grass and smash into my
9 opponent. The thunderous thud of bone on bone soothes me and as I stand a wave of intense
10 relief washes over my body. I believe my behaviour was vindicated as I now feel a little
11 better. However, as I return to my senses I am greeted with a wall of noise and anger.
12 Disorientated, I struggle to focus on the words uttered and can only see the venom spewing
13 from my opponent's mouths. They are shouting at me and at the ref. I don't understand why
14 they are so furious. I just need the opportunity to explain my actions. It may just be a game to
15 you, but to me it is everything in my uncertain world. Please, I'll do anything. The referee
16 marches over and in no uncertain terms tells me to leave the field of play.

17 As I solemnly shuffle from the pitch the opposition manager shakes his head and calls
18 me a disgrace. The ever-present self-doubts flood into my mind. This isn't fair. He's not my
19 coach and has no right to criticise me. He should tell his player off for provoking me. Just
20 remove the hecklers from the game and the shackles from my feet; I need to be free. Free like
21 everyone else. Can't you see each tear that slides across my face represents a day of pain?
22 These thoughts now stop and I begin to detach myself from the life that surrounds me.
23 Everything is black and caving in rapidly. I feel trapped inside my own head. Feeling a
24 mixture of emotions – too many to contemplate -I turn and run to escape. A few hundred
25 yards later and I am in the woods. I feel safe, but my mind jolts back into life like an electric

1 shock. Help me! Leave me alone! Kicking through the still brush and screaming hysterically,
2 I try to resist but the anger boils and overflows inside me. I am drowning head first within my
3 own mind. Like a boat without a mast, I scream out for a light house, but all I receive is the
4 open ocean. Save me. Save me from myself! After a few moments the whirring cogs inside
5 my mind begin to slow and the fog starts to clear. I lift my face to feel the rain and abruptly,
6 I stop. The voice of reason, missing for the past few minutes starts to protrude through the
7 mist of anger. I am being stupid, very stupid.

8 I hear the leaves rustle at the edge of the woods. I turn to see my pale faced coach
9 panting and frantically looking for me. I expect anger, but all I see is concern. Tentatively we
10 move towards one another. “I’m sorry”, I mumble. The coach stretches out an arm, places it
11 on my shoulder and tells me it’s ok. I am now calm and just want to re-join the action. I had
12 been looking forward to this all week. My coach pleads the case for my return but the referee,
13 without looking, gestures him away. Is life always this cruel? I see the game progress without
14 me as I am ushered towards an open car door. Bewildered and mid-movement I turn towards
15 my team. The field looks so joyous. Safely imprisoned in my dad’s three door saloon, I look
16 longingly towards the referee one last time. I feel my chance to belong shattering into
17 thousands of pieces. With puffy red eyes that are watery from the previous events, I look
18 over one last time, but I’m ignored. The referee has already made his choice; my game is
19 over before it ever really began.

20 **Losing it - academic voice.**

21 Although scholars have begun researching the role of sport in the treatment of ADHD
22 symptomology (e.g. Conant-Norville 2012, Lee et al. 2014), to date, the focus has been
23 primarily quantitative. In response, the previous vignette aimed to showcase the condition
24 from an individual’s perspective. Whereby, the vignette first presents the author’s identity
25 uncertainties developed through difficulties in school – and extended to extra-curricular

1 activity. In doing so, the first author earmarked his potential susceptibility to antagonism, due
2 to his dynamic identification with ADHD. Despite naturally acknowledging the opportunity
3 to integrate with his peers as a 'football person', the author soon realised that he would fail to
4 change his identity attachment to ADHD placed on him by his opposition (Jones 2006). As
5 a result, the vignette demonstrates how the condition can affect relationships with others, in
6 this instance the first author was shy, lonely, and confused in the social situation (Gentile and
7 Atiq 2006, Nazeer et al. 2014). However, putting evident identity discrepancies aside from
8 the social norm (Gajaria et al. 2011), two key themes ran true through this reflective account.
9 The first theme captures the reasoning as to why ADHD is misunderstood as a disorder of
10 both anger and aggression (Singh 2011). Perroud et al. (2016) offer an explanation for this
11 aggression, stating that individuals with ADHD anticipate fewer negative consequences,
12 which through a lack of self-directedness, may lead to a greater likelihood of unrecognised
13 risky behaviour.

14 Within the vignette, the first author's behaviour was perceived to be the result of the
15 opposition's targeted provocation. In this case, emotional regulation was achieved through
16 an excessive outburst of anger, which in this instance resulted in the ill-timed tackle (Harty et
17 al. 2008, White et al. 2013). Subsequently, the first author felt in a paradoxical position
18 whereby he understands cultural norms around appropriate behaviour in sport, yet achieves
19 emotional regulation through the transgressive act. This dissonance is thought to lead
20 children with ADHD to develop heightened levels of stress (Webb 2004, Whalen et al.
21 2009). The vignette also highlights that, through the forceful removal of the first author from
22 the football pitch, it can be argued that the referee legitimises and reinforces the need to
23 warehouse the disordered individual (Whalen et al. 2009). Although the whole event only
24 lasts minutes, the situation subjectively demonstrates how a hostile team sport environment,
25 combined with the form of low frustration tolerance associated with ADHD can result in a

1 child's exclusion from a desired activity. As Beyer et al. (2008) and Rizzo et al. (1997)
2 suggest, when dealing with athletes experiencing ADHD symptomology, those in positions of
3 authority (i.e., coaches, referees, and parents) should attempt to provide adequate support and
4 involvement opportunities. Although a positive step, as expressed within the vignette, this
5 message does not seem to have trickled down to all aspects of competition. In reflection,
6 individuals in authority should seek successful and acceptable methods to allow their athletes
7 to release anger to stop similar episodes. For example, leagues could instruct referees to
8 permit a short time out period, which would allow the athlete to regain their thoughts in a bid
9 to return to action – although care and subtlety would be required in implementing such an
10 initiative.

11 The second theme of the vignette surrounds the role of the coach in meeting the
12 needs of individuals with ADHD. Within the vignette, the first author initially felt competent
13 within the team. This may be directly attributed to the success of the coach in dealing with
14 the first author's disruptive behaviour to positively influence his team mate's social
15 perceptions (Sherman et al. 2008). However, as the story continued and the first author came
16 in to contact with his opponents, he became confused as self-doubt influenced his perceptions
17 of others. As Wiener and Daniels (2015) suggest, destructive ADHD behaviours may be
18 lessened when the individual feels socially accepted and supported by peers within group
19 settings. With this in mind, the vignette highlights the need for coaches to: (i) show patience
20 and understand their athlete's needs, (ii) gain extra training and experience in supporting
21 those with mental health disorders, and (iii) attempt to develop an inclusive culture within
22 their clubs, which aims to challenge the stigma associated with having ADHD (Bell et al.
23 2010).

24 **It's not just me: Personal voice**

1 As I step out of the car my ears are filled by the sound of police sirens ringing vividly
2 in the distance. Razor wire tops the graffiti covered walls of the club house and shattered
3 glass covers the floor next to an old phone booth. A bench covered by three walls of cracked
4 Plexiglas and what seems to be an infestation of spider's webs sits by the side of pitch. Every
5 so often, I can feel the sun's warmth, but its rays are marred by a block of flats, which cast a
6 shadow over the pitch. As I hide my belongings under the bench, flecks of white paint fall to
7 the floor. Confident in the knowledge that my personal belongings are safe, I take a moment
8 to sit quietly and consider where my coaching journey has taken me. I hear the air leave my
9 body in one almighty exasperated breath; this place looks like hell on earth.

10 I check the time by prising out my phone from the not so hidden compartment of my
11 tracksuit bottoms. It's 10:06am. Six minutes later than planned, but I am still here before the
12 players. As the Head Coach appears from the changing room and begins to approach me, I
13 wonder whether arriving earlier would have made a better impression, but accept it doesn't
14 matter now. I'm late. I track his movements in the corner of my eye, while trying to keep
15 calm. However, beads of sweat belie my obvious insecurities. Communication is key for any
16 aspiring coach; I have to look confident and introduce myself. I place my hand on the side of
17 my face, but the words are fixed between my teeth and impossible to force out. The Head
18 Coach doesn't notice and I regain my composure and complete the introduction. Reaching
19 into the depths of my pocket I retrieve a note with my plans for the session scribbled on it. As
20 the coach unfolds the outer edges of the paper, he seems happy as I try to explain my ideas.
21 Within a minute he sends me on my way to scatter torn cones and lay out dirty bibs. I have
22 passed the first obstacle in getting this far, but my mind begins to wander. It is one thing to
23 get my ideas across to a coach, but doing the same with a new group of kids may not be so
24 easy. Hopefully today works out.

1 As the players arrive I make final adjustments to the cones I had just laid out. A smirk
2 appears across my face as I look back at the meandering line I had just created. I'd better fix
3 that. As I finish the line, an invisible force attracts me to the slightly deflated ball beside me.
4 More players are trickling in so I concentrate on the ball. I enjoy the feel of the leather on my
5 boot as I attempt to keep the ball in the air. As the ball hits the floor I turn around to see that
6 all eyes are now on me now. I am the object of curiosity, the new coach. I attempt to
7 stimulate an upbeat mood to hide my insecurities. I remind myself that they are just 10-year
8 olds. As I introduce myself I see faces switch off and shoulders shrink. I can feel the respect
9 and authority draining out of my body. My lungs expand with every short breath I take, I
10 need to stay composed. I force myself to demonstrate the drill and swiftly the session gets
11 under way. Everyone seems happy to get playing.

12 After twenty minutes or so the skills component of the session ends and we finish
13 with a game. You can tell this is what the kids have been waiting for as a course of nervous
14 energy runs through the field. The players eventually take their sides and the game begins.
15 Like a murmuration of starlings, the players dart right, then left, swarming around the ball.
16 Like an addict looking for a fix, each of them is obsessed with the ball and desperate for a
17 touch. After a while, squabbling ensues between two players. Suddenly, anger burns in the
18 eyes of a player while liquid streams from his eyes. It's not physical pain or tears, but rather
19 anguish and frustration that boils over. In a fit of rage, he grabs the other boy, wrapping his
20 arm around the child's neck and squeezing. As the victim's face begins to turn red I shout to
21 let go, but he won't. As I move towards them the victim breaks free and rushes into the arms
22 of his distraught father. Both boys are clearly upset and while caring for his son, the father of
23 the boy recently released from a headlock scowls in my direction with a look that demands I
24 act.

1 I tap the perpetrator on the shoulder and ask the boy what had happened? He looks at
2 me in a way that I am familiar with, but can't put my finger on. I continue, but he's in his
3 own world looking straight ahead and ignoring my questions. I crouch in front of his face, I
4 ask him again. The light returns to his eyes and awakens from his daze, but the only answer I
5 can tease from his downturned lips is "I don't know". I press him a third time, but this time
6 he resists eye contact and shuffles petulantly trying to free himself from the interrogation. I
7 don't know what to do. The head coach then appears by my side and tells the child to
8 continue playing. No questions, no apology, no explanation for his action, simply "off you
9 go". I'm confused: The Head Coach now proceeds to tell me that he has known the boy for
10 "donkey's years" and that it is only recent that his behavioural issues have come to light.
11 Captivated, I lean in as the Head Coach quietly mouths "he does this a lot, but what can we
12 do?"

13 As the session ends, the perpetrator's father heads in my direction. A seemingly
14 passionate and supportive man, the dad speaks of how his "little shit" struggles to socialise
15 and is often bullied. Looking at the ground, he then proceeds to tell me that this is why the
16 boy experiences these explosions of rage – all the while assuring me that he is a "good kid".
17 For a split second all I see is white as the neurons fire in my brain. I lean my chest back
18 slightly and take a moment to reflect. The boy's father reaches out his hand to shake mine
19 and I am brought back to reality. As the boy trails behind his father kicking clouds of dry dirt
20 into the air, I smile. The Head Coach now congratulates me on my first session, before
21 quietly whispering in my ear not to worry about the incident, before explaining that it is
22 because the boy has ADHD.

23 **It's not just me. Academic voice.**

24 Now in the role of football coach, the first author was keen on instilling confidence to
25 adjust to the behaviour required to be a successful coach (e.g. Mills 2015). He was, however,

1 also ignorant of the need to gain trust and develop a coach-athlete relationship (Glutting et al.
2 2002, Gilbourne and Richardson, 2006). Instead, he was distracted by his own inattention and
3 hyperactivity. The vignette then highlights the difficulty in identifying important aspects of
4 ADHD symptomology within an unfamiliar group environment. Given the first author's
5 intimate knowledge of the disorder, this may, in part, explain why ADHD is such a poorly
6 understood condition in sport. Despite the lack of recognisable cues when originally placed
7 with the group, towards the latter sections of the vignette, he began to recognise and
8 understand the player's displayed impaired interpersonal skills (Beyer et al. 2008, Tarver et
9 al. 2014). Whereby, without having information to determine the cause of the incident, he
10 was still able to acknowledge the athlete's displays of anger were 'typical' of ADHD
11 behaviour (Braaten and Rosén, 2000). That said, without previously gaining the athlete's
12 trust, by approaching and interrogating the player in public, the athlete's unresponsiveness
13 was likely the outcome of the expected 'singling out' of his actions (Nazeer et al. 2014,
14 Conant-Norville 2012). Nonetheless, despite a long and difficult process in working with the
15 athlete, the Head Coach's response to the quarrel represents visible disparity from the
16 situational norm. The discrepancy expressed by not openly condemning the actions of the
17 athlete, perhaps offered an expressed way of removing the Head Coach from responsibility.

18 Research suggests that individuals with ADHD are more sensitive to immediate
19 punishment (Poon and Ho 2016) and acquire increased guilt and reduced empathy (Braaten
20 and Rosén 2000). Therefore, by re-directing communication towards the athlete's parent, the
21 Head Coach was able to effectively take the athlete away from the centre of negative scrutiny
22 to search for solutions to the ADHD outburst (e.g. Vargas-Tonsing, 2007). With such details
23 acknowledged, the vignette promotes the importance of (i) coach awareness of ADHD
24 diagnosis, (ii) coaches gaining ADHD individuals trust, and (iii) coach resourcefulness in
25 liaising with significant others to resolving ADHD related behaviours.

Discussion

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To date, scholars have investigated elements of ADHD symptomology using traditional quantitative approaches (e.g. Beyer et al. 2008, Conant-Norville 2012, Lee et al. 2014). However, in doing so, researchers have neglected using alternative qualitative approaches. To fill this methodological void, this study aimed to bring further meaning to the condition by showcasing the realities of ADHD in a sporting context. While the study also offers direct recommendations in a bid to assist coaches in their support. To achieve such aims, the study sought to address telling deficits in the field by providing both creative vignettes as the athlete with ADHD and as a coach in contact with ADHD, to “represent” the condition to a wide audience (Nöth 2003).

However, in centrally portraying the lived experiences of ADHD in sport, both vignettes highlight the potential triggering factors related to the formation of public outbursts of aggression. The vignettes highlight how behaviours deemed to be “abnormal” are often facilitated by a series of events caused by others misunderstanding (Rizzo et al. 1997, Beyer et al. 2008, Putukian 2011). In addition, while both vignettes showcase how outbursts can create allied identity discrepancies which can negatively impact social interactions, they are often caused by athletes accepting the label “disordered individual” (Whalen et al. 2009, Nazeer et al. 2014). That said, in addition to justifying the importance of increased social competency for youth athletes with ADHD, the present study highlights many key factors which potentially advocate why children with the condition are associated with a shorter length of involvement in team sports (Kang et al. 2011, Johnson and Rosén 2000). As the aforementioned scholars report, increased aggression and emotional inhibition were the prime reason for ADHD athlete dropout in sport (Johnson and Rosén 2000). However, despite such factors contributing to the formation of the outburst, the whole process may be mediated by complex rule structures, inter and intragroup dynamics, and trust in the coach.

1 Next, the vignettes both highlight the confusion that can occur when identifying
2 disordered behaviours. By taking the position of coach, the first author showcases how
3 difficult it is to detect ADHD symptomology within dynamic context of sporting
4 environments. Therefore, while sensitivity and understanding are required, both vignettes
5 exemplify the importance of strong coach-athlete communication, and understanding. The
6 first vignettes also gives meaningful evidence to the idea that those in youth sport (i.e.
7 referees/coaches) are usually not trained to work with the disorder (see Murphy et al. 2010).
8 Therefore, it would be advisable for coaches to remain patient and develop the trust and
9 respect required to make athletes feel competent and supported (Sherman et al. 2008, Lee et
10 al. 2014). Further, it would then be advantageous to promote an inclusive club culture
11 irrespective of ADHD outbursts, as this can challenge the negative outcomes surrounding
12 ADHD stigmatisation (Bell et al. 2010). Subsequently, coaches may then wish to liaise with
13 referees to offer cool-down periods in competition to promote such an inclusive culture,
14 cooperate with parents for solutions to ADHD outbursts or experiment with self-regulatory
15 techniques (i.e. goal setting or positive self-talk), which may help to motivate athletes and
16 improve on task behaviour (Braun and Braun 2014).

17 Finally, by adopting a narrative approach, we attempted to create a dialogue
18 representing an individual with ADHD (Denison and Markula 2003). We did so with the aim
19 of advancing understanding of the disorder within the sporting community. As a result, we
20 hope the current manuscript encourages those involved in sport to re-consider the personal
21 support and environment they create, when working with athletes who suffer from
22 behavioural disorders. Further, we hope to have encouraged others to use comparable
23 methods and support the construction of “collective stories” around athlete’s experiences of
24 similar conditions (Denzin 2000). The first author’s story will continue and so will many
25 others with the same condition. Rather than providing an ending, it is our hope that the

1 vignettes described here encourage others with behavioural disorders to embrace their
2 opportunity to speak up (Smith 1999, Mills 2015).

3 **Conclusion**

4 In sum, the reflective accounts presented here aimed to illustrate a range of outcomes
5 associated with experiencing ADHD in sport (Short et al. 2013). To achieve this, the current
6 study looked to redirect ADHD enquiry away from what is centred on the ‘other’ (e.g. Beyer
7 et al. 2009), towards utilising a method that originates from the ‘self’ (Ellis 2004). As this
8 process has led many to announce the efficacy of narrative approaches when navigating
9 misconceived phenomena (e.g. Lang and Pinder 2017), it is hoped by creating ADHD
10 associated vignettes the study may provide a deeper understanding of this often
11 misunderstood condition in sport. By also offering episodes from both an athlete and coach
12 perspective, the study aspires to illustrate how ADHD symptomology may present itself in
13 sport. Through the use of theoretical signposting and the use of creative non-fiction, it is
14 hoped that the current manuscript assists coaches in supporting athletes with ADHD in a way
15 that is accessible and engaging. Therefore, we hope that the stories presented here encourage
16 others who experience ADHD or coach those who do, to reflect upon their experiences in
17 sport, shine a light on this often ‘invisible’ disorder (Beyer et al. 2008, Tarver et al. 2014),
18 and consider the approach they take to meet and their athletes’ needs.

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