Title: **"They have to toe the line": A Foucauldian analysis of the socialisation of former elite athletes into academy coaching roles**

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Abstract

The pathway between elite athlete and high-performance coach is common within English men's rugby union and association football. To help develop as coaches, many elite athletes gain coaching experiences within male high-performance youth academies. The purpose of this article sought to gain an insight into the socialisation processes of current and former elite athletes within association football and rugby union amongst the socio-cultural context of England, and to identify why Academy Directors seemingly preferred to recruit current and former elite athletes as academy coaches. Semi-structured interviews with 11 Academy Directors were conducted. Results showed that the Academy Directors preferred to recruit their respective club's current and former athletes as a means to govern their academy's 'club culture'. Foucault's concepts of docility and discipline conceptualise how current and former elite athletes were judged to be more trustworthy to reproduce the academy culture in their coaching practices compared to external candidates.

Keywords: coach education; coach development; coaching philosophy

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Introduction

For 'expert' or 'successful' high-performance coaches, experience as a competitive-athlete has been considered an important factor in their development (Erickson, Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006; Gilbert, Lichtenwaldt, Gilbert, Zelezny & Côté, 2009; Koh, Mallett & Wang, 2011; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Rynne & Mallett, 2012; Wright, Trudel & Culver, 2007). Subsequently, the career transition from competitive-athlete to high-performance coach has largely been considered an idiosyncratic process (Carter & Bloom, 2009; Erickson et al., 2007; Schinke, Bloom & Salmela, 1995; Werthner & Trudel, 2009) and has now become a normalised assumption amongst the sporting discourse of many international contexts (Blackett, Evans & Piggott, 2017; Christensen, 2013, 2014; Kelly, 2008; Mielke, 2007; Rynne, 2014; Schempp, McCullick, Grant, Foo & Wieser, 2010; Sherwin, Campbell & MacIntyre, 2017). By way of example, Martin Johnson was appointed head coach of the England men's national rugby union team in April 2008 after retiring from a career as captain of both Leicester Tigers and the England men's national team (BBC, 2008). Although Johnson had no prior direct coaching experience before his appointment, many journalists and commentators expressed how his competitive-athletic career compensated for or even superseded this lack of coaching experience. One of Johnson's ex-England and Leicester teammates, Austin Healey (2008), wrote in his national newspaper column at the time:

> But I'm happy to correct the notion that because Martin Johnson has no coaching experience he should not be considered for a managerial role. The guy has got a very sharp brain and is good at working out how to facilitate things. We saw that when he was captain. Sir Clive Woodward [head coach] took a lot of plaudits for the World Cup win in 2003 but much of England's success was down to Johnno[1] pulling Clive in at certain crucial times... And now, four years on, I actually think Johnno's lack of coaching experience is a bonus. He has a fresh outlook, uncluttered by textbook thinking (p. 64).

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[1] Martin Johnson was regularly referred to as 'Johnno' by his team-mates and within the UK's media.

Conversely, however, after having researched the developmental pathways of 19 Canadian university coaches, Erickson et al. (2007) concluded that experience as a competitive-athlete was not "an absolutely necessary area of experience for individuals who eventually became high-performance coaches in either team or individual sports" (p. 311 – see also Schempp et al., 2010). Additional research on Canadian coach development pathways (Carter & Bloom, 2009) has recorded that high-performance coaches have reached coaching roles at levels which surpassed their own previous athletic careers. Coaches' perceived value of their own former competitive-athletic careers has been found to decline throughout their coaching careers, as opposed to being highly valued at the beginning and middle (Mallett, Rynne & Billett, 2016; Nash & Sproule, 2011).

Although former competitive-athletic experiences are valued, it can be suggested they are just a small part of a much more nuanced and complex coach development process. Indeed, when analysing high-performance coach development, there is growing recognition that the portrayal of linear, functionalist and unproblematic coaching pathway models does not accurately reflect the reality, which is "messy" and "fragmented" (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004, p. 1). This claim has been emphasised by others (Barker-Ruchti, Barker, Rynne & Lee, 2016; Cushion et al., 2010) indicating a need for research that further explores the socio-cultural dimensions of how coaches learn to become a coach and how other stakeholders, like Academy Directors, influence this learning process. This suggestion reflects the work of other scholars who have shed light upon the dynamics of coaches as social agents situated within socio-cultural structures (Hassanin & Light, 2014). Such research has drawn upon sociological theory to conceptualise how sports coach learning can therefore be understood culturally.

Situated within the growing literature that has analysed sports coach learning culturally, this study investigated how English high-performance male rugby union and

association football[2] academies act as socio-cultural spaces in which the learning and development of elite athletes who transition into post-athletic high-performance coaching roles is fostered, supported and actively encouraged. To do this, Academy Directors have been sampled and interviewed on the subject of how and why they recruit current and/or former elite athletes as academy coaches. Before outlining how we have analysed this topic, it is necessary to provide a rationale for how the sample of Academy Directors within these two sports was identified.

Building upon the notion of cultural learning, Blackett et al. (2017) interviewed senior directors of elite rugby union and football clubs based in England on the subject of why and how they 'fast-tracked' elite athletes into high-performance coaching roles within their respective clubs. The study found that the directors profiled their club's senior players in a subjective form of coaching talent identification based upon two main factors: 1) the extent to which specific athletes embodied their club's values; and 2) the likelihood that coaches could quickly gain the players' respect. For current athletes who were identified as prospective coaches, the directors promoted additional coaching experiences alongside their competitive-athletic careers in order to prepare them for a post-athletic high-performance coaching role. Similar experiences were also offered to their clubs' former athletes wishing to seek a post-athletic high-performance coaching role. It was reported that the majority of these coaching experiences were located within their own clubs' youth academies. Therefore, academies were environments where elite athletes were perceived to be socialised into a coach learning process that reflected 'the club's' legitimised values and culture. These values were ubiquitously referred to as playing and coaching philosophies. The recent career trajectory that ex-Liverpool and England football captain, Steven Gerrard has undertaken illustrates this pathway. Upon retiring from competitive football in November 2016 (Bascombe & Davis, 2016), Gerrard was appointed as academy coach at his first club, Liverpool Football Club

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[2] Hereafter referred to as 'football'

(FC) in January 2017 (King, 2017). At the time, Gerrard was quoted as saying "this gives me a great opportunity to learn and develop as a coach" (Bascombe, 2017).

With respect to the findings authored by Blackett et al. (2017), the senior club directors, however, were not able to fully explain how novice coaches like Gerrard developed as coaches, nor how 'their club' values were imparted onto them. It was assumed that experience as an apprentice coach in the academy further socialised them to 'the club' culture through informal learning. As a concept, informal learning refers to the aggregated effect of the conscious and subconscious knowledge that is acquired through coaches' everyday experiences (Cushion et al., 2010; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006; Trudel, Culver & Werthner, 2013). Coaches frequently report that informal learning grounded in everyday experiences are considered to have much more influence on their development when compared to the actual impact of formalised coach education (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009; Piggott, 2012; Stodter & Cushion, 2014; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016; Townsend & Cushion, 2017). As an extension of this, a competitive athletic career in the same socio-cultural context, in addition to being placed within an academy environment as a novice coach, can also be considered an informal learning environment providing current athletes with an apprenticeship of coaching (Cassidy & Rossi, 2006). This accumulated coaching knowledge has previously been considered by coach development researchers to be incidental, unguided and unstructured (Christensen, 2013, Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald & Côté, 2008; Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007; Mallett et al., 2009; Rynne, 2014), occurring within a learning culture (Lee & Price, 2016) or workplace learning environment (Rynne, Mallett & Tinning, 2006, 2010). Thus, it has been argued that coach learning is bound to the informal socio-cultural norms of the sport's (or sports club's) sub-culture (Barker-Ruchti et al., 2016; Hassanin & Light, 2014; Lemyre et al., 2007).

In the study by Blackett and colleagues (2017), any explanation of the processes for educating prospective high-performance coaches during this socialisation process were

unaccounted for because the senior club directors considered this element to be part of the remit of their club's Academy Directors. With the exception of Gibson and Groom's (2017) case study on how organisational change within an English Premier League Football academy was implemented by an Academy Director, the role that football and rugby union Academy Directors have in shaping the socio-cultural environment, and the role they play in appointing and then developing academy coaching staff is limited.

To address this gap the present study sought to conceptualise why Academy Directors seemingly preferred to recruit current and/or former athletes as academy coaches and to determine whether disciplinary conditions of high-performance sport influence recruitment practices. In turn, by analysing the perspectives of a population that has not been previously sampled in similar research, the study provides an original insight into the socialisation processes of current and former elite athletes within football and rugby union amongst the socio-cultural context of England. Concomitantly, the study's results then permit us to provide an original contribution towards explaining how and why a career trajectory between elite athlete and high-performance coach continues to be reproduced. The findings arising from this study can assist in the enhancement of national governing bodies (NGBs) of sports' formal coach education structures, along with helping to further edify informal coach development structures, such as mentors located within the high-performance club environment who have repeatedly been found to significantly contribute towards coach learning and development (see Sawiuk, Taylor & Groom, 2017; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016). By undertaking this research we have used the Foucauldian concepts of discipline, docility and regimes of truth to conceptualise the data. Consequently, a brief outline of these concepts is necessary.

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Theoretical Framework

A number of studies have applied Foucauldian concepts to illuminate coach behaviour and how specific forms of coaching knowledge are acquired (e.g. Denison, 2007, 2010; Denison, Mills & Konoval, 2017; Jacobs, Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2016; Piggott, 2012). Foucault theorised power as invisible, omnipresent and multifaceted, reflecting an interplay between the actions of agents that shape social structures whilst at the same time recognising social structures shape agency. Here, Foucault describes how agents, or subjects, operate simultaneously in two terrains: the 'inside', or an individual's relationship with their subjective self, and; the 'outside', which refers to the networks of power located externally from the subject (Evans, 2016). The concept of discourse highlights this interplay further because it reflects how cultural values, rituals and knowledge can become normalised as social 'truths' (Foucault, 1980). Discourses reflect taken-for-granted and rarely-challenged assumptions, like former athletes being perceived to be logical candidates for high-performance coaching roles, and arise from each context's historical conditions.

Foucault's (1980) primary objective in describing discourse was to seek out the mechanisms behind their production, or genealogy, and he labelled such mechanisms as 'regimes of truth'. Regimes of truth are produced, reproduced and resisted through social processes such as governmentality, which refers to the 'art of government', or a conduct of conduct, as, through surveillance, the powerful seek to guide and shape human behaviour (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1991). Governmentality is enacted at all levels of social organisation, even at the level of embodied identity (Shilling, 2003).

Research that has sought to understand how and why socio-cultural discourses are reproduced within high-performance football and rugby union academies have principally focussed upon analysing coach interactions with athletes (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2014; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012; Williams & Manley, 2016). Legitimising these

institutional discourses has been shown to underpin coach behaviours, whose central concern is to develop youth athletes to represent the senior team or to be sold as "marketable assets" (Stratton, Reilly, Williams & Richardson, 2004, p. 201). Guilianotti (1999) along with Cushion and Jones (2006, 2014) have reported that during the developmental process aspirant athletes are disciplined, encouraged to conform to the codes of conduct and become subservient to the hierarchy of coaches within their environment. These contemporary practices set within the UK context arise as a consequence of historical conditions that create sporting sub-cultures (Hughson, 2009; Roderick, 2006) and can be traced as far back to the bifurcation of the football codes (Carter, 2006; Collins, 2009). To maximise the possibility of successfully attaining a professional athletic status, Brown and Potrac (2009) have contended that youth athletes become docile to these socio-cultural conditions, producing "one-dimensional identities" (p. 155) as a result of these disciplinary techniques. Yet the impact that these cultural conditions and disciplinary techniques have on coaches and their development is only an incipient area of analysis.

To expose how disciplinary techniques influence coach learning, Denison et al., (2017) are some who have applied Foucault's (1979) concepts of discipline and docility to conceptualise how historical relations of power result in sports coaches becoming compliant to dominant assumptions/ideologies of and for coaching. The authors claim that docility to these norms ultimately prevents coaches practicing in alternative ways. Such a claim corroborates, to a degree, with those made elsewhere in empirical studies of coach development, like Sage's (1989) investigation of how North American high-school teachers/coaches became coaches. Sage (1989) highlighted the significance of organisational and professional socialisation to be experiences where "collective understandings started to form and the shared meanings about the coaching occupational culture took shape" (p. 90) meaning that neophyte coaches practiced in ways that reinforced the existing *status quo*. Whilst the work of Sage (1989) and Denison et al., (2017) has been informative, hitherto, the

extent that discipline and docility has on the decisions that Academy Directors make when recruiting coaching staff and how they support the career trajectory of elite athletes becoming high-performance coaches within contemporary settings is not an issue which has been analysed.

With respect to our data, Foucault's theoretical framework helped us to conceptualise how each club's philosophy reprised as a regime of truth, which manifested itself as each club's identity. In turn, the study's findings help explain how and why the career trajectory of elite athletes transitioning into post-athletic high-performance coaching roles continues to be socially reproduced within the English sports of men's rugby union and football.

Method

Ethical approval for the study was sanctioned by an Ethics Board at the first author's institution. Participant recruitment was conducted by sending letters of invitation by post or email to 64 Academy Directors whose academies were part of professional clubs which competed in top two football leagues of England (n=44) and the top two English rugby union leagues (n=20). The letters of invitation stated the study's aims and that any prospective participant had to meet the study's sampling criteria of: 1) currently be in a position central to the recruitment process of employing academy coaching staff; and 2) available to complete an interview before a set date.

A total of 11 white British male participants were recruited and each interviewed on one occasion. Informed consent was obtained prior to the commencement of interviews. All participants' names and additional data considered to be identifying information, such as names of clubs and other individuals, were replaced with pseudonyms (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). Anonymising the data was clearly stipulated during participant recruitment and reiterated at the beginning of each interview.

As table 1 identifies, the participants had a number of job titles at the time of interview, yet for ease and clarity, the participants are collectively referred to as 'Academy Directors'. All Academy Directors had attained their NGB's coaching qualifications at a minimum of level four and had been employed by their clubs' academies over a range of four to 21 years in either their current role or in a previous academy coach role. Some of the Academy Directors had also been teachers at high schools (Gareth), further education (Lawrence) or higher education institutions (Quentin), and had therefore accumulated a range of vocational and educational qualifications relevant to these occupations.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Sport	Pseudonym	Level of Senior Club	Club Pseudonym	Job Title	Ex-professional athlete	Current Practicing Academy Coach
Football	Dexter	Premier League	Eden City FC	Head of Player Development	Yes	Yes
	Quentin	Premier League	Bridge Town United FC	Assistant Academy Manager and Head of Education and Welfare	No	Yes
	Gareth	Premier League	West Diamonds FC	Academy Director	No	No
	Uri	Premier League	South Avon United FC	Academy Director	Yes	No
	Finley	Premier League	Severn Albion FC	Academy Manager	Yes	Yes
	Ian	Championship	East Riding	Coach Developer and	No	No

			Rovers FC	Assistant Academy Manager		
	Jerome	Championship	Itchen Rovers FC	Academy Manager	No	Yes
Rugby	Liam	Premiership	Derwent Swans Rugby Club	Academy Manager	No	Yes
	Isaac	Premiership	Wallside Rugby Club	Academy Head Coach	No	Yes
	Cameron	Championship	Deeside Rugby Club	Academy Manager	No	No
	Lawrence	Championship	Speybridge Rugby Club	Academy Manager	No	Yes

Semi-structured interviews were conducted (Patton, 2002) via telephone or face to-face by the lead researcher and lasted between 24 minutes and 61 minutes (mean = 44.63 minutes, ± 13.49). Data collection ceased at the point when thematic saturation was reached and explains the short length of the final interview on account that this interview did not yield any new themes (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Interview structure and questioning was based upon: 1) the participant's own background and their current role within their academies; 2) how they identified and recruited academy coaches; 3) how they supported current and former elite athletes' coaching development; and 4) the advantages and limitations of working with such a population. Probing enabled the participants to expand upon topics and allowed the first author to elicit further information (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the first author.

Data were thematically analysed within a poststructuralist paradigm of inquiry. Our understanding is that each interviewed Academy Director makes "multiple meanings" of their

lives and events within them, and these meanings are also influenced by our own meanings as researchers that act as "an integral part of the research process" (Markula and Silk, 2011, p. 47). By attempting to locate why the pathway between elite athlete and high-performance coach is socially reproduced, we assert that power is relational, but not equal, with Academy Directors having significant influence in supporting the pathway. Therefore, Foucault's conceptual framework has been used to expose the discursive strategies the Academy Directors employed when recruiting current and former elite athletes as academy coaches.

Coding of the data was initially conducted by creating categories which described the raw characteristics of the data. Categories were then collapsed into themes after highlighting interrelated characteristics. To conceptualise the data, themes were then related to concepts associated to Foucault's theoretical framework (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). To achieve rigor, lengthy and detailed discussions of the data were held between the authors. Preliminary results of data analysis were also presented at international conferences where further constructive debate and analytical consideration of our interpretation of data was evaluated.

Results and Discussion

Our outline of findings commences with a discussion of the perceived roles of the Academy Directors. This emerged as important contextual background information with regard to the legitimisation of specific coaching skills and knowledge. The Academy Directors were found to have governed the academy culture through preferring to implement recruitment strategies that targeted their respective club's current and former athletes in order to protect their academy's 'club culture'. The terms 'coaching and playing philosophies' were used as a discourse to describe this 'club culture'. The discussion then focusses upon the manner that Academy Directors perceived a competitive-athletic career at their respective club was needed to socialise future coaches to the 'club culture'. Academy Directors based

and prioritised the recruitment of their club's current and former athletes on this assumed socialisation process. The perception that current and former club athletes were already docile to the club's legitimised and normative forms of coaching knowledge and practices meant the Academy Directors anticipated the *status quo* of the academy culture would more likely be reproduced when compared to recruiting candidates without a competitive-athletic career at the same club.

Academy Directors as 'Cultural Governors'

The Academy Directors in this study practiced a role which can be described as a 'cultural governor'. This was because they considered it a significant feature of their role to promote and govern the academy to operate in a manner that reproduced their club's overarching identity, including playing and coaching philosophies. Jerome and Uri stated:

> …I suppose my responsibility is in term[s] of trying to set the environment which people can then go and be creative and also work within a structure. If you like, *the Itchen Rovers FC way*, and whatever terms you would like to call it. (Jerome, football, original emphasis)

> Well I'm the Academy Director, I head the academy. I have responsibility through the players that come into the system from eight years of age to twenty-one years of age. So my whole role is to ensure that the programme works really in terms of coaches with groups, organisation, coaching programmes, *everyone is following the same philosophy of the club* you know in what we believe is right for young player development and to *oversee* that on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis really. (Uri, football, emphasis added)

The Academy Directors applied the term 'philosophy' throughout all interviews to denote the overall academy culture which principally covered performance outputs of playing strategies (Gibson & Groom, 2017) along with coaching behaviours and practices. Long-standing scholarly descriptions of 'coaching philosophy' have recently been critiqued by Cushion and Partington (2016) who claimed that an over-emphasis of agency self-reflexivity

has been made rather than acknowledging the "effects of socialisation, power, history and culture" (p. 859). On this basis, the authors proposed coaching discourse to be a more accurate description of coaching philosophy. Through a Foucauldian lens, however, the overarching term 'philosophy' was not just considered a discourse but also a regime of truth, as it was felt that in order for the academy to be successful, all incoming coaches had to adapt their coaching conduct in line with the 'academy philosophy'. Quentin explained how his academy's philosophy could be interpreted as a regime of truth whilst also signifying the importance of coaches being socialised, docile and disciplined to practice in line with it:

> …the coaching philosophy is, you know, the place is stinking of it. What I mean it's ingrained… You have to be ingrained in the club philosophy. Now in that philosophy you've got your own opinions and own way of working and things like that, of course you have, but it's still got to come back to *the way the club* want children to be coached and the philosophy that's expected... (Quentin, football, original emphasis)

Here, the Academy Directors considered themselves to have significant influence over the definition of the academies' identities whereas Blackett et al. (2017) found senior directors to act as arbiters of the overall club culture. Nevertheless, Lawrence and Cameron respectively explained their academies' coaching philosophies:

> …we are pretty big in coaching through games, Games Sense, TGfU [Teaching Games for Understanding], that type of thing… I'm a coach who wants interaction, I want the players to be questioned; I want learning to take place. So if someone is standing there for an hour shouting and screaming and giving them all of the answers and telling them to do things, I'd be questioning them why they are doing it. (Lawrence, rugby union)

> Yeah we do, we have a culture, it's focussed on trying to ensure that players are in a learning environment rather than in an overly prescriptive environment. So we have a coaching philosophy which is based a lot on trying to help the players learn themselves rather than ramming it down their throats. (Cameron, rugby union)

As the above descriptions indicate, these coaching philosophies largely resembled athlete-centred approaches (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010). As Academy Head Coach, Isaac provided an example for how his rugby union Academy Manager continuously governed the language which he and the rest of the academy coaches used during their coaching practices so an athlete-centred approach would be applied: "You just have Chris walking behind you saying 'you said don't there, you said don't again, don't say don't'".

With respect to playing philosophies, which denote the style and strategy of on-field performance (see Gibson & Groom, 2017), Uri explained what his academy's was whilst also providing an insight to the genealogy of the club's playing philosophy by explaining how the club's historical identity influenced his governance of it:

> …South Avon United FC always had a certain way to play and the fans would say oh we want to see them play on the floor, we want to see it played, we want to see creative players, we want to see flair. So that was always the South Avon United FC style if you like… But that was Wayne (ex-manager from 1960's) and that's how it really started for me. *So I've really just carried on that sort of tradition*. When I took over the academy it was always try and play with that certain style... And that was all Wayne really that set that philosophy. We have refined it, we've written it down, we have analysed it a bit and taken it right down to the very young babies in the groups. But that's where for me the South Avon United FC philosophy began *and all the time I've been here I've just tried to follow it through and improve it year on, year on.* (Uri, football, emphasis added)

When governing their respective academy cultures, the Academy Directors had to comply with policy regulations such as the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) within football that was introduced by the English Premier League to enhance the development of youth athletes. As Finley described, the EPPP stipulates that any incoming academy coach must have attained a certain level of qualification depending on the age group they were to coach:

> Well obviously, again, regulations indicate that the coaches who are taking up say the lead phase coach, coaches of the different phases, they all have to be, the nines to sixteens, they need to be UEFA 'B'. The youth phase [16-18

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years], they have to be 'A' licence coaches and the same with the professional phase [18-21 years]… I mean at the end of the day it's up to the individual but regardless of whether he's been in the first team and played a lot of games he still has to go through a pathway which will basically give him the qualification to come into the academy. Without that he can't come in. (Finley, football)

Irrespective of policy, however, all of the Academy Directors, including Finley, acknowledged that they circumvented these regulations as they actively recruited their clubs' current and former athletes as academy coaches, even when they did not possess the necessary minimum formal coaching qualifications. Liam explained how elite athletes were recruited within rugby union academies:

…a lot of players will go into coaching through their clubs and you see that all across the country, all across the academies. Players are retiring and going straight into coaching the academy and then they're doing their qualifications while they are getting the experience… We've got a couple of coaches here who've gone straight into coaching from playing in the first team set up. (Liam, rugby union)

These pathways suggested that within-club developmental practices and informal modes of learning were considered to hold precedence over professional accreditation schemes. This supports the findings of existing literature which has analysed preferred sources of coach learning whereby coach practitioners devalued formal coach accreditation schemes as sources of knowledge (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003; Mallett, et al., 2009; Piggott, 2012; Sherwin et al., 2017; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016). This finding also further confirms the results engendered from high-performance coach pathway studies that have reported coaches to occupy initial apprenticeship coaching roles during their competitive-athletic careers which facilitated towards a seemingly fluent transition into a post-athletic coaching role (Christensen, 2013; Erickson et al., 2007). These studies, however, have not analysed the socio-cultural processes for why and how these opportunities have arisen. The following section, therefore, further outlines the Academy Directors' rationale for why they

circumvented such policy by making concessions for their clubs' competitive-athletes and why they supported the pathway between elite athlete and high-performance coach to be regularly reproduced.

Docile Bodies: Understanding the 'Club Culture'

Academy Directors actively sought to employ their club's current and former athletes as academy coaches on the basis that they perceived them to have already internalised and 'invested' in the club's regimes of truth pertaining to club values, ethos and culture. This meant that the Academy Directors appeared to consider their clubs' current and former athletes to be bodies docile to the normative values of their field (Foucault, 1972), particularly in respect to their perceived willingness to continue implementing their respective club's and academy's coaching and playing philosophies. In comparison to appointing external candidates, whom had not been competitive-athletes at the same club, the process of recruiting current and former athletes into academy coaching roles was a preferred discursive practice as it was considered to be a way to maintain the existing social order of the academies, whilst negating any micro-political tensions between academy staff based upon coaching practices (Potrac & Jones, 2009). Hence, incoming coaches associated with the same club through their competitive-playing histories were considered more likely to be disciplined to conduct their coaching practices in line with the overriding academy culture. Such a population were considered to be "politically obedient: bodies that were ideal for employment" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 40).

Within the organisational management literature, Collinson (2003) extended Foucault's concepts of docility and resistance by identifying how employees can create identities categorised as: 1) conformist - those who consent and acquiesce to an organisation's values and practices; 2) dramaturgical - those who provide a front or façade

through techniques of impression management; and 3) resistant - those who oppose the organisation, implementing tactics against "workplace processes" in "covert" ways (p. 539). Recent empirical analysis of an Academy Manager's ability to implement organisational change within an elite English football club reported that both players and coaching staff were reticent to some changes and therefore presented a resistant identity (Gibson & Groom, 2017). The coaches who presented a resistant identity in this instance were released from employment. To avoid any potential instability, the Academy Directors in the present study anticipated that a background as a competitive-athlete at the same club meant that they perceived these incoming coaches to apply a conformist identity. This meant that an elevated level of trust was bestowed to the club's current and former athletes as novice academy coaches, an issue seen as vital for best practice and organisational proficiency. For example, Quentin outlined: "So if you can't trust someone, you don't know what they are up to, and well, you can't trust someone if you don't know them. How's that good for the kids?"

The establishment of trust was also based on the view that competitive-athletes had a 'cultural fit' with the club, reinforcing the belief that they would conform and continue to reproduce the club's philosophies, or regimes of truth, in their own coaching practice. This finding resonates with the conclusions drawn by Kelly and Harris (2010) when investigating the internal club relationships between football managers and club directors within an elite adult performance context. Here, Kelly and Harris (2010) concluded the basis of trust between these social actors was based upon a "mutual suspicion of 'outsiders' and dealing with people who are perceived as very different" (p. 498). The extended extract taken from Cameron's interview highlights this assumption and the importance of trust when he explained why he preferred to recruit his rugby union club's current and former senior athletes as academy coaches:

> **Cameron:** I guess we knew them, knew that they were *trustworthy*, knew them
> as people, knew that they were reasonably good coaches, knew that they had

very much Deeside Rugby Club focussed on their mind and had sort of come through the Deeside Rugby Club ranks one way or another. And I think that sort of relationship between the coaches, the chemistry between the coaches is really good. And I think them also understanding the Deeside Championship Rugby Club ethos has really been quite important.

Interviewer: So when you say Deeside Rugby Club ethos, what exactly do you mean by that?

Cameron: Well the way in which things are done; the culture within the club.

Interviewer: Ok, is that again related to your coaching philosophies and how you play the game, or your coaching principles?

Cameron: Yeah it's related to all of those things. Deeside Rugby Club is often described as being quote unquote an old fashioned club you know. What does that mean? Well what that means in our sense is that it's a club which has been very successful but at the Championship level as you know over the years. But it's a club where people know each other pretty well. It's quite a tight knit community and bringing on people to coach at the academy level who understand what that sort of thinking, what that culture is like within the club has been quite important.

Furthermore, the strategic intention and preference for recruiting the clubs' current and former athletes as academy coaches depicts how the Academy Directors acted as 'cultural governors' as they consciously controlled the coaching identities of the academy coaching staff by avoiding the recruitment of club 'outsiders'. Such a theme illustrates the discursive actions of the Academy Directors for regulating the coaching populations so that each club's identity would be reproduced and safeguarded. Moreover, as Gareth explained, recruiting current competitive-athletes as academy coaches was a process that was considered to further socialise them to the clubs' coaching and playing philosophies in order to make their subsequent career transition into coaching more fluent:

I would be delighted in the future if we get to a point, and I've discussed this with the Chief Exec', if we get to a point where we are growing our coaches; so *our* coaches fill the vast majority of coaching roles in the club. I mean Michael who is currently with the first team, you know, finished a playing career, coached the reserves and is now with the firsts. (Gareth, football, original emphasis)

Gareth's ambition for his club to "grow" their "own coaches" signifies how the Academy Directors strategically profiled their club's competitive-athletes in a subjective mode of coach talent identification. Once talented individuals were identified they were then recruited into academy coaching roles that informally provided an apprenticeship of coaching whereby certain coaching values and knowledge were furthermore promoted (Cassidy & Rossi, 2006). This was so coaches would create a desired conformist identity (Collinson, 2003), meaning they would coach in line with the 'academy philosophy' in order for it to be reproduced. In turn, this partly explains why the transition between elite athlete and high-performance coach is promoted by stakeholders like Academy Directors.

Given that we have undertaken analysis of the data within a post-structural paradigm (Markula & Silk, 2011), we acknowledge that we have applied a critical interpretation of the data here. We recognise that others may interpret the actions of the Academy Directors to be more positive in that they nurtured incoming coaches and supported them as best as possible to implement what is considered to be best practices of coaching. Whilst this may be accepted, analysis of the data highlighted how the dominant regimes of truth transpired as coaching dogma, restricting the capability of individual coaches to be innovative (Denison et al., 2017). In their role as 'cultural governors', the Academy Directors here claimed to afford their coaches a degree of 'freedom', or as Alvesson and Willmott (1996) define, micro-emancipation, to potentially be individually expressive and innovative in their coaching practices. This micro-emancipation, however, was tightly controlled within the parameters of the Academy Directors' expectations and their perceptions of their club's culture and thus identity. Dexter's view exemplifies this tension between agency creativity and conformity when explaining the value he placed on individual coaching philosophies:

> No it's important that they [academy coaches] have a philosophy themselves but they can't, but you're still in a working environment aren't you? You are still in a working environment so you know you can't be a builder that's

building Barrett Homes[3] and start putting mosaics all over it can you? It's your philosophy that it looks better… but the build that the company want is these homes built in this way. So you have the skill set to do flamboyant but you have the discipline to fit in with a working team. And obviously, if your skill, your philosophy overrides the team that you are working with, then you have to part company don't you? (Dexter, football)

Dexter's view highlights the importance Academy Directors placed on academy coaches being disciplined and governing their conduct in order to 'toe the line' and follow the 'academy philosophy'. It is because this theme was prominent in our data as to why we have undertaken such a critical reading of it. This is even after we acknowledge that Foucault (1980) argued power to "be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (p. 119).

Conclusion

The Foucauldian concepts utilised here help us to explain the perceived socialisation processes current and former competitive-athletes encounter when negotiating the career transition into a high-performance coach. Indeed, Foucault's conceptual framework aided our conceptualisation of how discursive recruitment and subjective coach profiling strategies were employed by both sets of Academy Directors; as they sought to shape specific strands of coaching knowledge within their clubs through their roles as 'cultural governors'. The value of recruiting current and former competitive-athletes as academy coaches was based on perceived conformity through internalising and folding the clubs' regimes of truths (i.e. coaching and playing philosophies). This is where the apparently desirable notions of coach docility, discipline and trust were identified as prominent themes. These results signify how, from the Academy Directors' perceptions at least, that the production of coaching knowledge

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[3] Barratt Homes is a mass UK housing developer.

seems to be initially developed during an elite competitive-athletic career within club environments, which act as informal workplace learning environments (Rynne et al., 2006, 2010). Thus, a competitive-athletic career acts as an important apprenticeship phase for coach development (Cassidy & Rossi, 2006) where athletes are submitted to "certain ends of domination" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18), objectivised by those with power in order to acquire certain strands of coaching knowledge. In this case, the knowledge associated to club specific coaching and playing philosophies was valued by the Academy Directors and then promoted to the developing coaches.

The significance of Foucault's (1980) power-knowledge nexus is highlighted here. Current and former elite athletes' commanded authority over valued forms of knowledge associated to 'club culture'. This then afforded them power on account that they were preferred candidates to recruit into coaching roles compared to external candidates, even when the Academy Directors recognised that many current and former elite athletes had not acquired the necessary formal coach qualifications. In this light, our findings suggest that because embodied learning via socialisation within the club is deemed an important attribute for incoming coaches, subsequently means only those already immersed in these environments have the opportunity to acquire the context specific knowledge associated to the espoused regimes of truth the Academy Directors prioritised.

The importance placed on embodied learning in this instance can be argued to create "one dimensional" (Brown & Potrac, p. 155) coach identities which has implications for coach development. Within these socio-cultural spaces, novice high-performance coaches with a competitive-athletic career may not fully engage in purposeful reflection or critical thinking. Instead, these coaches can uncritically and subconsciously act as docile bodies by implicitly conforming to the espoused club culture they have been socialised to (Cushion, 2016). If this is the case then this reinforces and reproduces dominant coaching regimes of truth (Denison et al., 2017). Therefore, future research would benefit by further analysing the

micro-political context of coaching and individual coach development (Potrac & Jones, 2009). In particular, extending analysis on whether these contemporary approaches to recruiting coaches and managing high-performance youth academies actually empowers coaches to resist and challenge traditional coaching discourses, or whether they act as docile bodies and conform to them, would aid our understanding of the processes for how high-performance coach learning occurs within these informal learning structures. A limitation of our study is that we did not examine the Academy Directors' own coach pathway and career histories to a greater degree. Further consideration of this background information could potentially explain how the Academy Directors had become disciplined to the discourse of incoming coaches' requirement to embody club specific values, especially if they too had followed the coach pathway they were now actively promoting.

Finally, our results highlight that Academy Directors circumvented policy guidelines by preferring to recruit their clubs' current and former athletes as coaches without a minimum level of formal NGB coaching qualification. By drawing upon Foucault's concept of power-knowledge, we propose that this contributes to socially reproducing a patriarchal and able bodied coaching workforce in high-performance football and rugby union academies. We suggest that NGBs and other stakeholders may need to consider how such recruitment policy and human resource legislation is adhered to by clubs. This is on account that opportunities for women or disabled people to attain coaching roles in male high-performance contexts is restricted on the basis that they are unable to perform as competitive-athletes in these sports, and are therefore unable to access the embodied and subjugated knowledge the Academy Directors seemingly prioritised. Thereby the article finally points to the need to better understand high-performance coach learning as it happens in professional club environments, rather than on formalised coach education courses, as this seems to be an increasingly powerful mode of elite coach development.

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