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2 Investigating inspirational leader communication in an elite team sport context

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1 **ABSTRACT**

2 The purpose of this study was to examine how leader communication inspires athletes in a  
3 team sport context. Footage of elite rugby coaches and athlete leaders delivering genuine  
4 speeches were used as a stimulus. Team sport athletes (n = 20) watched this footage and  
5 identified which aspects of the communication inspired them. Follow up interviews were  
6 conducted to explore what the participants were inspired by and why. Thematic analyses  
7 revealed six main dimensions of what was inspiring within the content of the speech,  
8 including showing how the team can be successful, embracing and reinforcing the underdog  
9 status, and creating pride and unity within the team. In addition, a number of features of  
10 effective delivery were identified, including the tone of voice, fluency of speech, and the way  
11 key ideas were emphasised.

12 Key Words: Leadership, Rugby, Leader Communication, Pre-Game Speech, Inspiration, Elite  
13 Environment.

14

## 1 INTRODUCTION

2 *This is your f\*\*\*\*\* Everest, boys. Very few ever get a chance in rugby terms to get for*  
3 *Everest, the top of Everest. You have the chance today. Being picked is the easy bit. To*  
4 *win for the Lions in a Test match is the ultimate, but you'll not do it unless you put your*  
5 *bodies on the line. Every one jack of you for 80 minutes.*

6

7 The above quote is from Jim Telfer's speech to members of the British and Irish Lions rugby  
8 side from their tour of South Africa in 1997. Speeches from this tour were captured and  
9 published in a commercial DVD ('Living with the Lions'), and provide us with an insight into  
10 the communication of elite leaders in a team sport environment. Such a speech has been  
11 anecdotally described as 'iconic' and 'the king of inspirational speeches' [1], however, no  
12 specific research has examined the qualities of such authentic speeches from the elite sport  
13 environment. Furthermore, while researchers have examined leader communication in team  
14 sport contexts [2-6], research has yet to explicitly explore how sporting leaders communicate  
15 (i.e., what they say and how they say it) to inspire their athletes.

16

17 In a sporting context, research findings have provided coaches with some evidence regarding  
18 athletes' perceptions of effective leader communication [for a review, see 7]. For example,  
19 Vargas-Tonsing and Bartholomew [2] asked participants to imagine they were participating in a  
20 championship game, and then exposed them to one of three audio recorded speeches created by  
21 the authors. The results showed speech containing emotional messages enhanced the  
22 participants' feelings of team efficacy. Vargas-Tonsing and Guan [3] found athletes preferred  
23 more emotional speeches before a championship game, when competing against an opponent  
24 who was higher ranked, and when considered an underdog. **Furthermore, Vargas-Tonsing [4]**  
25 **found coaches' pre-match speeches heightened feelings of emotion and self-efficacy, with a**

1 **greater amount of informational content linked to higher self-efficacy.** Using qualitative methods  
2 to investigate leader communication, Breakey, Jones, Cunningham and Holt [5] revealed athletes  
3 favoured the manager conveying **genuine emotion in their** voice, when **they** used short,  
4 meaningful messages, and **when they made** reference to team values. Vargas and Short [6]  
5 reported positive perceptions of speech that included greater focus, arousal levels, and  
6 performance. These studies provide evidence of aspects of pre-match communication that  
7 athletes prefer from their leaders.

8  
9 **While researchers have examined leader communication in sport, limited research has examined**  
10 **the concept of inspirational communication.** In the domain of social psychology, **research** [8,9]  
11 has focussed on the conceptualization of inspiration as a distinct psychological process.

12 Inspiration has been associated with 'illumination' or 'insight' [9], which suggests that one is  
13 inspired if they hear or apprehend something that is deeply important. Such transmission of  
14 inspiration involves first an illuminating trigger object, and second a target object towards which  
15 the inspiring qualities are extended. Using this description in a team sport context, a coach might  
16 provide the illuminating trigger ahead of an important match or competition (e.g., through pre-  
17 match communication) which leads to the athlete being inspired to action (e.g., exerting more  
18 effort within the competition). Furthermore, the two component processes of being inspired are  
19 described as being "inspired by", which in this case would involve athletes appreciating and  
20 accommodating the value of the words or actions of the coach, and being "inspired to" which  
21 would refer to the players' motivation to transmit the qualities exemplified by the coach [9].

22  
23 Numerous studies have advanced our understanding of the process of inspiration in the social  
24 psychology literature, and the positive outcomes that inspiration has on followers [10,11].

1 However, limited research has examined inspiration within the sporting domain. Using an  
2 experimental approach, Gonzalez, Metzler, and Newton [12] found participants watching a film  
3 clip showed increased levels of inspiration to compete, play, and perform well, and participants  
4 also reported greater emotional dominance. Poynor, Arthur, and Gibas [13] focussed their  
5 research on coaches as a source of inspiration, and interviewed five elite soccer coaches. The  
6 results revealed seven themes that the coaches considered to have an inspirational impact on  
7 their athletes, which were vision, communicating the vision, charisma, need for change, follower  
8 empowerment, risk taking and leader reliability (which included providing protection and  
9 pressure relief). Figgins, Smith, Sellars, Greenlees, and Knight [14] aimed to further understand  
10 the experiences of followers who have been inspired in a sporting event. Figgins et al.  
11 interviewed 17 elite athletes who reported being inspired by a range of coach behaviors and  
12 actions such as demonstrations of belief (e.g., outlining an athlete's long-term potential),  
13 providing an example to follow (e.g., displaying exceptional effort), providing opportunities to  
14 be inspired (e.g., setting up meetings with higher-level athletes), and showing the way forwards  
15 (e.g., providing technical or tactical instruction to enable an athlete to understand how to  
16 improve).

17  
18 The aforementioned studies examining leader communication and team-talks in sport, as well as  
19 those investigating inspiration, are not without their limitations. For example, research in  
20 mainstream leadership literature has investigated leader communication in much greater depth.  
21 One approach involved researchers examining the specific rhetoric of presidents' speeches  
22 [15,16], but limited research has examined leader communication in this depth in sport. In  
23 addition, researchers using qualitative approaches to examine leader speech in a sporting context  
24 [5,6] have utilized retrospective interviews, and it is possible that participants struggled to fully

1 and accurately recall specific elements of leader speech retrospectively. Furthermore, there were  
2 limitations concerning the stimulus materials used to investigate leader communication, as  
3 Vargas-Tonsing and Bartholomew developed audio speeches for their study, and Gonzalez and  
4 colleagues used a speech from a fictional film. Consequently, the materials used in both studies  
5 lacked authenticity in terms of using genuine footage from leaders communicating in a natural  
6 setting. Finally, limited research in sport has investigated leader communication at an elite level,  
7 which would allow us to learn from sporting leaders and the way they interact with their teams.  
8 The present study aims to address these limitations, and thus, aims to further extend our  
9 understanding of leader communication and inspiration in sport.

10

## 11 **Purpose and Research Design**

12

13 The purpose of this study was to examine the communication of leaders in an elite sporting  
14 environment, and to investigate how club level team athletes responded when watching this  
15 communication. The footage used is from leaders in an elite rugby team (British and Irish  
16 Lions). Our study aims to extend our understanding of leader communication in three specific  
17 ways. First, we aimed to extend the leadership literature by understanding more fully how  
18 leaders communicate in an inspirational manner. Second, we used authentic footage of elite  
19 leaders in a real-life environment, to allow us to understand more about how leaders  
20 communicate at this level, and thus, what we can learn from them. Third, by using video  
21 footage of team-talks to stimulate data collection, participants can comment more fully on  
22 aspects of leaders' speeches. From an applied perspective, we aimed to provide more  
23 nuanced information (e.g., specific words used, distinct elements of body language) that  
24 impact on players' perceptions of such speeches.

1

2 This study used a form of embedded mixed method design [17]. This approach involves the  
3 collection of both qualitative and quantitative data within an overall quantitative or  
4 qualitative research design [18]. In the current study, we principally used a qualitative design,  
5 which was enhanced with the collection of quantitative data. The quantitative stage involved  
6 measures of inspiration being taken to assess participants' responses to a variety of speeches  
7 from sporting leaders. These results were used to stimulate the principal element of the data  
8 collection, which were the interviews conducted to investigate why participants responded to  
9 aspects of a leader's communication in the way they did [17].

10

#### 11 **Context of the study and stimulus used**

12

13 The focus of the current study was on the communication of leaders within an elite sporting  
14 team. The stimuli chosen were leaders from the British and Irish Lions rugby union team (from  
15 herein referred to as 'the Lions'). In 1997, the Lions toured South Africa, playing 10 games  
16 against provincial teams, and three test matches against South Africa (at the time, the holders of  
17 the rugby world cup). The Lions ultimately won the 3-match test series 2-1. A DVD entitled  
18 'Living with Lions - The Complete Story, 1997' was created to document the tour. Journalist  
19 Boris Starling [19] reflected on the DVD that: "Its cameras went into dressing rooms, treatment  
20 rooms, hotel rooms and even bathrooms. It was access all areas like we'd never seen before".  
21 This access resulted in a range of authentic footage including numerous clips where leaders (e.g.,  
22 coaches, captain, senior players) communicated very naturally to players. Furthermore, such  
23 situations (i.e., in the changing room before the first test) are likely to be times where the leaders  
24 communicated as they would normally, due to the importance of the games (i.e., they would not

1 compromise or alter their communication just because a camera crew were there). Thus, this  
2 footage was used in the current study due to the availability of a range of clips that allow us real  
3 insight into communication of leaders in an elite environment.

4

## 5 **METHOD**

6

### 7 **Participants**

8 The initial criterion for inclusion was that participants should play team sports at club level.  
9 Initially, club rugby players were recruited, as the stimulus footage was specific to rugby.  
10 Following this, we recruited a further group of non-rugby players, to also allow us to examine  
11 which aspects of leader communication were found inspirational, and whether any aspects were  
12 specifically impactful to the sample of rugby players. Thus, 20 male participants were recruited  
13 for this study ( $M_{age} = 22.45$ ,  $SD = 4.14$ ). Participants were club standard team sport players, with  
14 10 participants being rugby players ( $M_{age} = 21.80$ ,  $SD = 3.29$ ) and 10 participants from a range of  
15 other team sports ( $M_{age} = 23.10$ ,  $SD = 4.93$ ) which included football, basketball, hockey and  
16 cricket. All participants reported themselves to be British.

17

### 18 **Stimulus Materials**

19 The 'Living with Lions' DVD was reviewed for appropriate clips. The criteria for selection were  
20 that the videos were at least one minute in duration, focused on a particular theme concerning an  
21 upcoming game, and did not feature a topic that would only be relevant to those in the touring  
22 party (e.g., one extended clip with a leader speaking was not used as it focussed on addressing a  
23 particular discipline issue that arose on the tour). Seven videos of leader communication were  
24 selected, which included three team meetings, and four from the changing room either pre-match



1 or half time. The seven scenarios were: i) team meeting before the first tour game (Ian  
2 McGeechan); ii) pre-match talk before first tour game (principally Jason Leonard); iii) forwards  
3 meeting before first test (Jim Telfer); iv) pre-match talk before first test (Keith Wood/Martin  
4 Johnson); v) team meeting before second test (McGeechan); vi) pre-match talk before second  
5 test (Keith Wood); and vii) half-time talk in second test (various). A transcript of the speeches  
6 can be viewed in supplementary file A. In addition, information about the leaders in the footage  
7 is in supplementary file B.

8

## 9 **Procedure**

10 Data collection was conducted in individual sessions. Participants were told to imagine  
11 themselves preparing for an extremely important match in their sport, and to consider how they  
12 would respond if their own leaders were to give such speeches. Following this, participants  
13 watched the series of video clips from the 1997 Lions DVD. Before each video, participants  
14 were provided with an overview of the scenario and circumstances surrounding each video. **One**  
15 **item from the state version of the inspiration scale ('I feel inspired') [8] was placed in front of**  
16 **participants, along with a response scale. Response options ranged from 1 (not at all inspired) to**  
17 **7 (very strongly inspired). During each video, participants were instructed to point to a number**  
18 **on the scale at any point when they felt inspired. An experimenter manually recorded participant**  
19 **responses, along with the segment of the video during which the participant responded<sup>1</sup>. After**  
20 the participants watched the seven video clips, participants were interviewed about their  
21 perceptions of the videos. The videos were played again, and the researcher stopped the video at  
22 the points where the participants had self-reported being inspired (if they had recorded a

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<sup>1</sup> A preliminary analysis by the lead author had previously identified a number of segments within each video, based on discrete stopping points (e.g., the speaker paused). These segments are specified within supplementary file A.

1 minimum level of four on the inspiration scale, which is the median point). Each video clip was  
2 stopped by each person on average 3.3 times ( $SD = 1.82$ ). At each point the participants were  
3 asked questions such as: "You reported being inspired by this clip; can you explain why you  
4 responded in this way? Tell us about specific elements of the communication that provoked this  
5 response". Interviews lasted between 45 and 64 minutes ( $M_{minutes} = 53.97$ ,  $SD = 5.67$ ) and were  
6 transcribed verbatim. Due to the depth and richness of data collected, we were confident that  
7 saturation point had been reached [20].

8

## 9 **Data Analysis**

10 *Inspiration data:* When data collection was completed, the mean scores of i) the rugby players;  
11 and ii) the non-rugby players were averaged and plotted on scatter-graphs (these graphs are  
12 included as part of supplementary file A). A series of inferential tests were used to identify  
13 whether there were differences between the levels of inspiration reported between these groups.  
14 Due to non-normal distribution of the data, a series of non-parametric tests using Mann-  
15 WhitneyU were conducted.

16 *Qualitative data:* The first author listened to the audio interview files, and read the interview  
17 transcriptions numerous times to immerse himself in the data concerning elements of the  
18 speeches that participants perceived to be inspirational. Following this, a thematic, content  
19 analysis was conducted, in which themes were identified in the data, and quotes were extracted  
20 and classified into categories. Analytic memos were also written throughout this process, which  
21 allowed connections to be made to theoretical concepts that related to themes that were identified  
22 from the participants' responses. These memos and the thematic coding shaped the categories  
23 developed, and the final stage of analysis involved the second and third researchers acting as

1 "critical friends" [21] who encouraged reflection upon and questioned the emerging  
2 interpretations of the data.

3

#### 4 **Trustworthiness**

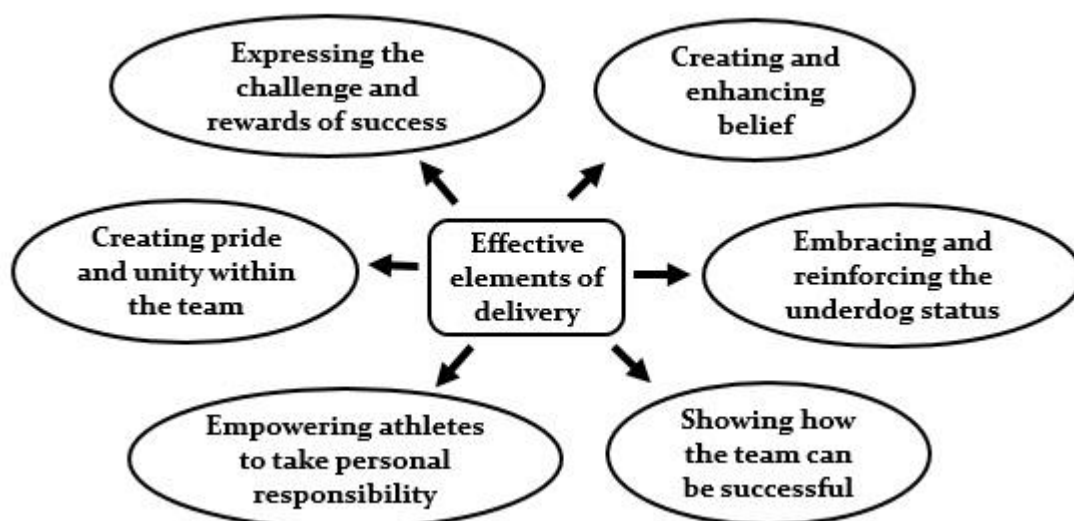
5 A number of steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the data and the analysis. The  
6 use of critical friends was used, which is a process that Smith and McGannon [21] describe as  
7 "a critical dialogue between people, with researchers giving voice to their interpretations in  
8 relation to other people who listen and offer critical feedback" (p.13). In the current study, the  
9 first author conducted the analysis, and then met with the second and third author at several  
10 stages. For example, the first author presented initially developed themes, and the other  
11 researchers questioned various elements of raw data allocation within these themes. Smith and  
12 McGannon propose that exploring alternative explanations and interpretations in this reflective  
13 process means researchers are able to defend decisions made in relation to the analysis, and  
14 thus, increases the rigor of the analysis process. The first author also reflected upon his own  
15 approach throughout the research process by writing memos to consider the interview process  
16 and thematic ideas emerging. For example, these memos helped ensure he did not unduly  
17 impose his own experiences on the participants, by monitoring questions asked in the interview  
18 process. This memo writing further added to the rigor of the data collection and analysis, as  
19 these reflections were routinely presented and discussed with the research team. Finally, the  
20 findings of the study are presented with contextually rich, direct quotations from a range of  
21 individuals in the sample. Consequently, we encourage the reader themselves to decide the  
22 extent to which the data might inform their own communication.

23

#### 24 **RESULTS**

1 Six main themes emerged from our analysis: i) expressing the challenge and rewards of success;  
2 ii) creating and enhancing belief, iii) embracing and reinforcing the underdog status, iv) showing  
3 how the team can be successful, v) empowering the athlete to take personal responsibility, and vi)  
4 creating pride and unity within the team (see figure 1). Also, a further section is included which  
5 illustrates the features of delivery that participants identified as contributing to the inspirational  
6 impact. These findings are accompanied by examples of leader speech which inspired participants'  
7 responses, and participant quotes are used to illustrate why specific elements were perceived to be  
8 inspirational and challenging. The mean inspiration scores for each segment of video are shown in  
9 supplementary file A. Mann-WhitneyU tests revealed that two sections of footage (video 2, part 2;  
10 video 7, part 4) were rated significantly more inspirational for the team sport players (compared to  
11 the rugby players), and two sections were rated significantly higher by rugby players (video 5, part  
12 5; video 5, part 9). These key differences between rugby players and other team players are  
13 considered further when discussing the qualitative results.

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18

*Figure 1. Thematic representation of effective/inspirational aspects of leader communication.*

## 1 **Expressing the challenge and rewards of success**

2           *To win for the Lions in a Test match is the ultimate . . . the moment's arrived for the*  
3           *greatest game of your f\*\*\*\*\* life* (Telfer: video 3, part 12).

4 The metaphor of getting 'to the top of Everest' and the words that followed, inspired  
5 participants by reinforcing the magnitude of the task the Lions faced. Participants were  
6 inspired by the desire to test themselves and make the most of such an opportunity. For  
7 example, one participant said: "If you're ambitious enough you always want to play against  
8 the best or better players than yourself. . . that's how I test myself. . . it's like finding out what  
9 you're capable of". Participants also reported being inspired by the idea of needing to take  
10 such an opportunity in a big game. For example, McGeechan reminds the team that the  
11 upcoming match provides players with a "*special*" opportunity that some never experience  
12 (video 5, part 1 & 2); in response one participant said: "It just reminds you to make the most  
13 of it . . . it's similar to a big tournament that you're selected for, you might not get the chance  
14 again". Furthermore, Wood (in video 4) outlines the "*pleasure and pain*" that the players will  
15 feel if they meet the challenge and are successful which participants were inspired by. One  
16 participant illustrated how they would feel in response to such words:

17           It's inspiring to think about how you would feel at the end of the match. Take the  
18           pleasure at the end so put in the hard work now so hopefully win at the end so like  
19           striving at the end to get the feeling of the win.

20

## 21 **Creating and enhancing belief**

22           *I think Jim and I both feel privileged and to a certain extent humbled, about coming*  
23           *together with the most talented players in the British Isles* (McGeechan; video 1, part 2).

24 Participants reported McGeechan's speech being inspirational due to the feeling that being in  
25 such a select group of players would give them. Participants responded to the idea of the

1 belief the coaches showed in players, with one saying: "it would make you think they [the  
2 coaches] obviously believe in me". In turn, this belief might impact on participants'  
3 perceptions of their own confidence, with one participant stating: "It makes you confident  
4 about yourself and your own ability". Furthermore, Telfer's reference to "*Everest*" (video 3,  
5 part 2) was seen as inspiring due to the coach highlighting the achievement of representing  
6 the Lions. One participant expressed this by saying:

7           You are one of the few special ones that has climbed to the top of Everest in terms of  
8           rugby . . . in terms of the Lions, it is the ultimate thing you can do in your career . . .  
9           you have reached the peak of where you can be.

10

11 Phrases about the overall talent within the squad were also regarded as inspirational because  
12 they could increase feelings of belief in teammates. For example, McGeechan referred to the  
13 overall talent in the squad ("*the shoulders you've been rubbing alongside*"; video 1, part 3),  
14 and one participant commented on this, saying: "It's always good if you have confidence in  
15 the people you're around. . . when you realise you've been around the best players that makes  
16 you feel you're ready to go out there".

17

18 While some participants highlighted the communication that included the word 'privileged'  
19 as being inspiring, a small number reported not being inspired by this due to a different  
20 interpretation of this word. One participant explained this by saying: "I didn't like the  
21 privileged bit. . . I think it should be like you've earned it. I suppose the word privileged to me  
22 is a bit like you've been given it as opposed to you've earned it".

23

24 **Embracing and reinforcing the underdog status**

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1           *They f\*\*\*\*\* underestimate us, they're going to get it rammed down their throats*  
2           *today, it's what they're going to get for the next six weeks . . . 47 of us against*  
3           *f\*\*\*\*\* all of South Africa* (Leonard; video 2, part 1).

4   The narrative of needing to overcome the odds stacked against them was a common theme  
5   throughout the speeches. Indeed, McGeehan had already set this up in the first team meeting  
6   by saying "*We're underestimated, I'm convinced of that*" (Video 1). Participants suggested  
7   that this would inspire them to put in more effort because it would motivate them to prove  
8   their doubters wrong. For example, one participant expressed: "I always like that, I think to  
9   myself 'They're going into this game thinking it's going to be a walk in the park' . . . it gives  
10   you that extra incentive to go out and prove them wrong". Participants proposed that the extra  
11   motivation might also be a result of not identifying with the underdog status, suggesting that  
12   such status would "make you stand up and go 'well that's not fair' as you don't class yourself  
13   as an underdog". Participants also expressed feeling inspired by the challenge of being an  
14   underdog against a supposedly stronger side, with one participant highlighting:

15           Again, it's that underdog feeling that is coming back. . . watching it, I can feel the  
16           hairs standing on end now because of those overwhelming odds of 47 lions. . . going  
17           against the away crowd and knowing it's going to be tough.

18  
19   Being considered an underdog was proposed to reduce expectation on participants, with one  
20   saying it would allow them to play "with freedom because no-one expects you to go out there  
21   and do well". Participants also reported feelings they would get from anticipating success in  
22   such situations where their team may be perceived as an underdog. One participant  
23   commented: "I've played teams in the past who are so much better than us, and we've  
24   scraped a draw or even a win, and it's the best feeling in the world".

1

2 Whilst being considered an underdog inspired individuals to anticipate success, participants  
3 suggested that when coaches focussed on weaknesses highlighted by the opposition and the  
4 strengths of the opposition, it would have a negative effect on them. An example of this was  
5 when Telfer outlined some of the supposed weaknesses highlighted by the media and  
6 opposition (see video 3, part 7). One participant commented how this would lead to self-  
7 doubt:

8           It's making you think about them . . . I think for me that's a real negative cause then I  
9           start to question my own ability. It's nice to be told that you know . . . you're not the  
10          favourite but internally you know that's not true . . . as soon as someone in your close  
11          circle starts reemphasising that I think it really detracts from the game.

12

### 13 **Showing how the team can be successful**

14           . . . *get right up in their faces and turn them back, knock them back. Outdo what they*  
15           *can do. Outjump them, out scrum them, out ruck them, outdrive them, out-tackle them,*  
16           *until they're f\*\*\*\*\* sick of you* (Telfer: video 3, parts 5 & 6).

17 A key source of inspiration for participants was when leaders provided instructions that  
18 informed them of how to be successful. For example, **the words of Telfer (above) were**  
19 **perceived as highly inspirational overall, but particularly by the rugby participants with one**  
20 **participant commenting:**

21           It was another simple way of just sort of saying anything they do, you've just got to  
22           do better. . . if they jump a certain height to win a ball, you jump higher. You need to  
23           match them for every tactical or physical thing that they do.

24



1 Participants reported being inspired and challenged by McGeechan's metaphor (video 5, part  
2 5) of a wounded Springbok (i.e., South Africa after losing the first test) "*returning in frenzy*"  
3 and the Lion waiting for the right point before "*going for the jugular*" and killing off "*the*  
4 *Springbok*". Participants reported how this message made them aware of how their team  
5 would need to show certain qualities such as patience and intelligence to be successful.  
6 Another participant commented on the analogy, stating: "this is how you get the job done . . .  
7 they're in a frenzy. You just stay cool and then go and get the job done yourself so yeah I  
8 think for me that was just quite inspiring". This section was rated significantly more  
9 inspirational by the rugby playing participants which suggests that the nature of this metaphor  
10 was more meaningful in a rugby context, whereby participants identify with the words  
11 focussing on the aggressive nature of the sport.

12  
13 Furthermore, inspiration was drawn from aspects of the leader speech that emphasised the  
14 need to win the individual battle. For instance, Leonard (video 2, part 2) exhorted the players  
15 to make an early impression on their opponents by making strong early tackles, and one  
16 rugby playing participant commented on the importance of this:

17       You need to hit them hard . . . if you hurt them then they're not going to go so hard on  
18       you and you've got the upper edge straight away. When he said 'out-scrum them',  
19       being a prop, that's a key area [for me]. The scrum, the ruck, the drive, the tackle,  
20       they are the main things we do, and you want to win every one you go in for.

21 This quotation indicates that where possible, a leader should communicate specific  
22 instructions that resonate individually with players, such as their own roles or the battles they  
23 will be having with their individual opponents.

24

1 Participants warned against using negatively framed messages which highlighted what they  
2 *should not* be doing, especially after communicating on what players *should* be doing (see  
3 figure 2 for mean inspiration scores across video 2). For instance, Leonard's speech is  
4 perceived as very inspirational early in video 2, but in part 5 where he says, "*do not go inside*  
5 *yourselves*" (video 2, part 5) and starts focussing on what players should not do, inspiration  
6 decreases. Referring to this, one participant said: "As soon as you start telling boys don't do  
7 this and don't do that it starts subtracting from the original feeling [of inspiration]". Another  
8 participant highlighted how earlier, the leaders had emphasised the need for players to  
9 support each other and commented how by saying not to overcommit, they felt as the leaders  
10 are "contradicting themselves" with such mixed messages.

11

### 12 **Empowering athletes to take personal responsibility**

13 *It's our day, it's nobody else's f\*\*\*\*\* day, it's our f\*\*\*\*\* day, it's ours to win and*  
14 *lose. But we're f\*\*\*\*\* winning. . . We set the standards we play the standards*  
15 (Wood; Video 6, part 3).

16 Participants responded being inspired by leaders highlighting the responsibility they had, and  
17 how it was in their control to be successful. One participant commented on this wording of  
18 "our day", highlighting how Wood's words results in them "being in charge of your own fate  
19 at this point". Another participant explained: "If you don't perform, if you don't work hard  
20 enough, you know we are going to come out second best. It's giving them the responsibility  
21 again". Wood also asks the side to put in the effort required to meet this challenge, imploring  
22 them to "*demand everything for 80 minutes. That's all, every time*" (video 6, part 1). One  
23 participant said they would be inspired by this because "it's actually realistic that now you  
24 can actually achieve it [the team's goal] and see it. And everything you've worked for you  
25 can achieve in this match".

1

2 In contrast, when leaders discussed elements outside of the team's control, participants  
3 suggested that inspiration would be negatively impacted. One element that participants  
4 generally didn't like was the leaders referring to the referee; for example, Leonard saying  
5 they [the Lions] are "*not going to get any favours off the ref*" (video 2, part 8). In accord with  
6 this, one participant outlined: "It's just wasting our time [criticising the referee] when it's not  
7 something we need to worry about. We could be sort of focusing on setting up our line out or  
8 you know anything rather than shouting about [the referee]". Such ideas further reinforce  
9 examples provided in the 'showing the way to be successful theme', and add that a focus of  
10 such suggestions should be elements of the game players have control over.

11

## 12 **Creating pride and unity within the team.**

13 *You'll meet each other in the street in 30 years' time, and there'll just be a look, and*  
14 *you'll know just how special some days in your life are* (McGeechan; video 5, part 4).

15 One of the segments reported as being **highly inspirational by both groups of**  
16 **participants was when McGeechan highlighted how teammates might meet each other in the**  
17 **future, which would allow them to reflect on their** potential shared success. One participant  
18 said: "In 30 years it will all be gone but you'll still have a bond with these team mates who  
19 have reached the same point you have. And you'll realize just how special that day was".  
20 There are numerous other words and phrases that participants identified that created such  
21 feelings of unity, such as Leonard referring to the chain that "never gets broken" (video 2 clip  
22 4), and references to the kit that symbolise the team (e.g., McGeechan's reference to "*the*  
23 *badge*", video 6, clip 4). The importance faced of this unity was highlighted when a  
24 participant highlighted the potential inspirational impact of such symbols: "More the unity  
25 that when you put on the shirt, you're all one. You wouldn't necessarily die for each other but

1 you would give everything for each other". McGeechan also refers to the look that players  
2 will give each other on the pitch (video 5, part 9, 10) which was rated significantly more  
3 inspirational by the rugby players. One rugby player explained why this idea in particular  
4 would resonate:

5 A look or a nod or something like that will tell a 1000 words and that's all you need to  
6 see from a team mate that might be blowing, might be bleeding or anything like that.

7 Just a look that's going to say I'm going to continue, you know that idea of unity, that  
8 everyone's in the same boat.

9

10 A final aspect participants commented on was the use of huddles, for example when Leonard  
11 brought the team in as a group, saying "*squeeze the arms, feel the unity*" (video 2, part 2). In  
12 addition, when players were in close proximity to each other, this also promoted thoughts of  
13 physical sensations associated with unity. Overall, participants reported high levels of  
14 inspiration for the overall section, and interestingly this was significantly higher for the team  
15 sport players. Participants explained why they could identify with such statements, with one  
16 saying: "It's the last time you're all together [before the game starts] all in a huddle.

17 Everyone's, no individuals, everyone's a team and you're all together as one just before you  
18 go out". However, a small number disliked this element, with one saying: "I'm not a big fan,  
19 I like to take myself away from that sort of thing, and sit down and self-reflect. . . I just feel a  
20 bit silly".

21

## 22 **Features of communication perceived as inspiring**

23 Participants also identified specific features of the delivery that they perceived to have  
24 influenced their feelings of being inspired. Participants particularly identified the way

1 speeches built up to the key points at the end, as well as the leaders' use of pauses, repetition,  
2 and emphasis. For example, one participant highlighted the impact of McGeechan's approach  
3 (video 1, 5), saying: "He's not shouting at them, he's delivering it softly and calmly . . .  
4 you've time to really take it in, and re-analyse it personally". Participants also responded  
5 positively to the way leaders built up the intensity of the speech. One participant reflected on  
6 Telfer's speech (video 3): "he was calm throughout then he really spikes it up as if to light a  
7 fire under them almost". Repetition of certain words that represented key ideas was deemed  
8 effective; for example, the continued reference to "*commitment*" needed (e.g., video 1). This  
9 technique appears to link with the theme of 'showing the way to be successful', with one  
10 participant saying: "It's the repetition of commitment that's nice . . . and then he's telling us  
11 literally the ways he wants us to be committed".

12  
13 Demonstrations of passion and aggression by leaders was also proposed to be effective. One  
14 participant suggested that Telfer's passion would reinforce belief, stating: "You can tell that  
15 someone is passionate about it but with this there is something that changes in his voice. You  
16 can tell what he's saying he genuinely believes and he wants them to believe as well".  
17 However, participants reflected on the balance between content of communication and  
18 passion, with one participant commenting: "I think it's not so much the words, because I  
19 think I was struggling to hear what they were saying. I think it was more just seeing what was  
20 going on and just seeing the desire". When participants reflected on Telfer's speech, several  
21 mentioned elements of his tone and accent having an impact. One participant explained: "His  
22 Scottish accent also resonates with me a little bit, but just in a completely different way. I  
23 can't tell you why I just like him". Another participant further explained: "it was quite a  
24 bellowing, deep voice so it was sort of, goes straight through".

1

2 Participants also highlighted various features of the speeches they did not like. For instance,  
3 participants did not like when multiple leaders were talking at the same time (e.g., video 4,  
4 part 7) as this could lead to contradiction and a lack of clarity in communication. For  
5 example: “there’s no clear message being portrayed there, I sort of turn off straight away”.  
6 Another dislike was when Johnson speaks (video 4); participants highlighted how they  
7 disliked the tone of his voice, with one saying: “I sort of turned off when he started talking,  
8 it’s just sort of dull in how he delivers it; it’s very monotone”. Fluency of communication  
9 was also deemed to be important, suggesting that a lack of fluency indicates uncertainty and  
10 highlights the importance of a coherent message that builds up to a crescendo. For example,  
11 one participant commented on the middle part of the pre-match speech in video 2: “I almost  
12 get the impression that he’s running out of things to say, because he stumbles over a couple  
13 of words, and yeah, he’s just filling space”.

14

## 15 **DISCUSSION**

16

17 The purpose of this study was to explore how team sport athletes were inspired by the  
18 communication of elite rugby leaders, and our findings add several new insights to the  
19 leadership literature. First, the present study extends previous research that has examined pre-  
20 match team talks [2-6], and literature that has specifically examined the inspirational nature of  
21 leader communication [12,14], **by examining authentic speeches from an elite environment.**  
22 **For example, the research of Gonzalez et al. [12] revealed participants were inspired by leader**  
23 **communication, but our study extends this by providing more specific information that**

1 **identifies** *what* aspects from speeches were inspirational, and *why* participants found them  
2 inspirational.

3  
4 Our findings support previous research that inspiration can be evoked by the communications  
5 of the leader [9,14], and participants were 'inspired by' such illuminating ideas. Considering  
6 the three sources of transmission of inspiration [22], it appears that *actualization* occurred, as  
7 the participants appreciated the compelling ideas offered in the dialogue of the leaders. Our  
8 findings revealed six dimensions of leader communication that allowed inspiration to be  
9 transmitted (e.g., showing the way forwards, demonstrating belief, and reinforcing the  
10 underdog status). In line with the theorizing of Thrash and Elliott [8], how leaders illustrate to  
11 players how they can be successful was identified as a key source of inspiration. This finding  
12 echoes that of Figgins et al., [14], who found that coaches inspired their athletes by showing  
13 them the way forward. Our findings provided examples of further ways leaders can show how  
14 players can be successful to inspire them in a team context, such as providing specific  
15 technical and tactical instructions, and framing these in a positive way.

16  
17 The leaders in the footage regularly stressed the idea of being an underdog, and participants  
18 reported being inspired by the leaders making such an emphasis. The term 'underdog' has  
19 been used to refer to those who are at a 'competitive disadvantage' [23, p.34], and our  
20 findings are in line with previous research that has also found various advantages of the  
21 underdog status being adopted [e.g., 24-26]. For example, Vandello, Goldschmied, and  
22 Richards [24] found that participants reported favourable feelings for competitors framed as  
23 the underdog in a range of competitive situations, and Goldschmied and Vandello [26] found  
24 that when participants were presented with a fictitious story about an upcoming competition,

1 the participants predicted those presented as underdogs would exceed expectations with their  
2 performance. Such positive impacts may be explained by the number of inspirational stories  
3 of underdogs being successful portrayed in the media, or in films. Thus, we may overestimate  
4 the likelihood of underdogs succeeding as similar stories are available in our memory and  
5 capture our attention [27]. Furthermore, the research of Gibson, Sachau, Doll, and Shumate  
6 [28] revealed that favorites are believed to be under more pressure compared to underdogs.  
7 Such an 'underdog schema' [23, p.39] was utilised very effectively by the elite leaders in the  
8 footage used in the current study, and was a strong source of inspiration.

9  
10 In line with the principles of social identity theory, our participants perceived the leaders'  
11 communication more favourably when the leaders promoted a sense of group identity that  
12 created a feeling of an emotional attachment and sense of belonging to their team [29]. Our  
13 findings highlight numerous words and phrases used by the leaders that created a sense of  
14 team identity, including ideas of 'unity', 'the chain', and 'the badge'. **This is in line with the**  
15 **research of Slater, Barker, Coffee, and Jones [30], who found that the identity of the TeamGB**  
16 **Olympic team was enhanced when leaders made reference to team kit and collective symbols**  
17 **(e.g., the national flag). These links are proposed to enhance the sense of attachment to in-**  
18 **group ties, by increasing athletes' connection to the team, and thus, mobilizing their efforts to**  
19 **be successful [31].** The leaders also appeared to utilise the idea of being an underdog as a  
20 symbol to unite the team behind. Furthermore, referencing positional instructions may have  
21 created specific, individual identities within the team. Social identity theory also predicts that  
22 athletes will perceive their leader's communication more favourably if the leader is more  
23 prototypical, and thus is representative of the group identity [32]. Future research should  
24 investigate this idea further with elite participants to assess how perceptions of their leaders'



1 prototypicality might strengthen feelings of inspiration. In addition, the further source of  
2 transmission, *expression*, which is where athletes act upon the compelling idea immediately  
3 [22], could not be judged because our participants did not compete after hearing the leader  
4 communication. Thus, future research should apply experimental methods to investigate  
5 participants' actual responses to inspirational leader communication in a practical setting.

6  
7 The use of speeches from real-life leaders communicating in an authentic, meaningful  
8 situation was a strength of the study, as this footage stimulated data collection and in turn,  
9 provided rich information on what participants would be inspired by and why. However, this  
10 study is not without its limitations. In terms of the speeches used, the three speeches in team  
11 meetings were complete speeches, but the pre-match and half-time speeches were not  
12 complete, as they had been edited for the production of the 'Living with Lions' film. Thus, the  
13 incomplete speeches might have been missing important contextual information that would  
14 have allowed participants to make more thorough judgements on the inspirational content. In  
15 addition, while the participants were instructed to imagine themselves listening to such  
16 speeches in their own sport ahead of an important match, it is likely that they were able to do  
17 this with varying degrees of success, as they would not have previously experienced similar  
18 speeches in such a competitive, elite context. **Furthermore, while using authentic speech in the**  
19 **current study builds on previous literature that has used fictitious speeches, our study still falls**  
20 **short of both the communicator and receiver of the messages being included in the study.**  
21 **Indeed, while our findings examine how inspiration might result from the content and**  
22 **delivery of speeches, inspiration might also result from contextual factors, such as the**  
23 **importance of the upcoming game, or being in the dressing room environment. As participants**  
24 **in the current study only hypothetically placed themselves in the scenario, future research**

1 might investigate perceptions of leader speech from the perspective of those who have  
2 directly experienced the communication.

3  
4 A further avenue for further research might be to examine how personality traits might impact  
5 on how different players perceive aspects of the team talk. A strong candidate for  
6 investigation is narcissism, as narcissists have been found not to buy into team goals [33]. In  
7 addition, given that the sample used in the current study were a fairly homogenous sample of  
8 young, adult males, future research might also investigate how different participant samples  
9 are inspired by leader communication, such as female or junior athletes. In addition, future  
10 research might examine the specific features of communication identified as being  
11 inspirational. Researchers in the organizational leadership literature have conceptualized  
12 distinct rhetorical dimensions used by charismatic leaders [34,35], and subsequently,  
13 researchers [15,16] have used this framework to analyse leaders' speech in different contexts,  
14 such as those in pre-election American presidential debates. Thus, future research might use  
15 similar methods and frameworks to conduct more in-depth explorations of the specific  
16 rhetoric used in different sporting contexts. Finally, participants might have had a prior  
17 awareness of the elite leaders used, and such information might have influenced the way they  
18 perceived the speeches, as reputation information of coaches has been seen to impact on  
19 initial impressions of coaches [36]. Thus, it may be that athletes' initial impressions moderate  
20 the impact leader communication which is a further contention that could be examined in  
21 future research.

22  
23 In terms of the applied implications of this study, our results provided rich and detailed data  
24 concerning not only the content of the speeches, but also the style and delivery of the speech

1 that they were inspired by (e.g., tone of voice, passionate delivery, and repetition of key  
2 ideas). Participants reporting being inspired by passionate, emotional communication, which  
3 supports findings of previous research [2-5]. Most notably our findings were in line with  
4 Vargus-Tonsing and Guan [3] who found players preferred more emotional speeches before  
5 competing against higher-ranked opponents, and when they were considered an underdog.  
6 Our results revealed that participants perceived speeches more favourably when there was  
7 fluency and directness in the leaders' speeches. This is in line with the findings of Areni and  
8 Sparks [37] who found speakers using powerful language (e.g., lack of hesitations and pauses)  
9 were more persuasive, and thus suggests that leaders should strive to demonstrate such traits  
10 in their speeches to impact positively on their followers. Also, it appears important for leaders  
11 to avoid using negatively framed messages, and to focus on elements of performance which  
12 are under the control of the followers.

13

14 As many speeches can be intentionally constructed and delivered, our findings can provide  
15 insight to sporting leaders on how to structure their communication, and thus, inspire  
16 followers. However, if speeches are too structured and planned, they might lose authenticity.  
17 Indeed, in his autobiography, McGeechan [38] talks about his speech (video 5) being  
18 improvised, but that he did go for a walk beforehand to clear his head which allowed him to  
19 'focus on the final words to the team' (p.240), and thus ensure that the messages he delivered  
20 were clear. Furthermore, there are potentially a multitude of individual differences that  
21 athletes within a team have, and a challenge for coaches communicating in a team  
22 environment is to meet such a range of demands [39]. Thus, our findings should not be taken  
23 as prescriptive instructions for leaders. Instead, the findings (and indeed the footage of elite  
24 leaders we used) might be used as a stimulus for discussions with players to allow leaders to

1 understand more fully their preferences and requirements from communication. Finally, our  
2 findings suggest leadership functions within a team (i.e., task, motivational, social, and  
3 external leadership) might be delivered most effectively by multiple athlete leaders [40].  
4 Interestingly, in the current study the captain of the Lions, Martin Johnson, appeared to play a  
5 limited role in providing communication to the players ahead of important matches; the senior  
6 player Keith Wood played a much greater role communicating in such situations. Thus, our  
7 results suggest it should be the one who has the most inspirational quality who delivers  
8 speeches, regardless of their formal leadership role.

9  
10 **In summary, the results of this study identify a number of aspects of the content of a leader's**  
11 **communication that might be used to inspire athletes. In addition, aspects of the delivery have**  
12 **also been highlighted that might contribute to the communication being perceived as**  
13 **inspirational. Thus, in using authentic footage from elite leaders, this study furthers our**  
14 **understanding of leader communication in an elite context, and provides a stimulus for leaders**  
15 **and applied practitioners to stimulate discussion concerning how leaders might use**  
16 **communication to inspire their own athletes.**

17

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1 **Supplementary file 1**

2

3 **This supplementary file includes:**

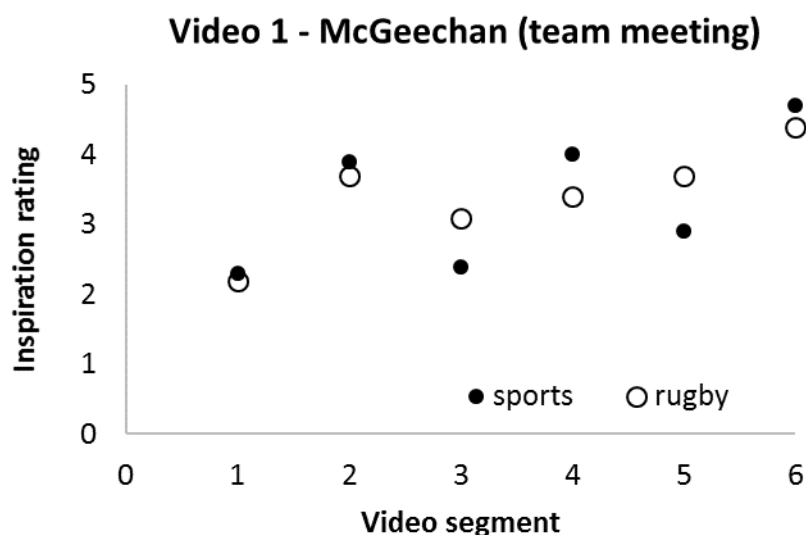
- 4 **i) Graphs with mean inspiration scores plotted (for each segment in the video clip,**  
5 **the mean inspiration scores for the rugby players and the non-rugby players**  
6 **are presented)**
- 7 **ii) Lions Speeches Transcripts (all the spoken words are included, as are the**  
8 **timecodes within the video).**

9

10

11 **Video 1: Ian McGeechan – team meeting before the first game of tour**

12



13

14 1) 20"47

15 McGeechan: Well boys, I said from the word go, it's teams within teams. You've got the jerseys, you  
16 carry the responsibility you carry the challenge. What you've got now is four countries playing as  
17 one.

18 2) 21"05:

19 I think Jim and I both fell privileged and to a certain extent humbled, about coming together with the  
20 most talented players in the British Isles. The mantle you carry and the challenge that you have, is to  
21 put a marker down in South Africa, about the way we can play rugby.

22 3) 21"27

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1 The whole thing should be a challenge. You've got to enjoy it. If you look around the shoulders  
2 you've been rubbing alongside the last two weeks, the talent...

3 4) 21"43

4 We're underestimated, I'm convinced of that. I'm quite happy – but the ability for us to stay in this  
5 game and keep them under pressure and play at the pace we want, if somebody hits the deck, or if  
6 somebody goes into contact, there has to be 3, 4, 5, behind him.... There has to be.

7 5) 22"03

8 There has to be that commitment to get behind the ball, there has to be that commitment to knock  
9 them away, and then there has to be that commitment in behind and make that second wave.

10 6) 22"13

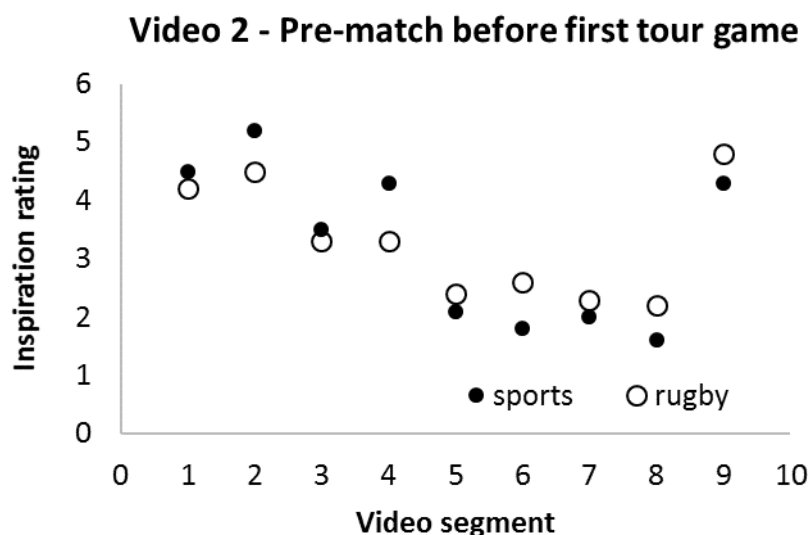
11 I want to put that marker down today. But I tell you, fucking hell, the hairs on the back of my neck  
12 will be up when you run out onto that field, a lion in South Africa is special – the Lions are special,  
13 the legends go with it. You're making it, you're making history, you're putting the marker down this  
14 afternoon, you this afternoon are saying what the 1997 lions are all about.

15 22"35 Finish

16

17 **Video 2: Pre-match speech before the first tour game (various leaders – principally Jason Leonard)**

18



19

20

21 Figure 2: Mean inspiration scores, re-match speech before the first tour game (various leaders –  
22 principally Jason Leonard)

23 1) 22"40

24 (Jason Leonard) "They fucking underestimate us, they're going to get it rammed down their throats  
25 today, it's what they're going to get for the next six weeks, they are going to get taken to the edge

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1 every single game, and we're going to blow them away, blow them away, blow them away. There's  
2 no doubting this. What you're wearing, people fucking die for. (20 secs)

3 2) 23"00 (in huddle)

4 This game, I'm sure that everyone's made it??? Already,

5 Every single one of us knows what we want to do. Think about the contact, think about the first hit,  
6 taking the ball it, taking the ball back, quick ball. Sizing up your opposite number. Cutting him in  
7 fucking half. Squeeze the arms! Feel that, fucking squeeze the arms, the unity. (25 secs)

8 3) 23.25

9 You're playing for everyone back home, everyone who's watching this game, everyone who's sent  
10 you a message of good luck. That's for us. That's for us. Not one person, for everyone. Everyone back  
11 home wants you to do fucking well. And it's down to us, no-one else. Squeeze the arms again.  
12 Squeeze the arms. (18 secs)

13 4) 23.43

14 This never gets broken, this chain never gets broken no matter what. We stick together, whatever  
15 fucking shit happens out there, we stick together. Squeeze again.

16 Listen boys, it's there. We want this game, we want this game, big fucking game, that's it. (17 secs)

17 5) 24.00

18 1...2..3, 1..2..3 – "Nice and loose... Boy's this is it. We don't go inside ourselves, do not go inside  
19 yourselves, we're here, we express ourselves on the pitch, that's what we do, yeah. We do not try  
20 and cramp anyone's fucking style. (24 secs)

21 6) 24.24

22 2 minutes to go. We've been waiting for this moment yeah. 2 minutes to go. Let's keep this talk  
23 going yeah. Get this tour off to a big bang, big bang. Big start. (14 secs)

24 7) 24.38

25 (Keith Wood) "Let's box clever boys, let's play as cute as we fucking can, as hard as we can. That's  
26 what we're looking for. (8 secs)

27 8) 24.46

28 (Leonard). Forwards, we're not going to get any favours off the ref. We're not going to get any  
29 fucking fair treatment whatsoever (6 secs)

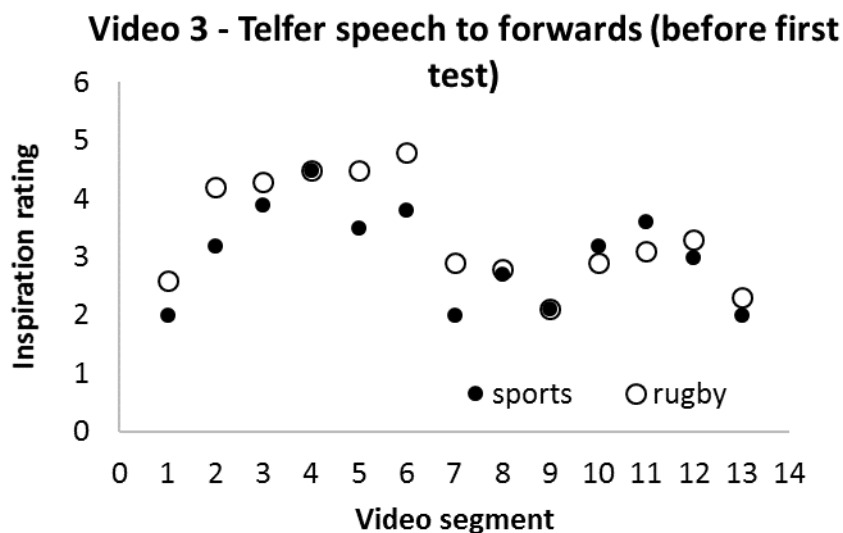
30 9) 24.52

31 (In huddle) "What more do you want to achieve, what more do you want to achieve. It's there for us,  
32 it's there for us. Squeeze the arms. That's it, squeeze the arms. 47 of us against fucking all of South  
33 Africa. I don't care what happens today, as long as you can look at each other honestly and just say I  
34 didn't let you down. (23 secs)

35 Finish - 25.15

1

2 **Video 3: Jim Telfer speech to forwards before first test**



3

4 1) 1"50.38

4

5 "The easy bit has passed. Selection for the Test team is the easy bit. You have an awesome  
6 responsibility on the eight individual forwards' shoulders, awesome responsibility. (17 secs)

5

6

7 2) 1"50.55

7

8 This is your fucking Everest, boys. Very few ever get a chance in rugby terms to get for Everest, the  
9 top of Everest. You have the chance today. (11 secs)

8

9

10 3) 1"51.06

10

11 Being picked is the easy bit. To win for the Lions in a Test match is the ultimate, but you'll not do it  
12 unless you put your bodies on the line. Every one jack of you for 80 minutes. (17 secs)

11

12

13 4) 1"51.23

13

14 Defeat doesn't worry me. I've had it often and so have you. It's performance that matters. If you put  
15 in the performance, you'll get what you deserve. No luck attached to it. If you don't put it in, if  
16 you're not honest, then we're second-raters. (19 secs)

14

15

16

17 5) 1"51.42

17

18 They don't rate us. They don't respect us, They don't respect you. They don't rate you. The only way  
19 to be rated is to stick one on them, to get right up in their faces and turn them back, knock them  
20 back. (19 secs)

18

19

20

21 6) 1"52.01

21

22 Outdo what they can do. Outjump them, outscrum them, outruck them, outdrive them, outtackle  
23 them, until they're fucking sick of you. (10 secs)

22

23

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1        7) 1"52.11

2 Remember the pledges you made. Remember how you depend on each other, you depend on each  
3 other at every phase, teams within teams, scrums, lineouts, ruck ball, tackles. (14 secs)

4        8) 1"52.25

5 They are better than you've played against so far. They are better individually or they wouldn't be  
6 there. So it's an awesome task you have and it will only be done as I say if everybody commits  
7 themselves now. (20 secs)

8        9) 1"52.45

9 That was written yesterday about us, read it silently, taken note of it, and then make a pledge. (15  
10 secs)

11       10) 1"53.00

12 You are privileged. You are the chosen few. Many are considered but few are chosen. (12 secs)

13       11) 1"53.12

14 They don't think fuck all of us. Nothing. We're here just to make up the fucking numbers. 'Their  
15 weak point is the scrum'. 'The Boks must exploit this weakness'. 'The Boks must concentrate on the  
16 8-man shove every scrum'. 'Scrummaging will be the key'. 'Their weakness is the scrum'. (26 secs)

17       12) 1"53.38

18 No one's going to do it for you. You have to find your own solace — your own drive, your ambition,  
19 your own inner strength, because the moment's arrived for the greatest game of your fucking life."  
20 (22 secs)

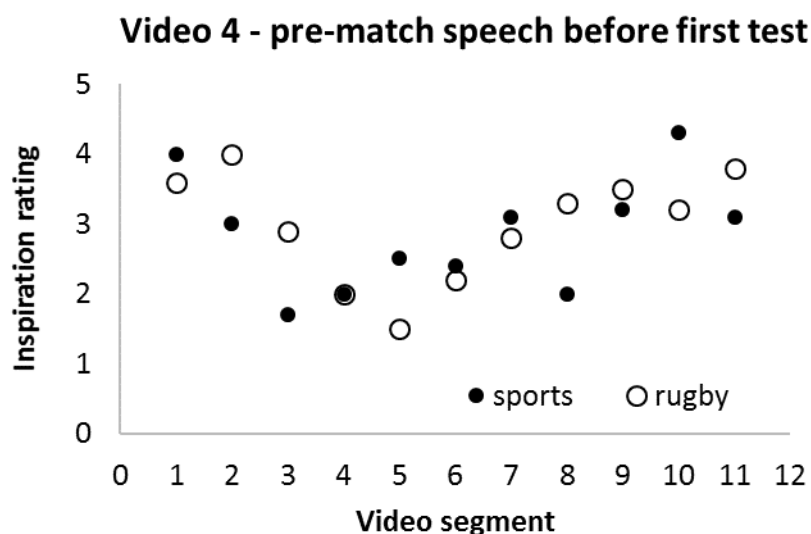
21       13) 1.54.00

22 Quiet time at end of speech/players getting up

23 Finish – 1"54.33

24

25 **Video 4: Pre-match speech before the first test (various leaders – principally Keith Wood)**



1

2 1) 1"56.04

3 (Keith Wood)

4 "Look across boys, look across. Get the fucking bind. Right. Our hearts, our bind. That's what we look  
5 for, everything we share together, the pain, the pleasure.

6 When you come off that field, at the end of 80, fucked we'll be, but we'll have won, and we'll know  
7 the pleasure, and we'll share it, as 9 as 15, we'll do it. (19 secs)

8 2) 1"56.23

9 It's all in the heart boys, let's put it together, in any forwards heart, you put it together, you let  
10 everything out, everything you want.

11 It's what we're looking for, it's what we're always ever looking for, it's all we've ever dreamed for.

12 It's our day, our biggest day, we can fucking make it. (15 secs)

13 3) 1"56.38

14 (Martin Johnson)

15 Think about those fucking names, think about them now, Krueger, Tyson, they're all fucking getting  
16 it.

17 4) 1"56.43

18 GAP

19 5) 1"56.53

20 (Johnson)

21 "Let's play it smart, don't overcommit" (10 secs)

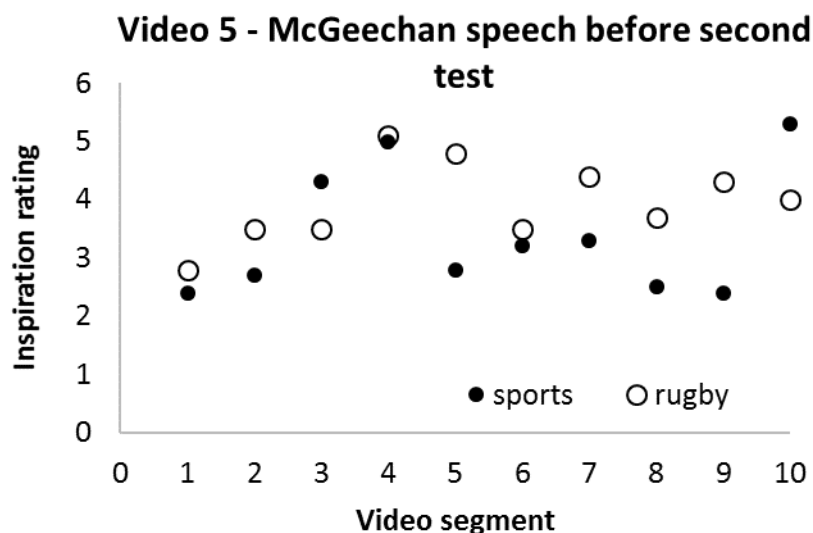
22 6) 1"57.03

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- 1 (Keith Wood)  
2 "It's our day, it's our day we've got to make it our day, but it's our day. Don't leave anything in here,  
3 put everything on the pitch, we take it all back in with us at the fucking end, with a fucking smile" (12  
4 secs)  
5  
6 7) 1"57.22  
7 (Johnson)  
8 "Listen, have the courage, have the courage to play your game, think about that".  
9 (McGeechan)  
10 "Self-discipline, belief, desire (10 secs)  
11 8) 1"57.32  
12 (Johnson)  
13 "Enjoy the knocks, enjoys the knocks, enjoy the play"  
14 (McGeechan)  
15 "Everything everybody's put into that body of yours, let it come out, one minute boys" (14 secs)  
16 9) 1"57.46  
17 (Wood)  
18 "the last 5% heart you need, just imagine of yourself, you put it on the line, and you take the  
19 pleasure at the end. That's what it's for, it's pain, it's pleasure. (16 secs)  
20 10) 1"58.02  
21 (Johnson)  
22 "And when you're dying, and when your arse is hanging out, and you can't take another step, just  
23 think of here now. Think of the faces around here"  
24 (De Lallio)  
25 "come on, let's fucking squeeze" (shouting)  
26 (Johnson)  
27 "Think of the faces you're looking at now, don't let those fuckers down, they won't let you down"  
28 (16 secs)  
29 11) 1"58.18  
30 "Come on boys, let's go" (28 secs)  
31 1.58"46 - Finish

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**Video 5: Ian McGeechan speech in team meeting before second test.**



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1) 2"23.54

There are days like this, when many rugby players never have it, never experience it. It is special. (18 secs)

2) 2"24.12

Jim and I have been involved in rugby a long time, I can tell you, these are the things, these are the days that you'd never believe will come again, it has. (17 secs)

3) 2"24.29

And I can tell you, I've given a lot of things up, I love my rugby, I love my family. And when you come to a day like this, you know why you do it all, you know why you've been involved. (19 secs)

4) 2"24.48

It's been a privilege, it is a privilege, because we're something special. Because you'll meet each other in the street in 30 years time, and there'll just be a look, and you'll know just how special some days in your life are. (25 secs)

5) 2"25.13

We've proved that the Lion has claws and has teeth. We've wounded a Springbok. When an animal is wounded it returns in frenzy. It doesn't think. It fights for it's very existence. The Lion waits, and at the right point, it goes for the jugular. And the life disappears. (28 secs)

6) 2"25.41



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1 Today, every second of that game, we've talked about what they're going to do, or everybody else  
2 has, we go for the jugular. (10 secs)

3 7) 2"25.51

4 Every tackle, every pass, every kick, is saying, the fucking Springbok, you're dying. Your hopes of  
5 living in this test series are going. (19 secs)

6 8) 2"26.10

7 And on that field sometimes today, all it will be is a look between you is a look, no words, just a look,  
8 that will say everything. (13 secs)

9 9) 2"26.23

10 And the biggest thing it will say is, you are special, you are very, very special. (12 secs)

11 (2"26.35)

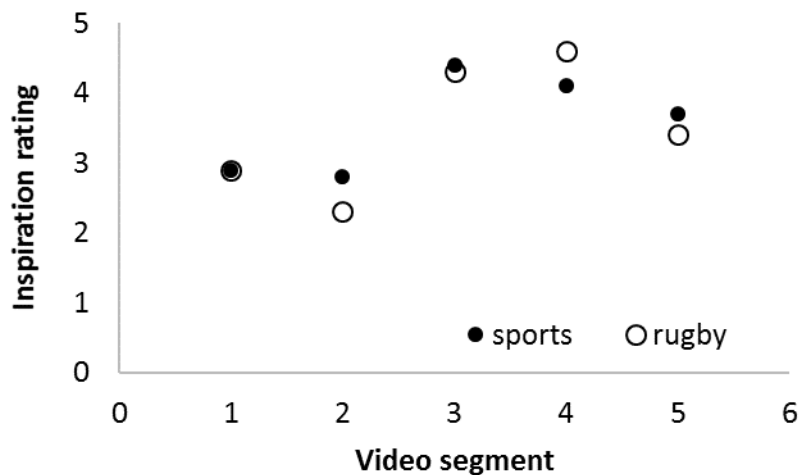
12 10) It has been, it is a privilege, go out, enjoy it, remember how you've got here and why, and  
13 finish it off and be special for the rest of your lives. Good, luck, go for it. (17 secs)

14 FINISH 2.26"52

15

16 **Video 6: Pre-match speech before the second test (various leaders – principally Keith Wood)**

**Video 6 - Pre-match speech before second test**



17

18 1) 2.27"45

19 (Wood): Let's demand it, let's demand it. Let's look across boys. Look into each others' eyes, look  
20 into yourself, and demand everything for 80 minutes. That's all, every time.

21 2) 2.28"04:

22 (McGeechan). Every second of every minute of every hour... come on, 80 minutes

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1 (Johnson): we play football

2 3) 2.28"12

3 (Wood): it's our day, it's nobody else's fucking day, it's our fucking day, it's ours to win and lose. But  
4 we're fucking winning. That's what it is, it's ours to do what we fucking want with. We set the  
5 standards we play the standards. We take the fucking

6 (Unknown): Let's fucking knock them back.

7 4) 2.28"26

8 (McGeechan): Come on, you're in places no British player has ever been before.

9 We've got to earn respect to win.

10 (McGeechan): Come on, what's behind that badge. Who are you playing for, who does it matter to?  
11 Everybody here, whoever it is. Who does it matter, who do you wear that badge on your chest for?

12 5) 2"28.44

13 (Johnson): One last squeeze, come on.

14 (Wood): It's our day boys, just keep thinking it, it's ours.

15 Let's encourage

16 (Mcgeechan). Let them start looking down, There's not one man there you should be frightened of.

17 (Telfer). Look 'em in the eye, look each one in the eye boys.

18 (Mcgeechan):

19 (Telfer): Willy, first scrum, push that bastard to the ground

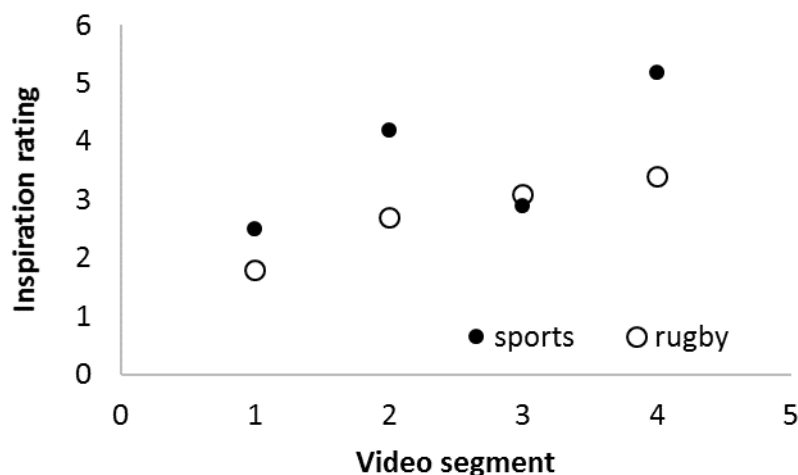
20 (McGeechan) Whatever it takes, whatever it takes.

21 FINISH: 2"29.17

22

23 **Video 7: Half-time speech during the second test (various leaders)**

### Video 7 - Half time speech in second test



1

2 1) 2.31"40.

3 (McGeechan): listen, just keep listening - the other thing that's going to be crucial in this second half,  
4 with the referee, is total self-discipline. Right... don't talk to him, he's going to give penalties, he's a  
5 Frenchman.

6 2) 2.31"52

7 (Guscott): If we work as hard as we can in attack as we do in defence, we'll fucking wipe them off the  
8 field. There's no ambition in attack at the moment, we're just happy to go from one set-piece to  
9 another, we're not working any phases of play.

10 We've got to work twice as hard in attack. Defence is what we've worked on all this tour, it's in our  
11 heads, it's natural, we've got to work some attack –

12 just pop the ball up, there's one person running, there's another person outside, let's fucking use  
13 'em. They're lining us up, now let's play some fucking rugby.

14

15 3) 2"32"19

16 We're 40 minutes away from winning a test series in South Africa.

17 Telfer: We have to get some heroes in there. They're coming beyond the ball all the time. Let's get in  
18 the fucking middle of them. In the front five,

19 And if they knock it on Tommy, you didn't look at it in front of the posts, if you'd have looked at it,  
20 we could have counter attacked – react when they've knocked on – don't wait for the whistle to go.

21 4) 2.32"40

22 (McGeechan): You're 40 minutes away now from winning the test series. You keep this ball, you play  
23 for it, you've got it.

24 (telfer) Do you want it enough boys

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- 1 (McGeechan) Half backs come on.
- 2 Telfer) Make it happen – make it happen Wallie. Left your fucking heads – stop feeling sorry for
- 3 yourself.
- 4 FINISH - 2.33.07
- 5

1 **Supplementary file B: Information about key leaders communicating in the video footage**

2

3 The five leaders most prominently included in the footage were;

4 *Ian McGeechan (Head Coach)*. Before 1997, McGeechan had played for, captained,  
5 and had been head coach of the Scotland rugby side. The tour of South Africa was the fifth time  
6 McGeechan had toured with the Lions. He had played on the 1974 and 1977 tours and had been  
7 head coach on the two tours preceding the 1997 tour (in 1989 to Australia, and in 1993 to New  
8 Zealand). When he was again chosen to be the head coach in 2009, these six times were a record,  
9 and indeed, such was McGeechan's connection with the Lions that his autobiography was  
10 entitled 'Lion Man'.

11 *Jim Telfer (assistant coach)*. Telfer had also previously played for and coached  
12 Scotland, and had been on two Lions tours as a player (1966 and 1968), and one as a head coach  
13 (1983 tour to New Zealand). On this tour, he had additional responsibility as the forwards coach.

14 *Martin Johnson (captain)*. Johnson had been on the previous (1993) Lions tour as a  
15 replacement. He had played for England since 1993, but had limited captaincy experience. While  
16 Johnson was the formal captain on the tour, his contributions to pre-match and half-time  
17 speeches was fairly limited.

18 *Keith Wood (senior player)*. Wood was on his first tour with the Lions. He had made his  
19 debut for Ireland in 1994, and had captained the Irish side. While he had no formal leadership  
20 role on the 1997 Lions tour he made significant contributions to pre-match speeches on the 1997  
21 Lions tour.

22 *Jason Leonard (captain during warm-up games)*. Leonard was an experienced member  
23 of the England side, after making his debut in 1990. Thus, he was the captain in several non-test  
24 matches on the 1997 Lions tour (when Johnson wasn't in the starting line-up).

25

26