'Life in the Travelling Circus': A Study of Loneliness, Work Stress,

and Money Issues in Touring Professional Golf

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Abstract

This article examines the effects of globalization on the well-being of migrant professional athletes. Interviews with 20 touring professional golfers reveal that players experience many of the personal problems – such as loneliness, isolation, low decision latitude, low social support, and effort-reward imbalance – which have been identified as "strong predictors of mental ill-health" (Leka & Jain, 2010, p. 65). Feelings of loneliness and isolation developed as players were regularly apart from family and friends, and spent most of their time with other golfers whom they had somewhat superficial relationships with. These feelings coupled with, for many, uncertain income generated through golf added further to their work-related anxieties. Overall, results highlight the importance of considering how workplace anxieties and vulnerabilities impact on athlete migrants' health and well-being.

Key words: professional golf, workplace conditions, sport labor migration, health and well-being, loneliness.

Professional sport is often considered to be a glamorous, care-free occupation characterized by large financial rewards, international schedules, and celebrity lifestyles for the most successful athletes. These viewpoints are promoted by the media, who tend to paint athletes' lives in glorified, romanticized ways (Roderick & Gibbons, 2015). It is unsurprising, therefore, that a career in elite sport is considered a relatively attractive occupation and many people dream about being a professional athlete. While aspects of the above might be true for some elite sportspeople, there is a growing body of academic research that identifies the personal struggles and challenges that do, in fact, characterize the lives of many athletes (Carter, 2007; Roderick, 2013, 2014; Roderick & Gibbons, 2015; Wacquant, 2011). For example, the majority of professional sportspeople do not earn large sums of money and their careers are generally short term in nature. Careers in sport are characterized by insecurities including the regular possibility of failure, rejection, and (long-term) unemployment all of which can impact negatively on the well-being of a person (Brown & Potrac, 2009; Carter, 2007; Frick, 2007; Kelly & Sugimoto, 2007; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Nesti, 2010; Platts & Smith, 2010; Roderick, 2013, 2014; Wacquant, 2011). For these reasons Carter (2007, p. 374) suggests that the lives of many athletes are marked by "painful costs, difficult lessons and problematic rewards". Such sentiments are not solely related to those athletes who are competing at a level lower down the sporting hierarchy but have been articulated by elite players too. For example, Roderick and Gibbons (2015, p.154) refer to a Premier League footballer who reflected on his successes as an international player and multiple cup winner, and the material rewards and celebrity status this brought, by saying "the better it looked, the worse it felt." Indeed a number of elite sports workers have talked publicly about issues connected with their physical and mental states of health, including playing with pain and injury, the commingling of pressures between private life and the sport 'workplace', and self-identity constraints that develop out of the increased scrutiny of the performance of

'celebrity' athletes (Mummery, 2005; Roderick, 2012; Roderick & Gibbons, 2015). It is important, therefore, to consider the effects of these workplace stresses on athletes' health and well-being.

A large amount of research has indicated that prolonged or intense workplace stress can have a negative impact on individuals' mental health and well-being (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Hughes & Leavey, 2012; Johnson et al., 2005; Leka & Jain, 2010; Lipsedge & Calnan, 2016). Arguably, the stresses experienced in the sports workplace are exacerbated for migrant athletes, who are required to follow the increasingly global trails of their sport and have lives characterized by job mobility. Indeed many sport workers are increasingly constrained to ply their trade in a variety of locations and experience varying levels of dislocation (Maguire, 2011a; Roderick, 2013). Professional golfers, in particular, have been described as the "nomads" of the sporting world with constantly shifting workplaces and places of residence (Maguire, 2011b, p.1104). Employment in this changing workplace was directly compared to working in a "circus travelling round the world" in an interview for this paper by an experienced European Professional Golf Association (EPGA) tour player and tournament winner. The reality is such that this lifestyle means many professional golfers encounter a melting pot of different issues and problems that impact on their personal well-being throughout various stages of their career on tour. There are, of course, a number of different experiences across various levels, but virtually all interviewees from this study spoke about the personal anxieties and vulnerabilities that arise through their line of work, including: feelings of loneliness and isolation, poor work-life balance, and difficulties surrounding social relationships. However, the views and experiences of athlete migrants regarding the impact of global work on their mental health and well-being is a largely neglected and under-explored academic area[1] (Butler & Dzikus, 2015; Roderick, 2013; Webster et al., 2008). Accounts of the everyday realities of working in elite sport are all too often absent from many

portrayals of athletes' lives (Roderick & Gibbons, 2015). Instead, the media often present a scenario where sportspeople travel the world living a life free of cares and worries (Cutmore, 2014; Porter 2014), which can, in turn, add a further weight of self-doubt and stress to the 'real lives' of athletes who are 'supposed' to be living a care free life in their dream job (Roderick & Gibbons, 2015). The central aim of this paper, therefore, is to use golf as a case study to examine the effects of globalization on the well-being of athletes as migrants in professional sport. Specifically, we seek to explain:

i.   Why golfers (as migrant workers) come to feel lonely and isolated, and

ii. How they attempt to address and make sense of such feelings and their life circumstances.

In order to address these aims, the paper is organized into the following sections: issues of loneliness, isolation, and work life balance; the precarious nature of workplace friendships; and stress over pay and conditions in professional golf. Prior to analysis of this material it is necessary to establish the methods used to gather the primary data for this study.

Method

The primary data informing the discursive analysis was taken from a set of semi-structured interviews with 20 male professional golfers aged between 22 and 56. Players were selected on their ability to provide an insight across the entire spectrum of touring professional golf. To achieve this, a 'purposive sampling' frame that was, in many ways, a deliberate, non-random selection was used to identify players with experience of playing on various levels of the EPGA tour (Bryman, 2012). Importantly, player career histories are freely available online and were researched prior to making contact. At the same time, however, it is important to appreciate that the hard to reach nature of elite athletes meant we were also limited by the extent to which we could 'select' participants. In other words, the purposive sampling frame resulted in a sample that was, in one sense, also a convenience snowball sample insofar as it consisted of those golfers who responded to the interview

requests. Although players were classified by a particular tour in order to provide a cross section of participants for interviewing purposes, the reality is such that each player had taken a unique and often complex route to their current position and virtually all had experience of playing on more than one tour[2].

Interviews were used in order to attempt to "generate data which gives authentic insights into peoples' experiences" (Miller & Glassner, 2001, p.126). Semi-structured interviews facilitated discussions in the golfers' own words, using their own frames of reference, and expressing their ideas and thoughts in their own way. The interview questions were designed to encourage players to address the reality of work as a professional golfer. They focussed on the ways and extent to which the nomadic lifestyle inherent in professional golf contoured their workplace experiences, and highlighted the impacts of this on their personal health and well-being. Interviews then began with generic, open-ended questions asking players "can you briefly talk about your first experiences of playing professional golf?" This question aimed to elicit a brief history of the participants' route to tour and how they found the transition from amateur to professional golfer. These initial probes were used to help to develop an interviewer-interviewee rapport and make the participant feel more comfortable (Bryman, 2012; Jones, 2015; Veal & Darcy, 2014). After the initial probes, interviewees were then asked questions that centred primarily on workplace experiences of their international labor migration and included themes such as: life of a professional golfer; relationships with significant others; pay and conditions; and comparisons between different golf tours. The data discussed in this paper, then, emerged from a much wider ranging study and we observed the issues of 'predictors of mental health' emanating from this. In this, the questions helped to elicit the well-being of the golfers and how they came to feel lonely and isolated, and how they attempted to address and make sense of such feelings within the confines of the relatively 'closed' world of professional golf. Interview transcripts were

recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Common themes were identified and analyzed. Nvivo computer package was used to code interview transcripts and organize themes. Coding was carried out by the lead author but there was continual debate with the co-author during this process, which helped to encourage a greater degree of detachment from the data (Perry, Thurston, & Green, 2004) and provided us with additional scrutiny in the development of codes (Mennell, 1992).

Loneliness, isolation, and work life balance

Labor market migration and geographical mobility is not the norm in most professions, however, it is commonplace in sport (Roderick, 2013; Williams, Bradley, Devadason, & Erickson, 2013). Roderick (2013) specifically refers to professional footballers in this context, however, it could be argued that golfers lead even more nomadic lives with constantly shifting workplaces and places of residence. Extensive travel on a weekly basis remains a crucial aspect of any professional golfer's career. Traditionally, Europe's most successful golfers have migrated to the United States Professional Golf Association (USPGA) tour, not only for higher purses but also for competition against players who tend to be ranked higher in the world rankings, which, if relatively successful, would enable them to gain even more ranking points. Such player movement to the USPGA tours constrained the EPGA to identify alternative sources of sponsorship to help attract players back, which, increasingly, has tended to come from countries further afield (Donegan, 2009). Subsequently, the EPGA also became increasingly concerned with extending the global reach of the tour itself. As such, the first EPGA event staged outside of Europe was the 1982 Tunisian Open and by 2016 more than half of the tour itinerary was staged outside of Europe (European Professional Golfers Association Tour [EPGA], 2016a).

The globalization literature has traditionally been heavily theorized and somewhat abstract, not paying explicit focus to the consequences of global flows on the lives of migrants involved (Roderick, 2013). The reality is such that sport migrants are required to

adjust and adapt quickly when moving internationally, which can impact on their personal well-being (Lever & Milbourne, 2015). As golf tournaments are staged in a variety of countries, which tend to be increasingly spread out across the globe, players are required to spend longer periods of time away from home, which leads to greater feelings of loneliness and isolation. For example, when asked to describe his life an experienced EPGA tour player said "the word that jumps in my head is lonely". Feelings of loneliness were expressed in terms of travel time and during tournaments as well. As an EPGA tour player of 21 years' experience, who would be considered a top European player and was a former tournament winner, explained, travelling between tournaments meant "you've got to enjoy your own company … [because there is] a lot of time in airports and airport lounges waiting for flights". Another EPGA player added that much of the time on tour "you are spending it on your own … you are in a hotel room on your own for a lot of the time". The impact of the increasingly global nature of professional golf tournaments means that players spend long periods of time away from home and experience intense feelings of loneliness, isolation and perceptions of being cut off from the 'real world' during travel time and even at the tournament itself. For example, a third tier tour player interviewed for this study explained that at tournaments players will "spend a lot of time training on your own and you must like your own company … you will have a lot of time on your hands ... it can be quite lonely", adding that outside the course environment "you can quite easily end up sat in your hotel room for three hours going crazy really ... spending four weeks on your own could be difficult". The quotes presented here are a direct expression of the toll being away on tour can take on the well-being of the golfers involved. One way in which players in our study attempted to find a release from the negative feelings of loneliness was to attempt to develop particular friendship groups on tour, an issue referred to in the next section of this paper. The key point, here, is that feelings of loneliness and isolation are exacerbated by the fact that,

given the global nature of the tour, players, even the most successful ones interviewed for this study that had earned considerable sums of money on tour, often very rarely have any family or friends with them, who could help pass the time. Furthermore, sometimes they cannot communicate that well with said family given the issues associated with travelling, such as different time-zones. This is compounded by the growing number of international tournaments which are more frequently staged further afield, and outside the direct control of the players involved. Indeed, this type of perceived lack of control and loss of personal autonomy/disempowerment over work has been established as a key factor in developing depression and anxiety (Hughes & Leavey, 2012; Willhelm et al., 2004). Furthermore, those professional golfers outside the highest levels may also have to rely on last minute invites to competitions, which is an extra burden that little control over planning their schedule can bring.

The experiences of professional golfers outlined here corroborate with previous literature on sports labor migration, which has identified loneliness as a personal challenge most athletes encounter at some point when travelling abroad (Agergaard, 2008; Molnar & Maguire, 2008; Stead & Maguire, 2000). However, such studies have focussed on sports that have a greater level of stability in their migratory moves, rather than those that involve almost constant 'circulatory' geographical movements such as golf where issues are further exacerbated. It is important to consider the impact of feelings of loneliness on sport migrants' well-being, particularly given the large amount of research that identifies a strong relationship between loneliness, isolation, and psychological health in relation to depression (Alpass & Neville, 2003; DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997; Luanaigh & Lawlor, 2008; Matthews et al., 2016). Unsurprisingly, research on loneliness tends to focus on 'elderly' populations, however, given it was a large feature of the lives of the golfers in this study, it is important to consider the links to mental health and well-being within sports migrants' lives. In a classic

study on the experience of loneliness, Weiss (1973) makes a distinction between the loneliness of 'social isolation' and that of 'emotional isolation'. The loneliness of social isolation refers to an absence of an engaging social network of other people whereas, in contrast, the loneliness of emotional isolation stems from the absence or loss of a close attachment relationship (Weiss, 1973). The professional golfers here exhibited evidence of loneliness of emotional isolation, but in contrast to the 'loss' being through death, it was the feeling that they had little opportunity to maintain the regular contact with their loved ones whilst on tour. That is, they were not isolated in terms of people who they had around them – such as other players, tour personnel, and spectators – but rather in terms of a lack of contact with people for whom they had meaningful feelings for, such as their family and friends. Despite the fact that professional golfers are regularly surrounded by people that are, in many respects, like-minded, because they are also fellow players, they still feel 'lonely' because they are not spending time with the people that mean the most to them. Players across the entire hierarchy of golf interviewed for this study highlighted the difficulties of being apart from their families. For example, a former major winner and world number one stated that "the hardest part of tour life is being away from the family". Similarly an EPGA tour player explained, "the life of a tour pro is a tough one, underestimatedly [sic] tough. Because you're away from your base and your home and I'm sure that a lot of the guys now miss their family". This sentiment is reiterated by another EPGA tour player, whose career spanned 28 seasons and was a winner of six main tour events, who said that because of his golf, "I miss my wife, my kids, my parents. I don't see them enough. And that's what is difficult about that". A former world top 10 player and major winner commented that playing professional golf:

> Can be the most wonderful life in the world but it can also be the most difficult ... it is the loneliest game because it is really all up to you. It can just be a lonely game. It can be gut wrenching, furious at times.

It is important to recognize that loneliness is synonymous with *perceived* social isolation, not with objective social isolation. That is, it is argued people can live an ostensibly rich social life and still feel lonely nevertheless (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). This is evident from the commentaries of the more successful players outlined in this study, such as the former world number one quoted directly above, who had legions of fans worldwide and a large support team who would travel with him on tour, but still explained that he experienced spells of loneliness. It is argued that loneliness occurs when a person's social needs are not being met by the quantity or, especially, the quality of their social relationships (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). In this regard, professional golfers do not always achieve the quantity of contact with their significant others, given that constant workplace circulation makes communication with people back home difficult, and even contemporary advances in communication technology enabling video messaging and calls does not substitute for the quality of more 'tangible' contact. Developments in technology, including 'Skype' and 'Facetime', help communication with family and eases the stresses of being away on tour, however, as a Challenge tour player interviewed for this study identified, issues still develop given the "lack of contact, different time zones, different times, and just not seeing each other". Professional golfers are increasingly required to live apart from their families and make adjustments to their lives accordingly, like coping with being apart from their children and a feeling of missing out on aspects of family life. The fact that many professional golfers are on tour while their families are at home elsewhere means that feelings of loneliness and isolation are compounded further, given they cannot be close to people with whom they have more meaningful feelings toward (Luanaigh & Lawlor, 2008; Weiss, 1973).

With all the above in mind it seems sensible to assume that when at home, professional golfers would be able to spend the 'quality' time with their families that they all craved. However, the reality is such that the 'work' of professional golf can even take priority

in the home environment, where players and families can struggle to 'break' from the game. Similarly, research on the work/life balance of professional sportspeople, and highly pressurized jobs more generally, has highlighted how people struggle to break from work related issues in their wider lives (Ortiz, 2006; Roderick, 2012). A Challenge tour player interviewed in this study, for example, compared professional golf to other 'mainstream' jobs:

It feels like you have got your 'work head' on all the time. You just have to spend a bit more time on your work than your mates have to. They've got 9-5 jobs and they can switch off but you sort of take your work home. That's a big thing that I've got that my mates don't have.

This quote is indicative of how the work of professional golf can define the lives of the golfers involved, who rarely leave their work at the workplace and often struggle to 'switch off' from the game. Research has indicated that this 'work spill' can be problematic for all involved (Patricia, Moen, & Batt, 2003; Sanderson & Clavio, 2010) and such demands have been cited as one of the "most common work factors associated with psychological ill health" (Michie & Williams, 2003, p.7). Intense practice schedules, monitoring and developing talent, and other activities such as sponsorship commitments tend to take up much of the athletes' time, even away from specific events, which further exacerbates the problem (DiFiori et al, 2014; Roderick & Gibbons, 2015).

It is important to recognize that, in many ways, the pressures outlined here regarding 'work spill' and 'switching off' are probably quite typical of many working environments. However, at one level, this is a key point that can be drawn from the article; that is, there is a perception that professional sport in general, and in this specific case, golf, is somewhat different to 'regular' occupations. This paper offers an antithesis to some of these common

sense assumptions and, in doing so, highlights how this may impact on athletes' mental health and well-being. Furthermore, it is also important to recognize that the increasingly global nature of golf tournaments means that many golfers are now required to spend long periods of time away from home, which can be characterized by numerous difficulties, such as issues of loneliness, isolation, and financial worries of not having a guaranteed regular income. While away on tour professional golfers do, however, spend large periods of time with fellow competitors, thus it is important to analyse these relationships in more detail.

The precarious nature of workplace friendships: Relationships between golfers on tour

So far this paper has revealed that the life of a touring professional golfer is characterized by levels of loneliness and isolation given the growing schedule of international tournaments. While away on tour, golfers do, however, spend large periods of time with other players and various types of 'friendships' develop. Many of the professionals interviewed for this study placed a high importance on establishing themselves amongst a group of like-minded people for the reciprocal common gains this could garner while away on tour. For example, one participant with nine years' experience playing on the Challenge tour commented that the "people you surround yourself with make such a difference". Furthermore, a player with experience of playing on a cross section of tours suggested it was important for golfers to "try and get a group of people around you that can help you become what you need to be". The composition of players on tour is, of course, outside the direct control of any single player, however, many of the golfers in this study attempted to exercise at least some control over who they socialized with.

There were a number of reasons why players sought to be part of friendship groups, with the aim of directly helping to improve their lives and reduce the grind of time away on

tour. The pursuit of such friendship groups was designed to try and create an environment like home. For example, a Challenge tour player said it is important to "try and surround yourself with people who you want to be with. So it is more like when you are at home and more normal". Another player explained that at the events where he had been most successful:

> One trend is being fun. And I don't mean late nights and I don't mean alcohol. I mean having dinner and laughing, [and] banter … the more that you travel like home the better. You need your home comforts.

It seemed that the ability for a golfer to create an environment similar to that of home helped to reduce the feelings of loneliness they harboured. Furthermore, as the quote above highlights, some players felt a 'home like' environment can even serve to improve players' performances at the event itself. That is, for some players the greater their ability to reduce the sometimes difficult aspects of life on tour the better they felt they were able to perform in the actual tournaments themselves. Jacobsen (2003) refers to the concept of 'travelling parochialism', or 'home plus', in describing the large proportions of contemporary holidaymakers who attempt to adopt a kind of home-like culture while abroad, 'home-plus-sun', for example. In a similar vein, it appears professional golfers often look to develop a 'home plus' scenario on tour by surrounding themselves with other like-minded people in their friendship groups and by attempting to engage in similar activities to those they would normally pursue at home. As an experienced EPGA tour player explained, players should "find out who liked the same things as you do, who liked the same foods, who wanted to go out for dinner at the same time as you did". However, given the global spread of the golf tours creating a 'home like' environment is more and more difficult to do, thus adding another burden to golfers' lives.

Golfers are, in effect, coming together in the face of stress, which exhibits itself most clearly through the intense feelings of loneliness experienced on tour, as discussed above. Furthermore, players began to adopt, both at a conscious and subconscious level, the mannerisms, attitudes and behaviors that helped foster the development of temporary group alliances. Professional golfers are constrained to develop these alliances to help with their wellbeing and 'survival' on tour and, specifically, for 'social' reasons to help reduce feelings of loneliness, isolation, and homesickness. Some players also developed such groups for what might be termed 'logistical' reasons, such as sharing rooms in order to help reduce the costs of competing on increasingly expensive touring schedules, due to a growing number of international tournaments that tend to be staged further afield (something discussed in more detail in the following section of this paper). As a player with 21 years EPGA tour experience and former tournament winner said, "I had good travelling companions and I suppose that makes a big difference ... some people who when they were on their own and didn't know anybody it was a lonely existence ... a travelling companion is one of the big things [to help maintain wellbeing]". In this respect, it is clear that our golfers seemed keen to develop a core group of 'friends' in order to protect their own interests and as a coping strategy for dealing with some of the stresses they felt whilst on tour. The importance placed on developing friendship groups forced players to behave in a manner that was expected of them and not always in a way that reflected what they were actually thinking. More specifically, players are expected to maintain a positive attitude on tour to avoid being stigmatized by other players, particularly during spells of poor performance and due to the amount of time away from their families. As such, they find it very difficult to openly discuss the reality of their personal feelings while away on tour, especially between the fellow players with whom they spend the most time. This has been referred to as the "privatisation of emotion", which constrains

athletes' ability to manage their experiences of workplace stress and mental illness out of shame and concerns of being stigmatized and not accepted amongst others (Platts & Smith, 2016). Indeed, the reality for many is that professional golf is a stressful workplace characterized by spending long periods of time away from families and friends, earning relatively small sums of money. Players, however, tended not to openly moan about the reality of their lives and engaged in somewhat of a 'show', or what Goffmann (1959) referred to as 'front-stage' performance, demonstrating a positive attitude to others and keeping their 'real' emotions private. It has been argued that athletes' frequently rationalize difficult aspects of their lives as a necessary sacrifice to become an elite sports worker, and it is an important process if they are to be accepted by others who also regularly encourage these norms (Douglas & Carless, 2015; Platts & Smith, 2016; Roderick & Gibbons, 2015). That is, professional golfers are expected to endure the stressful aspects of the touring golf workplace without openly publicizing their real emotions, a process encouraged by others in their social grouping that can further impact on players' health and well-being.

The issue here is that the emotional support people receive both at work and at home has been highlighted as a key coping mechanism in the amount of stress a person experiences (Andersson, 1998; Johnson et al., 2005; Willhelm, Kovess, Rios-Seidel, & Finch, 2004). Professional golfers, however, are regularly away from home with a lack of supportive environment from family and friends, which is further compounded given players feel they often cannot share their real emotions with fellow players. Similarly, Graham, Albery, Ramirez, and Richards (2001, p.85-6) argue there is "clear evidence that coping with work stress through using social support has a positive effect on mental health". For Graham et al. (2001), the alternative to social support is to cope with stress using emotion, such as avoiding the situation, which is often associated with poorer levels of mental health. This approach is endemic in the professional golfers interviewed here, who tended to avoid situations as they

would not discuss their feelings and emotions openly, but rather developed typical behaviors and acted in a way which they hoped would see them become accepted within by their fellow professionals. When asked about the difficult aspects of life on tour, a Challenge tour player said:

> I have found it hard … a lonely place. For example when you are travelling with four guys and they're playing well and you're playing awful ... they've got the highs and the good emotions of that and you've got the lows. You're like one of a kind ... [but] travelling with guys who when they are playing bad don't get upset, who are happy, who forget about it and have a laugh and stuff which [sic] is very important.

This quote specifically highlights how professional golfers aim to cope with some of the pressures of life on tour using 'emotional' strategies such as engaging in humour.

Participants in this study explained they had sacrificed their close knit group of friends associated with being at home, and these were reluctantly replaced by others who they saw on a more regular basis while competing on tour, and with whom they had a more changeable relationship. As a Challenge tour player explained:

> One of the biggest things you give up, and I suppose you do in a lot of professional sports, is your friends … your best friends and the people you were at college with … one of the things you miss really.

Similarly, another Challenge tour player said, "what I would call my circle of best friends from childhood I see them probably once every three or four months at the moment … so I wouldn't say I live a normal life anymore". Professional golfers spend the majority of their time with golfers, caddies, coaches, and other people who travel with the tours and as such their day-to-day experiences were impacted on by individuals in these wider networks. Furthermore, another player hinted at the influential role of these people when explaining that, as a golfer, "you spend more time with other players than your own family". For an EPGA tour player who was interviewed, players on tour had actually replaced the time spent

with his family. More specifically, when asked how the work of professional golf affects his 'normal' life, he said:

> It became my life and it was my world ... I was cocooned, it was my life. So this 9 to 5 and your weekends and you're meeting the lads down the pub or whatever, that was alien to me. My life was this circus travelling around the world ... there were sacrifices ... My circle back home was virtually non-existent.

Tour players are comprised of a variety of different ages, personalities, and nationalities. Many interviewees explained the only thing they had in common with other players was their employment as a professional golfer. It also became clear that, for many players, given a choice, they would not ordinarily be friends with each other but they felt bound together as a result of the unintended outcomes associated with their career. It has been argued that meaningful social relationships and affiliations are key determinants in positive engagements in both physical and mental health (Lewis et al., 2016). The data presented here, however, indicates that professional golfers struggled to strike up meaningful relationships with fellow players on tour, and came to feel dislocated given their 'real' group of friends and family were back at home. Consequently, the emotional isolation players felt was compounded given that the types of people with whom they felt they could talk openly, such as their friends and family, were so far away for long periods of time. Elsewhere it is argued that the relationships between players in the same friendship groups are characterized by bonds of togetherness and comradery while also showing evidence of tension, conflict, and rivalry. This also corroborates with previous research on friendship networks that has indicated the often 'double edged' nature of relationships between employees, which can be particularly problematic in occupations characterized by short-term placements, low pay, and uncertainty (Coulson, 2012; Umney & Kretsos, 2014).

The increasingly global nature of professional golf, and the regular separation between players and their loved ones this brings about, has led to changeable relations among fellow golfers with whom, for many, they only have a rather superficial relationship, which is an added burden on the health and well-being of migrant athletes. The relationship between golfers on tour is further compounded by the income inequalities that inevitably exist between players who have experienced differing levels of professional success. It has been argued that people develop specific strategies in order to manage income inequalities between friends, which included efforts to both hide wealth and refrain from ostensible consumption (Pellandini-Simányi, 2015). Interestingly, however, it is argued such efforts "lead to the weakening and possibly to the dissolution of friendships not despite, but, paradoxically, through the practices that they deploy to maintain them" (Pellandini-Simányi, 2015, p.12). In this study on golf it appears that at one level players need each other to engage in social activities to reduce the monotony of being away, however, at the same time they are in direct competition with each other for a share of the overall prize money and associated prestige that comes from being successful in their chosen career. It is to a more detailed analysis of pay and conditions in professional golf, and the impact this has on the health and well-being of golfers, that this paper now turns.

Gambling on the 'big win': Stress over pay and conditions in professional golf

The riches on offer in sport is one of the features that journalists, at least, focus on when considering the 'glamor' of being a professional sports person. Although the prize money available in professional sport has increased significantly over the recent past, the reality is that such riches are available to only a small minority even within professional sport, and for most sport professionals, the money available is, in fact, relatively low (Frank & Cook, 2010; Murphy & Waddington, 2007). The results from this study indicate a very similar level of earning inequality exists across the broad spectrum of professional golf. Players interviewed for this study who were competing on Challenge tour, for example,

considered that they needed to earn around £60,000 in prize money in order to cover travel costs and receive an equivalent salary of £15,000 per annum. This figure was derived from how much a typical season would cost, which included basic travel costs of around £30,000 (required to play a 20 event season), plus the £15,000 'salary', and then adding the tax accrued on any prize money they earned, taxed at source, and, depending on the country competed in, this could be up to 40%. As one participant who had qualified for Challenge tour commented:

> What I'd really earned was the right to spend 30 grand that I didn't have! So, I've worked really hard to get onto the Challenge Tour and I got there and I thought well how do I do this? ... It doesn't come without a price ... If I was the 1,000th best doctor in the world where would I be? I wouldn't be struggling for money for anything!

Another player who qualified to play on the Challenge tour explained that playing on tour could be "very expensive … I mean [one] year probably cost £30,000 and I earned nothing. I had a terrible year". These sentiments were neatly summed up by another player who explained that, "the money is great at the top level, below that, you have to be at the top end of your respective tour to be earning. Golf is a loss making business until you reach the top level of your tour, and then you move up to earn potentially more". To put the above figures in context, players earning £60,000 or more at the end of the 2015 Challenge tour season had to finish in the top 15 on the rankings list, on which there were a total of 214 players listed on the order of merit rankings (European Professional Golfers Association Tour [EPGA], 2016b). As such, given the top-down nature of prize breakdown in professional golf, players had to finish in the top 15 on the Challenge tour to make any return at all on their investments. Clearly, this would suggest that over 90% of those playing on the Challenge Tour that year either made no money, or lost money in their pursuit of a career in professional golf, which undoubtedly would impact negatively on most people's health and well-being.

The top-heavy nature of prize money in professional golf means money worries are never far away for the majority of players. Indeed, previous research has indicated that financial difficulties, effort-reward imbalance and high job insecurity (which is frequently displayed outside the upper echelons of professional golf) are strong predictors of mental ill-health (Leka & Jain, 2010; Willhelm et al., 2004). In sport, Woodman and Hardy (2001) have argued that financial issues such as not having enough money, differential financial support, and the perception of money being used "to control" the athlete are important factors in levels of athlete stress. Elite athletes commit many years of their life to their sport, and many often do not have time to earn money outside training, thus they rely heavily on family and/or sponsorship to provide them with sufficient funds to pursue their career, which is not always forthcoming and can impact on athlete health and well-being (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Furthermore, the fact that the prize breakdown in professional golf means such a small proportion of golfers on tour make any return on their investment has contributed to a scenario whereby many golfers are 'gambling' on their ability to gain future rewards in the sport. The ability to earn money while on tour is also affected by other pressures on golfers' lives brought about by increasing globalization. For example, the need to adapt to a number of diverse working environments has become increasingly important in golf in recent times, where professionals are expected to play tournaments in places where the terrain and environmental conditions, amongst other things, vary week in and week out throughout the tour (Fry, Davies, Smith, Barron, & Yiannaki, 2015). This is yet another burden on the lives of professional golfers who, in order to 'make the cut', and, thus, make a living out of the game, are required to cope with the stresses of a workplace that is constantly changing (Fry et al., 2015).

The significant rewards that are available to the few who finish high enough on their tour contributed to a situation where, despite the fact that many were aware of what they

perceived to be the unrealistic goal of achieving those heights, they still considered it worth taking the gamble as they felt that the big win would come soon if they kept trying. This viewpoint is neatly captured by a Challenge tour player, who said, "on the main tour people are made, you see these guys and it's unbelievable. The rewards which are out there are massive but on these mini tours you're broke really" adding that "but with golf age doesn't matter. That's why people sometimes don't pack in because they know that it's in there and they can do it ... [you're] still giving yourself the opportunity to have that break through". For the players interviewed in this study, their golf is what they are 'passionate' about and their attachment to it is strong, even when they reflect on the darker aspects of their careers. It is this constant 'need' for them to be successful playing golf for a living that is also the thing that constrains them to a life of potential struggle and further undermines their well-being, at one level. This is also compounded by the perceived logic that athletes must always strive to win and be successful, that they must love their work and treat it as a privilege, and "they must realise, and not squander, their God-given talents" (Roderick & Gibbons, 2015, p.154). For Roderick and Gibbons (2015), it is the power of this rhetoric which can lead to athletes continuing with the grind of their professional career and mask underlying mental health related issues.

Research on employees in the 'creative industries' (such as art, craft, music, and fashion) helps to understand how workers rationalize difficult material working conditions. The 'affective attachments' employees in such occupations have to their job helps deal with the double-edged nature of a workplace that is characterized by the rhetoric that their work is like play, while also being a precarious arena with high levels of mobility, low income, and large reliance on friendship networks (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Stahl, 2010; Thompson, Parker, & Cox, 2016). The result, like work in professional golf, is a mixture of tensions and anxieties which are stabilized by a high level of 'passion' and attachment to their work. This is

compounded by the fact that while on tour professional golfers are surrounded by other players who have the same mentality that golf is the best way out of the troubles they find themselves, both financially and in terms of lacking genuine contact with family and loved ones. Players tend to influence one another, consciously and otherwise, in this respect and cannot see the reality of their situation. This is referred to as 'occupational socialization', whereby a stronger work-related habitus is developed through the way in which people are socialized in the workplace (Lawson, 1988). Professional golfers surround themselves with many other like-minded players, and learn to develop positive affirmations that the best way to respond to not making money on tour is, in fact, to remain on tour for as long as they can afford to do so because this, they feel, offers them the best chance to claw back their debt. Being on tour so regularly keeps players away from day-to-day contact with people outside the relatively closed network of professional golf, that they tend to be so involved and find it very difficult to avoid the often unrealistic notion that if they just keep at it, then a big win will soon set them on their way. Furthermore, it is argued that these passionate attachments can not only lead to "toleration of long hours and insecurity" but also diminish employees' willingness to engage in resistance and voice concerns about the difficult aspects of their work (Thompson et al., 2016, p.327). The result is that employees, as the golfers in our study also, are even less likely to speak about the reality of their work, and the impacts this has on their personal health and well-being are pushed 'underground'. This is especially important since talking about personal problems has been identified as a key coping mechanism for individual health and well-being (Bruner et al., 2008; Johnson, 2005).

Conclusion

The central aim of this paper was to use golf as a case study to examine the effects of globalization on the well-being of athletes as migrants in professional sport. In doing so, we have sought to explain, firstly, why golfers (as migrant workers) come to feel lonely and isolated, and, secondly, how they attempt to address and make sense of such feelings and their life circumstances. This paper offers a critical analysis of the taken for granted stereotypical views of the 'perfect' lives of professional sportspeople often portrayed in the media and the wider spectating public, by highlighting a variety of issues which contour their lives. The touring nature of professional golf means many players experience intense feelings of loneliness and isolation which, coupled with the fact they felt they could not talk openly about their concerns, harboured even more stress and impacted further on their mental health and well-being. A key contribution of this article is, therefore, to help shed light on how, specifically, athletes with migratory sporting careers come to make sense of their workplace situations, and the impacts this may have. It is argued that professional athletes as migrants experience many of the personal issues and problems, such as "job strain, low decision latitude, low social support, high psychological demands, effort-reward imbalance and high job insecurity", which have been identified as "strong predictors of mental ill-health" (Leka & Jain, 2010, p. 65).

This paper builds on previous sports migration research, which tends to be heavily theorized and focuses on routes and pathways of athletic talent (Maguire, 2011a, 2011b; Elliott & Weedon, 2011; Williams et al., 2013), to offer an empirically grounded analysis of the lives of sports migrants by interviewing the athletes themselves. The more empirically based studies that have been conducted (Agergaard, 2008; Carter, 2011; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Poli, 2010), although useful, do not maintain a focus on occupations with constant workplace circulation. The lives of professional golfers presented here, therefore, helps to fill

the void in the academic literature by detailing realities of pursuing a career as a professional sports migrant. This research also helps shed light on the workplace pressures that may be precursors to mental health issues in a variety of highly skilled occupations with similar non-settler transient migratory patterns. Other sports where there is a requirement for professional athletes to commit to travelling 'circuits' include, for example, tennis players, track and field athletes, Grand Prix circuit drivers, skiers, and cyclists who undertake events at different locations, often in different countries and continents, from one week to the next (Maguire, 2011a; Mehta, Gemmell, & Malcolm, 2009; Roderick, 2013). Future research might focus more directly on the issue of mental health and well-being with the athletes themselves, in order to build on the material concerning potential precursors to mental health issues discussed within this paper. In this respect, the empirical and theoretical insights offered here can be used as a lens to understand the lived realities of other highly skilled workers outside of sport whose employment necessitates transient migratory patterns, such as musicians, project managers, motivational speakers, and other business elites with non-settler careers.

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Notes

1. Much of the literature has examined the routes and pathways of globalization and not the hidden consequences of high levels of workplace circulation for the athletes involved (Roderick, 2013). Furthermore, the work which has been completed in this area tends to focus on team sports and, as such, the support teams and wider network of coaches, trainers, and partners who work with individual sports (who are an important part in the overall health of the athletes involved) are often not acknowledged in the same way as they are in team sports.

2. Tournament golf in Europe is organised into three main tiers. The highest tier is the EPGA tour, the second tier is the Challenge tour, and the EPGA endorse four third tier tours, namely: the EuroPro tour (UK and Ireland), the European Professional Development (EPD) tour (Austria, Egypt, Germany, Morocco, Poland, and Turkey), the Alps tour (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland) and the Nordic league (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden). Participants for this study were recruited according to criteria which ensured a cross section of players representing all these three tiers of the EPGA tour, in addition to a group of players who had operated 'above' this. In other words, the sample included a group of players above the EPGA tour whose world ranking meant they had a greater ability to pick and choose events and played what arguably could be termed a 'world tour' consisting of a combination of EPGA, USPGA, and other tournaments sanctioned by various worldwide organisations. This said, even the players in this elite band had a significant amount of experience playing EPGA tour events at various stages of their careers. Players were selected, therefore, on their ability to provide an insight across the entire spectrum of touring professional golf.