

MINDFULNESS APPLICATION IN PROFESSIONAL ACADEMY FOOTBALL

AMY LOUISE SPENCER

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER
FACULTY OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

MAY 2022

DECLARATION AND COPYRIGHT AGREEMENT

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

I confirm that this thesis is entirely my own work.

I can confirm that Chapter Two in the thesis has been revised and developed for a book chapter. I can confirm that no third-party editing has been used in this thesis.

Copyright in text of this thesis rests with the author. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made only in accordance with instructions given by the author. Details may be obtained from the RKE Office and Southampton Football Club. This page must form any part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) of copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the permission (in writing) of the author.

Where issues of Intellectual Property arise, these should be addressed in accordance with the University of Winchester and Southampton Football Club's Intellectual Property Policy and an appropriate comment defining ownership should be included immediately following the Declaration and Copyright statements listed above.

DISSEMINATION

Some of the work conducted has been presented at national/international conferences, as well as featuring on several podcasts. These are listed below:

Conferences

Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement in Action: A Case Study with an Elite Football Academy.

Spencer, A., Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., Pineau, T. R., Cotterill S. T., & Holder, T; BASES Conference Power point, 2018.

Mindful vs mindless: A pilot mindfulness program for injury rehabilitation. Spencer, A., Frame., M., Cotterill, S; BASES Conference Poster, 2018.

Integrating a Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MSPE) into a Premier League Academy. Kaufman, K., Spencer, A., Glass, C., Pineau, T. AASP 2019.

Published Work

Swedish Flow Magazine #2 2020

Book Chapter: Spencer, A., Kaufman, K., Glass, C., & Pineau, T (2019). Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement in Action: A Case Study with an Elite Football Academy. In K. Henrikson, J. Hansen, & C. Hvid, Larsen (Eds.), Mindfulness and Acceptance in sport: How to Help Athletes Perform and Thrive under Pressure. Routledge.

Podcast

Podcast guest speaker for Mindful Sport Performance Podcast: Episode 4. 2020

ABSTRACT

Mindfulness is a state of non-judging awareness and acceptance of internal experiences. This state has been achieved through evidence-based interventions that are useful and beneficial for the enhancement of performance amongst athletes and other performers. Mindfulness has been used within clinical populations, yet it has become increasingly popular within the realm of sport. However, there has been no evidence of mindfulness being embedded into a professional football culture. As a result, the aim of this thesis, uses a range of approaches to research its impact of integrating mindfulness into an elite Category One English football academy. In particular, this programme of research sought to explore the perceived impacts of fully integrating mindfulness into an established football culture and to explore the perceived benefits of performance and well-being for those staff and players involved. Associations between mindfulness interventions and participants perceived increase in present moment awareness, an outcome that has been demonstrated in previous mindfulness literature, were especially of interest. Before any intervention took place, programmes were modified to accommodate the cultural climate of an elite football setting. This programme of research explored embedding mindfulness in a series of formats; 1. a recognised mindfulness-based programme with players, taking it from the classroom setting to their gym to application on the pitch. 2. How mindfulness was used effectively within rehabilitation for an injured player and the perceived benefits found from the player and the physiotherapist. 3. Football Academy staff's awareness of mindfulness and their application and functional use of mindfulness within their field of the football organisation. 4. Finally, an insight into how a practitioner found embedding mindfulness into the football culture, highlighting the highs and lows of the application and integration. Consistent themes emerged from the programme of research, are the use and importance of language within this context, the effectiveness of staff and players 'buy in' to mindfulness application, and the desire for mindfulness to be utilised throughout the academy culture to benefit performance and well-being. Despite several challenges faced throughout this six-year programme of research, these findings suggest and highlight the value of embedding mindfulness within an established, elite football culture. This novel, innovative and pioneering work will provide a foundation for the future and the need for more longitudinal studies to highlight and demonstrate the impact mindfulness can have when being fully embedded in an elite sporting context.

Acknowledgements

Tim Holder – The biggest thank you for your time, patience, and enthusiasm in getting me through this whole PhD journey. You have been with me the whole way, supporting, guiding, and encouraging me to never give up. I will always be forever grateful. Thank you.

Jo Batey – All I can say is a big thank you. Your comments and analytical eye have been a crucial part in me making it this far in the PhD journey. You have been an invaluable asset.

Malcolm Frame – You have supported, encouraged, and pushed me to achieve great things with this PhD and more importantly as a practitioner. Thank you for always believing in me.

The football club, players, and staff – Without access and willingness to take part in this thesis, this research would be non-existent. Thank you for developing me as a practitioner first and foremost but also allowing me to pursue my passion of achieving a PhD within your organisation.

Chris – You have supported me through thick and thin, the highs and lows of this journey. I will forever be grateful for the love and support you have shown me, encouraged, and comforted me to keep pushing and achieve. You are always and will always be there for me, you believe in me and encourage me to achieve great things. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I did it!

The SP53 Clan – Mum, to think I wasn't going to take education any further! Thank you for all the support you have shown me to achieve and get to this point within my career. Who would have thought that your little girl would have come this far in education. Thank you for all the love and care you have given me to be successful. Dad, who would have thought that I would have conducted research in football, the club we grew up watching together. Thank you for believing in me and pushing me towards my passion. Katie and Liam, its done, whoop!

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Table 1. An overview of the MSPE sessions conducted | 66 |
| Table 2: Overview of themes | 102 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: Organisational Structure | 15 |
| Figure 2: Thesis outline with study titles and research questions | 27 |

Glossary of Acronyms

| Acronym | Meaning |
|----------------|--|
| ACL | Anterior Cruciate Ligament |
| ACT | Acceptance Commitment Therapy |
| .b | Stop and Be (Mindfulness in Schools Project) |
| CNF | Creative Non-Fiction |
| CPD | Continuous Professional Development |
| EPPP | Elite Player Performance Plan |
| FA | Football Association |
| FDP | Foundation Development Phase |
| IDT | Inter-disciplinary Team |
| IPA | Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis |
| MAC | Mindfulness Acceptance Commitment |
| MBCT | Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy |
| MBIs | Mindfulness-Based Interventions |
| MBSR | Mindfulness-Based Stress Response |
| MCL | Medial Cruciate Ligament |
| MDT | Multi-disciplinary Team |
| MSPE | Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement |
| PDP | Professional Development Phase |
| PL | Premier League |
| PST | Psychological Skills Training |
| S&C | Strength and Conditioning |
| TA | Thematic Analysis |
| YDP | Youth Development Phase |

CONTENTS PAGE

| | |
|--|---|
| Declaration and Copyright Agreement | 3 |
| Dissemination | 3 |
| Abstract | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| List of Tables | 6 |
| List of Figures | 6 |
| Glossary of Acronyms | 7 |

CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.1 Role of the Practitioner-Researcher within the thesis context | 13 |
| 1.2 Mindfulness | 16 |
| 1.3 Relevance and importance of the thesis | 19 |
| 1.4 Thesis objectives | 25 |
| 1.5 Structure of the thesis | 25 |

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

| | |
|---|-----|
| 2.1 Defining Mindfulness | 29 |
| 2.2 Attention and Awareness | 30 |
| 2.3 Well-being | 31 |
| 2.4 Theoretical underpinning | 32 |
| 2.4.1 Jon Kabat-Zinn school of thought | 33 |
| 2.4.2 Ellen Langan school of thought | 37 |
| 2.4.3 Comparing both mindfulness schools of thought | 39 |
| 2.5 Mindfulness and Flow | 409 |
| 2.6 Mindfulness and Pressure | 43 |
| 2.7 Mindfulness and Injury | 46 |
| 2.8 Mindfulness and Practice | 49 |
| 2.9 Mindfulness and Football | 529 |
| 2.10 Summary | 53 |
| 2.11 Literature Update | 54 |
| 2.11.1 Summary and Thesis Focus | 58 |

CHAPTER THREE – Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement in Action: A Case Study with an Elite Football Academy

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 3.1 Introduction | 60 |
| 3.2 Literature Review | 60 |
| 3.3 Method | 64 |
| 3.3.1 Participants | 64 |
| 3.3.2 Procedure | 64 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 3.3.3 | Interview Guide | 66 |
| 3.3.4 | Sessions | 66 |
| 3.3.5 | Measurement | 67 |
| 3.3.6 | Data Analysis | 68 |
| 3.4 | Results and Discussion | 69 |
| 3.4.1 | Experiences | 69 |
| 3.4.1.1 | Challenging Experiences | 69 |
| 3.4.1.2 | Instructions to feel | 70 |
| 3.4.1.3 | Bodily Attention | 71 |
| 3.4.1.4 | Learning | 72 |
| 3.4.1.5 | Relationships | 73 |
| 3.4.1.6 | Controlling Pressure | 73 |
| 3.4.1.7 | Feeling | 74 |
| 3.4.2 | Breathing | 74 |
| 3.4.2.1 | Formal | 74 |
| 3.4.2.2 | Informal | 75 |
| 3.4.2.3 | Anchor | 76 |
| 3.4.3 | Emotional Management | 76 |
| 3.4.3.1 | Relaxation | 77 |
| 3.4.3.2 | Awareness | 77 |
| 3.4.3.3 | Frustration | 78 |
| 3.4.3.4 | Managing Mistakes | 78 |
| 3.4.4 | Understanding | 79 |
| 3.4.4.1 | Defining Mindfulness | 79 |
| 3.4.4.2 | Bringing Attention Back | 79 |
| 3.5 | Future Recommendations | 80 |
| 3.5.1 | Application | 80 |
| 3.6 | Conclusion | 81 |
| 3.7 | Linking section for study one to study two | 82 |

CHAPTER FOUR – Incorporating Mindfulness into Injury Rehabilitation: Player and Physiotherapist Case-Study

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 4.1 | Introduction | 85 |
| 4.2 | Method | 94 |
| 4.2.1 | Design | 94 |
| 4.2.2 | Participants | 95 |
| 4.2.3 | Mason | 96 |
| 4.2.4 | Lewis | 96 |
| 4.2.5 | Researcher | 97 |
| 4.2.6 | Procedure | 98 |
| 4.2.7 | Mindfulness-Based Program | 98 |
| 4.2.8 | Data Analysis | 100 |
| 4.2.9 | Trustworthiness | 101 |
| 4.3 | Results and Discussion | 102 |
| 4.3.1 | Application of Mindfulness | 102 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 4.3.1.1 Experiencing Emotions | 103 |
| 4.3.1.2 Barriers to Practicing | 109 |
| 4.3.1.3 Success of Application | 111 |
| 4.3.2 Support Networks | 116 |
| 4.3.2.1 Trusting Relationships | 116 |
| 4.3.2.2 Inter-Disciplinary Approach | 120 |
| 4.3.3 Rehabilitation | 123 |
| 4.3.3.1 Process | 123 |
| 4.3.4 Learning Points | 125 |
| 4.3.4.1 Lessons Learnt | 126 |
| 4.3.4.2 Take Away Messages | 127 |
| 4.4 Research Issues arising from the Study | 129 |
| 4.5 Summary | 133 |
| 4.6 Conclusion | 136 |
| 4.7 Linking section for study two to study three | 137 |

CHAPTER FIVE – The Power of Being Present: A Creative Non-Fiction Representation of Embedding Mindfulness into Elite Football

| | |
|--|------------|
| 5.1 Introduction | 139 |
| 5.2 Method | 141 |
| 5.2.1 Philosophical Assumptions | 141 |
| 5.2.2 Participants | 142 |
| 5.2.3 Data Collection | 142 |
| 5.2.4 Interview Guide | 143 |
| 5.2.5 Data Analysis and Representation | 143 |
| 5.2.6 Composite Vignettes | 144 |
| 5.2.7 Authenticity | 144 |
| 5.3 Results | 145 |
| 5.3.1 First Vignette: Applying Mindfulness in Practice | 145 |
| 5.3.1.1 Summary | 158 |
| 5.3.2 Second Vignette: Cultural/Organisational Embeddedness of Mindfulness | 159 |
| 5.3.2.1 Summary | 167 |
| 5.3.2.2 Linking section for study three to study four | 168 |

CHAPTER SIX – An Autoethnography Exploring the Lived Experiences of a Psychology Practitioner Embedding Mindfulness into an Already Established Culture: Mindfulness in Professional Football

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.1 Introduction | 170 |
| 6.2 This is Me! | 171 |
| 6.3 Rationale for Autoethnography | 173 |
| 6.4 Critiquing and Evaluating Autoethnography | 175 |
| 6.5 Ethical Dimensions of an Autoethnography | 178 |
| 6.6 The struggles of Application: Personal Voice | 179 |
| 6.6.1 What am I doing! | 179 |
| 6.7 The struggles of Application: Academic Voice | 181 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.8 The use of language: Personal Voice | 185 |
| 6.8.1 It's too fluffy! | 186 |
| 6.9 The use of language: Academic Voice | 187 |
| 6.10 'Eureka Moments': Personal Voice | 189 |
| 6.10.1 Joy | 190 |
| 6.11 'Eureka Moments': Academic Voice | 192 |
| 6.12 General Discussion | 194 |
| 6.13 Limitations and Future Research | 195 |
| 6.14 Conclusion | 195 |

CHAPTER SEVEN – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|--|------|
| 7.1 Aims of the Thesis | 197 |
| 7.2 General Discussion | 198 |
| 7.2.1 Chapter Two | 199 |
| 7.2.2 Chapter Three | 203 |
| 7.2.3 Chapter Four | 206 |
| 7.2.4 Chapter Five | 210 |
| 7.2.4.1 Imposter Syndrome | 211 |
| 7.2.4.2 Use of Language | 214 |
| 7.2.4.3 'Eureka' Moments | 216 |
| 7.3 Practical Applications | 217 |
| 7.3.1 Buy In and Language | 217 |
| 7.3.2 Time | 218 |
| 7.4 Limitations | 219 |
| 7.5 Future Research | 219 |
| 7.6 Applied Implications | 222 |
| 7.6.1 Future Practical Applications for Future Practitioners | 2223 |
| 7.6.2 Future Practical Applications within the Organisation | 223 |
| 7.7 Conclusion | 225 |

CHAPTER EIGHT - A Critical, Self-Reflective Analysis Detailing My Personal and Professional Development During this PhD Journey

| | |
|---|-----|
| 8.1 Introduction | 228 |
| 8.2 Why a PhD? | 228 |
| 8.3 Significant Moments | 229 |
| 8.4 The Dual Role; Researcher and Applied Practitioner | 232 |
| 8.5 Transferable Skills | 235 |
| 8.6 Future Aspirations | 237 |
| References | 238 |
| Appendices | 304 |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Role of the Practitioner-Researcher within the thesis context

The data on which this thesis is based has been drawn from evidence that has been collected over a six-year period, from 2015-2021, where I (the researcher) occupied a dual role as a practitioner-researcher within the organisation being studied. Before starting this programme of research, it is important to clarify that I was employed through the organisation as a sports psychologist within the academy before conducting the PhD research. More specifically, I was (and still am) responsible for the delivery of the performance psychology development programme for the academy players, staff, and parents. When discussing relationships within this PhD, relationships have already been built with players and staff due to my length of service within the organisation. I have worked with players from U9 through to first team, meaning that I have seen their development across their academy journey. Such longevity, and associated respect and reputation within the organisation, assisted the 'buy-in' to the mindfulness method of intervention highlighted throughout this thesis.

Researchers (Bowles, 2014; Foley, 2002; Littlewood, 2005; Maitland, 2012) have suggested that it is important to make the reader aware of the researchers biographic positioning in relation to the research process. As mentioned above, I have been embedded as an employee of the organisation before conducting this research, and therefore my relationship with the research, data collected and the social world in which the research has been conducted in has been influenced (Champ et al., 2018).

Throughout this thesis, the term multi-disciplinary team (MDT) and interdisciplinary team (IDT) will be used. The MDT approach is defined by "...the presence of multiple professionals from diverse disciplines simultaneously working on outcomes for a single patient" (Hess et al., 2019. p. 235). This type of team approach within football allows each discipline to work on specific outcomes for a player, e.g., psychologists working on the staying focused when fatigued in a match, where S&C

practitioners working on fitness levels to sustain performance for over 90 minutes. This approach allows each discipline to work on the players outcome, yet there may be limited communication between discipline team members (Karol, 2014). Clement and Arvinen-Barrow (2013) addressed the MDT approach within sport and found that discipline professionals within the MDT may or may not collaborate across a process to achieve a specific outcome, and some professionals may have a more dominant role than others. However, Clement and Arvinen-Barrow (2013) did highlight the importance of communication between discipline professionals as helpful in achieving the desired outcome. However, researchers (i.e., Karol, 2014; Arvinen-Barrow & Clement, 2015, 2017) found that the MDT approach has low-levels of person-centered care, where athletes are not integrated into the team. In comparison, IDT is similar in makeup to the MDT where multiple professionals are present, however, an IDT engages in meaningful communication and desire authentic collaboration to ensure the needs, goals and process of the athlete is met (Karol, 2014). Melvin (1980) described the interdisciplinary approach as “synergistic, producing more than each individually and separately could accomplish” (p. 380). Ultimately, an IDT approach emphasises communication and collaboration between disciplines to aid the athlete’s well-being (Hess et al., 2019). This approach is believed to improve feelings of autonomy for athletes, reduce burnout in sport professionals, and improve speed and quality of service delivery (Körner, 2010; Richardson et al., 2014; Sinclair et al., 2009).

It is important to note that throughout the six-year time span of this thesis, the psychology departments positioning has changed, evolving to become more interdisciplinary in its stance. When I first arrived at the club, psychology was part of the Education department. This then moved to be placed under Coaching, and now currently sits within the Performance support department which comprises of Psychology, Sports Science, Medical and Performance Analysis for the Academy and Men’s first team.

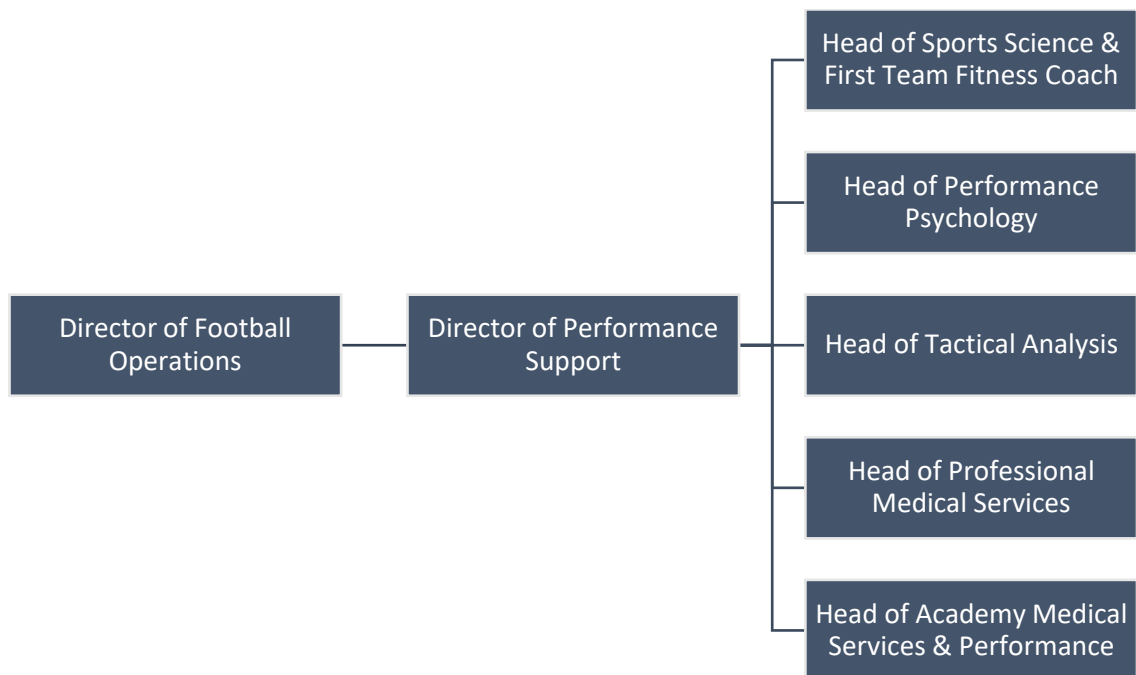


Figure 1: Organisational Structure

I am the first and only full-time member of the psychology team within the organisation working in collaboration with the Head of Performance Psychology. I work with consultants and part-time staff to develop and deliver the psychological programme that is currently running throughout the football academy. During the last 10 years at the club, I have learnt, observed, and experienced the daily practices of the organisation and have a sound understanding of how it operates. With the club psychology department growing rapidly, it is important to maintain innovative approaches and continue to create a psychologically safe environment for staff and players to grow. From evidence within the neuroscience and clinical literature, the potential use of mindfulness in the sporting arena became apparent. The benefits of this intervention have been consistently established within the general population yet research to date has failed to provide insight into its use within football.

It was Sport Denmark's first mindfulness in sport conference, which allowed me to gain greater insight from worldwide practitioners on how mindfulness can be used and be beneficial within sport and at the elite level. Through discussions within the football club, it was apparent that

this research was innovative within football as well as mindfulness becoming more popular within society. This therefore provided discussions between the club, University of Winchester, and I, that this research and thesis would be mutually beneficial. My role as a sports psychologist delivering psychological support would continue but allowing for research to be conducted using mindfulness was accepted and embraced throughout the organisation. I have embarked on several training programmes to become eligible to appropriately deliver mindfulness, as well as undergone several continuous professional development (CPD) events to ensure that appropriate delivery is undertaken. For example, .B (Stop and Be (Mindfulness in Schools Project)) training allowed me to embed mindfulness to players in a user-friendly language, where Mindfulness Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE) allowed me to gain insight into how mindfulness can be delivered within sport.

1.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to being aware of what is happening in the present moment, awareness of what is going on right now. Their ability to focus and pay attention to experiences that are happening in the moment, internally and externally, with an attitude of openness, curiosity, and care (Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005). Individuals might choose to bring attention to a particular aspect of the present moment, such as the breath, without attaching thoughts or emotions that could impact the current experience (Birtwell et al., 2019). Importantly, this non-judgemental awareness involves acceptance of these experiences, regardless of whether they are pleasant or unpleasant. Non-judgemental acceptance of unpleasant experiences may seem unusual for athletes and performers to want to achieve, However, Baltzell and Summers (2017) explain that when athletes judge themselves and their performances, they are limiting their attention on the bigger picture of what be happening in the present moment. Once fully present, then athletes can be more open, creative, and proactive in competition and training. This simple idea has a profound impact on sport development and performance (Baltzell & Summers, 2017).

Athletes strive for optimal performance and often interpret their experiences on the field of play in a self-focused way, based on what has just happened or what they want to happen next. Researchers within the field of football (Clayton, & Humblestone 2006; Nesti, 2010; Parker, 1996, 2001; Richardson et al., 2005) have all described football as a harsh, brutal, and volatile environment. It is as more apparent in professional football compared to other sports due to the majority of its population being from a working-class environment; associated more with lower- and middle-class individuals (Nesti et al., 2012). Parker (1995) described the occupation domain or professional football as a workplace that enforced authority, ruthlessness, and masculine behaviours. In such an environment Richardson et al. (2005) suggests that players need to show traditional hypermasculine behaviours, and mask their true feelings, which can only cause more tension and stress on these young players, prohibiting them from achieving a mindful state. Yet, coaches want players to be able to cope with distractions, refocus after errors, and deal with the high demands and expectations that are placed on them. With this in mind, players can become more self-focused and therefore habitually block out any form of present moment awareness, leaving thoughts such as *'I shouldn't have let that happen. What's wrong with me!'*, and feelings of anger and frustration. These reactions create self-blame and can impact performance, which could result in a vicious cycle of lack of self-worth (Baltzell & Summers, 2017). Football places immense pressure on the players and can increase their susceptibility to mental health issues (Hughes & Leavey, 2012). This pressure that is placed on these players could result in distress, disappointment, and sadness (Heun & Pringle (2018), which ironically may prevent players ability to get into a psychological state which could improve performance. Mindfulness practice, however, allows for a non-judgemental attitude which lessens the avoidance of the internal experiences and strengthens both the psychological flexibility and the distress tolerance (Baltzell, 2016; Kaufman et al., 2018; Shapiro et al., 2006).

The power of mindfulness allows for athletes to learn how to notice different patterns of emotions or thoughts that may arise that could have an impact on performance. Through mindful

practices, athletes can learn to better respond to emotional reactions or urges to behave in a certain way that may inhibit performance. Athletes can learn to stay engaged in performance through mindful practice (Baltzell, 2016; Kaufman et al., 2018; Shapiro et al., 2006).

The growth of the mindfulness literature within the last 20 years has been substantial with interest on mindfulness constructs as well as interventions (Pickert, 2014). Randomised control trials have consistently demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions have demonstrated a positive impact on a number of outcomes that can impact sport performance (Gardner & Moore, 2020). These include enhancing attention, working memory, acceptance, and emotional regulation skills (Birrer et al., 2012; Chiesa et al., 2011; Keng et al, 2011; Tang et al., 2015). In addition, empirical evidence has shown a steady growth and demonstrated improvements in athletes' psychological well-being and performance enhancement (Gardner & Moore, 2020). Gordhamer (2014) suggested, "The benefits of mindfulness practice applied to sports are the most blindingly obvious. Focus, awareness, clarity of thought, and the ability to stay in the present moment are basic skills for any athlete – and mediator"(Para. 4).

Jon Kabat-Zinn was a pioneer in developing a systematic, treatment base that involved mindfulness meditation. Originally, his Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme was first introduced in the late 1970s, initially focusing on helping medical patients relive suffering due to pain, stress, and illness. In 1985, Kabat-Zinn and colleagues introduced mindfulness into the USA Olympic rowing team which was the first application of an empirical mindfulness-based intervention for athletes. This provided the first insight into the use of mindfulness within sport, however there was a lack of research conducted in sport for 15 years. Gardner and Moore's (2004) Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) based performance enhancement programme was the research that started to gain the attraction of mindfulness in sport once again.

With the growth and evolution of theoretical perspectives and empirical data regarding mindfulness, sport psychology professionals are starting to think differently about cognition,

emotion, and physiology. Practitioners are starting to reconsider the way that they work and the techniques they are using within their practice (Kaufman et al., 2018). More recent studies suggest that rather than seeking 'control' or 'changing' internal experiences, mindfulness-and-acceptance-based models are promoting athletes to alter their relationship with internal states (Gardner & Moore, 2020). This approach allows athletes to develop the capacity to view internal experiences as normal, and non-threatening (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Hayes et al., 1999). Sport psychology practitioners and researchers have found mindfulness-based approaches appealing as they could potentially allow for enhanced self-regulation (Thienot et al., 2014) and formed a possible key element in producing optimal performance (Kee & Wang, 2008). More recently, mindfulness has also been explored as a potential way of addressing an athlete's mental health (e.g., Shannon et al., 2019).

Within the sporting literature, there are five established mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) programmes; Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach (MAC; Gardner & Moore, 2007); Mindful Performance Enhancement (MSPE; Kaufman et al., 2009); Mindful Performance Enhancement, Awareness, and Knowledge (mPEAK; Hase et al., 2016); Mindfulness Meditation Training for Sport (MMTS; Batzell & Summers, 2017); and Mindfulness-Acceptance-Insight-Commitment program (MAIC; Su et al., 2019). Mindfulness based programmes have been established and recognised within clinical and non-clinical populations, the above programmes have used these established constructs to target athlete populations (Roychowdhury et al., 2021). In terms of sport performance outcomes, these programmes also address emotional regulation, attentional control, reduction of negative thoughts, facilitation of flow, and promotion of personal well-being (Batzell & Summers, 2017).

1.3 Relevance, Importance, and Originality of the Thesis

The previous section provided an insight into mindfulness and some of the programmes that have started to be introduced into sport. The next section will further discuss the relevance,

importance, and originality of this thesis in deepening our knowledge of its application within professional football, adding new levels of knowledge.

When players are enrolled into a football academy, the Football Association (FA) committed themselves in 2012 to address the holistic aspect of football, introducing the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP). Within category one academies (such as the club within this thesis), the EPPP made sport psychology delivery mandatory (Nesti & Sully, 2014). This was to raise the awareness and application of sport psychology within football, and also to aid the psychological development of players within the system.

English football academies are currently split into three phases of development. The Foundation Phase (FDP) which consists of U9-12 age groups, where players are exposed to multi-disciplinary support (coaching, sport science, medical, performance analysis, psychology) in order to create a foundation for when they transition to the Youth Development Phase (YDP) between the ages of U13-U16. Here the players are exposed to more contact hours which consist of playing football and multi-disciplinary support. Those that are considered the most promising progress onto the Professional Development Phase (U17-U23) and are either signed as an Academy Scholar or a Professional. Players within this age group are full-time within the academy system and being paid to play.

The positive influence of psychology within elite football has been supported and encouraged by researchers and practitioners for over a decade (Daley et al., 2020; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2005; Nesti, 2010; Pain & Harwood, 2008). The FA formalised psychology into the academy system, however the discipline of psychology still faces challenges in its acceptance and integration into the system (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Nesti & Sully, 2014). When players are enrolled into a football academy, the FA committed themselves in 2012 to address the holistic aspect of football, introducing the EPPP. The objectives of the EPPP are to: “1. Increase the number and quality of home-grown players; 2. Create more time for players to play and be coached; 3. Improve

coaching provision; 4. Implement a system effective measurement and quality assurance; 5. Positively influence strategic investment into the academy system; and 6. See to implement significant gains in every aspect of player development” (Daley et al., 2020, p.3). This introduction of psychology from the FA has raised awareness of sport psychology within football, highlighting the need for psychological development of players within the system.

The EPPP guidelines for category 1 status (top status for academies with more financial support) stipulate that:

“Each club which operates a Category 1 Academy shall employ one or more psychologist(s), who shall 1. Be full time (however more than one person may be employed for this purpose to ensure that overall working hours re commensurate with one full time employee) for each club which operates a category 1 academy; and 2. Be on the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) Register of Health and Care Professionals or on one of the approved training routes/pathways towards HCPC registration” (Premier League, 2020, p 41).

Despite the update from the PL and EPPP providing a broader recognition of the value of the psychology discipline at higher levels of performance (e.g., national governing bodies), the question remains whether the organisations are actually embracing the discipline (Champ et al., 2021). To date, there has been no specific research focusing on appropriate psychological frameworks within English football academies (Twizell & Hanley, 2021). However, literature suggests that adopting growth-focused humanistic approaches could allow for academy footballers to take ownership of their own personal growth and goals (Twizell & Hanley, 2021) and that reflective practice encouraged within the system can facilitate psychological growth (Champ et al., 2020; Cropley et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2014). Mindfulness fundamentally allows for reflective practice to seek out truths about the self, existence, and reality, which ultimately promotes awareness and personal growth (Roychowdhury et al., 2021).

The statistical chances of becoming an elite footballer are low (Bevan et al., 2021). It is noted that only 0.012% of boys in England playing organised youth football will make an appearance in the PL (Bevan et al., 2021). With only 180 players out of 1.5 million boys playing youth football in England progressing on to play in the PL. Football academies represent the elite players from this 1.5 million who purposefully strive, with enormous talent, to fulfil their dream of becoming a professional footballer, yet statistically, a lot will fail to achieve their dream of playing in the PL. English football academies have received widespread criticism for their productivity of players. Given that 98% of boys given a scholarship at 16 are no longer playing in the top 5 tiers of the domestic game at 18 (Calvin, 2018), only 10% of those who receive an academy scholarship go on to receive a professional contract (Green et al., 2020).

With the football culture considered as masculine (e.g., Champ et al., 2020a; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kelly & Waddington, 2006; Nesti, 2010; Parker, 1995; Roderick, 2006) this could impact healthy psychological development of these young players (e.g., Champ, 2020a; Mitchell et al., 2014). From an early age, it is considered that males should behave in a certain way in particular environments, experience certain emotions and how they should express such emotions, meaning that they should be confident and assertive individuals (e.g., Berke & Zeichner, 2016). Research has highlighted that by having to conform or act in a certain masculine manner, this could have serious behavioural, physical, and mental health consequences (e.g., Erol & Karpyak, 2015). Research has shown that if individuals suppress, avoid, or ruminate about these emotions, it is positively associated with stress, anxiety, and depression (Aldao et al., 2010). Mindfulness allows individuals to notice these thoughts and emotions with non-judgemental awareness. This highlights the value and need for psychological support for these players (Martindale & Mortimer, 2011), yet the requirement from the FA is still vague. There is still a lack of clarity surrounding the psychology discipline within football academies, and these are emphasised through the challenges faced, i.e., lack of clarity, negative perceptions of psychology amongst staff and players, the delivery not being specific to the demands or the context of the academy environment (Daley et al., 2020; Twizell &

Hanley, 2021). The provision of psychology within football academies is a field that requires more detailed research.

Research within sport indicates that most successful athletes within professional sport apply various psychological skills to enhance performance (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012; Gould et al., 2002). Despite the challenges faced to integrate psychology into professional football, Konter et al., (2019) has found that PST is slowly becoming more popular within the sport. Psychology is not seen as an integral aspect of player and team development, regardless of acknowledgement of its importance (Konter et al., 2019). Assumptions are made from players and coaches (Konter, 2012) that PST lacks effectiveness. Literature has suggested that PST seeks achievement of optimal performance through an optimal internal state, suggesting that specific thoughts and emotions are necessary (Gardner & Moore, 2017). PST relies on methods from first and second wave of cognitive and behavioural interventions whereas mindfulness comes from a third wave therapy approach (Bühlmayer et al., 2017; Rothlin et al., 2020). Third wave approaches suggest that optimal performance does not advocate control, instead it promotes; 1) Full awareness and non-judgement of in the moment internal state; 2) Task-focused attentional processes; 3) Steady and determined values-driven personal commitment (Acceptance Commitment Therapy; ACT) behaviours that allow the achievement of athletic desires (Gardner, 2016). Unlike first and second wave, third wave therapy (Hayes et al., 2004) has stated that embarking on this approach allows athletes to change the context of treating the thought, rather than trying to change the thought. Instead, these practices focus on changing the contextual relationship between the self and thoughts (Hayes et al., 2006). Despite the differences, there are some similarities between the different approaches. For example, both lead the athletes to engage with and reflect on their own experiences; first and second wave through techniques such as relaxation, positive self-talk, reframing (Hardy et al., 1996; Vealy, 2007), whereas third wave describes the ability to face the current experience in an open, accepting, non-judgemental way without trying to change it (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

The contextual environment of football is demanding. Therefore, it is important for academy players to have healthy psychological skills that aid not only their performance development but their life development. Mindfulness seems to be a good skill to therefore introduce (Hayes et al., 2004). Allowing players to accept their thoughts and emotions non-judgementally, when in an extremely judgemental environment has value. This in turn will allow players to be able to 'clear their head' and better focus their attention on the things that matter, rather than the negatives (Baltzell et al., 2014). Regular mindfulness practice may also increase the likelihood of the player reaching a flow state, where they experience an increase in performance (Kaufman et al., 2018).

In order to build upon the current state of research on mindfulness in sport, this thesis seems an appropriate place to start to introduce this concept into football. Literature has highlighted that there is a connection between mindfulness, training, and sport performance. What the literature has failed to explore is whether mindfulness can be embedded into a sporting culture. This thesis is based on around 9000 hours of applied practice across a 72-month time span. Therefore, the level in which the researcher was embedded into the organisation, and the longitudinal nature of this research project offers a deeper account of how mindfulness was used within this context. This arguably demonstrates the strength, and originality of this research project. Allowing for an authentic understanding of mindfulness within a professional football club culture within one specific organisation.

In summary, this thesis supplements current literature within mindfulness in sport. This novel research however provides further insight and offers an additional layer of understanding of how mindfulness can be used within elite level professional football over a longitudinal period.

1.4 Thesis Objectives

The overall aim of the thesis is to explore the use of mindfulness within a football academy context and to investigate whether this concept can be embedded into the culture of a Premier League Football Club. Through four studies the following research objectives will be addressed:

1. To explore the perceived impact of integrating a mindfulness-based training programme with a specific age group of academy players and multi-disciplinary staff.
2. To explore the perceptions of incorporating mindfulness into a long-term injury rehabilitation programme from a player and physiotherapist's perspective.
3. To explore the understanding and integration of mindfulness with the football club's culture from a multi-disciplinary perspective.
4. To reflect on the experiences and realities of a full-time practitioner-researcher embedding mindfulness into a category one academy setting.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The chosen structure of this thesis is informed by the logical progression of the research question as well as the development of my epistemological stance and research philosophy (*please see Chapter Eight*).

Following tradition, the literature review is positioned at the start of this thesis in Chapter Two, to provide overall context and set a foundation for the following studies. Chapter Two aims to inform the reader of relevant prior research and appropriate theoretical perspectives. It critically reviews the current literature in relation to the objectives; in particular, the use of mindfulness within sport, how it can be applied in various sporting settings, and the practical and future development of mindfulness in football. The literature review exposes gaps within the existing literature base and demonstrates the relevance of the research in both further understanding, contributing, and applying mindfulness within football.

Chapter Three is using a known mindfulness-based programme (MSPE) as the foundation to then use its flexible structure to accommodate the football environment. This chapter explores how MSPE transitions from a classroom-based environment to a gym and then onto the pitch. From player experiences, it demonstrates the benefits and provides future recommendations of MSPE and its application within a football academy setting.

Chapter Four highlights and addresses the use of mindfulness within injury rehabilitation. It uses Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore a players and physiotherapists perception of using mindfulness within this setting.

Chapter Five provides insight into multi-disciplinary staff views, beliefs, and perceptions of the use of mindfulness within football and its function. This study has been presented as a creative non-fiction to create a contextual story encapsulating the perceptions of the staff members within the football club. It creates insight for the reader into how different staff members from within a football club view and use mindfulness to benefit performance.

Chapter Six provides an insight into the practitioner-researchers journey throughout this PhD. It elaborates on the highs and lows of conducting mindfulness research within football, creating a bespoke, raw, and unique insight into the application, and embedding of mindfulness into a football setting. It aims to provide comfort and guidance for other practitioners and researchers looking to carry this research forward.

Chapter Seven provides a summary of all the findings within this thesis. It looks to provide insight into the practical applications as well as the limitations of carrying out this work. It also highlights the need for future research to enhance the mindfulness literature further, continuing to bridge the gap between the literature and applied practical application.

Chapter Eight gives an insight into the professional journey of the practitioner-researcher went on. Providing context of the lessons learnt and how this benefited both academic and applied practice. Displaying the journey of a researcher and the impact this had on the shape of the studies and the style of data collection taken.



Figure 2. Thesis outline with study titles and research questions

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the world of elite sport, athletes and coaches are always looking for something special to help them gain the winning edge over their opponents and cope with extreme pressure. Sport is described as an environment where individuals motivate themselves to achieve goals and objectives through hard and dedicated training regimes (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2018). Athletes are required to consistently cope with the stress of training demands and competitive pressure, which, if they reach their potential, requires them to understand and regulate their emotions (Laborde et al., 2015; Korobeynikov et al., 2013). One psychological skill which can help them achieve these things is mindfulness. Mindfulness is about maintaining a moment-to-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and bodily sensations which is beneficial for athletes and the demands of their sports. Despite mindfulness in sport has become an increasingly 'hot topic' within the last 5 years, it has been connected to sport since the 1950s.

Coaches have integrated mindfulness principles into their practices for a long time, without referring to them specifically as mindfulness (Kaufman et al., 2018). Coaches have emphasised the importance of being in the present moment during practices, focusing on the process rather than the outcome, and letting go of what is uncontrollable; all of which are key aspects of mindfulness (Blythe, 2006). Within sport, athletes, coaches, and practitioners are seeking to facilitate successful performance outcomes; allowing psychological practices to become embedded into daily training routines which will allow all parties to achieve improvements in performance.

The increasing number of stressors that are placed on athletes, coaches, and staff, aligned with the emotional challenges they face (from fear to self-judgement, e.g., Kaufman et al., 2018) can have a detrimental effect on performance. Such mindful awareness therefore allows one to see how past choices a physical and psychological influence on current and future experiences can have, which is one reason why athletes utilise mindfulness. The United States Olympic Committee has utilised mindfulness training. The first mindful meditation program was implemented with Olympic level rowers (Hopper, 2017). These findings suggest that by increasing focus, concentration, and

attention, athletes will reduce their levels of stress and anxiety as well as improving cognitive function. In turn this will decrease the likelihood of athletic burnout. Research therefore suggests that mindfulness training correlates positively to performance in sport. Mindfulness is the 'guiding paradigm' in helping athletes train for and cope with the stress of performing in the Olympic Games (Kaufman et al, 2018). It teaches athletes to gain greater awareness and accept experiences that arise, learning to manage these and move past them rather than ignore or block unpleasant experiences (Hopper, 2017).

2.1 Defining Mindfulness

Mindfulness is also most commonly described as one being aware of what is taking place in the present. There are many scientific definitions of mindfulness and there are minor differences between them. The term 'mindfulness' originally stems from the Pali word 'sati', meaning 'remembering' or 'to remember' (Bodhi, 2000). Pali is the language, native to the southern regions of Asia, where the earliest Buddhist literature was written. The most common definition of mindfulness is by Jon Kabat-Zinn, "...paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally" (1994, p. 8).

Other definitions include moment by moment awareness (Germer et al., 2005), keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality (Hanh, 1976), attentional control (Teasdale, et al. 1995), a form of self-regulation of attention (Hassed, 2013), bringing ones awareness to current experiences through observing and attending to the change in thoughts, feelings, and sensations from moment to moment (Bishop et al, 2004), and complete attention to one's experience moment by moment (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999). Although there are various definitions, most appear to stem from Kabat-Zinn's 1994 definition.

These definitions are meditative in nature, emphasising non-reactive awareness and concentration on one's experiences and self. The main aim of mindfulness is to keep the mind fully grounded in the present moment and decrease any reactivity that experiences may cause.

Mindfulness is a way of relating to positive, negative, and neutral experiences in the same way and

showing no self-judgment. If this is achieved, suffering and pain is reduced and a sense of well-being increases (Germer, et al., 2005).

2.2 Attention and Awareness

Over the last two decades, mindfulness-related interventions have become increasingly popular across a range of domains from healthcare, sport performance, and business. These interventions and therapeutic approaches, promote the practice as part of physical and mental well-being. Different mindfulness-related interventions have matured such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes & Kirk, 2004), mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Teasdale et al., 2000) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). These therapies have been designed specifically to focus one's attention on the present experience in a way that is non-judgemental (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). With the interest in mindfulness evolving and becoming even more prevalent in the world we live in today, so do studies investigating mindfulness applications to sport (Mumford, 2015). Yet, the research is still relatively limited to adult populations.

Attention and awareness are constantly referred to during sport performance. To date it has been highlighted that when athletes adopt a skill-focus of attention, it can impair performance, and when athletes become too conscious of the execution of the skill, helpful/debilitative thoughts may appear, and choking may then occur (Gucciardi & Dimmock, 2008). Attention and awareness are consistent features of normal functioning (Brown & Ryan, 2003); mindfulness can allow athletes to experience an enhanced awareness and attention that allows individuals become more attuned to the current or present experience. Jha et al., (2007) have suggested that mindfulness training can enhance an athlete's attention subsequently allowing for performance improvements. Bishop and colleagues (2004) also suggest that mindfulness training can improve the self-regulation of attention. As well as shown to have huge beneficial impact, mindfulness can be considered an "enhanced awareness and attention of a current experience" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). Mindfulness also allows an individual to become more self-aware, addressing the internal state, consisting of physical

sensation (such as pain, tingling, tightness, itching, burning, numbness etc.) and psychological experiences including thoughts and feelings. Awareness of behaviour is also important as this allows for observation of actions in response to thoughts and feelings (Giges & Reid, 2016). Many studies (Jha et al., 2007; Lutz et al., 2008) have shown that mindfulness improves aspects of attention as well as increasing control of behaviour (Halliwell, 2010).

Several researchers have interpretations of mindfulness, and Bishop et (2004) state that practice of mindfulness as “self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment” and “an orientation that is characterised by curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (p.232). Vago (2014) further suggested that it is easy for individuals to switch to autopilot, where an individual may create new views and thoughts about themselves or the environment around them. These views can have an influence on the present state of awareness, as well as the past memories and imaging the future outcomes; impairing how individuals view themselves, hence how mindfulness can be effective.

2.3 Well-being

Previous reviews of health and well-being have noted the benefits of incorporating mindfulness not only into performance but also lifestyle. Neuro-scientific research has shown that mindfulness creates changes in the neural networks underlying emotional regulation (Holzel et al., 2008). Goldin and Gross (2010) supported this finding by providing evidence that there was a decrease in the amygdala response after mindfulness was used within anxious patients. Mindfulness has been shown to have beneficial changes in cognitive processing, thus reducing rumination which can lead to negative impact on performance. Athletes who practice mindfulness can learn to monitor their moment-by-moment experiences so that they can ‘step back’ from the negative or distressing thoughts and feelings in order to view them as mental events and not reality (Kerr et al., 2013).

There are also many studies that show the benefits of mindfulness in stress management. Davidson et al. (2003) reported that mindfulness increases immune functioning and produces brain changes which enables more effective handling of emotions when under stress. Another study (Mackenzie et al., 2006) showed that mindfulness can reduce the symptoms of burnout as well as improving life satisfaction. Many researchers (Eklund & Cresswell, 2007; Goodger et al., 2007; Madigan et al., 2019; Schaffran et al., 2016) have stated that preventing or even reducing burnout is viewed as an important issue in the sport psychology literature.

2.4 Theoretical underpinning

The literature on mindfulness broadly speaking, has been driven by two leading schools of thought, loosely referred to as Eastern and Western approaches. The role of these two approaches is to keep the mind grounded in the present moment and to decrease the reactivity to what happens at that particular moment. However, the most current definition of mindfulness from the more traditional, meditative perspective (Eastern) is that it is a form of self-regulation of attention that is in the present moment and is characterised by openness, curiosity, and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004). This aligns with John Kabat-Zinn's (1990) definition as purposeful, present, non-judgmental awareness. Ellen Langer's Western approach is less meditative and draws on more novel distinctions, which results in being situated in the present moment; being sensitive to context and the perspective and guided by rules and routines.

2.4.1 Jon Kabat-Zinn school of thought

Jon Kabat-Zinn and colleagues have labelled their Buddhist meditative approach as an Eastern mindfulness approach. Kabat-Zinn's concept of mindfulness has a big emphasis on meditation, and therefore in the 1970s Kabat-Zinn and colleagues produced a programme which was developed from a therapeutic viewpoint to address chronic illness, pain and stress and address psychological well-being (Brown et al., 2003). The Mindfulness Based Stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) programme cultivates compassionate self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-regulation, which can lead to a greater capacity to stay in or return to a state of calmness. The

Eastern approach is meditative in its nature, emphasising non-reactive awareness and concentration of oneself and experiences (i.e., viewing the body's sensations and feelings, observing one's mind) (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2007). Baer (2003) suggested that Kabat-Zinn's approach to mindfulness focused predominantly on observing both internal and external stimuli as it arises.

Mindlessness, as Kabat-Zinn described, is viewed as experiencing the world on 'automatic pilot'. The goal of mindfulness practice in this context is to develop self-regulatory abilities that ultimately need a self-disciplined mind (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Depraz et al., (2000) allude to the "practice" of meditation, and the "practice" of mindfulness is all about the actual engagement in the discipline; the "performance" of meditation is all about the moment unfolding (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). This practice and engagement takes place in a variety of forms, ranging from formal practices that are undertaken under guidance for varying periods of time on a regular basis, to informal practices that are aimed at cultivating a steadiness of awareness in everyday living (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness meditation is thus practised relieving suffering by improving one's metacognition awareness and regulatory processes (Wallace, 2005). This mindful awareness can be practised through exercises such as yoga, tai chi, centering, and mindfulness meditation derived from Buddhist tradition. Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme has contribute to much of the literature of mindfulness; explicitly, the impact of mindful awareness on the brain and immune function, as well as health and well-being.

Kabat-Zinn and colleagues developed an MBSR programme, that was originally created for patients with chronic pain and has since been applied with patients with a range of other conditions such as cancer, heart disease, other chronic illnesses, and relieving other symptoms (such as pain and fatigue (Ie et al., 2014)). The programme is also offered to patients who have psychological symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, stress, and panic. The main aim of this programme is to reduce physical and psychological symptoms through the enhancement of self-regulation through mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 2003).

In Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme, meditators are encouraged not to try and stop the pain or aches they are experiencing, but rather direct their attention to that area and the thoughts, emotions, or sensations, whilst being non-judgemental. Kabat-Zinn states that when individuals acknowledge pain and start to accept this pain (aware that this pain may always be there), mindfulness techniques are believed to relieve the stress and discomfort. The individual will start to understand that the thoughts, pain, sensations, and emotions are just thoughts and not reality; leading to desensitisation, allowing the pain to ease (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016). Kabat-Zinn repeatedly clarifies in his writing that when practising mindfulness, it is not a form of religion, and it is about paying attention to intention and without judgement.

Through engaging in mindfulness practice, individuals intentionally shape their internal focus that ultimately induces a state of brain activation. Kabat-Zinn and colleagues suggest that practice is crucial for success. With repetition, the intentionally created state triggers long-term changes in both the function and structure of the brain (McCarthy & Hayden, 2016) as well as experiencing less anxiety and rumination (Sibinga et al., 2013). This is neuroplasticity, the brain forming new neural connections, allowing the neurons to adjust and respond to new situations or changes in the environment (Bergland, 2017). Individuals who also practise mindfulness begin to experience trait-like differences in their ability to respond to emotion and perform in the face of stress-inducing stimuli (Davidson, 2002).

Historically there has been a high degree of scepticism regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation, especially with its non-empirical origin. However, the MBSR programme has proven to be very effective in enhancing the awareness of mindful meditation as well as contributing to the positive outcome individuals have had whilst on this programme (Ie et al., 2014). Studies of MBSR have demonstrated the effectiveness of the programme as a health-promoting activity; such findings outline the development of the programme and highlight the impact it can have on individuals (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Due to the increasing interest in mindfulness and the further evidence gained through research, neuroscientists are becoming more interested in

understanding the biological mechanisms that underline the brain. In the neuroscience literature, within the past decade, 21 studies have investigated the alterations in the brain relating to mindfulness meditation (Tang et al., 2015). There are a number of studies that have investigated the brain activation whilst at rest as well as when practicing mindfulness meditation. There is emerging evidence that mindfulness meditation may cause neuroplastic changes within the brain structure and functions that are involved with regulation of attention, emotion, and self-awareness (Tang et al., 2015). One meta-analysis addressed 21 studies that examined 300 brains of experience mindfulness practitioners (Fox et al., 2014). They found that brain regions were altered, and some changes that were seen include density and thickness of brain tissue, cortical surface area, and white matter fibre density (Fox et al., 2014). Tang et al., (2015) concluded that mindfulness meditation strengthens cognitive thinking processes which impacts positively emotional processing. Research explains that it is important to practise mindfulness and Segal (2007) explains that with repetition, mindful practice can create intentional brain activity which may become traits of the individual. The new patterns of the neural circuit strengthen the synaptic connections, which will lead to synaptic growth; this leads to an effortless trait which is seen as a fundamental component of mindfulness, reducing anxiety, and enhancing well-being (Hayes, 2004).

The second key finding from this programme is that this activity in the left frontal part of the brain also correlates with improved immune functioning as well as reducing anxiety (Davidson et al., 2003). The third finding (Moynihan et al., 2013) suggested that individuals were able to sustain attention for longer (greater executive functioning) and display significant improvements in self-regulation. From this programme, individuals were able to aside the 'unwanted chatter' that was in their mind and experience more flow of being in the here and now, the present moment. For individuals to perform to their full potential, avoid burnout, and have a healthy well-being, they need to learn to take a step back and detach themselves and not ruminate.

The Eastern approach and the research surrounding it that has been discussed here shows that meditators that embark on this approach are able to better monitor their own thoughts and emotions while adopting an accepting attitude towards them. The aim of mindfulness meditation-based therapies is to strengthen a meditators self-regulatory and metacognitive capabilities, and the research supports that this is best achieved through regular practice of mindfulness meditation (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016).

2.4.2 *Ellen Langer school of thought*

Ellen Langer and colleagues (Ie et al., 2014; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000) developed an alternative approach to mindfulness in the 1970's which has subsequently been labelled the 'western' approach. This western approach investigates two opposing cognitive states in relation to one's performance, psychological well-being, and health, emerging from a social psychological approach (Langer, 1989). Langer summarised mindfulness as conscious awareness, which entails "a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2), where an individual will attend to the present moment and to the events that may occur. Mindfulness according to this view is believed to increase an individual's cognitive and behavioural control in order to have a better and more meaningful connection with the environment (Carson & Langer, 2006).

Langer's early research focused on mindlessness, and its use in everyday life. Similar to Kabat-Zinn, Langer suggests that mindlessness is synonymous with being on 'auto-pilot'. However, Langer recognised that even though automatic behaviour can be useful as it allows the mind to execute high levels of cognitive functioning; being on 'auto-pilot' for a long period of time can be detrimental to performance, cognitive functioning, and well-being and health (Langer, 1994). Langer and colleagues further stated that individuals need to be open to new experiences and to want to draw from novel experiences. Being highly attentive to external stimuli can allow individuals to become more sensitive in relation to one's environment, which in turn encourages individuals to be alert to

new information, becoming aware of different perspectives on stimuli (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Langer's approach to mindfulness differs to the Kabat-Zinn approach, as the approach suggests that mindfulness does not need to be enhanced through meditation. Rather, mindfulness is gained by being in the present; open to the unknown, alert, and aware of different sensations that occur in different experiences, and an awareness of multiple perspectives. She believes that mindfulness can be enhanced through understanding the variations of one's mental and physical state (Le et al., 2014). By increasing cognitive and behavioural states, it allows individuals to have a greater capacity to accept uncertainty, be less reactive and more flexible, and have a greater engagement with one's environment. Langer and her colleagues have been able to induce a state of mindfulness through instructional interventions, which prompts individuals to momentarily think moving them from mindlessness to mindfulness.

Dhiman (2012) suggested that this approach to mindfulness can also facilitate the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is a state of consciousness where an individual becomes totally immersed in the activity and experience, which is intrinsically rewarding for the enjoyment or engagement of moment-to-moment experience of that activity (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016). Flow is where the mind and body are working harmoniously, leaving the feeling of ease (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), and transferring from the ordinary to optimal, often creating optimal performance and creativity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005).

More recently, Langer has suggested that mindfulness and creativity naturally pair together which can promote the types of cognitive processes that are essential for creativity such as flexibility, critical thinking, and reasoning. According to Levy and Langer (1999), there are four components to mindfulness which facilitate the process of creative thinking: (a) engagement – being aware of changes that take place; (b) seeking novelty – being open to new environments; (c) novelty producing – the ability to construct new meanings or experiences; and (d) flexibility – view experiences from multiple perspectives and adjust one's behaviour accordingly. Through various

non-clinical studies, Langer and colleagues have used interventions that promote individuals to intentionally regulate their thinking, shifting from a mindlessness state to a mindfulness one.

Several studies have looked at the western approach to mindfulness, where they aimed to interrupt mindless, automated habitual cognitive states by prompting mindful states of awareness through various stimuli to evoke deliberate self-regulation of attention (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016). Studies within this approach induce mindful states of consciousness mostly through instructional interventions.

Results from this approach show improvement in cognitive functions, well-being, and health measures, as well as reductions in psychological distress symptoms.

2.4.3 Comparing both mindfulness schools of thought

Both of these approaches have received a great amount of interest in the literature as well more broadly in the public domain. As well as having differences between the two approaches, both have to deal with the unwillingness of individuals to accept reality and the present moment as it is: being mindless. There is a reluctance to face suffering, pain, and resistance to failure. When individuals practice mindfulness, regardless of the approach, once practised individuals will face dis-regulation that is needed to make change. Individuals need to be aware that either approach is not easy and may struggle, however the struggle will become less and less; learning to be mindful accept reality and one-self (Djickic, 2014).

Two other earlier contributors to the Eastern style mindfulness-based approach in medicine include Herbert Benson and Richard Davidson (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016). Benson's greatest contribution to the field was his demonstration of how meditation can improve one's stress response and subsequently prevent negative physiological reactions that are associated with stress. He suggests that the mind and body are one. A lot of approaches, both Eastern and Western, explain the mind-body relationship; suggesting that if a change was to occur in the mind (i.e., cognitive changes), there would also be a change in the body (i.e., cellular, hormonal, neural changes).

Reviewing both Kabat-Zinn and Langer's approaches to mindfulness, the main aspect that both approaches highlighted was the importance of self-regulation. Rather than getting distracted by thoughts, where they have come from, and the implications these thoughts could have, mindfulness allows for individuals to have a direct experience with the mind and the body (Teasdale et al., 1995). Both approaches are not practices in thought suppression, it is about observation. Mindfulness enables individuals to manage feelings of pain, discomfort, fear, and anxiety (Buckley & Cameron, 2011; De Petrillo et al., 2009) aids performance outcome as well as a healthier well-being and lifestyle. Both processes are however obtained in different manners. While the Eastern concept emphasises practices rooted in meditation, Western concepts foster a heightened sense of awareness through maintaining an open awareness of new information and forming new categories from one's experiences. Despite the noticeable differences between the two approaches, the degrees of similarities considerably outweigh the differences. Both approaches have a similar view of the relationship between the mind and the body.

2.5 Mindfulness and Flow

Flow is a state that all athletes strive to achieve due to the association between flow and peak performance (Jackson & Roberts, 1992; Landháuber & Keller, 2012). Researchers have stated that when athletes have experienced flow, they have reported to be relaxed, calm, and have a heightened perception of the body (Chavez, 2008), experiencing more bodily awareness, stronger heartbeat, and 'tingling' sensations in their muscles (Bernier, 2009). In addition, athletes have reported more awareness, acceptance, and less judgemental cognitive processes when in the state of flow (Swann et al., 2015); qualities seen when practising mindfulness. Swann and colleagues (2012) demonstrated that several factors could prevent or disrupt flow: focus, performance, thoughts, emotions, and arousal. When the mind is distracted, the present moment is no longer present. Daniel Smith (2013) edited the book *Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety* which addresses how the mind can constantly become distracted and restless, and how individuals can manage the

mind. Despite studies showing that flow can be unpredictable, professionals have stated that in order to achieve optimal performance and experience that place called “the Zone”, athletes need to be in the present moment, experiencing each moment as it comes.

Milhalý Csikszentmihályi (1975) first introduced flow, and after interviewing a range of performers concluded that all performers experience an automatic experience, which resulted in intrinsic rewards through pure enjoyment of the activity. Csikszentmihályi (1999) defined flow as “a particular kind of experience that is so engrossing and enjoyable that it becomes autotelic, that is, worth doing for its own sake even though it may have no consequence outside itself” (p. 824). He was aware that being ‘in the flow’ represents a particular state of happiness, one that allows individuals to experience complete absorption which calls for full attention. Comparing what is an enjoyable moment to moment for individuals in highly engaging experiences, to individuals who are mindless; caught up in the past or worrying about the future was an interesting subject area for Csikszentmihályi. The concept of flow has always been an intriguing concept in the academic literature but also within every-day activities; sport, music, business. Csikszentmihályi (1990) began to understand that people were most creative, productive, and often happiest when they were in a state of flow. Csikszentmihályi first got intrigued with the subject of flow by wanting to understand the roots of happiness. His studies (Csikszentmihályi, 1990) led him to conclude that happiness is an internal state and happiness can be shifted through the introduction of flow. It is part of the positive psychology movement and health (Compton & Hoffman, 2013) and also closely aligned with sport, more precisely, optimal performance.

Having a present-moment awareness is a key concept to experiencing flow. Both focus and awareness can be developed through the practice of mindfulness. With mindfulness having a more prominent feature in sport psychology literature and in its application as an intervention, this approach demonstrates the value of present-moment awareness. The two constructs of flow and

mindfulness are very interrelated. Leading sport psychologist Terry Orlick describes the optimal state of performance as:

The ideal performance focus is total concentration to your performance. Focusing on distracting thoughts (about final placing, others' expectations, the weather) interferes with an effective task focus. Stay in the moment, which is the only one you can influence anyway (Orlick, 1990, p.16).

Orlick is one of many researchers that has emphasised the importance and relationship between awareness and peak performance. Tasks are performed better when there is full attention on that task, and this concentrated focus may help the with the finding of flow in performance. Flow is an optimal state because it involves being fully focused in the present moment. Mindfulness practices helps bring focus and present-moment awareness, training the mind to not become distracted or disturbed. Thus, allowing and teaching athletes to become more mindful may also help create the conditions for flow (Jackson, 2016). Studies have shown empirical support that mindfulness enhance the ability to experience flow (i.e., Aherne et al., 2011; Cathcart et al., 2014; Kee & Wang, 2008; Kaufman et al., 2009).

Being mindful shares a lot of similar properties to flow, such as concentration, awareness, and control. Csikszentmihalyi (2008) described the experience of flow as being when an individual is completely immersed in the activity, where challenges and skill levels are high; both equal to each other which allows for "the Zone" and flow. Mumford (2016) explains:

"The more one practices mindfulness, the more readily one sets themselves up to experience conscious flow. Put differently: having mindfulness practice is like watering one's garden; it's the only way to make things grow" (p.75).

Despite having similar properties, they are also quite different. Sheldon et al (2015) suggested that mindfulness is about maintaining reflective awareness in each moment. Whereas

Sheldon and colleagues (2015) state that flow alters the inner consciousness of an individual, which blurs that moment into a continuous stream of activity. Individuals may ask why mindfulness is beneficial if it is potentially the opposite of flow. Mindfulness isn't a state to prevent flow, it allows the mind to maintain focus and with-stand min-wondering. By staying present and in the moment, athletes will have control over their task allowing for total absorption and achieving flow. In essence, an athlete needs the right combination of cognitive, affective, and physiological conditions in order for a well learned skill to occur in an effortless ad automatic manor (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

Some research (Aherne, et al., 2011; Carthcart et al., 2014; Chen & Meggs, 2021; Kaufman et al., 2009) has highlighted that mindfulness training can boost flow; however, this research didn't distinguish the difference between flow absorption and flow control. Further studies in this area help to promote further understanding of both mindfulness and flow. Jackson (2016) states that the concept of flow provide practitioners and researchers an understanding of those moments in time that make life worth-while. Mindfulness through awareness of moment-by-moment experiences, provides allows for athletes to develop those skills that will lead to flow.

Jackson (2016) highlights the importance of flow and how every athlete wants to experience that positive state. The concept of flow provides practitioners and researchers with a key to understanding those moment in time that make everything worth doing. Jackson (2016) stated: "Mindfulness, through cultivating present-moment awareness, provides one pathway for developing skills that can help unlock the door to flow" (p 96).

2.6 Mindfulness and Pressure

Pressure is a term that is often used within elite sport and is spoken about by coaches, support staff and athletes, when actually pressure is nothing more than something that manifests from people's imagination and self-imposed experiences that sporting individuals create (DeCaro et al., 2010). Even at the highest performance level, disruptive thinking which turns to rumination, can occur. However, in the context of sporting environments, this type of thinking could be fundamental

to optimal performance (Bierrer et al., 2012). Individuals can thrive off pressure, but in order to thrive, individuals need to know their own mind and body. In order to pursue excellence, athletes, coaches, support staff all need to be able to recognise pressure and either be comfortable to detach themselves from that pressure or understand how to elevate that pressure in order to enhance performance. A lot of the time, pressure comes when individuals are pushed out of their comfort zones, yet this is often how optimal performance is achieved. Having the ability to recognise what discomfort feels like will enable individuals to develop and grow, creating a clearer outlook on potential opportunities (Mumford, 2016).

Previously in this chapter, flow and pressure has briefly been discussed which ultimately research has suggested is a state that athletes want to achieve (Nideffer, 2002). Yet the internal stressors that athletes place on themselves can inhibit that flow state, such as internal failure attribution (Biddle et al., 2001). During performances, athletes ideally adapt themselves and their behaviour automatically to the situational demands (Gardner & Moore, 2007). This automatic process consists of self-monitoring and self-evaluation, to regulate behaviour effectively in order to perform (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Mindfulness can help athletes step back and observe the unwanted thoughts that they are having without judgement and or feeling the need to act on them. When internal pressure is so strong, athletes are mindless, being overly sensitive to that self-critic inside and making everything contained as a narrow channel (Mumford, 2016).

In professional sport, a lot of the focus is on what is wrong or what needs to change, rather than noticing what is right (Baltzell, 2016). The internal experience of athletes needs to be given more attention, to enable athletes to accept and at worst tolerate what emerges whilst coping and focusing on the elite high-performance environment around them. Athletes need more guidance towards the raw acceptance and exploration of what is happening moment to moment, being open and curious at such difficult moments, such as performance anxiety (Baltzell, 2016). Research has shown that mindfulness helps reduce anxiety (Hofmann et al., 2010). Mindfulness teaches athletes

to be aware of the present moment, rather than acting instinctively , unaware of what emotions maybe driving that decision. By teaching awareness for one’s physical and mental state in the moment, mindfulness allows for more adaptive reactions to difficult situations (Hofman et al., 2010).

Speilberger and Hackfort (1989) stated that there are two components to anxiety that can affect an athlete’s competence to perform, worry and emotionality: an increase in autonomic arousal levels. Due to this increase in arousal level, the mind gets caught up in thoughts which create a stress response whereby a part of the brain does not function as efficiently. As previously stated, this unwanted stress response impacts behaviour and can affect performance outcome, causing an increase in anxiety and negatively impacting their perception of pressure.

For some athletes, being asked to accept thoughts and emotions or focusing on the stimuli/environment is tough, and sometimes athletes need more than this to assist them in performance (Baltzell, 2016). As stated above, some athletes may be exposed to that harsh self-critic or intense negative emotions, normally resulting from high pressure-performance expectations, and may need more than mindfulness interventions. Athletes may need more support coping with thoughts and emotions beyond trying to manage and accept their feelings. The ultimate goal for any practitioner, coach or support staff is to help athletes feel more empowered to emotionally regulate effectively when face with intense fear of trying to achieve optimal performance (Baltzell, 2016).

2.7 Mindfulness in Injury

Injuries are a common occurrence within football and results in a major event for players (Stubbe et al., 2015). It is estimated that 65% to 95% of international football players suffer at least one injury a year (Hagglund, 2007) with injury incidences occurring between 2 – 19.5 every 1000 hours of football practice (Pfirrmann et al., 2016). Injuries within football can cause huge financial loss (Ekstrand, 2013) but also cause unsuccessful performance or early

retirement from the sport (Drew et al., 2017). These injured players can experience a number of negative psychological and emotional effects such as depression, anxiety, sadness, isolation, anger, frustration, lack of motivation (Brewer & Redmond, 2016; Putukian, 2016).

Researchers Williams and Anderson (1998) proposed the model of stress and athletic injury to better understand the relationship between acute (traumatic) sport injuries and psychological factors. The understanding of stress within this model varies depending on the athlete's perception of the situation, such as an important competition, or playing for your country for the first time; these situations may lead to a stress response. This evaluation is known as cognitive appraisal (Naderi et al., 2020). The more an athlete sees a situation as threatening, the more intense the stress response will be (Williams & Anderson, 1998).

Over the last decade, more attention has been directed towards the psychosocial strategies within injury prevention (Naderi et al., 2020). The studies that have used the Williams and Andersen (1998) model suggest that interventions that have been directed towards the stress response have the potential to decrease the risk of acute injuries (Ivarsson, et al., 2015; Ivarsson et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2005; Perna, et al., 2003; Tranaeus et al., 2015). The limitations of these studies however, is the purposeful selection of participants, meaning that these studies selected athletes who are at risk of acute sporting injuries (Johnson et al., 2005; Perna et al., 2003; Tranaeus et al., 2015). The reason this is a limitation within these studies is because the findings cannot be generalised and the magnitude of the effect of intervention may seem less effective (Naderi et al., 2020).

Mindfulness within injury has become increasingly more popular within the literature (Ivarsson et al., 2015; Ivarsson et al., 2017). Mindfulness is about paying attention in the moment without judgement, and according to Williams and Andersen (1998), paying attention to the 'here and now' is part of human survival. Internal thoughts and distracting external cues can prevent us from being present in the moment and impact the effectiveness of

scanning the environment for threats. Therefore, these changes in attentional processes are thought to impact and athletes' susceptibility to injury (Brewer & Redmond, 2017).

Mindfulness can have an important impact on an athlete's susceptibility to injury (Naderi et al., 2020). In a 6-month study with 41 high school Swedish soccer players, Ivarsson and colleagues (2015) reported their mindfulness intervention had a medium effect on injury incidence, meaning the participants within the mindfulness group had almost over half the number of injuries of the control group. The study didn't however show significant change amongst the control group and the mindfulness group, and the sample size was relatively small to show any generalisability. In addition, Naderi et al (2020) expanded on Ivarsson et al (2015) work where they found a positive relationship between mindfulness training and injury; meaning that mindfulness training positively influenced attention and state mindfulness and negatively influenced trait anxiety and perceived stress. This then led to a decrease in sport injury (Naderi et al., 2020). These findings show consistency with other studies in the reduction of sports injuries within football (Tranaeus et al., 2015; Edvardsson et al., 2012; Ivarsson et al., 2015). Naderi et al., (2020) suggest that some processes which mindfulness may help reduce injury are improved attention and perceive situations in a less stress-inducing manor. In addition, their findings also found that mindfulness helped injured players improve speed and accuracy of information processing which would help players identify and react quicker to relevant stimuli, allowing them to function safely in the environment (Rogers & Landers, 2005).

Within a sporting injury, athletes become stressed, and this can be detrimental to their recovery. Athletes' beliefs, emotions and thoughts influence the way their body responds after injury and more specifically, there is an interaction between the body and the mind (Mohammed et al., 2018). Arvinen-Barrow and Walker (2013) mention that mindfulness can be an effective addition to the rehabilitation process as it helps relax the body and mind.

It can additionally enable the athlete to gain more awareness and acceptance about their injury and the current situation that they find themselves in. Stahl and Goldstein (2010) emphasise that being in the present moment and paying attention to the body's physical sensations is important within rehabilitation, and therefore the mindfulness practice of a body scan can be an effective technique for the reduction of physical pain, stress, and anxiety. Literature (Mohammed et al., 2018) suggests that mindfulness can encourage athletes to accept whatever situations they may be facing and not judge them.

2.8 Mindfulness and Practice

Mindfulness allows for athletes to become aware of their personal thoughts, feelings, and any other internal aspect that they may be encountering. Mindfulness practice also allows for athletes to focus on personal values and process that are related to their sporting skills or strategies rather than staying focused too heavily on their performance outcomes (Pineau et al., 2014). Although mindfulness research is now growing within the sporting literature, it was Jon Kabat-Zinn who is responsible for introducing mindfulness into Western medicine and psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Michalak et al., 2019; Segal, 2014). It was Kabat-Zinn's work that heavily influenced the introduction of mindfulness into sport. Phil Jackson, a basketball coach for the Chicago Bulls and LA Lakers, states that he viewed the game of basketball through the lens of 'Zen' and the reason he introduced mindfulness:

"Basketball is a complex dance that requires shifting from one objective to another at lightning speed. To excel, you need to act with a clear mind and be totally focused on what everyone on the floor is doing. Some athletes describe this quality of mind as a 'cocoon of concentration'. But this means shutting out the world when what you really need to do is become acutely aware of what's happening right now, this very moment. The secret is not thinking. That doesn't mean being stupid; it means quieting the endless jabbering of thoughts so that your body can do instinctively what it's been

trained to do without the mind getting in the way. All of us have had flashes of this sense of oneness – making love, creating a work of art – when we’re completely immersed in the moment, inseparable from what we’re doing. This kind of experience happens all of the time on the basketball floor; that’s why the game is so intoxicating. But if you are really paying attention, it can also occur while you’re performing the most mundane tasks” (1995, p.115-116).

, Stemming from Kabat-Zinn’s work in MBSR and Phil Jackson’s use within basketball, this started the trend for mindfulness within research and applied practice. Haberl (2016) explains that mindfulness offers the athlete and the practitioner a way to prepare for the uncertainty that accompanies the world of high-performance sport. Although every athlete and practitioner desires that ‘winning’ outcome, what can be controlled is the preparation and engagement with the present moment. Phil Jackson (1995) summarises by stating that “winning is important to me, but what brings me real joy is the experience of being fully engaged in whatever I’m doing” (p.201). Mindfulness offers someone to be fully engaged in whatever they are doing whilst being faced with uncertainty of the outcome (Haberl, 2016).

Although mindfulness has been viewed as a third wave therapy and is now one strategy within sport that is widely used, the more traditional psychological skills training (PST) needs to be addressed in comparison to mindfulness, especially when it comes to applied practice. The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) program developed from the lack of empirical support for the efficacy of PST (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Moore, 2003; Moore & Gardner, 2001) and drew upon the theoretical developments emerging from the third wave acceptance-based behavioural movement within clinical psychology (Hayes et al., 1999). The MAC program was designed as a theoretically conceived alternative approach to understand athletic performance as well as working with athletes to enhance their sporting performance and overall well-being (Gardner, 2001, 2016; Gardner & Moore, 2004; Moore & Gardner, 2001, 2002, 2003).

Building on from Kabat-Zinn and colleagues work (1985), Kaufman and Glass developed a programme designed to be adaptable to any sport of focus, known as MSPE. This program is a mental training approach that has been shown to impact flow states and enhance performance (Kaufman et al., 2016). Unlike the other mindfulness programmes, this is a four-week long course that is specific for sport. Similar to Garnder and Moore's MAC approach, MSPE emphasises the development of mindfulness skills and acceptance. Yet unlike MAC, MSPE does not include a focus on values, value driven behaviour, or commitment (Kaufman et al., 2009). Adapted from MBSR and MBCT, the MSPE programme uses a unique progression of training, to allow athletes to build the 'attentional muscle' and compete in their sport mindfully thus maximising performance, flow, and enjoyment.

Another approach to mindfulness is Mindful Performance Enhancement, Awareness and Knowledge [mPEAK] (Haase et al., 2016). The foundation of this programme has been driven and empirically supported by the MBSR, incorporating the latest neuroscience and mindfulness training. The mPEAK intervention is specifically designed to support high-level athletes to become more resilient to high demands and pressure and ultimately optimising sport performance (Hase et al., 2016). mPEAK seeks to attain new levels of performance and success, which has been built around the latest research related to peak performance, resilience, focus and flow (Hase et al., 2016). One of the goals of mPEAK is to teach and support the ongoing integration of mindfulness practices and responses within highly competitive sport. mPEAK implements many of the core mindfulness sessions of MBSR, and with similarities to MSPE, mPEAK however includes a consistent focus on supporting the athlete to apply the insights of formal mindfulness practice to the competitive sport (Haase et al., 2016).

All of the above programmes are promoting individuals understanding of how mindfulness training can facilitate enhancing performance.

2.9 Mindfulness and Football

The globalisation of football in this decade has provided football clubs with the opportunity for huge financial rewards (Giulianotti, 2002), dependant on team performance and status (Solberg & Haugen, 2010). Sport psychology within football often lacks work security (Vosko et al., 2009; Gilmore et al., 2018), and this perspective is due to the high turnover of first team managers and staff (League Managers Association, 2015). Within football, managers usually bring in their own 'back-room' staff often resulting in staff departures. Studies of sports psychologists in football are to be seen as quite rare (Gilmore et al., 2018). Nesti (2010) states that the football culture requires something more than PST and highlights that psychology as a discipline is over reliant on mental skills training.

The formal structures and processes that clubs are now implementing to create home – grown players is growing, and the attention on academies to equip these young players with the correct skill sets, qualities, and characteristics for successful progression and/or failure (Richardson et al., 2005). Mental toughness is branded around in the football culture, explaining that all players need to be 'mentally tough'. For example, mental toughness has been highlighted by Crust (2007) as being arguably the most important attribute that elite athletes possess. From this, Crust et al., (2010) explored mental toughness for academy premier league players, with the findings showing that coaches thought this was the key ingredient for players to go on through the academy set-up. This research also highlighted the important role psychology has within football.

To date, no mindfulness programme has addressed elite premier league football, and therefore, this is an area with the sporting mindfulness literature that needs to be explored. Can a mindfulness programme be embedded into a Category One Elite Football Academy?

2.10 Summary

Controlled research on mindfulness-based interventions in sport is becoming more prevalent and emerging in the literature (e.g., Kaufman et al., 2018). Yet despite this, there are still few studies that highlight embedding mindfulness into a sporting culture, rather just using mindfulness as an intervention for example, attention, flow, attentional control (Baltar & Filgueriras, 2018). The

current research will look at how a new mindfulness-based programme can be used for players to gain an experience of paying attention to their ever-changing environment. This programme is unique in allowing mindfulness to be applied in motion, encapsulating sport-specific exercises that facilitates the practice of being mindful while engaging in core sport skills (Pineau et al., 2019). With MSPE being at the forefront in mindfulness application in sport, this programme provides a framework and philosophy that the club works from, holistic approach. MSPE, however has never been incorporated in elite sport, nor in football, or the UK, hence the basis for the study one. Only recently, has it emerged that other clubs within the UK are looking at mindfulness as a skill, however, to date, no club has looked at integrating mindfulness into the staff and player's daily practice.

Literature update

With the current programme of research having been conducted over a long period of time, research has developed and enhanced the evidence base through the available literature. This section will critically review how the mindfulness literature has developed over this recent time span beyond 2017, highlighting the most recent contributions that have been made within this field.

Performance at elite level in sport places extremely high demands not only on athletes, but also staff (Oguntuase & Sun, 2022). Mindfulness training within sport has become increasingly popular, highlighting that this training is designed to help individuals increase their ability to be more conscious of the present moment and helping athletes develop non-judgemental awareness and improve performance (Corbally et al., 2020; Noetel et al., 2019). This increased awareness has been found to affect sport performance either directly or indirectly through variables that impact performance (Bagheri & Dana, 2021; Bühlmayer et al., 2017; Jha et al., 2017; Gardner, 2009). In more recent times, evidence demonstrates that mindfulness training is a more constant and stable intervention for creating improvements in variables that will aid and improve overall performance,

regardless of the challenges faced (Oguntuase & Sun, 2022; Rothlin et al., 2016; Hasker, 2010), as well as well-being (Foster & Chow, 2020).

Several MBIs have now been created specifically for the sporting context, including (a) the mindfulness– acceptance–commitment approach (MAC; Gardner & Moore, 2007), (b) mindful sport performance enhancement (MSPE; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kaufman et al., 2018), and (c) mindfulness meditation training for sport (MMTS; Baltzell & Akhtar, 2014; Baltzell & Summers, 2018). These approaches focus on aiding athletes to modify their relationship between themselves and their internal experiences (cognitions, emotions, and sensations), rather than controlling these internal experiences.

The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach (Gardner & Moore, 2007), influenced by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 2014), was designed to help enhance the performance and psychological well-being of elite performers (Noetel et al., 2017). Multiple studies have shown that MAC is able to increase mindfulness and improve both physical and psychological outcomes (e.g., flow, anxiety, and performance) (Buhlumayer et al., 2017), as well as increasing ability to cognitively cope in high-demanding situations (Jha et al., 2017) under extreme exhaustion within endurance exercise (Nien et al., 2020). MAC studies have also reported that athletes develop higher mental toughness (Tsebe & van Niekerk, 2021), improves stress-recovery balance (Holguin-Ramirez et al., 2020), and reduce anxiety and improve self-efficacy (Bagheri & Dana, 2021). Although research has highlighted that MAC may not directly affect performance, it may indirectly affect performance through certain variables, which can in turn result in improvements in performance-related outcomes (Oguntuase & Sun, 2022). Bulgay et al., (2020) found that athletes with peak performance had higher mindfulness levels and professional football players had higher mindfulness levels compared to their amateur counterparts (Tingaz et al., 2021). As any elite sport, football requires being exposed and being able to cope with highly stressful training and competitive environments (Oguntuase & Sun, 2022). Having the ability to focus on the present moment tasks allows players to maintain high levels of concentration, focus, regulate emotion and indirectly enhance performance (Josefsson et al., 2019; Rothlin et al., 2020). This has been demonstrated within various sports such as hockey, lacrosse, swimming and volleyball within late adolescents and adults (Zhang & Su, 2020).

Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE; Kaufman et al., 2018), was influenced by both MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1994) and MBCT (Segal et al., 2002). MSPE has shown that this programme has successfully led to improvements in mindfulness, flow, satisfaction with performance and anxiety (Kaufman et al., 2009; Glass et al., 2019; Minkler et al., 2021; Pineau et al., 2019). Glass et al., (2019) found significant reductions in sport related worry and significant improvement in flow when following MSPE. Furthermore, the ability to cope with negative emotions and experiences, reductions in stress, state, and trait anxiety (Rooks et al., 2017) have also been observed within college athletes (Minker et al., 2021). Chen and Meggs (2020) also found that swimmers who received the MSPE training improved more on dimensions of flow in comparison to those who underwent relaxation training.

In general, participants who undertook MSPE interventions have reported that they would incorporate mindfulness into both sport and their everyday lives (Minkler et al., 2021). Athletes have reported that MSPE had been successful in helping them be more 'in the zone' during sport, reduce anxiety, focus in the moment, let go of distractions, and be more aware to cope with upsetting emotions (Minkler et al., 2021). Research has also been conducted to evaluate the "train-the-trainer" model of MSPE intervention delivery explored by Minkler et al., (2021). This approach suggests that it is feasible and acceptable for other practitioners to deliver this mindfulness intervention, yet it could be reported that athletes may feel pressurised in attending due to coaches' delivery (Minkler et al., 2021). However, further research is required on 'train-the-trainer' approach as further assessment on the instructor's knowledge of mindfulness and level of competency as a mindfulness teacher needs to be explored (Crane & Kuyken, 2019).

Finally, the Mindful Meditation Training for Sport (MMTS) was designed from MAC and MSPE to limit the length of sessions that were delivered. This intervention was designed for teams in which mindfulness training was delivered to players and coaches through two 30-minute modules per week over a six-week span (Baltzell & Akhtar, 2014; Baltzell & Summers, 2016). The aim of this programme was to increase athletes' mindfulness as well as their ability to cope with negative thoughts and emotions, to enhance concentration, and adjust focus to task relevant stimuli when in training and competition (Dibernardo, 2018). The evidence collected from MMTS studies within soccer (Baltzell et al., 2014; Baltzell & Akhtar, 2014; Baltzell et al., 2015) found that self-compassion was a key outcome and therefore, this finding led to the development of MMTS 2.0 (Baltzell &

Summer, 2016, 2017, 2018). MMTS 2.0 integrates the concept of self-compassion to help athletes deal with competitive anxiety and self-criticism. This particular programme is designed for a sport psychology practitioner to deliver and implement the programme with the following objectives to be achieved: 1. Poise; shift in relationship with negative thoughts and feelings to lead to more effective coping, 2. Concentration; increased focus especially on task -relevant cues, 3. Adapt/Adjust; the ability to adapt and adjust to novel situations (increased psychological flexibility (Batzell & Summers, 2018)). This programme has contributed to the growth of the mindfulness literature through empirical support, providing insight into feasibility studies amongst several student-athlete populations (Cote, 2019). The biggest factor that makes this programme different to the previous is the measure of self-compassion. Cote (2019) found significant improvements from utilising the MMTS 2.0 on the experimental group from pre to post intervention, where no change was found within the control group. Although statistical findings are somewhat limited, qualitative data suggest that MMTS has a strong impact on performance for both students and athletes (Cote, 2019).

In recent years, systematic reviews have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of mindfulness approaches in the sport and exercise domain. Sappington & Longshore (2015) conducted a systematic review of 19 empirical studies using mindfulness, including single case studies, qualitative studies, non-randomised trials, and randomised trials of athletes from different sports. Their review provided preliminary support for mindfulness-based interventions in improving performance. However, their studies explored mindfulness in isolation and excluded the broader range of acceptance-based approaches (Leven et al., 2012). The weakness of this reviews design is that the mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches differ in their outcomes, the degree in which they focus on acceptance versus present moment awareness (Leven et al., 2012), as well as the role value-driven action (Moore, 2009).

In a further review of nine studies incorporating 290 athletes from various sports, Buhlmayer et al., (2017) showed that mindfulness had a positive effect on mindfulness, physiological and psychological variables (such as, salivary cortisol levels, flow, and anxiety), as well as performance in closed sports (such as darts and shooting). Further to this Noetel et al., (2019) conducted a fully comprehensive review of all of the available research, exploring both mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches. They found in their review of 66 studies (including 3908 athletes), support for the effectiveness of mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions on dispositional flow, competitive

anxiety, and performance enhancement. They also found preliminary evidence for the use of mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions to prevent injuries, reduce burnout, and increase confidence. Corbally et al., (2020) also conducted a systematic review of seven studies including 266 long distance runners where they found small to moderate effects of mindfulness-based interventions for reducing competitive anxiety and effort perception.

The studies that were incorporated into the systematic reviews used a huge range of measurement tools available (e.g., questionnaires and behavioural indicators) to show impact of mindfulness interventions. This has resulted in a disparate range of impact indicators and little consensus on how to quantitatively demonstrate the intervention effectiveness overall. For example, some literature has utilised measure using only composite scale results (e.g., dispositional mindfulness) whilst others have used sub scales (e.g., the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire). Further to this very few studies shown within the systematic reviews used identical interventions, comparison groups or outcome measures, so “quantitative synthesis of findings via meta-analyses were not likely to be meaningful” (Noetel et al., 2019, p. 12). Such measurement concerns may be partially overcome by a more meaningful use of qualitative approaches rather than relying on quantitative indicators to demonstrate the efficacy of mindfulness intervention approaches.

More recently, reviews have been conducted (Bondar et al., 2020; Corbally et al., 2020) highlighting that although a number of studies show positive effects of mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions for athletes, the evidence at present is open to critique. The quality of the current mindfulness evidence has been described as low and more methodological investigations are needed (Hut et al., 2021), as well as objective measures to confirm the success of MBIs (Minker et al, 2021). However, while using qualitative measures within these studies is successful in several ways, this opinion is critiqued by Hussey et al., (2020). It is highlighted by Hussey et al., (2020) that these studies could be even more successful if personal reflections are noted by the participants. Future studies can make such intervention evaluation better by considering methods that will enhance our understanding of the participants engagement with the intervention and their overall experience (Hussey et al., 2020).

Summary and Thesis Focus

From the range of review documents published in recent years on the use and impact of mindfulness through meta-analyses and systematic reviews a consistent conclusion has been drawn.

This conclusion highlights the low quality of the research to date primarily in relation to research design components such as the use of control groups and minimal use of randomized controlled trials overall. Whilst these reviews highlight positive overall impacts of mindfulness on health professionals' well-being (Lomas et al., 2019), reducing anxiety in runners (Corbally et al., 2020) and enhancing flow and performance in sports performers (Noetel et al., 2019) there still remains substantial challenges to the enhancement of the quality of the research conducted. Whilst there are a number of potential avenues to enhance the research one opportunity is to move towards more qualitative investigation of such a nuanced and individualized intervention application. Such an approach, when used in a robust and rigorous manner, could provide a valuable contribution to the evidence base and engage with individual experiences and effects of a mindfulness intervention that more quantitative approaches cannot access as readily.

This therefore establishes the evidence-based rationale for the current programme of research. This research provides qualitative accounts of athletes and multiple staff's perception and account of the use and function of mindfulness within elite sport. Each study addresses the literatures concerns and aims to provide further insight into the impact that mindfulness can have when fully embedded into an environment, capturing the holistic and personal reflective accounts of participants. This study enhances the current literature by gaining greater insight as to why mindfulness is impactful rather than focusing solely on outcome and performance measures.

CHAPTER THREE:
MINDFUL SPORT PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT IN ACTION: A CASE STUDY WITH AN ELITE
FOOTBALL ACADEMY

3.1 Introduction

Mindful sport performance enhancement (MSPE) is a mental training program for athletes and coaches (Kaufman, Glass, & Pineau, 2018) that can be tailored for use with any sport, and is applicable for all levels of sport performers, from recreational to elite.

The aim of this study is to adopt a case study that focuses on the integration of MSPE into the under-16 boys' team of an elite English football academy. This study seeks to explore the perceived impact of fully integrating a mindfulness-based mental training programme into an established football culture (the "Southampton Way") and to explore the potential benefits to performance and well-being for those players and staff involved in the study. Of particular interest are the associations between the MSPE training programme and any increase in participant's perceived ability to enter a flow state, an outcome that has previously been demonstrated in similar research utilizing this programme of intervention.

3.2 Literature Review

An explosion of interest in mindfulness has spread throughout the world of psychology, including the domains of sport, exercise, and performance psychology. The idea that mindfulness can help athletes enhance their mental ability to perform is not new; and several athletes and coaches have recently revealed that mindfulness is a type of psychological training that can optimise performance (Jekauc et al., 2017).

Mindfulness is known in the literature as a way of paying attention that entails intentionally being aware of the present moment and accepting things without judgment (Kaufman et al., 2018). Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience

moment by moment (p.4). The aim is simply to watch thoughts; feelings; and senses come and go, rather than act on them. This sense of awareness and acceptance ultimately allows for greater responsiveness to the self and the environment, providing a greater sense of choice to guide actions. This increased awareness and attention leads to a feeling of alertness to what is happening in the here and now (Jekauc et al., 2017).

Mindfulness has long been perceived in the western world as unscientific religious practice, however, inspired by eastern philosophy some research in psychology and neurosciences has helped to develop several therapeutic interventions (Baer, 2003). The analyses of their effectiveness have provided that mindfulness evidence-based interventions were effective in reducing anxiety (Hofmann et al., 2010) and symptoms of stress (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009) as well as improving well-being (Keng et al., 2011) and cognitive ability (Chiesa et al., 2011). The mind-body relationship is fundamental; suggesting that if a change was to occur in the mind (i.e., cognitive changes) there would be also a change in the body (i.e., cellular, hormonal, neural changes). Mindfulness therefore allows the players to have direct experience with the mind and the body (Teasdale et al., 1995), and manage feelings of pain, discomfort, fear, or anxiety (Buckley & Cameron, 2011; De Petrillo et al., 2009) which aids performance outcome.

Sport scientists have recognised that certain psychological characteristics seem to facilitate performance outcome through optimal performance states (e.g., Ravizza, 1977). Such states have been identified such as peak experience (Ravizza, 1977), peak performance (Privette, 1981), the zone (Young & Pain, 1999), and flow (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). The commonality between them all are positive emotions, centred attention, and calmness (Kaufman et al., 2017). Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) construct of flow has similar characteristics to the state of mindfulness, which encouraged the development of MSPE (Kaufman et al., 2017).

MSPE is a mindfulness programme developed in 2005 by Keith Kaufman, Carol Glass, and Timothy Pineau. The aim of the programme is to train athletes and coaches to participate in sport

with mindful awareness and acceptance, to maximize both their performance and enjoyment. Rooted in the traditions of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2013) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002, 2013), MSPE sees mindfulness as a way of intentionally paying attention to the present moment without judging what is experienced. There are six 90-minute MSPE sessions, which includes educational, discussion, and experiential components, as well as recommended daily home practice with access to audio recordings of all exercises.

MSPE targets the development of five core performance facilitators, which are specific applications of mindful acceptance and/or awareness (primary mindfulness characteristics) through which athletic performers can strengthen their capacities to regulate attention and emotions, help establish conditions for flow, and potentially achieve peak performance. Drawing on and adapting the work of Kabat-Zinn, Beall, and Rippe (1985), these performance facilitators include: (1) concentration (establishing present-moment attentional “anchors” to redirect the mind once attention invariably wanders). (2) Letting go (of thoughts, feelings, and reactions to experiences, as well as the expectations and attachments that underlie them, to redirect attention to a present-moment anchor). (3) Relaxation (noticing when and where excess bodily tension arises and creating the opportunity to choose to release it). (4) Establishing a sense of harmony and rhythm (the merging of action and awareness that can be characteristic of a flow experience). (5) Forming key associations (environmental cues in and outside of sport that can be reminders to pay attention mindfully) (Spencer et al., 2019).

Over the last decade, MSPE has been applied with a variety of populations including recreational adult athletes (De Petrillo et al., 2009; Kaufman et al., 2009; Thompson, et al., 2011), groups of collegiate athletes from multiple sports (Glass et. al., 2019; Mistretta et al., 2017), university athletic coaches, high school, and college teams (e.g., Pineau et.al., 2018); and elementary school kids. Although the MSPE protocol is a group-based intervention (Kaufman et al., 2018), it can

also apply to individual athletes or coaches, and there are adaptations for performing artists (e.g., musicians, actors, or dancers).

In elite sport, athletes aim to achieve the desired peak performance, which is often achieved through 'being in the zone' (Nicholls et al., 2005). It has been stated in research that when athletes experience flow, they have reported to be relaxed, calm, and a heightened perception of the body (Chevez, 2008), experiencing more bodily awareness, stronger heartbeat, and 'tingling' sensations in their muscles (Bernier, 2009). In addition, studies have shown that athletes have reported more awareness, acceptance, and less judgmental cognitive processes when in a state of flow (Swann et al., 2015). Research (i.e., Scott-Hamilton et al., 2016; Carthcart et al., 2014; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008) has demonstrated that there is an empirical link in the mindfulness-flow relationship in athletes, and mindfulness-based interventions have been found to increase the state of flow in athletes (Kaufman et al., 2009; Arherne et al., 2011; Scott-Hamilton et al., 2016). MSPE demonstrates a strong relationship to flow and the achievement of optimal performance, with a heightened development of awareness, acceptance, and self-regulation

The aim of this study was to create a bespoke 10-week programme for the academy players of an elite category one premier league club. This study seeks to explore the perceived impact of fully integrating a mindfulness-based mental training programme into an established football culture (the "Southampton Way") and to explore the potential benefits to performance and well-being for those players involved in the study. Of particular interest are the associations between the MSPE training programme and any increase in participant's perceived ability to enter a flow state flow, an outcome that has previously been demonstrated in similar research utilizing this programme of intervention.

It was hypothesized that the players who participated in the workshops would experience the following variables: 1. Reduction in sport anxiety, 2. Reduction in thought disruption, 3. Growth in sport confidence, 4. Greater management over emotions, 5. Players would become more mindful,

6. Players would display greater elevations in performance, and 7. More likely to enter flow whilst playing football.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Participants

A total of nine male Under 16 (4 = age 15, 5 = age 16) football players were recruited from the Southampton Football Club Academy. These participants were purposefully selected based upon their year group (U16s) and the timing of psychology session allocated for them within the football program. The whole squad consisted of 16 players, yet seven could not participate in the formal intervention due to school requirements and commitments.

Before this intervention, all players had previous experience of psychology support and had exposure to mindful breathing, body scans, and mindful yoga. None had experienced intense 'back-to-back' consecutive sessions of mindfulness. The length of time that these players had been within the academy ranged from 2 to 7 years ($M = 4.8$).

3.3.2 Procedure

The researcher liaised with the authors of MSPE to establish a suitable protocol that aligned with MSPE. From these discussions, 10 sessions were created that linked all aspects of what the players would do/receive on a weekly basis, for example, gym, football rondos (a type of football practice where players need to keep possession while completing a series of passes), individual practice. Other members of staff from the club were consulted in line with their disciplines (such as coaches, strength and conditioning (S&C) practitioners, medical professionals), to explore and keep the same alignment and consistent message throughout the 10 weeks. These staff members were also part of the programme, where they joined in the sessions with the players. Staff worked with the researcher and the MSPE authors to ensure that mindfulness was embedded into their sessions. For example, coaches used the breath as an 'anchor' within the football rondo sessions to allow the players experience pressure and a heightened heart rate, whilst then paying attention to this and

using their breath as an 'anchor' to stay present rather than getting distracted in their emotional and physical state. It was emphasized through competition.

Before the intervention started, parental permission was gathered and an optional session for parents was arranged for them to gain a greater insight as to what the intervention entailed, the benefits and why this research was being conducted. The workshop session for parents included the aim, what was involved, the psychometrics used, and research from previous studies and the benefits. Parents asked about their sons that were not able to be involved. Although they would not receive the formal training due to time constraints, these players still had access to the home practices and recordings. It was also highlighted and reinforced that this programme would not just be in isolation, meaning other staff disciplines (e.g., coaches, S&C) would also include mindfulness practices into their sessions such as on the pitch, or in the gym. These staff members were had the appropriate level of training required to deliver MSPE in their sessions. These staff members undertook the MSPE training facilitated through the researcher, who was appropriately trained and supported throughout by the MSPE authors. The researcher was always present when these were delivered. After all sessions, players were asked what they learnt from each session, and how they can use what they had learnt into their football practice and development. Players were asked to practice their skills and monitor their progress in daily logs, and addition were given recordings to listen to daily (*example of a daily log in the appendix*).

Players completed a battery of questionnaires to highlight their baseline in trait levels of sport anxiety, mindfulness, sport confidence, thought disruption, emotional regulation, and flow. Players completed these within the first session, with instructions of what they would cover throughout the 10-week period. These batteries of questionnaires were then re-administered after the 10-weeks, however due to football schedules, only six players completed the 10-weeks. This therefore meant that the statistical analysis was not run and therefore this mixed method design become a qualitative study.

Informed consent was collected (*see appendix*), and information sheets were provided both to the players and their parents (Gratton & Jones, 2004). In addition, ethical approval was granted by the University of Winchester.

3.3.3 Interview Guide

The interviews followed a semi-structured approach, allowing the researcher to collect the important information about the intervention they underwent while also giving the participants the opportunity to report on their own thoughts and feelings (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Therefore, although there was a certain element of structure to the interviews, the order of the questions did vary dependent on the response the participants gave. This allowed the participants freedom to talk and describe their meanings and experiences whilst still within the parameter of the intervention (Smith, 2008). The questions were open ended to allow the participants considerable scope to express their perceptions and expand on their views (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

The interview guide was structured around three key elements: MSPE within the psychology classroom, MSPE within the gym and S&C sessions, and MSPE within football (out on the pitch). A variety of probe and elaboration questions (such as, can you remember the body scan? What was this like for you?) were used to ensure a complete understanding from the participant and enabled in-depth answers to be obtained (Malterud, 2001). All interviews were conducted on the same day and lasted between 20 and 45 minutes each. Each interview was digitally recorded and stored in the author’s personal computer in a password-encrypted file. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in an education classroom and the researcher confirmed with each participant that they had accurately captured the participants experience of the intervention.

3.3.4 Sessions

| Session | Key Concepts | Exercises | Location/Length/Deliver |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. Introduction, Rationale, and Confidentiality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to performance • Importance of self-practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any concerns or questions on the 10 sessions • Psychometrics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • 60 mins • Researcher |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength training for attention | | |
| 2. Present-moment anchors and diaphragmatic breathing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mind-body connection Present-moment anchors Noticing sensations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malteaser exercise Diaphragmatic breathing Sitting meditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Researcher |
| 3. Strengthening that Attention Muscle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 core performance facilitators to help achieve optimal performance Noticing sensations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing Discussion of the 5 core performance facilitators Sitting meditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Researcher |
| 4. Strengthening that Attention Muscle – part two | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moment to moment awareness – developing concentration and flexibility of attention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body scan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Researcher |
| 5. Stretching the body's limits mindfully | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mindful movement – pre-activation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing Pre-activation Mid-way psychometrics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins S&C and researcher |
| 6. Embracing 'What Is' in stride | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand 'what is' happening in a non-judgemental way Understanding expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing Rondo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Coaches and researcher |
| 7. Embodying the mindful performer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being non-judgemental Key anchors for each player Coach participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing Developing own anchors Sitting meditation with a focus on the breath, body, and sound | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Coaches and researcher |
| 8. Embodying the mindful performer – part two | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how thoughts can disrupt our performance – being hijacked – delivered by coaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing Practical application of anchors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Coaches and researcher |
| 9. Ending the beginning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to make it truly applicable to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic breathing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|--|
| | sports performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm and discuss how to practice these skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher |
| 10. Final wrap-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences – good and bad Any changes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom 60 mins Researcher |

Table 1. An overview of the MSPE sessions conducted

3.3.5 Measurement

Daily Mindfulness Log. Participants were asked to keep a daily account of whether they practiced mindfulness skills and the length of their practice, as well as any observations they noted. The MSPE mindful log was adapted from Seagal et al., (2002) homework record form.

Battery of questionnaires. MSPE (Kaufman et al., 2018) utilize a FAME (flow, anxiety, mindfulness, emotion regulation) profile measures. These measures included: Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (DFS-2), Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS), Mindfulness in Sport (MIS), Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHL), and Emotional Regulation – Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS).

3.3.6 Data Analysis

Data was thematically analyzed to code the common themes between the player’s experiences. Thematic analysis is a widely used form of coding that identifies, analyzes, and reports themes within the data (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke., 2006; Roulston., 2001). The thematic analysis approach is a flexible and a useful research tool that can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By reporting and allowing the player to reflect on their experience and the reality, the players then could make meaning of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher gained credibility of the data through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data (Nowell et al., 2017). Peer debriefing provided and external check on the data and process, which increases credibility within the data, as well as member checking to ensure interpretations were accurate (Lincon & Guba, 1985), As suggested by

Braun and Clarke (2006), after each semi-structured interview, the data was transcribed immediately by the author for proper coding and data storage, and additionally to become familiarized with the data. The steps that were followed by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1. Become familiar with the data, 2. Generate initial codes, 3. Search for themes, 4. Review themes, 5. Define themes, and 6. Write-up.

3.4 Results and Discussion

Interviews were conducted with the participants that completed the full 10 weeks of the programme. All interviews were conducted on the same day and by the researcher in an education classroom. The researcher confirmed with each participant that they had accurately captured the participants experience of the intervention. Five major themes were constructed from all interviewed participants within the analysis: Experiences, Breathing, Emotional Management, Understanding and Future Recommendations.

2.4.1 Experiences

As an applied piece of research and intervention, it is not surprising that experiences emerged as a major theme. Specifically, seven sub-themes were identified: challenging experiences, instructions to feeling, bodily attention, learning, relationships, controlling the pressure, and feeling.

3.4.1.1 Challenging Experiences.

Ericsson has conducted groundbreaking research on the pursuit of expert performance and the facilitation of mastery practice. Mastery of a skill is achieved not through accumulation of experience, but more through sustained levels of achievement, intentional engagement with full concentration on deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993). Wanting to improve mindfulness to the point of expertise, is a powerful way to commit to mindfulness. Peter Haberl (personal communication, August 18, 2015) highlighted that it is not a quick or easy one to master, therefore patience and discipline are required and likely over a period of several years as Ericsson's work suggests. One of the major challenges of implementing mindfulness to elite athletes is resisting the assumption that if there are no immediate results, then it doesn't work. One player agrees with this statement and stated, "*first I was just getting annoyed...what's the point*". The structure of an

academy day is busy and because of this, players become tired and lethargic. Players mentioned that they struggled to practice the skills of mindfulness when in this state:

“If I was tired, I did find it harder...I am tired and it’s hard to get out of that thought process”

“I have had an awful day, your brain tells you that you don’t want to be there, and it all sort of goes downhill”

“It is quite hard, because your mind just doesn’t want to do something sometimes”

“When you are lifting heavy and you are struggling, your mind is telling you to lift the weight, in your body it’s telling you not to. It’s overcoming your body telling you not to”

As Haberl stated above, patience is key and learning the skills take time and personal investment. If an individual is willing to put in the deliberate practice, they will see and experience the rewards. A player highlights the frustrations but also the use of mindfulness in practice.

“Just after I made a mistake and as soon as you make a mistake you are angry. Then people start having a go and you’re like I wouldn’t deliberately make a mistake, you’re angry on yourself, and I have let the team down... All of this is within five seconds and after that five seconds the ball is on the other side of the pitch you have that little time to think, even if it is two or three seconds to just breathe. Just calm down and next time you get the ball, do something simple”.

3.4.1.2 Instructions to Feeling.

Coaches embed mindfulness into their coaching sessions as they are aware that emotions and reactions (i.e., worry) can easily hijack attention and inhibit optimal performance states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Being mindful whilst out on the pitch and in situ can maximize control of the performance process, yet such control is not possible when stressors are commandeering attention (Kaufman et al., 2018). All the players highlighted that the coach was getting the players to be attentive to the environmental cues, *“feel the grass...feel the wind on your face...feel your muscles*

working". In line with research (Kaufman et al., 2018), coaches gave awareness-based instructions to notice an experience. Players then alluded to experiential information the coaches gave such as, *"feel the grass under your feet, feel the wind on your face"*, with additional reflections, *"you were actually there experiencing it"*. The MSPE programme is designed to be flexible in its approach and designed to be adaptable in all situations as Kaufman and colleagues (2018) explain that it is then more likely that an athlete will find a mode of mindfulness that practice that really works for them. Practising mindfulness therefore increases as it is personally significant and intrinsically motivating, which will transform into long-term practice: *If I focus on that a lot, I can feel it working...your brain is like making it work and you start to recognise it"*.

3.4.1.3 Bodily Attention.

Meditation exercises encourage individuals to have an open awareness of their internal experiences, and this includes body sensations (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Players mentioned throughout their interview about their heightened state of bodily awareness during the intervention. They recalled perceptions of bodily sensations during the body scan when practising formally but also in situ. As such moments, they were highly aware of their internal states and mentioned a strong heartbeat, especially noted when at a high emotional state, and a feeling of muscles becoming less tense. Some players explained how the bodily sensations brought attention back, by focusing on that sensation, allows the mind to refocus and be back in the present. Examples include the following:

"The feel of my heartbeat slow down. When your angry or hot headed, you can almost feel your heart pumping really quick but when your relaxed you can feel it slowing down and it sort of relaxes your whole body. Your muscles become less tense. It starts with thinking about it and then your whole body starts to follow."

"You are tracking your attention to your toes"

"I learnt that over time of how to bring it down to one part of your body like that. It was good."

Research states that by practising mindfulness, awareness of bodily sensations is improved, and these skills teach individuals to accept their sensations and commit themselves to action, rather than 'fighting' against negative thoughts and unpleasant emotions (Bernier et al., 2009).

3.4.1.4 Learning.

Mindfulness is a skill and like football, is learnt and developed through repeated daily practice. By learning to cultivate present moment awareness, research shows that individuals become more mindful of their thoughts, emotions, sensations, and overall sense of self (Nehra & Kumar, 2013). Transformation and change only occurs through learning to be open and accepting of whatever is present at that time, whether that is positive or negative. Whether players learn best through formal or informal practices, the main aim is to all the players to learn mindfulness skills that they can then apply both out on the pitch but also in everyday life. Some players stated that they just went and applied the skills, *"...you just sort of learn how to do it"*. Alidina (2010) states that all true learning stems from curiosity, and as a player stated, *"you just sort of figure it out yourself and then just doing it a bit more"*. As stated previously, mindfulness allows an individual to learn different skill to apply them into everyday living. It is evident in the literature that mindfulness promotes self-compassion and non-judgment. One player highlighted that they learnt to appreciate everything that they were experiencing and had around them, being truly present: *"you start thinking, I take in everything around you and you look around going 'I'm wearing this kit, I'm playing for this team, and I'm playing football which is what I love'. Everything is good around it"*. Breines and Chen (2012) found that self-compassion is associated with greater motivation for and effort towards self-improvement after failure. Further, Kageyama (2014) concluded that " the research suggests that harsh self-criticism only increases passivity, procrastination, and fear of failure, and self-compassion may actually be the key to maximising our potential" (p. 31).

3.4.1.5 Relationships.

One player highlighted that the mindfulness intervention has allowed the squad to become closer as a unit, building and enhancing on those already present relationships. *"We have got closer ...its affected the team, we know each other, we know how each other work, we know how each other reacts and we now can help each other"*. This supports Charoensukmongkol (2014) statement that people who regularly practice mindful meditation can develop the ability to detect and understand the emotions of others. This is supported within other research (Brown et al., 2007; Shapiro et al., 2008) showing that mindfulness allows people to better focus and understand others emotional state, felt a sense of relatedness and interpersonal closeness (Brown & Kasser, 2005), and have the ability to decipher emotional cues more accurately (Krasner et al., 2009).

3.4.1.6 Controlling the Pressure.

The literature shows a trend that athletes have a great demand not only on their bodies, but on their minds as well (Heckman, 2018). As practitioners the aim is help create a solid mental platform, which will enable our athletes to reach for high potential and take away some of the mental pressure that involved when training or competing. One player supports this statement with, *"If you're in a good mental state, you perform better"*. All athletes are striving to perform and achieve the highest standard and that is the same for academy footballers: *"I put pressure on myself as it is always there in the back of your mind"*. The reality of a being in a Category 1, Premier League Football Academy is that there is an enormous amount of pressure on that footballer from internally but also externally: *"that pressure in yourself to perform, it all builds up"*. To be able to shift in mental state and reduce any negative factors towards football, makes meditation and being mindful a very powerful tool. There was a common factor amongst the players that simply being able to breath and focus on the breath, was a coping strategy that allowed the pressure to be controlled and managed; *"getting flustered, you can do something simple like breathing...everything feels more clearer and sharper"*.

3.4.1.7 *Feeling.*

Sport breeds emotions and they can have a powerful impact on performance. Zillmer and Gigli (2007) highlights within their research that sport in general is more comfortable about doing rather than getting in touch with feelings. If athletes embrace their emotions, the worry is that they will be in discomfort and therefore not perform well, yet mindfulness is explaining to see if it is possible to sit with those emotions. Can an athlete become aware and not react to emotions, leading to defusing and decentering from experiences rather than reacting to them (Kaufman et al., 2018). One player summarises this sub theme by encapsulating his experience as well:

“You are focusing on so many things that you don’t really focus on yourself on how you’re feeling, or you then could be thinking too much... But then if have control and your mindful, you can push through that, but it will help you either know how you’re feeling or disguise how your feeling”.

3.4.2 *Breathing*

The next theme highlighted three sub-themes that are heightened within the mindfulness literature as aspects that are important for practising and embedding mindfulness effectively. These sub-themes consist of anchors, formal sessions, and informal sessions. With all mindful practices, they involve practicing the skills of mindfulness intentionally with an open and non-judgmental attitude.

3.4.2.1 *Formal Sessions.*

Formal practices involve systematic meditation practices that are driven towards guided meditation practices. Players had the formal sessions in the psychology laboratory as well as having home practice, with the session that was covered put onto their phones as audios. The general consensus from the players, the shorted audios and formal sessions were easier to focus and maintain attention: *“the three-minute one was easier than the nine-minute one because on the nine-*

minute one I was starting to think about other things". Despite players preferring the shorter formal practices, *"it was shorter and not that much time for your mind to wander as much"*, the next challenge for them would be to practice the longer audio recordings and see if they can regain their focus and bring their attention back when their mind does wander. One player did mention that the home practices were easier to do the longer audios due to there being less distractions, *"I found it easier at home on my own...when I am at home I will try and change my breathing"*. Again, this can be an area to be developed and worked on as there are always distractions within elite sport and therefore by being able to notice the distractions and bring attention back, is a skill that the players are practicing and enhancing more. Despite the difficulties that the players faced with the longer audios, research highlights that transformation and change occurs through learning. Being open and accepting of the present, whether that is good, bad, or neutral; to be intentional in the way one pays attention, to skilfully relate to difficulties, distractions and to be more compassionate and befriend whatever arises (Nehra et al., 2012). *"I remember not being very good of them at the start of them... the more I did them, the more I could concentrate more on myself"*. Time spent engaging in formal mindful practice allows for a significant improvement in the skill of mindfulness, yet research has also found a relationship between formal practice and improvements in psychological functioning, which in turn leads to symptom reduction and improved well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008).

3.4.2.2 Informal Sessions.

Informal practice refers to the *"application of mindfulness skills in everyday life"* (Germer et al., 2005, p.14). The purpose of informal practice allows mindfulness to be generalized and integrated into everyday living, and these skills are learnt through the formal practice. Players have learnt the skills from the formal practice and used it within their performance, *"When stuff isn't going right and your head is on fire, and you're losing your head. That is when I would go right, deep breath and relax"*. Within the research (Carmody & Baer, 2008), people are encouraged to engage in informal practice by trying to embed it into everyday activities, having full awareness of the

associated movements, sensations, cognitions, and feelings that may be present. The players stated that some strategies and skills that were learnt in the mindfulness sessions helped bring their minds back but also use the skills outside of football. Two statements support the above, *“the counting really helped me as that helps me forget what I am distracted about and come back to normal. So, when we did the counting, that really helped me focus and my mind didn’t get distracted at all”, “taking deep breaths, going in for four and out for six, just slow it down. I do it in tests now”*. Kabat-Zinn (1990) has often described informal practice as a method for generalizing mindful skills that has been learnt from formal practices into daily life.

3.4.2.3 Anchors.

Anchors can be anything that are in the present moment. Anchors can include sight, touch, taste, smell, sound, the breath, physiology etc. an anchor will aid someone stay present, stay grounded, and stay in the here and now: *“I knew the anchor to bring me back and regain my focus”*. How someone practices can vary for each individual dependent on their anchor, where they choose to place their focus and bring their attention back to that place of focus. Normally when practicing and starting off, that anchor is the breath or a sound, yet as someone becomes more experienced and, in their environment, individuals become more open to what their anchor can be, relating to their environmental experiences (Lutz et al., 2008). One player highlighted their anchor was associated with his position and therefore is bespoke to him and his environmental surroundings: *“Just pick the ball out of the net and get on with it.... Yea my anchor in training is my gloves; it helps me stay on task”*. As research has highlighted, all aspects that change due to the contribution of mindfulness is underpinned by learning to anchor awareness in the present moment (Nehar & Kumar, 2013).

3.4.3 Emotional Management

From discussions with the participants, emotional management was evident and explained in four ways: relaxation, awareness, frustration and managing mistakes.

3.4.3.1 Relaxation.

Emotions, whether positive or negative, can have a profound impact on an athlete's performance (Hannin, 2000; Lazarus, 2000). Although mindfulness is not used specifically as a relaxation tool, increased feelings of relaxation are often reported from people after engaging in mindful meditation. One primary mechanism of mindfulness is to enhance emotional regulation, which is integral in sport performance. Players that have the ability to manage their reactions to strong emotions that is produced from competitive sports, is a key aspect within the sport psychology literature (e.g., Jones, 2003). One player mentions, *"Slowing my heart rate down, relaxing. I get quite emotional, so this just helps me to relax"*. Gardner and Moore (2004) support this statement by stating that mindfulness-based interventions allow an individual to become more accepting of their current emotional experiences, allowing them more space to free up precious resources like attention to devote to performance (Schwanhausser, 2009).

3.4.3.2 Awareness.

Sometimes we like to allow our minds to wander. It can allow us to be creative, innovative, and positive, yet often, the mind can get distracted which leads to little or no awareness within daily activities. We can become blind to our emotions and those emotions of others (Powietrzynska et al., 2015). One player stated, *"Before we did the mindfulness, how I used to react to something was shocking. Using the mindfulness, I have got better, and I have learnt how to almost, look at myself and see how others may see me, look at my body language"*. The connections between emotions and the physiological responses are heightened through the practice of mindfulness and specifically, through increasing awareness (Powietrzynska et al., 2015). Through developing a deeper awareness of ourselves, we as individuals are more likely to show more compassion and non-judgement both within and externally. If as individuals we do not pay attention and increase our awareness of both the emotional and physical responses, research (Bai & Repetti, 2013) has shown that there is an increased stress on the nervous system, which could leave someone physically and emotionally

drained. From interviews with the players, the following emerged; *“Improving emotional control was one of the main things that I got out of it, take deep breaths and learn how to control my emotions”*. Research (Powietrzynska et al., 2015) supports the relationship between awareness and emotional intelligence, and states that the development of awareness is through practising mindfulness (Epstein, 1999).

3.4.3.3 Frustration.

From regularly practising mindfulness, it can significantly enhance the ability to regulate and control emotional states (Cahn & Polich, 2006). This player highlights his experiences within football expressing how the use of mindfulness has become a skill that he can use to manage his frustration as well as aid performance: *“I remember that I got really angry... I just started breathing a little bit slower, in for 4 and out for 6 and then a couple of minutes later I just felt better again and then I just started relaxing and it helped me with my football as well”*. Having an awareness of own emotions, both negative and positive, allows a task to be performed better even when that specific emotion is still present (Averill et al., 2001).

3.4.3.4 Managing Mistakes.

As already highlighted in the literature, mindfulness can assist with emotional states and within sport; it can be a very emotional experience (Kaufman et al., 2018). Mistakes are part of sport and developing, especially within an academy set-up. One player stated, *“What I would do after we made a mistake or conceded a goal, the reaction from that was terrible”*. Charoensukmongkol (2014) identified that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and mindfulness, explaining that regular practice of mindfulness meditation can enhance our ability to understand our own emotions. Meditation training requires an ability to closely observe our own emotions and feelings moment-to-moment without any judgement or interference, and this therefore develops a heightened awareness of the emotional state (Brown et al., 2007). Thoughts are powerful for anyone, and especially when performing in elite sport. If those thoughts are negative, this can have

detrimental impact to performance, *“After a goal, it would affect my head and my next action”*. Yet, mindfulness practice has been associated with the ability to let go and decrease occurrence of negative thoughts (Frewen et al, 2008).

3.4.4 Understanding

Another major theme that emerged from the data is ‘understanding’ and from this, it can be divided into 1. Defining mindfulness and 2. Bringing attention back to the present moment.

3.4.4.1 Defining Mindfulness.

For a skill to be learnt it is best to understand it before you begin learning it (Cotterill, 2019). Mindfulness is best learnt experientially, therefore exploring their practice in formal group sessions once a week and listening to their peers and staff around them, this aided their understanding:

“We had to apply the mindfulness that we learnt in the classroom into there and what we would do different.”

“Mind over matter.... It’s like trying to focus your mind on different stuff and not to get distracted.”

“Refocusing the mind...You have got to notice that you have lost focus to get yourself back”

“Calm down and focus more on what you need to do rather than just focusing on stuff that you don’t need.”

“How you can control yourself and your body and how well you know what is going on around you and inside you.”

“It’s a way to relax and chill for a bit without consuming up too much time.”

“It’s almost for a life lesson I guess”

3.4.4.2 Bringing Attention Back.

Having the ability to bring the wandering mind back to the present is a difficult skill. Yet the mind is like an elastic band, we all have the ability to stretch it in all different directions but snap it back to the present moment. Noticing when the mind has wandered and then bringing it back to the present is a practice in letting go and accepting what is happening in that moment. The players had a good understanding of bring their attention back: *“That if you’re distracted to bring your attention back to the one thing to regain your focus”*. Experiencing bring the mind back and understanding

what it feels like, enabled the players to gain a better understanding but also apply it within their domain out on the pitch. Reflecting on the multiple pieces of literature on mindfulness, recognising when the mind has wandered and being kind to oneself will enhance the practice and strengthen the ability to bring the mind back on a more regular basis. The players gave good examples of how they used these skills in situ:

“Yea just focusing on what I could do and not having any regrets on what I didn’t do... for example when we are doing the warmup and stretching, and he says feel the muscles working. I have noticed a change in that... it gets you more focused on what you need to do”.

3.5 Future Recommendations

Despite there only being one theme in this area, it is important to mention. The players have highlighted future recommendations for MSPE, and this programme being delivered across the whole club

3.5.1 Application.

MSPE was designed to incorporate and embed mindfulness into all sporting contexts. It is flexible in its approach and design, which made it a desirable programme to integrate into the academy culture. Although the modified 10-week programme transitioned from the psychology laboratory to the gym to the pitch, players did not notice mindfulness being applied in gym sessions, *“the biggest difference I saw was when we went out onto the pitch”*. The main point exposed from the players was doing more sessions on the pitch: *“do more pitch sessions...a few more football related activities...take it more onto the pitch. For example, if its 3 sessions a week, do 2 inside and 1 outside”*. Players wanted more formal sessions, *“the only thing would be to do more sessions...doing the sessions every week really helped me”*. The final ‘take home’ message that emerged from the interviews were concerning the audios. Players would have preferred a different voice every time,

meaning that psychology, coaching and S&C would all record the same audio which would ensure the same practice and instructions, yet a different voice would give the instructions.

3.6 Conclusion

Academy football is a highly stressful environment (Nesti, 2010). Players need to be aware of the resources that staff can provide to help players' journey but more importantly, players need to be made aware and upskill on the resources that they have and can internally manage. With the surge of interest in mindfulness within the last five years accelerating, the club have embarked in integrating mindfulness into the player's daily routine. This is revolutionary and innovative within the realm of football as this is the first study to date, to integrate mindfulness into football performance (Spencer et al., 2019).

The results in this study showed that there was a link between practising focusing on the breath in a formal situation to utilizing the skill on the pitch in situ; being able to focus attention and be in the moment and think clearly when under pressure. The use of breathing in recovery S&C sessions was mentioned as being helpful, being able to focus on muscle groups that had tension and then physically working on that area. However, the link to the practical gym sessions, where players were trying to utilize mindfulness in their strength-based gym sessions, were not beneficial. They explained that there was a greater link between the psychology classroom sessions and the pitch, noticing more of a difference in how they focus when pitch side. Players interviewed all stated that they benefited and learned skills from the intervention. All had different experiences, some preferring formal practice, others wanting more individual sessions especially delivered out on the pitch, and all stated that they required more practice and sessions with the researcher as the deliverer. All players had a good understanding of mindfulness and the benefit that it can have on them as a player, as well as noticing the impact within other domains of their life such.. The programme enabled all players to have an individualized personal experience.

Finally, the main points that were highlighted from the players were to have more on pitch sessions where they could apply it practically in situ allowing them to practice with support from the researcher. The aim is also to upskill other discipline staff to allow them to support players, with all staff providing the same instructional messages.

More academy coaches and staff want to embed mindfulness into all players' daily routines. This 10-week specific intervention can be enrolled through all ages in the academy so more players will benefit from this programme. For future sessions, sessions will last longer than 10-weeks, as recommended by the players, more emphasis on the transition between the psychology classroom and the pitch, with a potential to miss out strength-based gym work. However, S&C and physiotherapist still want to have mindfulness sessions within recovery and pre-activation. They found that the MSPE programme demonstrated that players had more focus and concentrated better on their body. MSPE highlights its intention to be flexible and this has been evident when collaborating with the authors of MSPE (Kaufman et al., 2018), to ensure that this programme and intervention integrated into the club culture (Pecen et al., 2016).

Overall, it was a positive application of mindfulness into this elite culture and the club are looking to enhance their understanding and application into all context within the football club, such as pitch sessions with coaches, gym sessions for recovery and activation before exercise, as well as analysis sessions.

3.7 Linking section for study one to study two

Study one was conducted in September 2016 with the purpose of using a flexible mindfulness-based program which could be conducted around the academy footballers' schedule. This meant that the mindfulness program had to be adaptable to fit with S&C, Medical, Analysis and more importantly on field coaching. The effect of MSPE showed true promise, allowing for the four sessions as planned by Kaufman et al., (2018) to be extended and flexible in their delivery, ultimately creating 10 sessions for the academy players to be involved in. This proved to be highly valuable

within the academy context and proved its potential as the best approach to take to integrate mindfulness into an organisation.

The results from this study highlighted that players would benefit from more sessions of mindfulness. They specifically suggested that there should be more than 10 sessions which ultimately demonstrates the impact that mindfulness had on these academy players. Although group sessions were of significant benefit, with some players highlighting the impact this intervention had on team cohesion, making sessions bespoke for individuals was a regular point of feedback from participants. Players stated that they found more benefit of practising mindfulness in the classroom setting and then taking it straight out onto the pitch. They struggled to always see the transitional link between the gym and the pitch. Players also stated that this program made them more aware of themselves and others, meaning that they were better able to manage more disruptive thoughts and emotions that could inhibit own and team performance outcomes.

Academy staff could see the benefit of the mindfulness intervention and the impact suggesting that more educating and upskilling of staff competency in mindfulness and its application would be needed for true effective embedding throughout the academy. This study also provided a foundation platform to evidence how multidisciplinary staff could use mindfulness within their own sessions. This led to the focus of study two; Incorporating mindfulness into injury rehabilitation: player and physiotherapist case-study. This particular study commenced soon after study one was completed in the summer of 2017. Study 1 demonstrated an interest from practitioners in addressing the role of medical practitioners and the use of mindfulness within their practice. The physiotherapists have prolonged contact time with players during their rehabilitation. The results from study one highlighted the potential for mindfulness to be delivered through other practitioners in collaboration with a trained psychologist. The working relationship between an injured player and their physiotherapist would present an opportunity to delve deeper into the delivery of mindfulness.

CHAPTER FOUR:

INCORPORATING MINDFULNESS INTO INJURY REHABILITATION: PLAYER AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST

CASE-STUDY

4 Introduction

Professional football carries a high risk of injury (Bengtsson et al., 2018), and has a higher injury rate than other team sports (Koutures & Gregory, 2010). Reported injury rates vary within football. In football, an injury may be defined as a physical complaint sustained and reported by the player, which results in time loss from training or matches, irrespective of the need for medical attention (Arden et al., 2016; Fuller et al., 2006). The process, duration and return to play following the injury is determined by the injury classification (Rae & Orchard, 2007). Hawkins et al., (2001) reported an average of 1.3 injuries per player per season within English Professional football, where 23% of these were major injuries keeping players out of training or games for four weeks or more. Whereas Ekstrand et al., (2011) stated that typically, top level professional football players sustain two injuries a season. In addition, there is a chance of re-injury (an injury of the same type and location as the initial injury) which leads to an extended time out of football that is often longer than the initial time frame from the original injury (Ekstrand et al., 2020).

Furthermore, sport injuries can lead to discomfort both physically and emotionally for athletes, With this in mind, recent evidence (e.g., Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2014; Ford et al., 2000; Heaney, 2006; Reese et al., 2012; Ruddock-Hudson et al., 2014; Tatsumi & Takenouchi, 2014; Tracey, 2003) suggests that psychological interventions play an important, if not vital role within the rehabilitation process for an injured athlete (Mohammed et al., 2018). There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that athletes are psychologically affected once sustaining a physical injury and return to play can be challenging (Brewer, 2007, 2010; Nesti, 2010; Podlog & Eklund, 2007; Putukian, 2016). While the quality of return to play has been shown to be influenced by multiple factors, one of key significance is psychosocial factors (Gledhill et al, 2018). One of the most cited

theoretical frameworks to address the psychosocial factors of injury is the model of stress and athletic injury (Williams & Anderson, 1998). Within this model, the psychosocial factors are divided into three categories: personality factors, history of stressors, and coping resources. These three categories may impact the athlete's perception of potential stressful situations, which may also have a bidirectional relationship with cognitive and physiological responses; this in turn will influence injury risk (Iversson et al., 2019).

Psychosocial factors can be defined as “pertaining to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of behaviour and social factors” (Martikainen et al., 2000, p.1091). Johnson et al., (2016) identified three key core themes representing psychosocial factors that facilitated injured athletes' recovery; constructive communication and interaction with others, strong belief in their actions, and ability to set reasonable goals. Research has also demonstrated that the psychosocial impact also occurs immediately post-injury, throughout rehabilitation, and continue once fully fit and back performing (Podlog et al., 2014). Return to play often takes place in a social environment involving many different people (e.g., physiotherapists, coaches, family, friends), highlighting psychosocial as an appropriate term to explain within the context. In support, Ivarsson et al., (2013) explain how theoretical concepts, empirical studies, and applied knowledge in the realm of psychology and injury is being more widely used, yet researchers are still questioning how much psychological support players are provided with when returning to play (Gervis et al., 2019; Podlog, et al., 2014). In spite of the Football Association's aim to increase the awareness and application of sport psychology with English football (Pain & Harwood, 2004) resistance is still evident when trying to implement psychological support on long-term injured players (Heaney, 2006; Putukian, 2016).

Several researchers have suggested that sports medical practitioners are vital in the psychological process of injury (Gordon et al., 1998; Gordon et al., 2001; Pearson & Jones, 1992; Weise & Weiss, 1987; Weise & Weiss, 1991). Medical professionals are the first to attend to an

injury, are there during the injury process and are on hand to attend to the athlete's needs (Wiese-Bjornstal & Smith, 1993). Therefore, the success of the rehabilitation may be related to the degree in which medical professionals understand the holistic needs of the injured athlete (Heijne et al., 2008; Podlog & Eklund, 2007). Any psychological distress that may be experienced is not only likely to influence the success of an athlete's return to sport but also their adherence to the rehabilitation programme (Williams et al., 2001). It has therefore been argued that throughout the athlete's rehabilitation, medical professionals need to equally devote attention to the psychological needs of the rehabilitation, not just the physical needs (Harris, et al., 2005; Podlog et al., 2014; Tjong, et al., 2014).

Typically, there are three stages to a physical rehabilitation process for long term injured athletes (Prentice & Arnheim, 2011). These three phases are Acute (Phase 1), Repair (Phase 2), Remodelling/Return to Training (Phase 3). There is an additional phase that has been included, Return to Competition, which incorporates the psychological rehabilitation (Clement et al., 2015). Although phase 3 explores the psychological element, it is important to note that all four phases have different psychological impacts (Clement et al., 2015).

Phase 1 is typically where athletes experience debilitating emotions such as anger, shock, fear, confusion, anxiety, and helplessness (Carson & Polman, 2008; Tracey, 2003). Throughout phase 2, the athlete may experience a long-drawn-out process of the physical repairing (Heijne et al., 2008) meaning that psychological disruptions such as loss of motivation, feelings of exclusion and loss of athletic identity may occur (Manuel et al., 2002; Ruddock-Hudson et al., 2012). In phases 3 and 4, fear of re-injury is prevalent and is characterised by anxious thoughts and feelings (Tripp et al., 2007). These emotions can cause long-term physical impairment, reduced performance levels and satisfaction of their chosen sport as well as an increased risk of re-injury or further injury (Ardern et al., 2012; Johnston & Carroll, 1998; Lentz et al., 2015).

Sport medical professionals believe that psychosocial strategies are necessary for an effective and successful rehabilitation (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2007; Ford & Gorden, 1998; Hemmings & Povey, 2002; Larson et al., 1996). In addition, Walker et al., (2007) stated that if physiotherapists have a greater understanding of how athletes respond to injury, it may potentially improve the rehabilitation experience and outcome for players (Hamson-Utley et al., 2008; Stiller-Ostrowski & Hamson-Utley, 2010). The research highlights psychological interventions are effective at improving emotional states and rehabilitation rates (Podlog et al., 2014). However, there is a lack of research exploring the use of psychological interventions in rehabilitation. Arvinen-Barrow et al., (2014) documented that there is limited research on the influence of sport medicine teams on the psychosocial aspects of athlete's sport injuries. Typically, the medical professionals are trained to diagnose and treat the physical aspects of an injury and to prepare the athlete for return to performance as physically fit (Sauers et al., 2011). However, medical practitioners attend to the athlete as a whole and not just the physical needs (Petitpas & Danish, 1995). The rehabilitation process may be painful, uncomfortable, stressful, and time-consuming (Cohen et al., 2010), therefore, Ray et al., (1999) highlight that sport medical practitioners are an important source of emotional support especially during the injury period. Nonetheless, the emphasis placed on psychosocial aspects of the injury is minimal or even neglected within medical practitioners (Heaney et al., 2012; Mann et al., 2007; Stiller-Ostrowski & Hamson-Utley, 2010), despite beliefs that psychosocial strategies are necessary to increase the effectiveness of the injury rehabilitation (Beneka, et al., 2007; Flint, 1998; Ievleva & Orlick, 1991). One barrier to greater implementation of psychosocial strategies has been identified as medical professionals feeling inadequately trained to address the psychosocial elements that may arise (Hamson-Utley et al., 2008; Stiller-Ostrowski & Hamson-Utley, 2010).

Over the last decade, there has been a growth in the literature highlighting a more holistic approach to injury rehabilitation which includes acknowledging the importance of psychosocial aspects (Arvinen-Barrow & Clement, 2017). As a result, more athlete-centred interprofessional

models have been developed to highlight how professionals in sport can work effectively together as one team (Clement & Arvinen-Barrow, 2013; Meyer et al., 2014). In Premier League Football Club's integration and collaboration amongst departments is vital (Champ, 2018) for the progression and development of players, not only in rehabilitation but across all aspects of football. Research has presented the benefits of collaboration amongst injury professional within the rehabilitation process, highlighting that having a multi-disciplinary team working with injured players is common practice in professional sports (Weise-Bjornstal & Smith, 1999). All professionals involved with the rehabilitation process should work closely together, along with the player, to achieve a common goal, resulting in full physical and mental fitness to achieve a high level of performance (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2010). The benefits of engaging in psychosocial aspects such as cognitions, emotions, behaviours, social support and interpersonal skills between practitioner and athlete (Podlog, 2014) during the rehabilitation process has shown several advancements (Hemmings & Povey, 2002). The current football club where this study took place strives to create a culture where an inter-disciplinary model is embedded. This approach allows for an overlap of roles and functions across team members, which Eames (1989) referred to as the "blurring and sharing of roles", which may require staff to "learn and develop new skills, outside their normal professional requirements and experience" (p.52).

However, despite a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach being recommended in the literature, this is not always able to be adopted in practice. While percentages in football have been reported as higher, (69% of physiotherapists are likely to have access to a sport psychologist, Heaney, 2006), Arvinen-Barrow et al., (2007) conducted a national UK study with physiotherapists and only 25.3% indicated that they had access to a qualified sport psychologist. Therefore, despite psychological issues playing a significant role in the return to play, without clubs employing sport psychologists it may fall to the medical professionals (e.g., Jevon & Johnston, 2003). A number of researchers have suggested that these medical professionals have more contact time with the athlete during the rehabilitation process (e.g., Gordon et al., 1998; Pearson & Jones, 1992; Wiese et

al., 1991), and build greater rapport with players (Niven, 2007). As such, Ray, and colleagues (1999) believe that physiotherapists are an important, if not the main source of emotional support to aid players through their rehabilitation and should be using a range of psychosocial counselling techniques and strategies.

Research has suggested that physiotherapists themselves perceive that sport injury will have an impact on an athlete psychologically. However, many physiotherapy degrees do not include psychology training in their course content since the extent to which the training is provided is solely dependent on the facilitator (Harris, 2005). According to Harris (2005), physiotherapists should be skilled enough to recognise a range of psychological reactions experienced by injured athletes and can recognise the need for referral. However, during their professional training, rarely do they receive training in the use of psychological interventions (Kolt & Anderson, 2004).

Throughout the phases of rehabilitation, players will experience different emotions and seek support from those closest to them. In a club environment this will often be the physiotherapist (Jevon & Johnston, 2003). In phase 1, players often experience emotional reactions such as shock, denial, anger, fear, confusion, anxiety etc (Carsen & Polman, 2008; Tracey, 2003). During phase 2, players can experience boredom, lack of motivation and loss of athletic identity due to the long and drawn-out process of the injury repairing itself (Heijne et al. 2008; Manuel et al. 2002; Ruddock-Hudson et al. 2012). Emotional reactions to the rehabilitation can cause frustration, feelings of loss, and depression (Clement et al., 2015; Tracey, 2003), which have been shown in the literature to potentially trigger or uncover mental health issues (Gervis et al. 2019; Heaney 2006; Putukian 2016; Smith & Milliner 1994; Sundgot-Borgen 1994). In phase 3 and 4, fear of re-injury has been found to have an impact on players rehabilitation and return to play performance outcome (Podlog et al., 2010). Unwanted feelings, emotions and thoughts may appear (Tripp et al., 2007), causing performance drops, physical impairment, reduced outcome and performance satisfaction and increased risk to further injury (Ardern et al., 2012; Johnston & Carroll 1998; Lentz et al., 2014).

With injuries having the potential to produce such distress researchers have identified factors that contribute to a more positive rehabilitation, alongside possible psychological interventions (Brewer, 2002; Weise-Bjornstal et al., 1998; Williams & Scherzer, 2010). These interventions include goal setting (Evans & Hardy, 2002; Williams & Scherzer, 2010), relaxation (Walsh, 2011; Williams & Scherzer, 2010), imagery (Driediger et al., 2006; Wesch et al., 2021; Williams & Scherzer, 2010), and acceptance and commitment therapy (Mahoney & Hanrahan, 2011). Clavert (2015) stressed that utilising psychological skills within a rehabilitation process is vital. Athletes' beliefs, emotions and thoughts influence the way an athlete responds after injury, meaning that there is an interaction between the body and mind (Mohammed et al., 2018). Nonetheless, there are still some obvious gaps in this growing literature base. This study therefore explores and examines the impact mindfulness has on experience of rehabilitation from injury, with an emphasis of the delivery through the physiotherapist.

Mindfulness allows individuals to have a greater awareness of their thoughts and feelings, whilst allowing them to notice these thoughts and emotions and stay present. It can teach individuals to decentre from problematic thoughts by being able to just notice them as events rather than accurate reflections of reality (Bedard et al., 2013). Developing skills of awareness, acceptance, non-judgement, and self-compassion (all factors of mindfulness) may benefit players and provide them with the skills to manage the stress of the injury (Baltzell, 2014; Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). With respect to the role of mindfulness meditation, Arvinen-Barrow and Walker (2013) mention that mindfulness can be an effective tool to achieve a relaxed state of body and mind within rehabilitation. Mahoney and Hanrahan (2011) conducted a study with injured athletes rehabilitating from ACL injuries using a mindfulness approach through the use of Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT). This study used an educational approach where an abbreviated 4-week ACT intervention was implemented. The results of the study reported that mindfulness was useful in accepting emotions such as frustration, boredom, and anxiety throughout the rehabilitation process (Mahoney & Hanrahan, 2011). Cooper (2017) states that "Mindfulness interventions represent an

ideal coping technique for injured athletes” (p. 5). Ivarsson (2015) reported that elite footballers who undertook psychological interventions based on attention to aid rehabilitation, were able to minimise sport injuries. Considering the substantial impact that injuries can have on athletes (e.g., Hagger et al., 2005; Stambulova et al., 2007), and clubs (e.g., Ekstrand, 2013), all interventions that could contribute to the reduction of injuries is deemed of interest. The results from this study are also in line with previous findings where the mindfulness intervention group have shown meaningful levels of injury reduction (Ivarsson et al., 2015). Ivarsson (2015) also recommended daily mindfulness exercises to lessen the risk of injury in the first place. Mindfulness as an approach has been used more frequently in the last decade, yet there is no published literature of a physiotherapist and sport psychologist using mindfulness together to support an injured player in professional football.

Where there has been a great deal of research in mindfulness is the clinical setting. In clinical psychology research, mindfulness meditation has been an effective intervention and skill to address psychological factors such as increased stress, anxiety, depression, devastation, loss, rumination, and restlessness (Brewer, 2007; Tracey, 2003). Many researchers have highlighted that mindfulness has been an effective way for individuals to cope with pain and trauma (e.g., Grant & Rainville, 2009; Grossman, et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1986; Veehof et al., 2011; Zeidan et al., 2015; Zeidan et al., 2010). Mindfulness programmes such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) have shown to reduce psychological distress as well as increase general well-being amongst clinical and non-clinical populations (Baer, 2008; Carlson et al., 2001; Carmody & Grossman et al., 2004). Research has shown that practising mindfulness daily can reduce stress-related cortisol, perceived stress and anxiety and increase mood (Tang et al., 2007). By gaining a greater awareness and acceptance of pain and trauma through practising mindfulness, psychological distress will decrease allowing for injured players to potentially gain a quicker return to sport.

Although mindfulness-based interventions are becoming increasingly popular within the realm of sport, there are still many areas where mindfulness practice has not been researched. To date there are only a few studies have looked at mindfulness within injury. The first explored the efficacy of MAC (mindful acceptance commitment) on injury occurrence amongst 41 male and female soccer players ranging in age from 16-19 (Ivarsson et al., 2015). The findings from this study showed that 67% of the players in the mindfulness group remained injury free in comparison to 40% in the control group. These findings suggest that an intervention focusing of improving attention (such as mindfulness) could decrease injury risk. The second used MMTS (mindfulness meditation training 2.0) addressing mindfulness and self-compassion interventions with three injured athletes ranging in age from 15-16 (Batzell & Summers., 2017), and a qualitative study using psychoeducation of mindfulness based on ACT for post injury recovery of four injured athletes ranging in age from 18-49 (Mahoney & Hanrahan, 2011). These athletes were at various stages of their Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) recovery as they focused on four processes: cognitive diffusion, mindfulness, acceptance, and values. The intervention was successful allowing each athlete to accept events and commit to rehabilitation behaviours; however, the major limitation was the lack of experiential exercises that contribute to the delivery of ACT (Shortway et al., 2018). Despite the literature suggesting that mindfulness meditation interventions are being used more frequently (Ahern & Lohr, 1997; Walsh, 2011), there has been no research using mindfulness meditation to aid in the rehabilitation and recovery process (Cooper, 2017). When addressing the literature, a more holistic view to sport injury rehabilitation has been taken (Hamson-Utley, 2010; Kamphoff et al., 2013). However, there has been limited research that has directly addressed the views and experiences of athletes and professionals involved in the rehabilitation process overall (Arvinen-Barrow & Clement, 2017); let alone the specific use of mindfulness.

The purpose of the current study is to explore the effectiveness of a mindfulness-based programme within rehabilitation. Additionally, the mindfulness-based programme will be delivered with and through the physiotherapist working with the injured player, ultimately utilizing an

interdisciplinary approach. It is reported that when an athlete is injured, they may experience a range of negative cognitive appraisals (e.g., loss in confidence), emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety) and behaviours (e.g., isolation, Brewer et al., 1993; Tracey, 2003; Udry et al., 1997). Research has shown the impact mindfulness interventions can have on a population, more specifically the athlete population. Therefore, using mindfulness interventions on an injured athlete would add value (Sappington & Longshore, 2015), as well as for individuals (physiotherapists) to gain better health and wellbeing (Thomson et al., 2017). This provides greater self-awareness, decreasing levels of stress (e.g., Brinkborg et al., 2011; Flaxman & Bond, 2010), as well as greater attention to the task or stimuli (Jha et al., 2007). The aim of this study is to understand and represent the experiences of the athlete and physiotherapist when using mindfulness specifically as a tool to facilitate injury rehabilitation.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Design

The current study adopted an Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, which is a well-established approach to qualitative research in psychology (Palmer et al., 2010). IPA “involves detailed examination of the participant’s lifeworld; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p.53). The specific aim of this approach is to gain an understanding of the phenomena under investigation from the participants perspective, in a specific context (Nicholls et al., 2005). IPA is an approach where data invites participants to articulate stories, thoughts, and feelings about certain phenomena (Smith, 2004). The approach allows for flexibility and individuality, despite being systematic in its method (Cope, 2011; Smith & Eatough, 2006). The IPA approach allows for a detailed analysis of the personal accounts of the participants experiences followed by themes explored paired with the researcher’s own interpretations. IPA is described by Larkin and colleagues (2011) about ‘being-in-the-world’ and ‘lived experiences. It is a powerful tool for examining ‘how individuals subjectively experience and give meaning to a particular phenomenon’ (Gill, 2014, p.

131). The use of IPA examines how people view their world through their own personal experiences and preconceptions (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Exploring the participants' perspective, with giving priority to understanding how they experienced it and the meanings these experiences have for them (Larkin et al., 2015). In addition, IPA also acknowledges the researcher's role within the research, recognising how the researcher interprets their findings will also be affected by their own lived experiences, known as a double hermeneutic (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Researchers have stated that IPA allows meanings of experiences to be context-sensitive (situated) and that humans are inseparable from the world (Grbich, 2007; Palmer et al., 2010), meaning the nature of the existence can be revealed through one's involvement, justifying their lived experiences (Grbich, 2007; Larkin et al., 2011).

Ethical approval for this study was gained via the University Ethics Committee from the University of Winchester. Both participants consented to take part in the study by giving their informed consent.

4.2.2 *Participants*

The two participants were purposefully selected for this study. The specific approach was adopted in accordance with Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidelines for IPA. In accordance with the Ethical Principles for Psychologists and Code of Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2018), pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality.

4.2.3 *"Mason"*

Introduction: Mason is a 19-year-old British male who played in a Category One football academy. He had been in the academy system for ten years and had suffered multiple injuries during this period, specifically four ACL and one MCL (Medial Cruciate Ligament) reconstruction. He was coming to the end of his contract, and therefore wanted to recover as best and quickly as possible to secure another professional deal. Mason lived at home whilst injured and travelled into the club to

receive treatment. Mason had been exposed to sport psychology throughout his time within the academy, having this integrated into his training programme through coaching, sports science, rehabilitation, and analysis. He also had team, unit and one to one psychology sessions as part of his individual development plan.

Mason had transitioned through the club. Initially he attended a couple of days a week (U16) and then moving to being a full-time apprentice and professional player. As explained previously, players within the academy are developed technically, tactically, physically, and mentally. Mason consented to this study and the integration of mindfulness into his rehabilitation programme. He was happy for the sport psychologist (researcher) to work alongside the physiotherapist, sharing information to contribute to a successful rehabilitation. The sport psychologist (researcher) had worked with Mason previously regarding performance-based psychological support and therefore a rapport had already been built before commencing this study.

4.2.4 “Lewis”

Case introduction: Lewis is a 42-year-old British male physiotherapist who worked with Mason. He has twenty years’ experience and had been a first team physio at the club for six years. The sport psychologist (researcher) and Lewis had not worked directly together before, however, brief interactions meant that there was a relationship developed prior to the study. Lewis wanted to embark on this study due to his interest in psychology and mindfulness, as well as learning more about how to emotionally support injured players. When the intervention commenced, Lewis had already been working with Mason for three weeks.

Mason and Lewis were purposefully selected, which corresponds with the analysis of IPA; ‘hand-picking’ participants based on their experience of the phenomenon being studied at the start of the data collection process (Dale, 2000). It is important to note that it is at the discretion of the researcher to ensure that the recruited participants have the experience of the phenomenon needed for the research (Finlay, 2011; O’Mailey et al., 2016; Smith, 2009). Smith and colleagues

(2009) have also discussed the importance of researchers developing rapport with the participants to provide a more engaging and skilled interview. As previously highlighted, the relationship between the researcher and player was strong, and the relationship between the researcher and physiotherapist was positive, but in its infancy. All parties had a mutual respect for what they brought to the rehabilitation process, and it was agreed that open and honest conversations would be had (Randall & Phoenix, 2009).

4.2.5 *Researcher*

The researcher was fully immersed in the environment as an employee and worked as a full-time sport psychologist (HCPC registered) for the football club. The main objective of her role is to support the pathway programme to assist with the development of talented young players and ultimately aid their progression and transition through the academy system and into the senior team to play Premier League football. As a practitioner, the researcher covers the performance psychology strand of the psychology department, integrating this into players football programme: from coaching to s&c, analysis, and rehabilitation. The academy program highlights the importance of sports psychology and promotes the discipline being an integral part of the inter-disciplinary culture. With this in mind, the medical staff saw a need for the researcher's expertise within the rehabilitation programme, which ultimately led to this case study.

4.2.6 *Procedure*

This researcher first integrated mindfulness into Mason's rehabilitation . Working collaboratively alongside Lewis, the researcher incorporated elements of mindfulness into his language and along stages of the rehabilitation. In addition, the researcher worked on an individual basis with Mason incorporating a mindfulness-based programme which mirrored Lewis' work. Mason and Lewis were then interviewed approximately three weeks after return to play, to gain a greater understanding of their experiences utilising a mindfulness-based approach in rehabilitation. This was the time scale due to schedule constraints.

4.2.7 *Mindfulness-based Program*

The applied intervention consisted of an adaptation of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, originally proposed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). This program was chosen as it was specifically designed to alleviate chronic pain for patients. MBSR is used to adapt to medical conditions that enable regular mindfulness practice to manage both emotions and stress (Nehra et al., 2012). Specifically, this involved taking language and exercises from this program as well as the mindfulness in schools project (MiSP) such as 'raisin' exercise (this requires the individual to focus their mind on the present moment using all their senses), mindfulness of breathing (simply focusing the attention on the breath, following the natural rhythm), body scan (the ability to tune into the body and reconnect with the physical self, noticing any sensations that arise without judgement), mindful movement and walking (engaging in different exercises whilst placing attention on the movements of the body and breath), as well as discussions around sitting with difficulties and the stress around elite football (see an example in appendix). The main alterations were expanding the length of the sessions to align with the rehabilitation programme, not placing a time limit on exploring the different exercises. The modification of time has also been considered in other studies, Mohammed et al., (2018) adapted the mindfulness meditation to align with the injured participants treatment and availability. For example, in the mindfulness programmes mentioned above, they explore a new focus of mindfulness in each session, this programme allowed Mason to practise mindfulness of the breath for several weeks before moving on to a body scan. In addition, the reflective sessions (which are done after every mindfulness practice) were done as individual sessions with the player and the sport psychologist (researcher) or with the physiotherapist, player, and psychologist (researcher) during rehabilitation sessions, rather than group reflective sessions as stated in MBSR and MiSP.

Due to the length of the recovery period, sessions occurred face-to-face either weekly or bi-weekly dependent on schedule, however the psychologist and physiotherapist had correspondence

weekly as reviews. This whole intervention lasted the full 9 months of the rehabilitation process. Each session reflected on where the player was in their rehabilitation process and explored whether the player and physiotherapists' views were aligned, and then exploring various aspects of the mindfulness practices. The importance of flexibility in the approach was crucial as the player was unable to do mindful movement at the start of the rehabilitation due to the stage that they were at, the programme had to be aligned with the rehabilitation programme. In addition, the body scan did not occur early on (as suggested in MBSR) due to Mason struggling to manage and accept the pain. Anchoring techniques are designed to bring attention back to the present moment, and this needed to be learnt so he did not solely focus on the pain. This was based on the feedback from Mason and Lewis.

This study then used semi-structured interviews as articulated by Smith and Osborn (2003) for conducting IPA research. The semi-structured interview procedure followed Smith's (1995) description. This involved the construction of the interview guide (*see appendix*) – giving guidance of areas to be discussed (Osborn & Smith, 2015). The specific process for developing the interview guide adhered to a four-step approach developed by Smith and Osborn (2003). This approach suggests that the researcher; 1) Thinks about the broad picture; 2) Put these topics into some relevant order; 3) Think of appropriate questions relating to those areas; 4) Think about possible probes and prompts. The aim is to facilitate the participant telling their own story, not to check the researchers' preconceptions of the use of mindfulness in rehabilitation (*example of the interview questions are included in the appendix*). The two interviews (Mason's was 60 minutes and Lewis lasted 80 minutes), were recorded separately and transcribed verbatim to produce an accurate record of the conversations that took place, these occurred at the training ground. This approach is consistent with the phenomenological approach where the two participants are considered the 'experts' and it is their experiences that is of interest to the researcher (Smith, 1996).

4.2.8 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using IPA. Through this process the researcher engaged in an “interpretative relationship with the transcript” (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 64). The analytic process proceeded as follows:

1. Both transcripts were read a number of times so that the researcher could become familiar with the two participants accounts and gain a general sense of the participants experience. Initial notes were made in a margin, annotating anything that identified as interesting or significant. As this process continued, emerging themes were noted, and the process was informed by the researchers experience of the interview itself (Osborn & Smith, 2015).
2. Returning to the beginning, the interviews were then re-read, and any emergent themes were identified and organised into a table.
3. Attention was focused on the themes to define them in more detail and establish their interrelationships. “The focus was on the psychological content of the phenomenon under study and the data were now being condensed” (Osborn & Smith, 2015, p.68).
4. The shared themes were then organised to make consistent and meaningful statements which contributed to an account of the meaning and capturing the essence of the participants experience. Checks were made with the original transcripts to make sure that the connections still worked with the original data. This step then supported the development of a table with coherent themes.

4.2.9 Trustworthiness

Within qualitative research, the researcher is often both the one collecting and analysing the data, meaning there is potential for research bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative researchers may impose their own personal beliefs and experiences onto all aspects of the research, leading to the researcher’s voice overpowering and dominating the participants voice (Mason, 2002). To actively reduce the researcher’s bias, the participant is involved in checking and confirming the

results of the data. By returning an interview or analysed data is known as member checking, which is used to validate, verify, and assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007).

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to a rigorous design, credibility of the researcher, the authenticity of the findings and the relevance of the research methods (i.e., Jonson & Parry, 2015). Ultimately, it evaluates the overall impression of the quality of the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Within the academic literature, trustworthiness has been likened as a key element in maintaining the place of qualitative research in the academic world, and “there is a general consensus that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124).

Trustworthiness was achieved using bracketing and member checking (Nicholls et al., 2005; Cotterill, 2015). Bracketing is a form of phenomenological enquiry that requires deliberately putting aside one’s own belief and prior experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Carpenter, 2007). Bracketing is a means of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and analysis (Ahern, 1999), meaning that researchers accurately describe participants’ life experiences. Despite the hermeneutic phenomenological approach acknowledging that pre-understanding of the subject area cannot be eliminated or ‘bracketed’ (Koch, 1995), the technique of bracketing is found to be inconsistent and problematic within its approach (LeVasseur, 2003). There is no set process or method for undertaking bracketing (Gearing, 2004; Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004; Giorgi, 2011). Member checking is a method used to check rigor (Smith, 2018). This involves the participants validating the credibility of their data which assesses the trustworthiness of the data, asking for the participants’ input on whether the data accurately represents their experiences. If the participants confirm the data has been accurately represented, the findings are then deemed credible, and the research is valid (Smith, 2018).

4.3 Results and Discussion

Analysis of the data highlighted four major themes, which have been used as the base for the following discussion, and 10 sub-themes. The major themes (figure 1) include application of mindfulness, support network, rehabilitation, and learning points.

| Major themes | Sub-themes |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Application of Mindfulness | |
| | 1.1 Experiencing emotions |
| | 1.2 Barriers to practising |
| | 1.3 Success of application |
| 2. Support Networks | |
| | 2.1 Trusting Relationships |
| | 2.2 Inter-Disciplinary Approach |
| 3. Rehabilitation | |
| | 3.1 Process |
| 4. Learning Points | |
| | 4.1 Lessons learnt |
| | 4.2 Take away messages |

Table 2: Overview of themes

4.3.1 *Application of Mindfulness*

The first major theme related to the application of mindfulness and the use of this within the rehabilitation programme. There is a rapidly growing body of literature to support the positive effects of mindfulness, especially to help cope with pain (la Cour & Petersen, 2015). This theme explores the use of mindfulness from a player and physiotherapist perspective and the impact this had on the application to the rehabilitation programme It is explored through the sub-themes of regulating emotions, barriers of practising and success of application.

4.3.1.1 *Experiencing emotions*

Mindfulness is a practice that allows for monitoring ongoing experiences as they occur in the present moment, and “approaching these experiences with openness, curiosity, and equanimity (i.e., acceptance) (Lindsay et al., 2018, p.5). The first sub-theme highlighted the variety of emotions

experienced by both Mason and Lewis. In particular, Mason explains the emotions such as frustration and anger that has elevated time pressure and the context in which he is in, such as limited time on his contract:

"I was shocked that I've fallen injured again... Obviously annoyed, obviously what time, like, I mean I don't have much left in my contract, so obviously things trying to shine and show the coaches. But yeah, just had to try and move forward and work hard."

The emotional reactivity of injury was powerful for Mason due to stress caused by the short time left on his contract. Using mindfulness may enable him to increase his awareness and gain a greater understanding of his emotional intelligence, allowing him to notice what emotions are present for him. By doing this, it will allow Mason to effectively manage his emotions through the practice and training of mindfulness. Mason explains that he experienced a rollercoaster of emotions:

"Frustration. Got upset sometimes. Got sad. Um, sometimes I was happy because like, 'cause you know, you're progressing sometimes, but it was mostly frustration like getting upset. It's mixed emotions".

Although frustration and anger were reactions experienced, which are supported through the Kubler-Ross model (Kubler-Ross, 1969), sadness and happiness also featured. It was mixed emotions that were expressed, and these fluctuated on a day-to-day basis depending on his rehab. If something went well, progression was evident. This was shown through happiness and achievement of success. If his rehabilitation went badly, the progress that was made deteriorated. The frustration and annoyance that he experienced during the injury was heightened due to the fact that he had no control on whether he had done enough on the pitch to gain a contract for the following season; it was all out of his control.

He explains further:

"My head's gone a bit sometimes".

Lewis supports this by saying:

“Particularly with the more serious injuries there’s a constant nagging doubt in their mind where they don’t know how long it’s going to be before they’re fit or in some cases whether they’re ever going to get fit back to the previous level and that is just played over and over in their in their heads sometimes multiple time in, in, in, a few minutes”.

Research has demonstrated (Linehan et al., 2007) that by becoming more mindful towards experiences and emotions, this enhances emotional regulation and limits reactivity. Mindfulness practice has shown that individuals demonstrate greater emotional regulation to external stressors (Arch & Craske, 2010), repetitive thoughts (Feldman et al., 2010), less depressive thoughts following low mood (Kuyken et al., 2010), and brain processing associated with less reactivity (Van Den Hurk et al., 2010).

Increasing awareness is not a new concept for mindfulness, let alone emotional awareness (Hill & Updergraff, 2011). Having the ability to be aware and control emotions through focussed attention allows for individuals to be more present (Erisman & Roemer, 2010., Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Goleman, 2003; Hill & Updergraff, 2011; Nielsen & Kaszniak, 2006) and show a decline in mood disturbances and stress (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mason refers to gaining greater awareness of his frustrations (*My head’s gone a bit sometimes*) as well as noticing when he is not focused; ‘his head has gone’.

Research highlights that gaining more awareness of emotions in combination with reflection can be an effective way of improving the clinical reasoning process and treatment outcomes in rehabilitation (Meadows & Williams, 2009) This supports the literature in using mindfulness to enhance emotional regulation (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Mason and Lewis learnt through the mindfulness programme to become more aware of the emotions and thoughts that they were experiencing. This allows for focusing attention on the body

sensations, detecting them as they arise, as they unfold and as they pass. It is common for the mind to wander and drift away, yet the skill is to notice this and bring attention back to the task at hand. During the injury rehabilitation, the mind will wander due to various emotions. This can then make the mind think more negatively or over-think and therefore the focus on the rehabilitation fluctuates. Having an awareness of where the mind is and where the focused attention is placed, is a key skill to learn. Mason explains how his mind wanders at different stages in the rehabilitation:

“It's a frustration and it depends on what stage you are in your injury as well. There are different stages. We get angry like right at the start. At halfway because you still know you've got that long left that you're just done. And then near the end because you know you can play, as I said, them not letting you or when you are playing but you're on limited amount of time.”

The above shows and highlights the emotional journey that Mason experienced and what he learnt about himself through the process. Once an awareness of emotions and of self was gained, Mason learnt the benefits of anchoring his breath; he gained ability to focus on the breath. Gaining the understanding and the experiential feeling of what it is like to notice when these emotions arise and then have the ability to pay attention to the breath to bring his attention back to the present moment. He explains:

“Whenever I get frustrated, naturally I'll just do one big deep breath and I'm back concentrated... I can now bring my attention back quite quickly”.

Having the ability to focus on the breath has allowed Mason to be more focused in the present moment, focusing on the task at hand. Mason is now back playing and the ability to concentrate better has also allowed him to have clear thoughts to make decisions. He has also now been able to use what he has learnt during rehabilitation and bring this onto the pitch to help with attention and emotions experienced whilst on the pitch. For example, when the ball is lost and a tackle has been

made, instead of getting frustrated, he has the ability to calm himself down which ultimately helps with his performance decision making. Getting frustrated can distract attention, which make it more difficult to manage emotions. The breath becomes an ever-present, ever-available anchor to harness attention and is a vehicle to help locate, feel, and allow the body to fully pay attention to the sensations that are experienced (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Paying attention to the breath allows one to be more aware of the body and the senses that are experienced. The in and out breath can be powerfully felt within the body and the mind, and it can form a source of released tension build-up, allowing the tension to be realised and dissolve, just by paying attention and being mindful of the breath. Having tools to be able to manage and control emotions allows the mind to prepare to respond in a calming manner allowing more effective decisions to occur. Mason alludes to how this now helps him on the pitch

"I think more positive... cause when before I'd done the breathing before, I used to, say I lost the ball, I'll go after it and then do like a bad challenge. Now, whenever I lost the ball, I take like a deep breath and then this will calm me down; then obviously it's helped my performance as well as rehab."

From a medical standpoint, Lewis has encouraged players who are going through rehabilitation to practice mindfulness to see that being in the present moment is beneficial for them during and after rehab. What Lewis has experienced is that when players have utilised mindfulness, this has allowed them to return to a calm state and banish negative doubts and worries. Players that have adhered to mindfulness practice have completed the rehabilitation programme with more awareness of their cognitions. Lewis explains:

"There's a constant nagging doubt in their mind... it just gives them a state to calm down and let those thoughts leave their mind for a bit and in my experience of it I've found that players that have stuck with it and got through it just seem to have a little bit more organisation and structure to their thoughts in their head."

A calm state of mind was mentioned by both parties. When practising mindful meditation, it can enhance awareness as well as calm the mind; the more someone practises means that the day can be approached with a state of calmness and non-judgement (Behan, 2019., Brown & Ryan, 2003., Hill & Updegraff, 2012., Miller, 1993). When an injury occurs, there is often an emotional response attached; this can inhibit the healing process as the sympathetic system is more alert. By learning how to control the sympathetic and parasympathetic system skilfully, positive experiences can occur whilst developing a state of calm and steadiness within the mind. Hence the impact that mindfulness can have on emotional regulation and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

As stated previously, this was an emotional journey for Mason but also for Lewis. For Mason, it was learning how to manage his emotions, in particular the frustration and not allowing this to impact his rehabilitation.

“The most frustrating part was when you know you can play, but then not letting you say, your fitness or strengthen your leg, all you're doing is just running. And that's the most frustrating part” (Mason).

In addition, Lewis become more emotionally aware of what he was experiencing (thoughts and emotions) which enabled him to better accept and cope with the rehabilitation as well as manage his own expectations. Mason noted and gained greater awareness of how he became fully absorbed and learnt to detach his emotions from the process, if setbacks occurred, not taking them personally. He gained the ability to be ‘fully present’.

“I want to give them realistic expectations without killing their enthusiasm motivation for the moment. I think that for me personally I find that the most challenging bit”.

Research within the mindfulness literature has shown the impact emotions can have on performance and well-being. When individuals experience negative emotions, this can impact on the levels of stress experienced (Aschbacher et al., 2013; Ong et al., 2006) as well as impacting the

emotional and physical recovery of stress (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Research has shown that rehabilitation can have psychological impacts on athletes (Gervis et al., 2019), such as fear and anxiety (Carson & Polman 2008; Tracey, 2003;), frustration, denial, anger (Clement et al., 2015; Tracey, 2003), loss of identity, motivation (Manuel et al., 2002; Ruddock-Hudson et al., 2012). Weise-Bjornstal et al., (1989) explain that when an athlete becomes injured, they are likely to experience a range of thoughts, emotions and feelings which may have an impact on an athlete's behaviour and vice versa. With the growing evidence showcasing the impact emotions can have on recovery of an injury, the benefits of embedding a mindfulness programme to support the nature of these emotions that are experienced is of benefit; not only to the athlete but also the staff supporting.

4.3.1.2 *Barriers to practising.*

Mindfulness does seem to have a perception of being 'fluffy'. This scepticism surrounding mindfulness is also heightened within the football 'masculine' culture (Champ et al., 2018).

"At the start I found it hard to concentrate. At first, I was thinking 'what's going on here?'" (Mason).

The desire to 'show no weakness' showed its challenges and that was highlighted from Mason where his viewpoint has been shared amongst other players within the club. Once familiarised with the concept of practising mindfulness, Mason found it easier stating:

"After a month, I sort of knew what was going on. I sort of knew what I was doing. Then we sort of went in more depth about it".

Lewis expressed that he found no negative effects of mindfulness, yet, finding time in a busy work and life schedule proved very difficult.

"I don't think it's had a negative effect I do it's I think whilst I appreciate the positive effects from it, I don't give enough time to it, but I also know that if I have more clarity

the thought that comes with practising mindfulness, they'll be more time for sure.... and I can come up with lots of excuses as to why I don't think I have the time... I'm personally struggling with is time management".

From the above quotes, it has been highlighted that the initial perception from Mason was a negative one. He mentioned that mindfulness felt odd at first, wondering what he was meant to be doing as paying attention was difficult. However, as he gained a greater understanding of the purpose, Mason felt he could learn more and potentially benefit from the practice and exposure of mindfulness. Whereas Lewis didn't have any negative thoughts regarding the practice of mindfulness, yet a barrier was the time element, finding time within his schedule to formally practice. One reason why people do not practice mindfulness is time (Laurie & Blandford, 2016). From experience of working in football, this is a common trend that has occurred despite people seeing the benefits, making time to formally practice is difficult especially within this everchanging and reactive environment (Laurie & Blandford, 2016). Which is ironic as this is probably the most important reason as to why to make time and practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2004, 2005). Meditation can be one of the best ways to help find a sense of calmness and clarity, especially when in a frantic, reactive and everchanging environment.

One way that Lewis initially used mindfulness for himself was with the use of the Headspace application (Mani et al., 2015).

"I think there was definitely a time probably in the first year where I got introduced to it and I persevered with it, and I did the headspace apps where I think I was forcing it too much so I'd be in the environment and I'd be listening to the headspace app and I was forcing myself to relax or when other thoughts came into my mind I was forcing them out".

The above comment from Lewis highlights his understanding of mindfulness. He suggested that he was 'forcing himself to relax' or 'forcing thoughts out'. This suggests that a better understanding

of mindfulness is required. Although mindfulness may make the body relaxed, mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged in whatever maybe occurring at that moment; free from distraction and judgement, not allowing ourselves to get caught up in the thoughts and feelings that humans experience. Mindfulness is a way of living, and this is practiced through meditation, through this practice, humans are able to step back and be in the present moment in any situation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2005). With Lewis explaining that he is trying to force thoughts out, this is not what mindfulness is trying to do. People who try and force themselves, are more likely tend to ruminate or then worry that they are not doing it correctly, this then heightens their distress and leads them to believe that mindfulness is unhelpful and will discontinue to practise (Crane & Williams 2010). Realistic expectations need to be established before practising, recognising that practices maybe challenging. It is important to state that mindfulness does not eliminate stress or difficulties, instead, by becoming aware of what arises for us, it provides us with a choice of how to manage thoughts and feelings that may arise. Using meditation as a training tool to become mindful allows us to choose how we respond.

Despite this section explaining the barriers experienced, it is important to note that Lewis highlighted his understanding of mindfulness can be of benefit.

“I actually just need to relax and let these other thoughts come into my head and just let them seamlessly flow out into the distance if you like”.

4.3.1.3 Success of application

There are many sport-related benefits of mindfulness including..... Mason explains the benefits for him:

“I felt like you could concentrate more... you can sort of concentrate on yourself. I sat there with my eyes closed and noticed sensations. Noticed my toes and what I can feel and how tight my shoes were on my toes, then I sort of worked my way up and then to

focus on the pain in the leg and then see what it felt like as you can feel different, look deeper”.

Mason suggested that he learnt more about himself and found boxing a form of release for when he was feeling angry. Mason expressed that he enjoyed feeling the body in a more holistic manner, sensing the different feelings, and placing his mind on different body part, really exploring his injury in his own time. He learnt that he could choose to place his attention on his injury and could come away if it became too painful; ‘shining that torchlight of attention’ to either broaden or narrow his focus on the injury and the pain, depending on how deep he wanted to explore it. Mason continued by saying:

“It sort of took the pain away... I was able to focus on other body parts for example, balancing on one leg and concentrating on that rather than the pain... the pain was still there, but it helped.”

When working with Mason, discussing anchors, and having the ability to choose where to place attention was important. The above statement from Mason highlights that he was able to pay attention to a task rather than constantly being ‘pulled back’ to the pain he was experiencing. Numerous amounts of research have shown that mindfulness practice allows for thoughts, feelings, sensations and urges to occur without getting attached to them (Shapiro, 2006). Observing these non-judgementally without wanting to change them is key; being able to focus on anchoring your attention to the present moment. Lewis supports this with his view:

“To be present, to really think and feel about the movement, to really think when it comes to postural stuff like, ‘Where is the weight distributed on the foot? With balancing in-between, the little toe, and the big toe? The forefoot and the heel?’ I think when their mind is occupied in that way, they are present in the moment. They haven’t got time to think about other things and that’s me trying to put those principles into practice for that individual really”.

Lewis really tries to embrace the application of paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment. He continues to evaluate his point within the rehabilitation session.

“Early on in rehab we do a lot of exercises where the load is not particularly high, but I really want them to concentrate on the movement, to feel what the movement is like, to get the sequencing right and to wake up that sort of brain to muscle connection”.

The rehabilitation process is split into phases. In the acute phase the aim is to ensure that the players pay full attention on the small micro movements. They are unable to do any full movements and therefore this is a good opportunity for players to learn and understand more about their body, the movement and lack of movement that they have now compared to before the injury; to start to understand how important that mind and body connection is. With the physical loading being low, the ability to maintain a strong focus and stay present is challenging. Meaning that the mind can wander more frequently due to boredom, yet this is a key time to train the mind. It is at this time where training the mind to come back to the anchor is important as Mason is learning to pay attention to the present moment non-judgmentally and non-striving, whilst attending to the entire range of experiences to be able to reduce the noise within the system became important. Integration on language, understanding the purpose and communication between the physiotherapist and psychologist is important, as well as involvement from the player.

A growing body of literature explores the impact that mindful movement can have on the development of cognitive and attentional skills (Hernandez-Reif et al., 2001; Balasubramaniam et al., 2013; Converse et al., 2014; Meadows & Williams, 2009; Wayne et al., 2014); especially addressing this ‘mind-body connection’ (Meadows & Williams, 2009; Mostofsky & Simmonds, 2008; Tang & Posner, 2009; Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Movement illustrates the relationship between the mind and the body (MacKay, 1982). Doing any exercise mindfully turns into a meditative practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), yet the main focus is to cultivate a sense of awareness, similar to traditional breathing meditative practices. Mindful movement is about paying attention to the body and its sensations,

whilst considering the thoughts, feelings, emotions that may be occurring also. As Kabat-Zinn (2013) highlights, it allows individuals to experience the connection between the emotions, thoughts, and the bodily sensations; whilst noticing if they get caught up in anything that they are experiencing and choosing to let it go. Mason supports the above literature when asked about it, he stated:

“There was one thing that I really enjoyed. I actually remember we when we went for that very long walk around the training ground. I thought that was really good. It sort of calmed me down. Like that, that was quite calming. Yeah. Well, I was focusing quite a lot cause when I was walking as well and was focused and walking off, I like that.”

The mindful walk was initially to focus on the movement of walking and the ability to pay attention to every movement. What Mason acquired from this walking meditation was the ability to calm the noise in his head and focus on the here and now. Being able to notice himself come to a calm state was an additional benefit. He liked to express his aggression through boxing and therefore noticing the ability to calm the mind by walking and focusing on the foot placement, the micro movements and bringing attention to this was a sort of ‘eureka’ moment for him. Jon Kabat-Zinn often explains that doing any form of exercise mindfully turns into a meditative practice, regardless of the speed that it is done at (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Incorporating mindful movement was an aspect that went into his programme, as well as introducing yoga to his rehabilitation sessions.

“I’d done a bit of yoga as well. Yeah. I like doing that.”

Mason was able to focus and put his attention into the movement, in this case the walking and yoga movement, which allowed his mind to relax focus on the injury. This highlighted the use of movement as an anchor to keep the mind in the present moment. He was aware that the pain and the injury was still there, but he was able to place his mind elsewhere and focus less on where his mind had been at the start of the injury and rehab process. The yoga also allowed him to become

more aware of his body and his fine motor movements, being able to balance on one leg with his eyes shut, sensing, and feeling all the different sensations. The invitation to pay attention to the movement, however big or small, with a curious mind allows for Mason, or any athlete, to explore the movement with the boundaries that accompanies it, yet using the breath as a channel to go with the movement and face the difficulties head on; understanding that he has the ability to be able to sit with the uncomfortable feeling and continue to proceed in what he wants to achieve. A common thought that arises within injury and in elite sport is the idealisation of what 'should' happen or what it 'should' feel like. By having the ability to practice mindfulness, especially within a difficult state of injury, training and giving the mind permission to just experience things as they are in the moment allows for the mind to listen to the body.

Lewis addresses the movement element of the rehab in a different light, looking more at how he would change his practices in order to allow full attention and present moment focus, paying more attention to the use of language:

"I mean certainly look there would be a time before when I would coach movement I would try and get them to cognitively engage on it, but I wouldn't use the same language. I wouldn't ask them to be present in the moment, I wouldn't use that word. Don't be distracted is easy to say but I want their full concentration on the exercise and how it feels. So, now I guess I did use it more; like 'be aware of how it feels', 'what can you notice'. This I guess it probably just gives that little bit more awareness."

A slight adjustment to the language allows for intentionally cultivating mindfulness into a practice. Lewis is guiding Mason to become more aware of his body and gaining greater proprioceptive feedback (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). The body knowing itself and feeling itself means that Mason is gaining greater body intelligence. If difficulties arise during movement, through thoughts or feelings, Mason is training himself to greet these experiences without judgement and with kindness and acceptance (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Whilst there are several ways to practice mindfulness (Siegal, 2007), the majority of research is based on meditative practices. Walsh and Shapiro (2006) refer to meditation as “A family of self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calm, clarity, and concentration” (p.228). Mindfulness meditation is about applying one’s attention to one’s bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, and surrounding environment (Bodhi, 2000; Germer, 2005; Germer et al., 2005; Gunaratana, 2002; Wallace, 2001; Young, 1997).

4.3.2 *Support Networks*

The second major theme addresses support networks within the rehabilitation programme. Sport injuries can have an effect on an athlete’s support network (Lu, 2013). The players beliefs about the support network around them within the rehabilitation programme is important as this reflects upon the degree in which the player believes in the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programme (Bone & Fry, 2006; Hilliard, et al., 2017) as well as help with any psychological distress (Rees et al., 2010). This next section looks at the impact social support has within rehabilitation. This section explores trusting relationships and the inter-disciplinary approach adopted.

4.3.2.1 *Trusting relationships.*

An essential part of a successful rehab is creating trusting relationships which (Little, 2015). For Mason, this was a vital component as he could show his vulnerabilities in a safe environment without being judged.

“I like individual work...feel like I can talk about more than stop speaking in front of other people because you got to be careful about what you say”.

Mason really opened up and talked about all aspects from performance to well-being to homelife. The psychology sessions allowed him to build an even greater relationship with the

performance psychologist (researcher) and allowing him a safe space to speak openly without being judged, highlighting the importance of non-judgemental awareness. Building that relation between all parties is has shown to be important. Research has highlighted that clients prefer working with practitioners that have good listening skills, share information at appropriate moments, and help clients organise their thoughts (Todd & Andersen, 2012; Sharp, Hodge & Danish, 2015; Chandler et al., 2016; Woolway & Harwood 2020). As highlighted from Mason, that ability to talk openly is important, this also allows for reflection to take place which promotes awareness (Worsfold, 2013). Mohammed et al., also reported in his findings that awareness increases once exposed to a mindfulness intervention. Lewis also highlights that it is important for players to speak to the psychologist, and it can be beneficial for the rehab process. This can also allow the psychologist to re-iterate the same message to players.

“When you’re up against it and something hasn’t gone that well to hear a similar consistent message from someone else that they trust because they’ve got this relationship with the psych already which I think is really nice for them... It is also then hearing that said in a variety of ways from different people, and this can be really powerful because the physiotherapist-player relationship spends so much time together sometimes the words feel a bit empty”.

Building strong relationships and providing support is not only important for the player but also for other practitioners. If high level of support is perceived, this could maximise the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process (Bone & Fry, 2006). Research has shown that athletes who suffer with severe injuries, perceive their support to be greater when practitioners engage with the athletes in the challenging exercises (Bone & Fry, 2006). This research is consistent with the perceptions from Mason and Lewis. Lewis highlights the impact of having different voices to re-literate messages, he also mentions the importance of the relationship being there in the first place between Mason and the psychologist.

With Lewis embarking on the mindfulness journey with Mason, again it supports the fact that stronger relationships are being built and therefore leading to a more effective rehabilitation. Lewis continues by stating:

“It has given me sort of a richer sense of what that person is going through maybe away from the football club or in their own head and how I might be able to help them in in ways I previously wouldn’t know”.

Mason then highlights:

“We have spent so much time together and it's quite good to have him.... Very supportive”.

The support provided from all invested parties, especially the physiotherapist, is considered vital to athletes (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2009). When physiotherapists understand the role they play to the injured athlete, they become more aware of their own behaviour, and knowledge which can influence the athletes emotional and behavioural responses to injuries (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2009). Regardless of whether the physiotherapist is the main source of support, just by ‘being there’ for the athlete can have a significant impact on the recovery process (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2009). Empirical evidence shows that mindfulness-based programmes can facilitate relationships and their function as well as improving an individual’s psychological well-being (Carsen et al., 2004). With relationships and social support being a critical factor in the effectiveness of long-term rehabilitations (Bone & Fry, 2006), the investment from Lewis to not only support the mindfulness programme but take part and help disseminate the mindfulness programme with his use of language was highly important for the success of this study. The strength of the relationship between all parties shows the value it has on embedding a mindfulness programme and the perception from Mason and Lewis is shown; having this area as a super-ordinate theme is evident.

“There’s a whole range of biopsychosocial stuff there that I previously unvalued or more recently just struggled to find time to do, that I think having access to a psychologist they’re really good at tapping into and giving me the heads up on the key to it is obviously me checking in with them regularly to get that information”.

Lewis really utilised the psychological support. He alluded to the impact the support had for him and not just the impact the support had for Mason. Lewis continues:

“I’ve definitely found a benefit in discussing certain things with the psychologist that just get me to frame it differently and understand the person better.”

Training and follow-up conversations happened between the Lewis and the psychologist. Lewis had more contact time with Mason than the psychologist did. Therefore, by upskilling Lewis following the MBSR and .b protocols, allowed for Lewis to pick up on key behaviours or language which allowed either the psychologist independently or collectively to delve deeper into that rather than scratching at the surface. From experience of the football culture and the pressure that is placed amongst players and staff to perform consistently, stress can become high (Nesti, 2012). Managing expectations of players, coaches and other staff members is one aspect that can cause pressure and stress. Therefore, having the ability to manage stressors such as expectations, allows for greater focus and application to the rehabilitation. It has been shown within research that injured athletes often encounter negative psychological experiences such as low self-esteem, anxiety about the rehabilitation process and even concerns regarding individual position within the team (Bianco, 2007; Tracey, 2003). The research in mindfulness has been consistently associated with lower rates of anxiety and greater well-being (e.g., Kaufman et al., 2018).

Furthermore, mindfulness literature demonstrates that by embarking on a mindfulness programme together, (as Mason and Lewis did) it brings significant improvements in day-to-day relationship happiness, relationship stress, stress coping efficacy, and overall stress (Bone & Fry, 2006). Social support has been widely researched in the context of injury and has been defined as

“an exchange of resources between two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p.11). Within the football culture, injury can be a stressful place for both players and staff (Podlog & Eklund 2007; Heijne et al., 2008). With a long-term injury, different emotions will be experienced, pressure will be present, and expectations are evident. Despite this mindfulness intervention being used to support the rehabilitation process, providing coping skills and resources for Mason and Lewis to use outside of the rehabilitation programme, highlights the diversity and impact that mindfulness can have in all aspects of football and life.

4.3.2.2 *Interdisciplinary Team.*

Having the support network around, working as an interdisciplinary Team (IDT) allows practitioners to feel a sense of not being alone; collectively working towards a performance problem (Kelly et al., 2020; Raya-Castellano & Uriondo, 2015). The aim of all staff is to help the player come back fitter, stronger, with limited or no setbacks, therefore the value that all staff members can bring is imperative. Having the ability to take that external lens as a psychologist and assist/support all staff rather than just the player is important and contributes more to the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process rather than staff working in silos (discipline isolation) with the player. Lewis highlights the importance of this by stating.

“The psych sees it through a different lens, and this is important to understand and recognise how the player might be feeling. Players are not very good at verbalising how the process is from their point of view until it becomes labelled as a problem. So, the more understanding you can get of the things that there are plenty of ways to skin a cat so what’s working well what’s not working well, what would they like to see in what’s stressful anxious times for them. If you can tackle those few issues what’s working well, what’s not, what’s the way they’d like to do something, you know we can get a lot of

wins erm and that's easier to tackle through an intermediary if you like which is where I think psych come into it."

Working collectively as a team was a big strength towards the success of the mindfulness intervention. Having the ability to communicate, discuss, challenge, and explore each other's approaches and rationales allowed for trust, relationships, and stronger partnerships to form. This all helped through sharing the experience of the mindfulness programme. Recognition for every practitioner's strength and discipline was enhanced and valued greater, as well as greater 'buy-in' was formed from Mason and Lewis.

Mason highlights that the best way he was successful within his rehabilitation was having variety, therefore it was key to break up his sessions such as 45/60 minutes with Lewis and then having the mindfulness exercises such as breath control, body scan, anchoring attention. Having Lewis present allowed for him to gain a greater understanding of the language as well as experiencing the exercises, allowing him to then transfer some of what was experienced, back into the exercises. Common language was key, and this demonstrates the impact and effectiveness of working collaboratively together as one team.

"I liked doing the exercises and then having a break from the exercises and going to talk to you and then doing more exercises...I liked the variation" (Mason).

As a collective IDT, staff (physiotherapist, psychologist, doctor, S&C, analyst) ensured that this rehabilitation process was bespoke for Mason. As a collective team, the IDT allowed for Mason to be an active participant in his rehabilitation process, ensuring that the programme was athlete-centred as well as developing Mason's self-awareness, growth, and development. This is supported from Lewis stating:

“There is a psychological component to every single rehab from the injured player to the whole MDT support...“Having access to a psychologist they’re really good at tapping into and giving me the heads up is key”.

An inter-disciplinary approach within this club was vital. Having collaboration and working together to solve a performance question is the norm within this club; each performance question forms its own identity (Van den Besselaar & Heimeriks, 2001). Incorporating mindfulness into this performance question was discussed as an IDT, looking to enhance Mason’s awareness to ultimately deal with the stressors that he will face during his injury, build resources to aid his stress over his contract, and help transfer these skills learnt out onto the pitch to aid performance. In order for this mindfulness programme to be embedded and successful, communication within the team had to occur. This also enabled discipline perspectives on the reality of the injury journey to help answer the performance question; how to get Mason back fit, without recurrence of injury and prepare him for the journey he will take which may include being unsuccessful in gaining another contract (Van den Besselaar & Heimeriks, 2001). Ford and Gordon (1998) stated, “Sport trainers, sport therapists and physiotherapists are required to address the psychological factors when treating injured athletes and apply various psychological strategies if complete, holistic recovery is to occur” (p. 80). For the psychological factors to be addressed within rehabilitation, practitioners need to understand the psychological processes involved with injury. Therefore, all professionals involved should work closely together along with the athlete in order to achieve a common goal (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2009), which is a common practice within professional sport (Weise-Bjornstal & Smith, 1999).

Working together as an IDT yet having the trust and relationships built are beneficial for players and practitioners. The value in having a ‘different voice’ can be really impactful in the rehabilitation process and its success. The strength in hearing the same message but from different practitioners was a finding that also emerged from study one.

Within a clinical population, Germer and colleagues (2005) proposed that mindfulness can be integrated into psychotherapy using three different approaches: therapists' own practice of mindfulness to be more 'mindful' and present with clients, mindfulness-informed psychotherapy (applying theory to practice), and mindfulness-based practices where clients are learning skills through the application of mindfulness practices. Research has shown that therapists who introduce mindfulness interventions with clients, may be able to explain the benefits and use through their language, avoiding jargon that may have a negative effect on the client (Carmody, 2009). This was the intention when this study was designed and applied; integrating mindfulness through practices through rehab with Mason, allowing Lewis to learn and practice mindfulness to understand himself and be more present, and finally, apply theory to practice with reference to language.

4.3.3 Rehabilitation

The next major theme related to the experience of the rehabilitation programme with the addition of the mindfulness programme. This section explores the process and the emotions experienced within the rehabilitation and the impact that mindfulness had on the recovery.

4.3.3.1 Process

Support staff and coaches have a responsibility to make sure that players are as fit as they possibly can be, both physically and mentally. Players will get injured within their career and the demand for elite athletes to return to training and competition as quickly as possible is huge, especially within elite football (Dhillon et al., 2017). Therefore, rehabilitation requires care and a highly structured sport-specific process (Dhillon et al., 2017). The doctors and the physiotherapists at the club classify any injuries that players may pick up by a cause of absence from football participation. All injuries then go through a process which has been classified by the doctors and the physiotherapists at the club. With long term-injuries, players have a perception at the time of occurrence about the severity of the injury and already have a pre-perception of what rehabilitation will be like

“I know that it can be a slow process” (Mason)

Professionals working with injured athletes have highlighted those psychological issues can determine the extent to which an athlete is able to cope successfully with their injuries, and therefore it is recommended that psychology is introduced early on in the programme (Ivarsson et al., 2017). Research (Ivarsson et al., 2017) suggests that injured players have to cope with the long process of the injury, fear of reoccurrence or even loss of contract, which just adds to the psychological issues that could prevent a player from successfully returning. With rehabilitation being process driven, a lot of the exercises, and timescales are very much out of a players control. Having the ability to sit with frustrations about things not moving quickly enough or the repetitive nature of the acute phase (start) of the injury, was a skill that as an IDT was crucial to a successful rehabilitation. With this in mind, this also allows for the rehabilitation to take a person-centred approach; it is important to understand the person you are treating.

Lewis explains:

“In the last couple of years, in terms of where the research is at, there is a fairly clear model to structure a rehab process around in terms of a criteria-related approach.”

He then continues by expanding on making the rehabilitation specific for the individual that is being treated:

“You can compartmentalise it down into what a player needs to do in this phase to prepare him for the next phase and ultimately it’s driven by what the end stage looks like.”

As seen from the statements from Lewis, the process is a key. Understanding the rehabilitation process is the first step, what makes the rehabilitation successful is understanding the person that is being rehabilitated. Being able to prepare players for the emotional journey that they are likely to encounter on their rehab program is evident and therefore it is essential that the right steps are put

in place. By incorporating the mindfulness programme into the rehabilitation, this allowed for Mason and Lewis to gain more awareness of themselves but also of each other. Despite the rehabilitation being process driven, along Mason's injury journey there was high emotions and overthinking occurring from both parties. Structure and process has shown to be beneficial, yet setbacks occur as well as comparisons between other injured players. Therefore, the use of the mindfulness programme gave skills to both Mason and Lewis to be able to deal with anything that is thrown in their direction.

"You've got a broad time frame to slowly improve everything to get to that end stage really and that that tends to be pretty well accepted and so you can map it out in a very linear goal-orientated fashion. What you have to be careful of is what looks on plan like a straight line and particularly when you get to mid to long term rehabs, you're constantly having sort of setbacks that and that really is then a test of your relationship with the player and the MDT support network surrounding the player"

Mason explains the reality of what being injured is like; the length of time, having to stay patient due to processes that need to be followed and how it is important to not get caught up in negative emotions. This supports the current literature of the importance of utilising and understanding the psychological stressors involved in rehabilitation.

"I knew it'd be a long process and like a long time out, but I sort of learned that I need to be positive. It was hard going though".

With Mason practising mindfulness and utilising mindfulness within his rehabilitation, it allows one to increase ability to regulate emotions and decrease stress and anxiety. Learning to focus attention as well as learning to observe thoughts and emotions without judgment is a key skill, which relates to patience being explained above by Mason. Through practising mindfulness, one can become more engaged in life, allowing for more effective decision making (Linehan, 2015).

4.3.4 Learning Points

The final major theme addresses the key points taken from Mason and Lewis with regards to the mindfulness programme and their experience. This section explores the lessons learnt and take away messages.

4.3.4.1 Lessons learnt

The ability to pay attention, on purpose, without judgement is a skill that is learnt through mindfulness, and this can be enhanced through focusing and tuning attention to the breath. Having the ability to train the mind to focus on particular anchors was explained through Mason's interview. He goes on to explain that having the ability to reflect and notice when attention has wandered and being able to bring his attention back to the task at hand was a key learning point. Using the breath as an anchor when out on the pitch to help bring attention back has been key; especially when getting frustrated. Although it has helped him personally, being able to practice breathing exercises as a team has also had its benefits. When he is frustrated, and he starts breathing, the team are aware and there is that support network available which he individually finds fundamental.

"Whenever I get frustrated, naturally I'll just do one big deep breath and I'm back concentrated...I've started to do it in training as well, every game I've done it.... I transferred it onto the pitch."

Mason also highlights how it impacts the team:

"Within the team, if someone's getting wound up by someone turns up and start doing breathing and then it becomes pretty normal seeing them in the changing room and doing it in there".

Mason has taken the skills he has learnt from the rehab process and now started to apply these out onto the pitch. Having techniques that he found useful and can utilise in all situations was key for his return onto the field and being able to perform and concentrate. Using the breath as an

anchor helped him bring back his focus. Breathing in for a certain count and then extending that count on the out breath also has a physiological reaction that activates the parasympathetic system. Whilst doing this, it allows him to place his mind where he wants and stay focused and concentrated on the task at hand,

When I'm tired, I do breathing, like a three in five out or five in seven out. When I breathe as well sometimes it gets me back concentrated".

Although the more practical application of mindfulness meditation was applied for Mason, the practical element was not as impactful for Lewis; he highlighted the impact of the IDT and the use of a psychologist for his own development and an awareness; helping him be more aware and watching the language that he used to be impactful.

4.3.4.2 Take away messages

The ability to stay fully engaged, motivated and maintain desire across a long-term rehabilitation is a challenge. It is important to acknowledge and address the psychological responses towards injury (Hamson-Utley et al., 2008).

"I want to give them realistic expectations without killing their enthusiasm motivation for the moment" (Lewis).

As Lewis has highlighted above, Mason's drive to continue and stay motivated within the rehabilitation is important and this is supported through literature. To have a successful rehabilitation, athletes need to be willing to listen, maintain a positive attitude and be motivated, where physiotherapists should have good communication, keep both the athlete and the IDT staff involved, as well as having realistic goals can align with the rehabilitation process (Wiese et al., 1991). Despite the importance of the IDT, which has been highlighted previously from both Mason and Lewis, the biggest relationship that will develop is between the player and the physiotherapist.

"The importance however is placed on the therapist and the player." (Lewis)

Literature has shown that how during rehabilitation the physiotherapist is the primary carer, spending most of the time with the athlete (Lafferty et al., 2008). Due to the above statement from Lewis the research supporting this statement, the integration of mindfulness would be through Lewis. For him to have the full understanding of what mindfulness is and how to integrate into his practices is important. The use of the psychologist enabled the mindfulness programme to be integrated into the rehabilitation. If Lewis was left to his own devices, he mentioned the use of an app to use mindfulness:

“The only way I the only way I incorporate it into the rehab I’ll suggest they use head space. I would rather them to talk to you about it”.

Lewis also highlights the need for other medical staff to be upskilled and educated within the use of psychological stressors that can be detrimental to the success of a rehabilitation. Here Lewis admits that his knowledge area is not as high in the psychological domain and therefore extra training and guidance is needed:

“I think for so many practitioners it’s something they haven’t done before so there’s a bit of a learning curve with it. It’s still in its infancy within the physio room but certainly once the someone’s got the basic concepts behind it and feels comfortable with it, I think to maximise its effectiveness I think I think then there needs to be a practical examples of then how they might use it within the rehab process.... practical examples of how they might incorporate the skills of mindfulness into rehab-orientated tasks.... On a basic level, the staff need an introductory workshop on when we can use it with an injured or fit player and how”.

As explained within the literature, successful rehabilitations can be related to the degree in which medical staff meet the psychological needs of an injured player (Heijne et al., 2008; Podlog & Eklund, 2007). It has been argued that in order for the best care for injured athletes, professionals

should devote more attention to the psychological consequences of injury (Harris et al., 2005; Podlog et al., 2014; Tjong et al., 2014).

The fear of the unknown can be overpowering at times, especially in an environment where performance is judged on a continuous basis. For Lewis, Mason, and the rest of the IDT to be open to learning more about the psychological stressor that are experienced within injury, as well as being open to try an intervention that has little research within this area, and none within football, highlights the growth and desire to have a positive result for the benefit of injured players. Having an openness to try new practices within this environment shows an innovative nature within the club. Additionally, providing feedback on the impact mindfulness had on Mason and Lewis personally but also within the rehabilitation provides further evidence for the benefits of embedding mindfulness into the football and rehabilitation culture.

4.4 Research Issues arising from the Study

A potential limitation of this study is the small sample size used. The study used only one player and one physiotherapist. However due to the nature of the study, at the time there was only one long-term injured player that was able to take part in the study. Despite the small sample size, Touroni and Coyle (2002) argue that qualitative research aims to provide in-depth accounts of small groups, and this is how the literature advances. Brocki and Wearden (2006) also suggest that most papers that employ IPA do not aim to achieve a representative sample, and therefore conclusions should be drawn specifically for the sample group used, with generalisations approached with caution (Flowers et al., 1997). As shown above, qualitative research engages with generalisability in different ways; with many researchers referring to generalisability as a limitation or weakness in qualitative research. To apply generalisability to a qualitative study is problematic. The ontological and epistemological assumptions are different to those conducting post-positive research. Qualitative research is about examining people's lives in rich detail, and in order to achieve that, a small sample size is required; often chosen through purposeful strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2013.,

Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Small sample sizes, purposeful sampling and rich knowledge of data is a unique strength of qualitative research, not a weakness. As Lewis and colleagues (2014) commented:

Qualitative research cannot be generalised on a statistical basis – it is not the prevalence of particular views or experiences, not the extent of their location within parts of the sample, about which inferences can be drawn. Nor, of course, is this the objective of qualitative research. Rather, the value of qualitative research is in revealing the breadth and nature of the phenomena under study. (p. 351).

Smith (1999) argues that “from an idiographic perspective, it is important to find levels of analysis which enable us to see patterns across case studies while recognising the particularities of the individual lives from which these patterns emerge” (p. 424). He suggests that research should be looked at with separate identities and that the “micro-level theorising should be richly informative of those particular individuals and may well be fairly modest in its claims to generalisation” (p. 413). The analysis and themes that emerged are best understood within this particular club, where there may be similarities to the application and experience when working with other practitioners and players within a similar manner. It is important to note that these findings are not necessarily generalisable to all rehabilitation experiences of applying mindfulness.

With this in mind, a type of generalisation that should be considered is transferability (Tracey, 2010), which is sometimes referred to as inferential generalisation (Lewis et al., 2014) or case-to-case generalisation (Chenail, 2010). The idea of transferability is defined as “as occurring whenever a person or group in one setting considers adopting something from another that the research has identified” (Smith, 2018, p.140). The question then is ‘to what extent can the results transfer to other settings? Is this something that can be applied to a different sport or population?’.

With reference to sample size, Smith (1996) illustrates that IPA research is more about the value of the research rather than the number of participants. Smith and Osborn (2003) highlight that

there is no “right” sample size (p.54). The literature refers to the use of small sizes as being the norm in IPA and how that larger sample groups could potentially overlook more subtle meanings (Collins & Nicolson, 2002). Smith and Osborne (2003) also suggest that IPA sampling tends to be purposeful and similar in nature as this perspective can provide adequate contextualisation (Briggs, 2010).

With reference to IPA, it has received criticisms which question whether this form of study can accurately capture the experiences and meanings of experiences rather than just opinions (Tuffour, 2017). Throughout the rehabilitation period, the researcher kept self-reflective notes to identify any assumptions prior to the analysis. These may have influenced the questions or the emphasis placed on answers, as well as the impact the relationship between the researcher and the player/physiotherapist. Salmon (2003) notes that “results of psychological research reflect the researcher as much as the researched” (p. 26).

Following Smith and Osborn’s (2003) guidelines, the researcher took care to ensure that there was a distinction between the participants account and the researcher’s interpretation, using quotes from the data analysis to allow for the researcher to make their own interpretations (Briggs, 2010). However, IPA is very subjective (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) meaning that others may question the reliability and validity of the data (Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001). Subjectivity is always present in qualitative research, but this is not necessarily a negative thing. Researchers must be aware of the potential threats and use subjectivity to fulfil the research objectives (Bumbuc, 2016). Reid and colleagues address this issue by suggesting ‘transparency’ of the results and ‘reflection’ in the interpretation process, which provides benchmarks of ‘good practice’ according to Elliott et al., (1999). Tracey (2010) states “qualitative research to be of high quality, it must be rigorous” (p. 841). Rigor can mean different things to different researchers, but such meanings might include, the intellectual precision, robustness, appropriateness, sufficiency, and cohesiveness of concepts, methodologies, epistemology, ontology, and methods deployed in the research process and output (Burke, 2016; Saldaña, 2013; Tracy, 2010).

Research has conflicting views on the term inter-reliability as a tool for rigor. According to Culver and colleagues (2012), 82% of qualitative studies in sport and exercise psychology clearly report reliability testing, and the most extensive method used is inter-reliability (Campbell, 2013). This method is where two or more researchers independently code the data and come to an agreement over the codes (Lincon & Guba, 1985). However, this method has been deemed as ineffective for ensuring the data is reliable (Smith & McGannon, 2017). There are various reasons as why this method is seen as problematic, one being unitization (being able to identify appropriate blocks of texts for particular codes). Researchers may disagree on texts and their meaning, with Campbell and colleagues (2013) stating “As such, identifying the appropriate unit of analysis can be difficult which ‘makes it hard to assess intercoder reliability and agreement’ (p. 302). In contrast, the notion of using critical friends acknowledges that while there may be agreement around the data, it also demonstrates that they will perceive the data in the same way and therefore will embrace the data with their own theoretical interests, research experience, power resources, and so forth (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Supervisors of this study acted as critical friends and a resource for challenging and developing the interpretations made.

A second potential limitation raised as a finding from the study, is that practitioners do not feel skilled enough to embed a mindfulness-based programme. This can be known as “implementation limbo” in which resource constraints set the “bar” for training providers at progressively lower levels” (Michalak et al., 2019, p.801). Researchers have explored mindfulness-based programmes that are delivered from those who have reduced training in mindfulness, which may result in unskilful ways of integrating mindfulness (Librowicz 2017; Michalak et al. 2019). A challenge that faces practitioners without the in-depth training is the “difficulty of integrating mindfulness practices and attitudes with core non-mindfulness-components of their treatment as well as difficulties in mastering the challenging task of integrating mindfulness practices into coherent case conceptualizations” (Michalak et al., 2019, p.801). If the absence of mindfulness being integrated appropriately, this may lead to practices being used for short term improvements in

mood. This however is not extremely problematic, the techniques used may not be as intended from the evidenced-based programs (Michalak et al., 2019).

4.5 Summary

This study has explored the perceptions of an injured player and a physiotherapist who embedded a mindfulness-based programme into rehabilitation. This study is an exploration that was conducted using the theoretical framework of mindfulness theory as understood by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1982, 2003, 2015). To explore this research question, the researcher worked with the player and the physiotherapist, was part of the support staff within the rehabilitation process and used the mindfulness-based programme within the rehabilitation. After the injury and successful return to play, both the physiotherapist and the player were interviewed. Four themes were developed 1. Application of Mindfulness, 2. Support Networks, 3. Rehabilitation, 4. Learning Points. These encompassed factors addressing emotions, barriers, success, support, lessons learnt.

Mindfulness-based programmes have had an increase in research over the last two decades with more and more evidenced based practice being explored in sport. There are three formal meditative practices that usually occur within mindfulness practices, and these are the body scan, mindful movement and sitting meditation (Crane et al., 2017). These practices were put into the rehabilitation programme which allowed for the effective integration to occur. These types of exercises also allow for an awareness of the body and in particular, noticing and paying attention to any emotions that may be experienced, yet learning to do this without judgement (Michalak et al., 2019). Emotions has been a theme that has been identified throughout the study and has been highlighted consistently through the rehabilitation process at how the mindfulness-based programme allowed for greater understanding of emotions and how to notice and accept these. Mason Identified that his emotions took him on a 'rollercoaster' of a journey, taking him to the highs and lows. Yet what the mindfulness-based programme allowed him to do was to find an anchor to

bring his mind back to the present and detach himself from the unwanted emotions that impacted his rehabilitation and ultimately taking this skill to help out on the pitch.

Research has also highlighted that through practicing mindfulness and paying attention to present-moment experiences as well as learning acceptance, this can lead to positive affect in daily life (Bishop et al., 2004; Davis & Zautra, 2013; Fredrickson et al., 2017; Garland et al., 2015; Geschwind et al., 2011). It has been stated within the data that Mason found that through practice and the integration of mindfulness allowed him to become more aware, less stressed and gained better control over his emotional state. In addition, Lewis also alluded to understanding himself more and in particular gaining greater understanding of Mason's emotions and the impact that this could have on the rehabilitation progression but also how Lewis faced the rehabilitation. With the 'emotional journey' that has been referred to within the data, using the present-moment awareness and acceptance allowed for a calmer state for Mason, which was also highlighted from Lewis. The ability to have a 'calm head' showed benefits within the rehabilitation as this allowed for greater focus and concentration, as well as effective communication as an IDT.

Time has been highlighted within this study as a barrier to practising mindfulness, yet this is not uncommon. Numerous amounts of research have also highlighted that a barrier for people practising mindfulness is the lack of time for regular mindfulness practice, whether that is through home practice or using an app (e.g., Taylor et al., 2016). Despite this being seen as a barrier, this has also been shown in other research and therefore was not a surprise when this was mentioned. Having an understanding of mindfulness was seen as a positive from both Mason and Lewis, explaining that they experience a calm state when they do practice, and this normally leave to them both feeling better. This is supported with the above research mentioned within the emotional research (Bishop et al., 2004; Davis & Zautra, 2013; Fredrickson et al., 2017; Garland et al., 2015; Geschwind et al., 2011).

With the calm state that is experienced by both Mason and Lewis, this also links to the success that they perceived from the mindfulness programme; this being the ability to concentrate and focus attention better, the use and benefit of movement as well the impact that language can have. With the ability to anchor attention, this allows for greater awareness on oneself, whilst bringing attention to the present moment without judgement. This greater awareness brought focus and concentration to the rehabilitation task at hand allowing for a greater application from Mason and allowed him to detach himself from the pain he was experiencing. This is supported through research highlighting within mindfulness programmes the ability to anchor attention but also being able to anchor attention to different stimuli rather than just the breath (i.e., Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 2003, 2015; Lutz, 2019; Yeung et al., 2018). Having the ability to focus attention on the task at hand was also really crucial for Lewis from a physiotherapist perspective, i.e., fully focusing attention on the movement whilst paying attention to the bodily awareness was a key principle for Lewis from a rehabilitation standpoint. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013) really highlights the importance and use of mindful movement with the benefits associated to this. This is highlighted significantly within this study and is supported through both Mason's and Lewis's perspectives of the relevance and importance of focused attention on movement. Mindful movement is one of the core exercises used within mindfulness meditation programmes. It has this experiential element that really highlighted the use and benefit of the practice within this domain. The mindful movement was also highlighted within the first study where MSPE was incorporated into the U16 programme. These benefits highlighted contributes to the research and provides more evidence for the impact that mindfulness can have within a culture such as football, and more specifically within rehabilitation.

Working collectively together with Lewis allowed for good integration between disciplines. A finding that came from the study was the importance and value of support. The use of the mindfulness programme provided a platform to form a good and sound support network between the researcher, Mason, and Lewis. This has also been shown within the first study of MSPE that support networks developed further due to the participation in the mindfulness MSPE programme,

similarly to the current study. Research has provided evidence that mindfulness programmes show significant improvements in day-to-day relationship happiness, relationship stress, stress coping efficacy, and overall stress (Bone & Fry, 2006; Carsen et al., 2004). Research has shown that mindfulness-based programmes promote a relaxation response which reduces stress-induced arousal, which also results in a calmer approach to difficult situations (Gottman, 1993). In addition, with acceptance as a core principle within mindfulness-based meditations, this also allows individuals to gain an increase in compassion, showing greater empathy for others (Shapiro et al., 1998). Working as an IDT also allowed for strong relationships to build such as explained above yet also reinforced the ability to use anchors and practising mindfulness with different practitioners. Mason highlighted the importance of diversity and by using the mindfulness-based programme, it allowed for difference practitioners (Lewis and the researcher) to work individually with Mason as well as collectively, yet ultimately using the same language to reinforce and practice the mindfulness exercises. Research has suggested that when working as an IDT that staff should be encouraged to have an active role within the process of delivering to an athlete which helps create a productive learning environment (Reid et al., 2004).

4.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of an injured player and physiotherapist who embedded a mindfulness-based programme into a rehabilitation process. Firstly, while the results supported the mindfulness literature, they have also enhanced the evidence of the benefits of mindfulness from a recovery and well-being perspective. Secondly, the findings highlighted the impact that mindfulness can have on support networks. Thirdly, the findings identified that it is possible for a physiotherapist to deliver a mindfulness programme within their recovery programme. Fourthly, it has been recognised that more education is needed for other practitioners to be comfortable delivering mindfulness and using it effectively. Finally, the time element is still a barrier for individuals to practice mindfulness, and within the

mindfulness literature, it is recommended that practitioners practise mindfulness themselves in order to deliver it (Michalak et al., 2019).

This study demonstrates the positive impact a mindfulness-based programme can have in rehabilitation within football as well as being delivered through a practitioner who has formal mindfulness-based training. This therefore accentuates the importance and effectiveness of working as an IDT and contributes to the literature. To the knowledge of the author, this is the first study to investigate this application of mindfulness. Therefore, further research needs to look into training practitioners and implementing mindfulness into other disciplines.

4.7 Linking section for study two to study three

Study 2 allowed for the opportunity to delve deeper into the delivery impact of mindfulness through a case study rather than just looking at a group perspective of an educational mindfulness intervention. The case study approach provided greater insight and exploration of both Mason and Lewis' experiences, sense checking over a 9-month rehabilitation time span.

Mason reported greater awareness of his emotions and felt that this had a positive influence on his rehabilitation and his return to on pitch performance. Mason also reported that he gained greater emotional control which allowed him to become less stressed during his injury period, presented a calmer state (also highlighted by Lewis), and demonstrated higher concentration and focus levels during the rehabilitation program. The study truly embarked on an IDT approach, highlighting collaboration and efficiency in working practices, creating a more effective rehabilitation approach and co-ordination in language used. With Lewis providing the delivery, he gained greater awareness of himself, his approach, the language he used as well as gaining a greater understanding of Mason's emotions.

At this stage, players and physiotherapists had been the primary focus for this programme of research. However, what was emerging was the importance and potential impact of a breadth of staff and an interdisciplinary delivery approach. This therefore led to study three where a group of

relevant academy staff members were purposefully selected to gain a greater understanding of what they believe mindfulness is, whether they feel it is useful, and its application in football.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Power of Being Present: a creative non-fiction representation of embedding mindfulness into elite football

5.1 Introduction

Organisational psychology is an area that has grown in interest over the years, and it is dedicated to better understanding “individual behaviour and social processes in sport organizations to promote organizational functioning” (Wagstaff, 2019, p1). Fletcher & Wagstaff (2009) are among those who contend that the focus of organisational psychology is to address and examine the development of optimally functioning sporting organisations through better understating those day-to-day interactions (Wagstaff, 2017a). To clarify, although organisational psychology explores group and cultural behaviour, none of this can be addressed unless we fully understand the individuals within the organisation (Wagstaff, 2019).

It is important to understand that sporting success not only comes from the athlete but also from the organisation. Sporting organisations are increasingly being held accountable for the development of their athletes through maintaining a culture that promotes well-being and duty of care. The value of organisational psychology is to help build a better understanding that success does not just come from a talent alone, but an environment that creates development, work, and change. These individuals within the organisations have a social responsibility that aids this development and therefore can help facilitate an environment that will thrive (Wagstaff, 2019).

Many researchers (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, 2017; Wagstaff & Lerner, 2015) have looked at the development of organisational psychology in sport, yet they often refer back to Hardy et al’s (1996) quote; “elite athletes do not live in a vacuum; they function within a highly complex social and organizational environment, which exerts major influences on them and their performances” (pp. 239–240). This analogy of a vacuumed environment links to Wagstaff’s (2017a)

'myth of individualism' (p.3). Talent can be a factor in success; however, it is not the stand-alone thing that creates sustained success. Recurrent success (Wagstaff, 2019) is based on how effectively athletes can build and maintain working relationships with collective social agents (e.g., coaches, managers, performance support staff) to optimise engagement and productivity for performance (Wagstaff et al., 2012).

Over the last 5 years, mindfulness has been heavily researched in the organisational psychology literature (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hafenbrack, 2017; Hyland et al., 2015; Jamieson & Tuckey, 2016). Being able to achieve a state of consciousness where individuals pay attention to present moment experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003) has a high correlation to health and well-being (Hulsheger et al., 2018). Gaining greater understanding the role of mindfulness is vital. Organisations are seeking to increase mindfulness within their workforce by offering formal meditative sessions or embarking on mindfulness-based training programmes (Hulsheger et al., 2018), yet this requires the individuals to take accountability for regular practice (Wolever et al., 2012). Little is known about the factors that facilitate the experience of mindfulness. Brown and Ryan (2003) noted that '...the question remains of how this form of consciousness naturally develops and what psychological and social conditions support and hinder its dispositional and state level, or momentary expression' (p. 844). Their question still stands years later.

This study illustrates how multi-disciplinary staff within one organisation interpret the importance of mindfulness within football, exploring their own understanding of the concept. The mindfulness literature has failed to explore staff's perceptions of mindfulness and its benefits within football. Yet, literature has highlighted that there is a gap where more knowledge exchange is needed to explore the role of mindfulness within organisations but also what facilitates the experience of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The representation of this data is done through Creative Non-Fiction (CNF). A story will be told in order to truly represent the data, meaning that the story is grounded in research data and draws on literary conventions (Smith et al., 2015). According

to Polkinghorne (1995) interviews with participants offer up scenes, characters, and plots. This takes the data from being in isolation to having substance and meaning for the reader to understand.

Therefore, evidencing and understanding these perceptions from staff can inform more effective delivery for practitioners wanting to embed mindfulness. Staff perceive mindfulness in a variety of ways, the relationship they have with mindfulness, and how this shaped their experience of mindfulness and its impact within the organisation.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Philosophical Assumptions

The research adopted an interpretivist paradigm in the collection, analysis, and representation of the data (Williams, 2000). Interpretivism assumes that reality is multi-layered and complex, having multiple interpretations that are subjective to one's own reality (Orr et al., 2021). This epistemological and ontological approach emphasises the importance of relationships and therefore informs how this data should be written, in the form of a Creative Non-Fiction (CNF) (e.g., Brett et al., 2015., Schinke et al, 2016). "Creative non-fiction is a type of creative analytic practice that tells a story which is grounded in research data and draws on literary conventions" (Smith et al., 2015, p. 59). Research states that CNF stories are created to demonstrate the real-life events and lived experiences of the research participants. Data can be 'brought to life' by illuminating meaningful and emotional events through creative writing (Hings, et al., 2018; Schinke et al., 2016). This provides a foundation for theory and applied practice can be combined through large quantities of qualitative data which can be turned into accessible knowledge for practitioners (Tranfield et al., 2003), meaning the research resonates with the readers personal engagement in life's affairs, or vicarious, often tacit, experiences (Smith, 2018, p. 140).

Understanding the subjective experiences of the participants within this study lies at the heart of interpretive enquiry (Coe, 2012), truly acknowledging the participants view of reality to make sense of their experiences and actions (Bryman, 2012; Coe, 2012). In order to truly appreciate

others' perceptions, the only way to explore the realities that exist in people's minds is through subjective interaction (Kelchtermans, 2009; Sparkes, 1992).

5.2.2 *Participants*

Participants for this study were purposefully selected, and this is a technique that has been described by Patton:

“The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (2002, p. 130).

The sampling criteria specified that participants had a range of experience of mindfulness from a known exposure of practising mindfulness to those who had very limited or no understanding of mindfulness. The data sample comprised of 11 employees of the football club (10 males, 1 female) ranging in disciplines (Academy Manager, Director of Performance Support, 4x Coaches across all age groups (8-23), Performance Analyst, Strength and Conditioning Coach, Physiotherapist, Player Care Officer, and an Education Teacher). All had various experience in elite football (ranging from 3-30 years), with an age range from 26-55 years.

5.2.3 *Data Collection*

Prior to the interviews, all participants provided informed consent. They were notified of their rights, confidentiality, and anonymity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each person on a one-to-one basis. Interviews were either conducted face-to-face, via Teams (online) or via a phone call. This approach had to be taken due to the recent pandemic. Eleven interviews were conducted, and audio recorded. They lasted approximately 60 minutes. The semi-structured interview format enabled participants the opportunity to expand on answers, ensuring that a

conversation style approach was adopted; this enabled the ordering of questions to be flexible to ensure points were clarified and expanded upon.

5.2.4 Interview Guide

The interview followed Sparkes and Smiths (2014) guide which meant the interview was split into two sections. The first section comprised of demographic information as well as general information around experience in football. The second section encouraged the participants to share their understanding of mindfulness, application, and recommendations into the football environment. Throughout the interview, participants were encouraged to describe their personal experiences as well as provide their honest opinion of mindfulness.

5.2.5 Data Analysis and Representation

The analysis of the data went through several stages. Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun et al., 2016) was conducted initially. This approach was used to explore the participants experiences, opinions, and feelings about the current phenomena (Braun et al., 2016). This allowed for flexibility and individuality without losing its systematic method (Smith, 2004). The researcher adopted the role of 'story analysts' (Brochner & Riggs, 2014; Smith, 2016; Tamminen & Bennett, 2017) to create realistic accounts of the staffs' experiences. Researchers have also adopted the role of the storyteller from using athletes' narratives to produce emotional and lived experiences (Brochner & Riggs, 2014; Smith, 2016; Tamminen & Bennett, 2017).

The researchers explored each participant's story and found common themes and points of differentiation within the participants experiences (Riessman, 2008). This allowed for a greater understanding of the participants stories; the similarities, differences, and their contexts that contributed to their experiences. Each participant went through the process of the TA, which meant that each participant was analysed and then discussed with supervisors, understanding the

similarities and differences. Extracts were then chronologically ordered and grouped to create a sense of flow.

5.2.6 *Composite Vignettes*

Composite vignettes are short stories from various people with different experiences which are fused together to create one single story (Blodgett et al., 2011; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). The researcher adopted the position of story analyst (Smith, 2016), which allowed for stories to be created that represented the population groups (Hings et al., 2018). This involved representing the data through qualitative non-fiction narratives, and throughout the development of the vignettes, the first supervisor and the researcher engaged in reflexive discussions regarding the content and the themes identified. A combination of the reflexive discussions, establishing links and re-organising the data, led to the creation of the storylines. (Hings et al., 2018).

The researcher engaged in a four-step process to assemble the vignettes, which was based on the literature examples in creative non-fiction research (Schinke et al., 2016; Smith, 2013; Smith et al., 2013). First each interview was transcribed (i.e., coach, physio, teacher). The overarching themes were identified and used as a possible framework for coding the data. From re-reading the transcripts, key emotions, thoughts, and experiences were also extracted. Next, any key quotations were extracted ready to be used in the vignettes, all gathered in one document. Discussion occurred amongst the researchers to start to build a picture of the setting and the context of how to best represent the data. Finally, the researcher linked sentences together with connective words to make sense of the quotations from the data. The researcher then revised the narratives to ensure the vignettes showed relevance to the research question, flowed, and showed adequate representations of the participants and their experiences.

5.2.7 *Authenticity*

A non-foundational approach was adopted for judging the authenticity of the qualitative creative non-fiction (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This means that when judging the quality of the work, criteria is not fixed, ridged, or pre-determined before conducting the study (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Guidance was provided by Bradbury-Jones et al., (2014) regarding: (a) data sources for vignette composition, (b) vignette format, (c) capturing reality, and (d) vignette/participant congruence. The vignettes were based on real-life environmental contexts that have occurred within the environment, ensuring authenticity.

5.3 Results

The creative non-fiction reflects the perspectives of embedding mindfulness into elite football from a number of professionals within the football domain. Throughout the stories, the vignettes incorporate the diverse multi-disciplinary team and culminates their experiences who bravely shared their first-hand experiences to help push the environment to world-class standard. It is asked for the reader to fully embed themselves within the vignettes and envisage the characters, the context and the scene that has been set.

5.3.1 Introduction to the first vignette: Applying Mindfulness in Practice

It's a cold Thursday evening, and we are all sitting round the warm open campfire surrounded by a deep dark New Forest. The sky is clear, with stars shining brightly. This is somewhere different to have a staff multi-disciplinary team meeting (MDT); it's nice to get out of the office and go somewhere completely different. It just feels...

More relaxed.

More open.

More comfortable.

It's great to have the whole team here, coaches, medical, sport science, player care, teachers, analysis.

“My god its cold out here” and it was. This message was echoed around the whole group. You could see shoulders hunched up from everyone; people trying to make their bodies smaller to create more warmth. Big club winter coats, gloves and woolly hats were out in full force tonight. The air was bitter this Thursday evening. I could see eyes darting across the group as people looked like they were thinking, why are we here. I shouted...

“Come nearer the fire”. I gesture with my arm for the whole group to come closer and sit round the fire. I watched the faces glowing in the firelight and took a deep breath as Troy (a lead phase coach) opened his mouth to say something. He’d always been sceptical of the mindfulness programme I’d been trying to implement, and I was wary that as an influential individual in the group what he was about to say would... my thoughts are broken as sure enough, he pipes up with...

“Why are we doing this? I don’t see the point!” shouted Troy.

“Come on, it’s something different, and we never spend any time as a team together away from the club. There are always other things that need to be done, or we get pulled into other things. Just enjoy the evening and everyone’s company”.

“Be present” [laughing] The giggles are rippling around the fire now. I have no idea who said that, but I am so thankful it has lightened the mood.

“Yes, be present. Be in the moment” I say whilst having the biggest grin on my face.

“Do you practice Amy?”

“Yeah. It sets me up for the day if I’m honest. I can tell when I have and haven’t practiced”.

“I did kind of practice, but I still don’t truly understand exactly what it is, what being mindful is” said Troy.

“I think it is being in the moment, being in the present, being kind to yourself, being able to calm down and deal with the situation best.” Annie, one of the education teachers explains. “For me it’s

kind of taking in my surroundings, like listening to the birds and I have time to think about what I'm doing where I'm going, what's going on and just kind of just think about me."

Harvey, another coach pipes up whilst nodding in agreement "I would agree with you Annie. I probably would link it to kind of self-awareness. Block out the noise and concentrate on what you're doing".

Troy responded, "Okay, well maybe I do have an understanding then. For me it's being aware, being aware of what's going on around you being aware of what's going on within yourself. Having that time to do that and be quiet, even if it's just listening to nature or trying to understand your own mind your own body".

Thinking to myself that we do have an understanding, I ask "Go on then, why people don't buy into it?" We do have an understanding. We can see how it can help and why it can be important, yet I still struggle to get people to see the benefits. Why? As I am still pondering this question, Dan a physio for the professional phase interrupts my thoughts and looks at me while he answers:

"You have to invest in the process. And I think it's the same with a lot of players, a lot of players are impatient. They want something where they can do it today. And tomorrow, they can see the benefits of it. They like to be able to visually see something, you know, you go in the gym, you pumped on weight, you feel bigger, you look bigger, and make instant results, they're gonna buy into it. Mindfulness, you don't necessarily... you can't see results straightaway. And you can't always feel results straightaway. And it's... you've got to kind of allow time, and then almost have a way of being able to quantify why they've why they've done better".

"Yeah, I agree with that," said Clive. Clive is part of the Senior Management Team. He continues "People can be resistant; you need to give it the time. My brother-in-law said to me that he tried mindfulness once and then stopped. I don't think that's enough. It's almost like you're not going to just... whilst its powerful and its impactful, you're not going to experience change just by doing it

once. So, there is something in engaging in the process unless you really understand the fundamentals of why you're doing it".

"There is a level of immaturity and not understanding the benefits for it" said Stewart from the player care department.

Some nods in agreement are rippling around the campfire. I realise that my body language is leaning forward, showing real enthusiasm and engagement with this conversation. This is what I had hope for. A nice, relaxing evening, away from the hustle and bustle of work life. Being at one with nature and enjoying each other's company, whilst having an open and honest discussion around mindfulness. My attention falls to Paul as he starts talking.

"Well, I got laughed at a lot. Got called a tree hugging football coach. People think it's like fluffy nonsense. People just don't understand it". Paul said this with such intent. The expression on his face was serious, yet still showed a hint of jokiness, showing some vulnerability of what he experienced when he was playing. Out of all the coaches here, Paul has achieved the highest standard of playing football. As a professional footballer for 20 years, experienced promotions and relegations, as well as gaining international experience. He always shared with me his views of mindfulness when we were at the club. I always love listening to his stories and he was often very open about the challenges he faced when playing. Meditation came to him later in his career, but it was seen as very 'fluffy' and created a sense of uneasiness amongst former teammates.

As I am listening to Paul, I think back and laugh to myself as I'm thinking 'yep fluffy, nonsense, psychobabble', just a few terms that have been used to describe mindfulness to me over the years. I take a bit of comfort that I have a coach here who has played to a high standard, had a successful career in the game, and still had experiences like this. But why? Why is it still seen like this?

My thoughts break away as Stewart says "When I very first started using it, I was very anti it. I didn't see the point, I didn't understand the benefits it was going to give me. Umm but after a couple of

sessions it gives you a freedom and it actually just..., I don't think I have felt quite so relaxed and it almost puts you into a space where no one else can touch you and you feel protected by your own emotions, your own being, your own...it almost puts a little bubble around yourself that no one can break through."

All I can think is WOW!

I have a warm feeling inside.

I can feel my heart beating faster in my chest. I feel a real sense of pride in the work and effort I have put in to make mindfulness accessible and appropriate for all to understand and use. I am glad we are all sat round the fire as I know that my cheeks are going red. This way if anyone asks why I'm blushing, its because of the warmth of the fire.

Josh jumps in, representing the analysis department, "a lot of thought processes are about people's perceptions of them and what's cool and what's not...I think the reason why they might struggle with it is because they're not fully buying into it because they're worrying too much about what others think of them".

"100%" agrees Will from S&C. "If you can get the big dogs in the group on board and start reaping the benefits, then suddenly everyone will follow".

After the flurry of conversation, there is a natural pause while everyone has a sip of their hot chocolate and baileys and then...

"Just to sit down and do it on my own is really tough" said John, one of the foundation coaches.

"Let's be honest. To sit and not do anything, it is time consuming. When there are other things that you want to be doing. [Pause and some nods around the fire] I find like sitting in or being still being present quite uncomfortable. As silly as that sounds. You'd think that sitting still is the easiest thing in the world. But it is actually really hard".

“I have heard some coaches say that this is nonsense, and ask why are the kids sitting in silence? What waste of time,” said Harvey.

Scott jumped in saying “I can definitely see you getting barriers from other members of staff that would potentially see that as a waste of time”.

“It is a bit weird to be sat in your room doing it though, I just toss it off”.

Everyone laughs as they picture Josh sat in his room on his own meditating. Instantly my thoughts go to Josh sat in the middle of a large room, crossed legged, surrounded by silence. My image is interrupted as giggles trickle round the group and carry on into the distant dark night. But there is also a sense of agreement regarding Josh’s comment, it seems to resonate with a few in the group who also just ‘toss it off’, but the question I am having is why?

“When I have sat in a room [Josh continues], playing [the mindfulness audio] to myself, and I'm giggling because I take myself out my shoes and am like, if somebody walks in and sees me doing this, they'd be like, Josh what hell are you doing?”

At this point, there is more laughter and little conversations going on between small groups.

Everyone talking around their experiences but with a sense of ease. The mood is great. Sat around the fire, laughing, talking, barriers down, just a nice atmosphere all round. I catch the conversation of one group ...

“We need to provide case studies of those that have done it and have benefited from doing it [nods of agreement as Clive was speaking]. I keep coming back to those superstar athletes, the likes of Anthony Joshua and LeBron James, and Roger Federer. From a football sense, there are certainly players engaging in mindfulness. You know, there's players here that engage in mindfulness in the senior team”.

“Yeah, we need case studies from the first team...like Ings or Redmond,” said Annie.

[Theres more nods around this group, deep in discussion and then the conversation veers off as Ollie (a director) starts to talk...]

“I tend to find examples of other successful coaches and players doing something and being successful and that’s what they find highly compelling, and they are drawn to that”.

As this conversation continues, talking about the Lakers and Phil Jackson, my attention drifts to the other conversation that is happening.

“We're in the world of technology” says Scott “and constantly be switched on with everything”.

At this point, people are looking around and laughing as they see people on their phones, smiles on people’s faces and laughter breaks out as a realisation of how in the current society everyone is technology focused; it feels like your right arm is missing if you don’t have your phone on you.

Everything now is documented for social media, and then Ollie jumps in ...

“Society is starting to bring you over here [he gestures with his left arm] and that is less mindful, and more focused on other stuff and over here [he gestures with his right arm] would be nirvana, complete sort of Buddhist peace, I would say that certainly for the vast majority of the human race, that (right arm) is unattainable and unrealistic and not necessarily desirable”.

Everyone is attentively listening to Ollie. He provides wisdom around the training ground, gets people thinking intently, always asking what the performance question is we are trying to solve. He continues...

“As a concept [mindfulness] I would guess that its fundamental limitation is that its only achievable to a certain extent. To the sense that its hard-wired survival based human instincts to focus on consequence, on the things that are surrounding you right now and what may or may not happen in the future”. [nods within the group] “So in football for example, it’s harder in football just because the stakes are higher in any other sport. The money, the scrutiny and all of that sort of that. If you go and have a bad period, you get absolutely hammered and people stop telling you that you are the

greatest thing in the world and suddenly I would then think twice before I do this trick or a step over.”

I ask what we can do about this, but initially my question is met with silence.

This silence feels like an eternity.

Then Clive interjects ...

“We need an environment where people are present, people are attentive and people are curious and there are probably other elements I’m sure to that, that would be a really productive environment and a really, really nice and positive environment to work in....I think you would have to do it to everyone that populates that environment so whether you’re a player, whether you’re a staff member, whether you’re a parent, I think if you had more people being mindful, that would be a nice place to be”.

“I suppose we will be having a conversation in four years’ time and talking about how much better the players deal with the situation much better the staff manage themselves towards tournaments cup games a little bit... I'd like to see players capable of managing challenging situations better,” said Troy.

“Yea I agree with that” said Will “but the staff need to be more upskilled, they need more knowledge because then more players engage with the process. But that starts with the staff buying into it. Maybe if you can get a group of staff, you know, like a football coach, a physio, the football coaches, the physio to buy into it and put a case study together on what they've done, and so on.”

“...Yeah, I get that, but I think the players can influence the coaches.” Explains Clive. “We often view the coaches as the people that influence the players, but I think equally when players start talking to coaches about new concepts or initiatives, good coaches will, are intrigued to understand what is that all about, what impact is that having and want to really experience it themselves”.

“No, I think we need to focus on the pivotal decision-makers” chimes in Harvey.

“Yeah, I get that, but I think it'd be more damaging forcing someone to do it, who really is anti-mindfulness” say Scott.

“So where do we place our focus?” I say, really enjoying this conversation. The atmosphere is dynamic. The conversation is free-flowing, and I can feel the energy amongst the group heighten. It's a fantastic feeling. To think, all of these professionals talking openly about mindfulness. WOW! I sit there feeling in awe of what I have achieved.

Scott continues “I think if we start from a staff point of view, that probably then impact the player side of it...”

“...I think everyone should learn about it, because it's their fundamentals” Dan interjects.

“Yeah, I agree,” said Stewart “I think there is a reasoning for both”.

“Ok this is all good but where do we start?” I said again with more conviction.

Dan continues “I think doing global team mindfulness sessions, I don't know if that's actually gonna achieve anything, because you're, you're putting everyone into the same bracket.... it could be very individualized...give us a personalized mindfulness approach, a lot of work, but it'll be very individualized. And then almost has to set a mindfulness class for each one to achieve that. And then start, then I think we'll start getting buy in because we'll be getting results on an individual basis, as opposed to just saying, Today, we're all going to have a meditation they, and it's just going to help you relax and calm down and think about your thoughts and feelings and be aware of your body, which I think's useful, but I don't think they're getting any results from it”.

“Yea it needs to be individual. Everyone's got different worries, fears”.

Nodding of heads are having a ripple effect around the fire as they agree with Annie's statement. It's like when one person yawns, the next person does: it's contagious. Even the other group are starting to join in the conversation. This is great. My excitement rises.

“I think if you could do it as a group, that'd be good” explains Scott. “But I think really, if what we say we do is for the player, and we're player centred, it should be done individually. Or in small groups of players that really need it or would really benefit from it....”

Josh interjects “...Yea you would have everybody is doing their own stuff, their own mindfulness....my personal opinion is that individual is the best way...ideal situation, you'd be able to spend all of your time with each individual players, my opinion, is that you can, when you sit down, you speak to the player, once you've got to know them and their needs. Then you can tailor it to however you want. It's very tailored to different people. So that's why individual sessions are more important.

“In an ideal world, you'd probably want a psychologist with every team”.

Laughter echoes round the fire from Scott's comment. Wouldn't that be nice! A psych working with each age group. You would be lucky if you have two psych's in one club. There are multiple staff members in other departments, yet there is only a requirement to only have one full time psychologist in category one clubs, and that psych would probably cover roughly 250 players in an academy. It's ironic that the consensus around the group is that more psych's are needed yet only one is required to get category one status. Why is this? Why is it that everyone here is openly stating the benefit and need for more psych input, yet for some reason, it doesn't happen. Only one psych is needed to provide psychological support for an academy, yet other disciplines have multiple staff.

Football baffles me sometimes. My thoughts are interjected ...

“The way forward is trying to make it individual to people.... It's probably less effective when it's not individualized,” said Troy.

“Agree Troy, if we talk about like a a personalized approach or holistic approach, or you know, whatever is in our Academy performance plan, then like what is the development priority for that player? I think everyone should have different timetables based around what they need”.

“I think like any other intervention,” Ollie starts talking, “mindfulness needs to be tailored and targeted to have maximum impact without just being a waste amount of time”.

There are more nods around the fire. Then silence.

All gazing into the amber flames, small sparks spitting as open fires do. My mind reflects on the conversation that has just happened. Before I realise it, I have said “how do we measure it then? Everyone always wants data! The data says this, the data says that...”

“... Yea but Amy, we need metrics.” Explains Harvey “We need to know high-speed running metrics, sprint distance, accels and decels. We need to track the loading otherwise we could account more injuries”.

“Yeah, I get that, and I see the importance in it, and I also think this is a factor on how much traction we can have from sports science, but how do we get mindfulness in the same place? For the last 45mins, we have all spoken about the benefits mindfulness has yet do we get more traction by having quantitative data? How do we do this?” I say, not realising how passionate I have got regarding this subject.

“I personally don’t think we should have to be putting any kind of metrics or data.” Annie states.

“It's probably quite hard to track progress and results too. So, yeah, I guess that would be a challenge.” says Scott “We spend a lot of time with data, then we look in that opta stats and things like that”.

“The Academy space is full of people who like charts and measurements because that keeps them in a job and it justifies why they're doing what they're doing, and we can then also compare that this one is better than this one, which is really dangerous like we're comparing kids on things that are not linear”.

Silence hits the group again after Harvey had voiced his opinion. I think that comment could have hit a few nerves. I think there would have been more debate on this if it hadn’t have come from a

coach. I hear debates about data all the time in the sports science office, but to hear this from a coach. Is anyone going to challenge? Surely someone will? Eyes are glancing round from one person to another, looking to see who is going to speak next. It weird as you can feel the tension building but no one dares to be brave enough to interject.

Harvey continues... "The whole Academy system is built around 10,000 hours in the more you train, the better you get and lots of other flawed concepts. And we're making judgments on on those things that aren't really important that the data should be supporting us, not driving us".

"Harv I completely agree with you", Dan says "but I think if we measure mindfulness from a reflection questionnaire, so this last week how many times have you felt angry but not able to not release anger and stuff like that. In terms or the stats and opta data, we still need this, and I think this can link into the measurement of mindfulness. When I've done that my on pitch rehab stuff and I say Benny and David and I thought the same session with him and their metrics are completely different ongoing like how have you done 500 sprint distance and you've done 20 yet it's the same exercise and it's only on reflection I start think okay gotta think about their application where they are as a player... you start learning through the reflections and I think I think in terms of thought processes feelings behaviours again you always in the the here and the now but you don't understand you are until you stop... and it gives that person time to think back and once you realise was actually happened you then inside go actually up I am and then you get like an intrinsic measurement rather than everything has to be so based off numbers and stuff as well trusting how else you would you would measure... it depends on what you're trying to achieve doesn't it if you are trying to achieve better sleep outcomes like measure back your watch isn't thinks they were trying to measure the amount of times you become uncomfortable or that you get angry invite whenever notepad and make a little tally...again I just think it's very very individual on what you're trying to what you're trying to measure...almost have a way of being able to quantify why they've why they've done better".

"I agree with that Dan. I think the way you would measure it is probably qualitative data from the kids. So, Bobby from the U13s would give you a good review on trip adviser so he's had a good time and he's got a better at these things. He'd also acknowledged it again and he puts it in his match diary. 'This happened and I and I did the breathing and it helped me get back on track.' Cool, that means that the mindfulness is working.... I don't know if you need to measure it, you need to justify that it's impactful. I think that's like different. I think if you can show the impact of what you're doing, then you've got more kind of behind the course. Only measurement implies that every time I did a session with a kid, you know almost like a computer game. You are getting 1% better than he was and there might be jumps where Bobby gets 10% better and there might be weeks he goes 1% backwards. But in five years' time, if he says. Yeah, you're right about that stuff and now much more resilient and much more able to concentrate on my game by acknowledging that that will happen and when it does happen, I'll do this. Then you've done your job". Harvey states with conviction.

"I think, there is a danger of trying to metricise stuff isn't there". Everyone stops and listens as Clive is talking. He continues "and I think with this, it's a sense of an individual subjective view of how they feel as a consequence of engaging in it. and also, how do you feel when engaging with others. because if you are engaging with someone who is mindful, but if, [pause] take this conversation, I can tell that we are present, attentive and curious, and that makes me feel better because you feel like someone is genuinely interested and I think that is one of those things that this environment has to do, particularly with the younger players, is they have to feel believed in and I don't think they can feel believed in unless you have got those types of elements, because it could just become another, just another number or individual. It is probably something that is quite subjective I think to judge is it having an impact. And it might not have an impact on everyone. I don't know if there are restrictions on people not benefiting from it, you will know the evidence of that, but I think it is probably subjective.

“It's a vibration. But we like we can't see gravity right, like when I put a thought out there I could say, hey, hey hey hey, hey that's got a negative vibration yeah, love, love, love, love, love love it's got like a smoother nicer vibration and that you know that's what you're putting out there you you can't see it it's not like it's not you can't touch it can you?....They can't see fear... love is strong so is that tangible? You know how does it feel? Right now, is it sound? How does it feel?

Everyone starts to have those little body shakes where they are trying not to laugh. Ripples around the group and laughter starts to fill the air. Paul does this to people. He brings a sense of energy to which ever room he is in, he could be talking about spaceships, but everyone will listen and engage because its Paul! He has lightened the mood.

As the laughter starts to die down, Stewart continues the conversation, “You would have to measure, from speaking to the coaching staff and perhaps the MDT as a whole, about how does a player react, is his performance increasing, are we getting more consistent results from on the field”.

“Agreed Stu. I think more chats with staff and players, you know, asking their understanding” says Troy.

“Amy, just take that mindfulness programme you did with the lads, the players were fully engaged and that's beneficial from a coach perspective. The players were so responsive on that week 10-week course”. A huge smile creeps across my face as Will gives me praise.

5.3.1.1 Summary

This vignette captured the perceptions of mindfulness from the MDT in a form of a story. The purpose of the story was to highlight the complexity of individuals experiences and providing a coherent analysis of what the data represented. It is important to note the following findings were uncovered through this CNF. Firstly, the desire to have a 'present' environment was important as this allowed for curiosity and attentive individuals within the organisation that would help foster greater productivity. Secondly, staff and players gained greater self-management when under

pressurised situations, such as on pitch performance and handling stress. This finding shows that staff are able to better manage challenging situations and if they continue to practise mindfulness and the club supports this practice, they can see an even greater improvement in years to come. Thirdly, there was a difference of opinion of the use of data. The findings highlighted that data used in football can overpower subjective feelings at times meaning that it can dictate players performance rather than facilitate. The staff mentioned that mindfulness is more of a feeling and therefore is subjective; therefore, self-awareness may not be the best form of measurement. Finally, all staff recognised the importance and essential need for an individualised approach towards mindfulness. This would necessitate that more psychologists are required to maximise the impact of mindfulness and its delivery. This inflation of psychology staff would then allow for more and enhanced training for staff which ultimately will benefit players development.

5.3.2 Introduction to the second vignette: Cultural/organisational embeddedness of mindfulness

So, it's my turn.

I tell myself, be prepared. Know what you want to say.

The inner voice again; stop questioning yourself Amy! You have statements from staff about the impact that mindfulness has had at the club, for players, for staff, for the organisation.

Stop.

Take a breath.

Go in and speak to Ian, he wants to hear an overview of the programme over the previous season.

Although he is in charge of the football side of the club, from 1st team to under 9s, he asks every season to sit down with each department to review and prepare for the following season. What have we done well, what can we do better, what are the actions for the following season. It's a great opportunity to be able to sit down with the director of football and talk about my discipline, such a valuable experience personally. The nerves still get the better of me, and it is definitely a time to

practice what I preach. Just think, this is just a normal process, and he is interested in what I have to say. He wants to know what I have to say.

“Morning Ian, how are you?”

“I’m good thanks Amy, and you?”

“I’m very well”. Butterflies are turning in my stomach already. Come on Amy, STOP, and BREATHE.

Ian then interrupts my thinking ...

“So, Amy, how has this season gone?”

“Very good thanks Ian. The lads have been great, they have really developed their self-awareness. They talk about their coping skills and what they use and don’t use. They have explored vulnerability and started to open up as a group which have created stronger bonds. They have been excellent...”

“...that’s good to hear”.

“As you know, over the last year we have been trying to embed mindfulness more into the programme. Having it in coaching sessions, S&C, physio, everything really. The aim is to provide both the players and staff with the resources to be in the present moment more. Gain greater awareness going into different situations, cope more with the adversity that they face within football, provide coping skills to bring their attention back and not overthink, as well as ultimately help them off pitch away from football”.

“Ok”.

“We have been running sessions for the players and the staff but for me, I really wanted to gain a greater understanding from the staff about their view of mindfulness and whether they feel mindfulness should be fully embedded into the programme and the culture”.

There is a pause, I’m in situ reflecting on how this conversation is going so far. It feels like the silence has been present for about three minutes but in reality, it is only about 15 seconds. I continue...

“What I have done is interviewed various people within the academy, coaches, physios, S&C coaches, analysis, education, player care, performance director, assistant academy director, to get their perspective of mindfulness here but also to provide evidence of the impact that mindfulness can have here”.

“Let’s hear it then Amy”.

[stop and breathe]

“All staff have shared with me of how they have integrated it within their own disciplines and some of the feedback and creativity from them has been fantastic. Dan spoke about how he has integrated into his rehab ... you're getting them [players] to learn more about their body and how it feels and everything a lot better so then hopefully their performance can be better than if they perform better then we get better results on the pitch, the club looks better, we get more money, and it will have a knock-on effect”. This is also supported from S&C, [as shown in the first study] they integrated into the gym to show the transition from a classroom-based learning to the gym and then ultimately onto the pitch. It has been highlighted that it is shown that mindfulness has not only helped them on the pitch but also off. Will has said from his perspective that “The work that you put in place, has increased massively, not just with the players, but in terms of the company is such a massive knowledge now and mindfulness is a good thing to go and research and don't understand because it's, it's healthy and helpful for whatever you need, whether it's playing football, or doing your best work as a marketing officer or whatever. Like that is something that to stay healthy.”

I continue by saying...

“Education is using it more formally. Annie has mentioned “I have got them to lie down in class, learning how to relax, getting time to be with themselves. It’s difficult but teaching ways to be still....We put feelings on the board and stuff like that. We sit and think about our feelings and be

mindful....I think it is easier for the boys to do it here than at school...I think people are quite open to things”.

“This is interesting Amy, but you have told me about what staff are doing in their sessions. How will it benefit the club wider? Why should we invest more in this?”

“Great question Ian”.

Stop and breath. The heart rate is pounding, and I anchor myself as I can feel my thoughts racing, a feeling of panic and when this happens my face goes red!

AMY

STOP

and BREATH.

“Some spoke about the changes that they have seen amongst the culture. Here is a perfect example of Clive’s viewpoint “On the public level he thinks there are people who will talk about their engagement in mindfulness and both players and staff talk about the benefits of being mindful. He thinks the language that both staff and players use probably reflects that they probably are being mindful. There is a more personal element that some people won’t talk about it outwardly but are engaged in it and you can see that in their approach. However, he said they probably, especially with the nature of this environment, it is very ego orientated, they might not want talk about what is a softer science perhaps... the other thing that I have done incredibly well here is introduce it in a really positive sense with younger age groups because then it just become, it becomes the norm”. Player care have had a similar opinion “they think players really enjoy it ...”

[pause]

“...they have seen group sessions here that have been really well attended”.

[pause]

Come on Amy, keep going. I say to myself to build up the courage to go again.

“...and they think we are leading the way to a certain extent because we have been partially practicing it for some time now. Other clubs are starting to get on board with it from the conversations that they have had. But from the support here, they feel we are definitely well in advance of the majority of other clubs anyway. They think the benefit of the club that we have here is that we are prepared to try new things, whereas other clubs are maybe not as open to new ideas they are quite stuck in their ways. They believe that other clubs are quite regimented, for example, this is what we do, this is how we do it kind of way. So, they think there are benefits of what we do here without a doubt as it is an opportunity to give those players the extra 1% or 2%, whatever it may be and as a club we are quite forward thinking in that sense. They believe that if there is an opportunity to gain an edge, we will take it”.

A pause is created. You can see Ian is processing this information. The expression on his face shows this. He is looking down at his note pad, back at me, and back down to his note pad. I'm not sure if he is going to say something, but I sense the vibe that he needs more info. Time to bring in the coaches' comments.

“Coaches have started to integrate mindfulness more with the players”.

As I am about to continue with the other coaching comments, Ian interrupts and says...

“Amy, this all sounds extremely promising. I do have one question though, if it is all positive, why are other clubs not doing this? Like you have said, this have been around for hundreds of years, is there any downfall to this approach?”. His expression is stern. This is what I hate. I get all flustered and start to feel hot, but then I think back to my training and think, ‘STOP and BREATH’. As I do this, my thoughts become clear, and I continue.

“For me personally Ian, the buy in is still an issue. People's perception of mindfulness is that it is fluffy. Elite sport and football in particular want results that they can see straight away and as

human beings, we are quite impatient. This is a real issue, but that isn't just an issue here, this is an issue that has been highlighted countless of times in the research. In terms of here, at the club, it has been highlighted that people don't feel the club doesn't support it and that the club could do more. One coach mentioned that if he said to his line manager or anyone in the academy, 'I'm gonna go and just take 15 minutes to be mindful'. That'd be absolutely fine. He doesn't think there would ever be an issue with that. But there aren't the resources for him to do it. He could go sit in a classroom for 10 minutes, but he wouldn't know what he was doing. He would want a little bit more support. There have been times where it has been pushed through the club for staff and there have been group sessions and it has been well attended, but he is not sure it's been done often enough. The census is around when is the time that you get to do that [mindfulness]?"

I continue...

"Ilan, it is clear that people see the benefit and can recognise how it will benefit their performance outputs but also that well-being side. For staff we need weekly drop-in sessions, which allows the staff to access it and also understand what they need to do. So have a drop-in session once a week and then carry on their sessions on their own once or even twice a week, however often they want to do it. The staff I interviewed said that would be very useful".

[Pause]

"Although you asked the question regarding the downfalls, staff have only highlighted what I have just mentioned. [Breathe] Coaches have found huge benefits for the performance aspect. One of the PDP coaches said It's fine to be emotional".

I'm on a roll. I can feel it. I need to get this out while I still have the nerve to tell Ian everything. This is my opportunity to show how vital and important mindfulness is to performance development, but also the club. This is unique. This is innovative. This needs to be heard.

I continue... "This particular coach gave me his insight and said from his perspective that when you go out for the second half, you have to be aware of how you feel at the moment? Where do you feel it? In your tummy? In your head? What is it feel like? Do you know what it looks like? He gave the example of it looking like fireballs. Do you think it won't come back on the pitch? It will affect your performance if you don't manage it. So, he gets his players to focus on their feet on the floor and breathe. Breathe 4 seconds in, 4 seconds out. He will get them to do it as a squad as they are all doing it together. They are all in the same room. Have the same breath".

Ian is looking at me quite perplexed. I get the feeling that he thinks I am being 'fluffy' as his expression is inquisitive but also not sure about what I am saying. He also has that slight smirk on his face where he knows he has to be serious but is also finding it a little amusing. I don't know whether this is a good or bad reaction. I cant quite figure it out.

So I ask, "Does this all make sense Ian?"

"Yea, it's all really interesting. I don't fully understand it all if I'm honest."

[Pause]

Oh no I have lost him. I haven't done mindfulness justice; I think to myself but then my thoughts are interrupted as he continues.

"...But I really like the fact that we are doing this. I enjoyed participating in the coaches CPDs when you have introduced mindfulness and joining in when the players done it, although I did fall asleep!"

[Laughter ripples between the two of us]. I feel that sense of relief over power me. He does understand. He does get it. Well to a degree he understands the importance and benefit of it and to be honest, at this stage, that is all I can ask for. I didn't realise the tension I was holding in my shoulders this hold time. It is like I have been holding a breath and only now I have been given permission to breath. Again, my thoughts are interrupted...

“I love the fact that it is being integrated, I think it’s great that our players and staff are building resources to aid their own personal development, not only to help them better with performance but also help them as a human being. It’s great to hear these stories and experiences from others, what else have others said?”.

I nod as he is saying this. His comments take me a little by surprise as I wasn’t expecting him to be so positive regarding my comments. I take time to look at my notes and quotes that I have from staff in front of me and continue talking by responding to Ian’s question.

“Ian, coaches have recognised the togetherness from this. They have also explained the impact it can have on performance. A story that a coach gave me was how he has fully integrated mindfulness into his training and coaching programme”.

Breathe.

“Troy was watching clips back with Ana [sport psychologist] of his age group and talked through different things he was thinking at the time in relation to the players performance. Ana would then go out on the pitch, keeping in mind what Troy had discussed with her, and then implement techniques out on the pitch. These were things that enabled the players keep themselves in the moment as well as Troy, being able to recognize what was going on. [Pause] Having the ability and skills required to bring selves back to the state they need to be in”.

I take a moment and continue.

“Troy mentioned that as a squad they would go out into pitch for talk and speak about what they're feeling, then do a form of meditative practice. Before a game, have time to go out, walk out onto the pitch, walk around, talk about sounds that they hear, talk openly about feelings and the impact this may have on the upcoming performance. Troy gave the example of when the squad played Chelsea in the semi-final. It was in front of about 250 spectators consisting of coaches, scouts, and parents’ players were outstanding. There were so much the players had to deal with, and they dealt with it

brilliantly. He mentioned that if hadn't of been for the practice of mindfulness, and if we had just done our normal coaching routine for games, whether we would have had the same outcome".

Without even realising, I have a big smile on my face. For me this promotes mindfulness better than any psych could. Having a coach and all these staff talk so highly of a psychological technique brings a sense of pride. I actually can't believe what I have achieved. My thoughts are cut short as Ian bringing conclusion to our meeting.

"Amy, this is fascinating stuff, and I can see the benefits from these case studies and quotes from staff, the benefits of this technique. Continue to embed mindfulness into the academy and next time we meet, can you bring a development plan of how you would take this further; how can we continue to embed this. I look forward to hearing about the next steps".

"Thanks for your time, Ian, much appreciated".

5.3.2.1 Summary

This vignette demonstrates the importance of human experience. These findings highlight the importance of human behaviours, actions, emotions, and social interactions. This is emphasised through the finding of mindfulness being positively introduced into the culture. Meaning that mindfulness is now seen as part of the norm within the club. As a caveat to this, it was also reported that this took time as initial perceptions of mindfulness was that it is 'fluffy'. Elite sport does not have the patience to wait for results and therefore this points links to the previous vignette with the use of objective data. Thirdly, staff reported a greater self-awareness, meaning that they have greater resources to cope with adversity; this is a monumental finding as adversity within football is an everyday occurrence. Finally, staff are integrating mindfulness practices into their daily lives and programmes as they can see the benefits. They desire more weekly workshops to assist in practice, learning and development. It was also reported from this finding that staff felt a greater social connection, gaining greater communication skills and a feeling of togetherness. This can only enhance the development and effectiveness of creating a functional IDT.**5.4 Linking section for study three to study four**

Results from study 3 highlighted how staff want to be upskilled and educated on the delivery of mindfulness and believe that mindfulness should be part of everyone's 'fundamentals'. It was also reported that staff felt that having the skill of mindfulness will allow them to manage themselves and the players more effectively, especially when in high pressurised environments. In addition, it

was reported that by trying to create a more present environment, greater learning can take place. Staff reported that having a mindful environment allows for greater creativity, more attentive and curious individuals which ultimately provides greater productivity on the pitch. Finally, it was reported that there should be a psychologist with every team to create bespoke one-to-one support to allow opportunities for greater collaboration amongst staff creating more of an optimal IDT approach.

In addition, there is still some scepticism of mindfulness itself and its application and function within football. There is still a perception from some that mindfulness is 'fluffy' and sport requires precise quantification of impact leading to more rapid results rather than a focus on psychological and performance development. This study truly highlighted the impact that mindfulness can have when the context is right, and the pitch of mindfulness has been delivered appropriately to the desired audience.

The programme of research culminates in Study 4 through insights from the practitioner experience of delivering this approach within the environment. This moves insights beyond the impact on players (Study 1), the integration into an IDT (Study 2) and the perceptions of the broader staff of embedding mindfulness (Study 3) to finally, the lived experience of myself as the researcher and practitioner.

This journey over these six years has taught me a lot and developed my skills as a practitioner and an academic. It has provided me with different perspectives and outlook from both the practitioner and academic lens and therefore I felt it was imperative that this story was shared with others.

Throughout this programme of research, others have enquired: 'Amy, how have you done it? What did you do?', and with similar questions being asked from academics, students, those undergoing professional training to become practitioners and experienced practitioners, it felt an essential journey worth sharing. Having lived and breathed the journey of mindfulness and trying to embed it into this sporting context, through group work, case studies and staff involvement, this

programme of research highlights and provides insight into a variety of situations where mindfulness can be integrated. This final study, an autoethnography, provides the realities of applications of mindfulness into football, the highs and lows, the struggles, the importance of relationships and being truly embedded as a practitioner. Not only has this research shown and demonstrated how mindfulness can impact players and staff's performance, but it has also allowed me to gain greater insight of myself as a practitioner and a researcher.

CHAPTER SIX:

An autoethnography exploring the lived experiences of a psychology practitioner embedding mindfulness into an already established culture: Mindfulness in Professional Football

6.1 Introduction

My PhD has been a journey of self-discovery and self-reflection with the single biggest reflection being that despite poring through the literature and attending conferences there have not been much published about truly embedding mindfulness into an elite sport culture. Many interventions have been employed; however, I have not come across any literature to help understand the complexities of using mindfulness and how to introduce and embed it within that organisation and culture.

I have learnt a vast amount from my years of conducting this research. There have been smiles and tears, and because of that I feel very passionate about what I have experienced and therefore wanted to share these personal experiences with others. I have found writing this very difficult and have struggled to know what to include, what to leave out, what may be interesting or useful and what I think others want to hear. I came across a phrase; 'removing the armour' and throughout this piece of work, that is what I aim to do. I want to show the raw emotion that I have experienced while embedding mindfulness into this context, and share the thoughts, frustrations, highs, and lows and truly show myself, with the hope that it resonates with others.

While difficult, this process has also helped me as a practitioner. Most importantly it has helped me to see potential barriers that I am hiding behind which has previously prevented me from developing. Mindfulness is woven through this whole thesis, but even I struggle to practise and accept without judgement highlighting that this skill cannot simply be taken off the shelf and used, it has to be something that is practised and integrated into your way of life and living. I have struggled at times to understand mindfulness. I come from a scientific background and initially found the

concept too 'fluffy'. Actually, I still find it 'fluffy' at times. At the start, consciously trying to make sense of it was the downfall for me. I soon realised that it was experiential learning that needed to take place. You can't just read about mindfulness; you have to experience it. Truly experience it. This requires letting your 'barriers' down, being vulnerable, which is hard to do and particularly in elite sport.

The following extracts aim to shed light on the experience of attempting to embed mindfulness into an already established professional academy football culture. I hope that what I share will bring some comfort, understanding and ultimately guidance to others wanting to bring mindfulness into their practice. I hope that this will also stimulate curiosity and encourage others to explore mindfulness to aid practice and personal discovery.

6.2 *This is Me!*

I have struggled conducting this research and embedding mindfulness into this culture because I have often felt like an 'imposter'. I have always questioned whether I am doing it right, whether I should be doing it this way or whether I have missed something. I have operated in this world for 10 years and yet these thoughts still frequently occur. Mindfulness has helped me a lot in this regard. It has helped me to detach myself and view things more rationally at times. Nonetheless, that imposter feeling that I experience within this role are still there, still powerful, and still raw. I do not want to lose these emotions as they make me good at my job. It means I care and therefore, constantly striving to achieve better. Yet, the balance between striving and achieving is difficult to maintain. A comment I came across that really resonated with me was, 'sometimes we can be in constant stretch and chasing joy'. Although I do enjoy my role and am often in the present moment, the feeling of being constantly stretched can be an uncomfortable and pressurised place to exist, thrive and survive! I am not sure if this is what it is like in all elite sport or just football, or whether I am the only practitioner that feels like this. However, through conducting this research and learning the skill of mindfulness I have learned to survive in this environment, and at times I have thrived.

I am not sure if it is the environment that I am in or me as a character, but my drive to succeed and push myself to my limits is evident in my work ethic and I believe that is why I have 'survived' in football as long as I have as a sport psychology practitioner. Although this can be seen as a positive trait, I believe it can also be detrimental. It is too easy to get caught up in the 'bubble' of football. You are being constantly judged, just like the players. You are striving for success, striving for optimal performance, and striving to be the best. I look at the research I have conducted and think about my ambition to fully embed mindfulness. I want everyone within the club practising, every player practising, daily mindfulness sessions to start the day in the present moment. I am always reflecting on what more could be done. Sometimes as humans, we get so caught up in the 'bubble' that we can forget how far we have come. I recognised this only recently, when writing this autoethnography. Through tears, smiles, and sleepless nights, it is those positive comments relating to what I have achieved by those around you, especially those comments that I would not expect, that allow me to take that moment, stand back and appreciate what I have done.

It is hard to share these reflections on my journey because showing vulnerability is difficult for me. Exposing myself and the challenges that I face on a daily basis may lead to perceptions that I am weak; these are thoughts that run daily through my head. I am the only full-time sport psychologist, and this can mean it is often lonely place to be. While I do have a team around me to share ideas with, they are only part-time and so they have an 'escape'; they are not consumed by this in the same way .

I find it equally hard to hear that my work embedding the applied side of mindfulness is 'pioneering'. I tend to perceive other practitioners' experiences and knowledge as being far greater and of more value than my own. Others tell me that I donot give myself enough credit for the work that I have done and what I have achieved within the realm of mindfulness and football.

Being 'pioneering' has probably been the biggest challenge for me. I realised that I like to be a sheep! I like to know how others have done it, learn from them, ask for their opinion, but I have

not been able to do that here. I wanted to be part of a herd. It has felt lonely taking the lead, but I can not show this, not in this environment, not when studying mindfulness. But maybe, it is ok to feel this way, to show this. I can choose to show this, and I know I have the support around me. I am suppressing my emotions of being lonely and isolated and this is only making this feeling catastrophise. I should not have to feel like I need to suppress this feeling, I need to learn to detach myself from this thought and feeling. Learn that I can sit with the discomfort of being pioneering, although I really hate that term! It has been a challenge but writing this has allowed me to truly see how much of a challenge it has been but also how far I have come.

6.3 Rationale for Autoethnography

Despite psychology being used in all sports across the world, within football the uptake has been slow (Champ, 2018). Mindfulness has existed for centuries and despite much literature being published within sport it is only now gaining traction within football. This research will address and explore my journey as a mindfulness practitioner within the realm of professional football and how I have attempted to embed mindfulness into its culture. It will highlight the journey I have been on, expand on the highs, lows, and challenges. Colleagues and other practitioners have asked about how I have introduced mindfulness, they want to know my experiences of trying to integrate mindfulness into elite football, hence telling a story about these experiences in the form of an autoethnography seemed appropriate.

Stories connect people emotionally, they resonate with others, and are created and embedded in every moment of our experience and reality (Bartlett, 2015). As Atkinson reminds us, “We are a storytelling species. Storytelling is in our blood. We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story” (2007, p. 224). Ellis (2004) has explained that autoethnographies allow for more creative, expansive, and textual spaces for researchers to conduct their research. Bochner and Ellis (2016) continue by explaining that autoethnography is a type of creative analytic practice that refers to a highly personalized form of qualitative research in which

researchers connect their own personal experiences to the culture. In this respect, as McMahon (2016) notes, "Autoethnographic researchers tell stories that are based on their own lived experiences and interactions with others within social contexts, relating the personal to the cultural in the process and product" (p. 302).

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that has been described as a "blend of ethnography and autobiographical writing that incorporates elements of one's own life experience when writing about others" (Scott-Hoy, 2002, p.276). Autoethnography is a form of narrative that allows for the self to be situated with a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). This method emphasises the exploration of the social context, interpreting meanings of the data, and reflecting on the purposes and motivations of social actions (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). It is an "autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p. 209). This type of approach involves rigorous self-questioning and the wiliness to confront things about yourself that may not be seen as flattering (Ellis & Bochner, 2003).

Autoethnography emerged in the postmodern era, when traditional science and research, started to be questioned and what constitutes knowledge was being challenged (Bartlett, 2014). Researchers started to think differently at what is termed 'real science' and what constitutes as knowing and that no one way of method should be favoured (Wall, 2006). The goal of autoethnography is to invite readers into the researcher's world and gain an understanding and feeling of the events that are being described to help learn and broaden their understanding and coping in terms of their own lives (Ellis & Bochner, 2003). Autoethnographers move back and forth between experiencing and examining aspects of their lives (McIlveen, 2008, as cited in Mendez, 2013).

Research methods have shifted, meaning that there is more support for the qualitative methods and subjectivity. This openness to new methods is not to eliminate the traditional scientific

method, but to demonstrate that there are other ways to gain and share knowledge. For example, feminist theory and research use multiple research techniques, has grown in relation to the male-dominated perspectives of traditional science. Many feminist writers now advocate for the research to start with one's own experience (Ellis, 2004). This has given a voice to those who may feel hidden in society or silenced (the insiders voice) as well as show different ways of representation that deepen our capacity to empathise with others (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Personalised accounts are important as they provide a different perspective and insight which could be applied to a broader audience. In this study, I share my experiences of introducing and embedding mindfulness into the elite football environment.

6.4 Critiquing and Evaluating Autoethnography

As with any research paradigm, autoethnography has been critiqued. Researchers have referred to autoethnography as self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualised (Atkinson, 1997; Sparkes, 2000). As Sparkes notes, "The emergence of autoethnography and narratives of self . . . has not been trouble-free, and their status as proper research remains problematic" (2000, p. 22). Some disapprove because the focus is on the self and personal experiences which are separated from other discourses and contexts (Wall, 2006). It causes a concern for some as personal experiences are exposed and some believe that a focus on a single, subjective subject lacks genuine description and provides a skewed view of life (Wall, 2006).

Critics against autoethnography as a methodology have dismissed it as being too artistic, not rigorous, too emotional, and not scientific enough (Bartlett, 2015). The reason for the debate in this approach is one side believing that 'objective' methods and procedures can be applied to determine the choices that we make, whereas others believe that these choices are made through someone's values and subjectivities (Bochner, 2000). Within qualitative enquiry, researchers consider the credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability of a piece of research, yet this is not always as easy to apply within an autoethnography (Holt, 2003). This is because different epistemological and

ontological assumptions inform autoethnographic inquiry, meaning that it would be extremely difficult to judge the value of personal text against these criteria (Sparkes, 2000). Frank (2000) noted that those who criticise the rigor and generalisability of a personal narrative are missing the point: "Maybe the point is not to engage [narrative] systematically but to engage it personally" (Frank, 2000, p.355). Ellis et al., (2011) states that the questions that are most important to autoethnographers are: Who reads our work? How are they affected by it? How do this keep a conversation going? It is an embodied experience by the nature of the study, sharing personal information of "who we are, what we have been, and what we may become" (Haynes, 2011, p.144). However, autoethnographers also recognise and acknowledge that "we have to take precautions in interpreting, generalising, and eliminating bias" (Ellis, 1991, p. 30). The aim of any autoethnography is to provide an analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena (Ellis, 2010); an inquiry that encourages in-depth description of personal experiences with enhanced reflexivity throughout the process and content of writing (Ellis et al., 2010) and research.

Lack of systematic and methodological rigor is also noted as a barrier for autoethnography to be accepted (Wall, 2006). However, those who support autoethnography argue that it provides more authenticity than traditional research approaches due to the researcher's use of self, the voice of the insider being truer than that of the outsider (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Similarly, Laslett (1999) writes: "Life stories are likely to present fuller pictures [thick description], ones in which the meanings of events and relationships are more likely to be told than inferred" (Laslett, 1999, p. 391). Furthermore, Walker and Unterhalter (2004) reminds us that "in excavating our own subjectivity, the point is not to produce research as therapy or stories for their own sake, but a disciplined and reflexive understanding of the known and the knower" (ibid, p.290). In judging narratives or stories, we should 'seek to meet literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest' (Richardson, 2000, p. 11). In other words, 'Does this account work for us? Do we find it to be believable and evocative on the basis of our own experiences?' (Garratt & Hodkinson, cited in Sparkes, 2000, p. 29).

However, autoethnographers also realise and acknowledge that ‘we have to take precautions in interpreting, generalising, and eliminating bias here the same as we do with any data we collect’ (Ellis, 1991, p. 30).

The principles of reliability, generalisability and validity are treated differently within autoethnographies (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) in comparison to other traditional methods. Autoethnographies are written to explore experience through a narrative, where the researchers value the narrative truth (Bochner, 1994; Denzin, 1994). Evidence is gathered to create the autoethnographies not to determine if events actually happened, but more to explore and show lived experiences; they look at facts and in contrast, explore the meaning behind the experience. Bochner (2001) argues that reliability is anchored through the narrative and being interconnected with life. Through the process of writing an autoethnography, the researcher shows a sense of authenticity leading to a greater meaning and self-understanding (Bochner, 2001). Reliability in autoethnographies is based on specific interactions with others in the field and within the process. Within this study, ‘reliability checks’ were done with supervisors who know the study, a trusted party as well as someone who was able to comment on its progress, process, and reliability (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Closely linked to reliability is rigor. Rigor means “that a work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is life-like, believable, and possible” (Ellis & Bochner, 2004, p.124). The narrative story aims to connect the readers to the writer and enter their subjective world (Plummer, 2001). The validity of a piece of autoethnographic research is about asking questions such as: does it speak to the reader about lives of known and unknown? How is it useful and impactful in the wider context? Bochner (2001) suggests judging autoethnographic writing on the usefulness of its story rather than only on its accuracy.

With regard to the term of ‘generalisability’, Ellis (2004) argues that “autoethnographic research is tested - not in the traditional way through random samples of respondents, but by

readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.751). Stake (1994) explains that stories provide insight into another’s world which provides vicarious experience for the reader. This meaning that the current research does not aim for generalisability but transferability. Whilst the personal meanings and experiences expressed throughout the narratives should not be applied to other researcher practitioners as a generalisable truth, the meanings provided do create an opportunity for further discussion, thought and analysis on the topic of mindfulness in football.

6.5 Ethical dimensions of an autoethnography

At this point, it is worth discussing some of the ethical considerations of conducting an autoethnography. Although this type of research is about writing about your own sporting or cultural experience and seems devoid of ethical concerns, there are still ethical dilemmas and issues still arise. When seeking ethical approval, we often address the impact on research participants, yet we often fail to take into consideration how autoethnographers protect themselves in the research process (Allen-Collinson, 2012). Engaging in the autoethnographic process itself can constitute an emotionally painful journey. Chatham-Carpenter (2010) for example, explains vividly how during the writing of her autoethnography regarding anorexia, the pressure to publish her work became entwined with the pressure of her anorexia. This therefore raises questions about how far along the self-disclosure and vulnerability route the autoethnographers wishes to take themselves in order to represent themselves within their research (Dickson-Swift, 2006; Kumar & Cavallero 2018). Researchers have found that when conducting autoethnographies, the dilemma of ‘presentation of self’ (Goffman, 1974) is questioned when considering how much sensitive information to share. Ellis (1999) revealed that an autoethnographical researcher makes themselves vulnerable in revealing sensitive and intimate information, being unable to retract any information presented and having no control on how the researcher will interpret the information. Writing in an emotional, vulnerable, and often exposed way “challenges the widely held orthodoxy of researcher as neutral, ‘objective’,

coolly rational, and textually absent” (Allen-Collinson, 2012, p.16). Greenhalgh (2001) supports this statement by stating that the autoethnographic researcher may be vulnerable to charges of being “irrational, particularistic, private, and subjective, rather than reasonable, universal, public, and objective” (p.55). Behar (1997) explains the danger of vulnerability and over-exposure in research; “vulnerability doesn’t mean that anything personal goes”; the exposure of the self ‘has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake” (p.13-14).

6.6 The Struggles of Application: Personal Voice

Literature suggests that applying mindfulness in any context has extremely positive outcomes. Yet I have found it very rare to come across any literature that explains the difficulties of using mindfulness. Instead, research and programmes in mindfulness explain what to do and provide very logical step by step approaches on how it can be applied, the format, the structure. But what happens when this does not work? What happens if the time scale is limited, or the participants do not ‘buy in’? There is minimal information that covers this area. The following narrative aims to explore my relationship with mindfulness and bringing it into a culture that can be considered as difficult.

6.6.1 What am I doing?

I have no idea what I am doing!!! Why are they asking me?!! I have to introduce mindfulness to 400 people, and I literally have no idea.! I have the CEO, the coaches, the sport science team, the reception staff in front of me. The list goes on. I just feel like I am drowning! Ironic , considering I am talking about mindfulness and the impact that it can have on our health, well-being, and performance. I feel like a fraud. This is what I wanted, mindfulness being introduced and used across the club but now I have to deliver and show the importance of it, be the person that is the expert in this area, but I don’t feel it at all. My mind is going crazy and filled with noise, and as much as I am practising accepting everything that is coming up for me, it is hard. I don’t think my irrational thoughts have been helped by some of the senior coaches. A staff invite went out to staff explaining

the content and structure of the day including my session on mindfulness, the response I got from coaches was “Amy what is this? Is this just more psychobabble? Are you really expecting us to meditate?”. These comments reinforce the imposter syndrome and make me re-question what I am doing.

I’m told I am the expert in this by colleagues and other mindfulness practitioners across the globe, this just exacerbates the feeling that I need to do a good job and increases my anxiety. I need to show them that I know what I’m talking about! This feeling comes up all the time for me. It is starting to ease and become weaker, but every time I hear these words I think, “make sure you do this right!” I am six years into this research and still every time I go to deliver a mindfulness session or even talk about it, the nerves start to build. Recently, I was in a Club meeting where I was sat with the Performance Director, the Head of Academy Analysis and the Head of Academy Sports Science and we were talking about performance impact. The thought ‘imposter’ came straight into my head as these guys are the ones making decisions. Why am I sat in here with these people? We are discussing culture and then all of a sudden, the Performance Director says “Amy’s research on mindfulness comes to mind. We can say that this has had an impact on culture and the organisation”. This took me completely by surprise. I can feel my face going hot and am 100% sure it’s gone red. I have all eyes on me. I can’t say it’s not great to be recognised for the work that has been carried out, but I still think, ‘I don’t know what I am doing’. This comes back to numerous conversations with my supervisor where I talk about mindfulness being ‘common sense’, That’s what I feel, it’s just common sense. Everyone does this, everyone understands it, why am I explaining it when people already know it! It’s amazing how much my mind is pulling me away from the present moment and wanting me to think negatively or think irrationally. The mind astonishes me more and more, especially when using mindfulness. The ability to notice where my mind goes and where it wants to get pulled and then trying really hard to bring it back, choosing to bring it back. Still to this day it is a challenge, but a challenge that I like to embrace and practice to get better at. This doesn’t just make me a better practitioner, but I know it will help my confidence in myself as a person.

I can't believe I'm here! All these amazing practitioners and I'm here with them. My first conference on mindfulness and it's an international one. I feel really out of my depth. I'm here with practitioners that have years of experience, have worked at international level with some world class athletes, and here I am! I'm sat in the corner scribbling as many notes as I can, listening and taking in as much information as possible. I am in absolute awe! But my thoughts are saying that 'I shouldn't be here; I don't have the credibility to be here'. I am the youngest person at this conference, and everyone has so much experience! What am I doing?!

That evening I started speaking to a delegate who was so interested in my work, my research, and my application of mindfulness in football. How is he interested in what I am doing?! It really baffles me! He was so intrigued and wanted to know more and kept saying how good I was at doing what I was doing in football. If I'm honest, I thought he was just being charming!

6.7 The struggles of application: Academic Voice

As the above encounters show, my personal voice is telling me that I am lucky to be in this position; my 'imposter' self would state that it was down to luck (Clance & Imes, 1978). 'Imposter syndrome' is referred as a psychological phenomenon characterised by intense feelings of intellectual fraudulence (Clance & Imes, 1978). Psychologists explain that 'imposter syndrome' is magnified by social influences and how this affects someone's psyche. This is especially for women in male dominated environments (Crawford, 2021). Historically, sport has been classified as a male sector where female voices are both under-represented and marginalised (Acosta & Carpenter 2004; Roper 2008; Roper et al., 2005). Feminist sport psychology researchers (e.g. Roper 2008; Roper et al., 2005; Yambor & Connelly 1991) have identified the importance of sharing lived experiences of sport psychologists working with same-sex and cross-sex athletes. Roper (2008) suggested that female sport psychologists may be faced with some unique challenges when entering and working in an applied environment, which may be exaggerated in a highly masculine environment. Feeling a

need to demonstrate my true worth as a female in football is something that I have experienced (Wilding, 2021); my own perception is that I am less competent in football related matters.

It is difficult being a woman in football, in addition to the overall challenges of being a psychologist in football, especially being in its infancy within the sport (McDougall et al., 2015; Nesti, 2010). Generally, sport psychology has not always been well received within the elite sport settings (Anonymous et al. 2018; Mitchell et al. 2014). It has often been viewed as a method of working with athletes that have a 'problem', or are too 'weak' to cope with the demands of professional sport, and sport psychologists are therefore seen as a care service (Anonymous et al. 2018; Pain & Harwood 2004). Nesti (2004) suggested that sport psychologists working in elite sport are likely to experience challenges. Some of these may include building relationships and establishing credibility with a number of different individuals and groups (e.g., coaches, athletes, support staff etc), handling ethical challenges and confidentiality issues relating to information sharing and working with multiple clients, and dealing with interdepartmental communication issues and conflicts.

Understanding and working with within cultures that are often volatile and unpredictable whilst resisting pressures to conform to the demands of the culture is also a challenge. In addition, understanding a role that involves organisational psychology work and culture shaping practices, as well as the pressures of continually evidence efficacy of support (Eubank et al., 2014). It is also documented that sport psychologists need to be able to regularly operate within a highly pressurised, stressful, highly competitive and success obsessed environment (e.g., Brady & Maynard, 2010; Nesti, 2010; Reid et al., 2004; Williams & Andersen, 2012; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). These generic perceptions of sport psychology are then exaggerated in the realms of professional football due to the masculine culture.

Football adopts the masculine ideals of withstanding physical and emotional pain and keeping your personal emotions to yourself. Many sports psychologists are wary of claiming definitively their success as a practitioner and their contribution to an athlete's performance, yet

they are by association, whether they like it or not, implicated by the performance of the athletes that they support (Brady & Maynard, 2010). The rewards for success in elite sport are substantial, meaning that there is little leeway for failure this may impact the sports psychologists' professional credibility and contribute to imposter syndrome (Cruickshank et al., 2013; Nesti, 2010). In 2015 when this research first commenced, limited if not no research of mindfulness in football had been delivered. This contributed to the feeling of being an 'imposter' with the fear that those around me would find out that I am not capable after all (Crawford, 2021; Sherman, 2013).

Imposter syndrome suggests that you believe your success is down to luck, your lack of ability will be exposed. The pressure of perfectionism, social comparison, and a fear of failure cause heightened levels of anxiety and stress that can contribute to imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978; Cowman & Ferrari, 2002; Harvey & Katz, 1985; Hutchins, 2015; Kets de Vries, 2005; Sakulku, 2011). Within the personal voice text, I speak a lot about those around me and the feeling of being 'inferior' or a 'fraud', The imposter literature highlights this by showing that people look to compare themselves with those who have characteristics that make them look like authentic professionals (Crawford, 2021). When comparing self to others, this creates the negative reinforcement of thoughts of "I'm not good enough"; "What am I doing?"; "It's just common sense", which are common thoughts that show how my perspective fits an imposturous reality (Crawford, 2021). There is a vast amount of research that documents imposter syndrome (e.g., Hutchin & Rainbolt, 2017; Parkman, 2016; Craddock et al., 2011; Brens et al., 1994), with research providing two views of this phenomenon. Anderson (2016) questions whether imposter syndrome is real and downplays the experiences as a normal part of success, whereas Haney (2015) disagrees. He believes that imposter syndrome is very much real and that individuals need to unlock the fear of being successful before self-doubt has an adverse effect of potential.

Colleagues and individuals away from the club often comment on the success I have achieved not only as a practitioner in football but also with the research that I am doing. They

commend me for being a far ahead of others in the area. Nonetheless, I am unable to recognise and take ownership of my success. This is not uncommon for those who are struggling with imposter tendencies since they will often link achievement to lowering of standards, networking, timing, and charm (Clance & Imes, 1978; Cowman & Ferrari, 2002; Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2005; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006).

Ronkainen and Nesti (2015) explore the concept of existential anxiety and explain how what I experience is an existential account of anxiety rather than fear. Within existential research fear is often described as relating to an object that you fear, whereas anxiety is experienced because it relates to the human possibilities that can be achieved rather than an object (Kierkegaard, 1844, 1980; May, 1983). May (1983) was one of the early psychologists to explore anxiety and he claimed that anxiety can sometimes be more painful than fear. He believes that this is due to fear having a clear and specific target, whereas anxiety is a more vague, diffuse state of apprehension (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2015). This interpretation from an existential approach corresponds nicely with my ontological view. As highlighted in an extract from the personal voice, the heightened levels of anxiety and stress overpowers the praise that is given because mindfulness is seen as 'common sense' rather than success in ability to deliver (Clance & Imes, 1978; Cowman & Ferrari, 2002; Harvey & Katz, 1985; Hutchins, 2015; Kets de Vries, 2005). This therefore can illuminate the feeling of 'imposter syndrome'; downplaying the scientific rigor and expertise needed for mindfulness application and the impact of one's skills as an applied practitioner. Mindfulness is a tool to notice and accept thoughts and feelings that are arising; the experiences and reflections have shown that it has benefited all; staff, players, and self. The existential literature suggests that we need to learn to accept anxiety rather than try to remove it (Corlett, 1996, 1999; Ronkainen & Nesti, 2015). Although the personal text details the anxiety I feel when I perceive that I don't know what I am doing, I have continued to explore and embed the use of mindfulness within this culture. This is courageous, and this has helped me become the practitioner I am today. As Ronkainen and Nesti (2015) remind us,

“We must be prepared to act even if this is uncomfortable, involves risk and requires that we leave safe and familiar territory behind” (p.6).

When writing the personal voice and reflecting on my experiences I often thought that I was the only one that felt that way, yet reassurance has come from peers and literature. Kierkegaard (1844, 1980) explored existential anxiety and explains that as human beings, we are programmed to worry; we worry about future events before knowing what the outcome is going to be. This is unavoidable. This gave me the comfort that I’m not the only one to experience this, although at times it feels like everyone around you is thriving and your only just surviving (or sometimes drowning). Similar to the mindfulness literature, Kierkegaard (1844, 1980) explains that anxiety is something that we are faced with as a result of accepting that we have ownership over our thoughts and actions. Knowing that as a practitioner, I will pursue a particular path (in this case mindfulness), however, I am also going into this knowing that I donot know how it will be accepted into this environment, how people will take it and what reaction I will have then on me as a practitioner; this is what causes anxiety (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2015).

6.8 The Use of Language: Personal Voice

Throughout this research project the use and accessibility of language has been a consistent theme that has arisen. The type of language that is used with mindfulness practices have not always been applicable or relatable to the players, which has been challenging and contributed to disengagement. The narrative within this section explores the use of language and the impact that this can have on application.

6.8.1 *It’s too fluffy!*

I have just delivered my first mindfulness session to the U16s. Before the session, I felt pure excitement. I had spent two years studying mindfulness developing myself as a practitioner, doing courses and designing a programme that would work with the players and be part of their day-to-day

programme. It was now time to put this into practice. The first session was on focusing on the breath and I was confident in delivering this as it was an audio from an established programme. So far so good. The audio had started, the lads were sat with intent, listening, and looking willing to listen and take part. I was ready for this. It was my first step to introducing something that I feel will have a big impact. All of a sudden, I hear a burst of laughter. This really threw me, and I honestly felt myself go red and hot, and thought what have I done wrong? Why are they laughing at me? I asked the boys to come back to the room, bring their attention back to me, notice that they are giggling and then bring their attention back to the audio, but the boys just carried on laughing and then eventually one lad said "Amy, please stop this, what are we listening to?". I stopped the audio and asked what the problem was and commented that they were all doing so well. They replied, "Why do we need to imagine that we are the wind crashing against a mountain? Amy we are footballers!". I realised at that point I had potentially lost all credibility I had with these boys .

How did I not realise before the importance of language? Having been on courses, listened to audios, and read lots of literature, I had just become accustomed to this use of language. I pride myself on making psychology user friendly for all players that I work with. Why should mindfulness be any different. I looked back on this session and the first thing that I picked up on was the 'fluffiness' of the language, and yet I went and did the same thing. I tried to get football to fit mindfulness rather than mindfulness fit football. I felt like a complete rookie at this point, but this epiphany was the experience that I needed in order successful embed mindfulness.

I'm ready! Here we go! The boys have asked for this. Coaches, S&C, physios are all joining in. I'm outside in the grandstand and I feel ready. "Now pay attention to your quads. You have just had a heavy loading session, there may be fatigue, DOMS starting to creep in, but just notice the sensation that you may have in your quads... now bring you attention to your hammys". I look around and I can sense that these guys are present. They are here with me in this moment.

Once debriefed and with the boys gone, I asked the staff what they thought, hoping and willing that they have seen the benefit. I am also hoping that they don't have a go at me as I made the boys late by 15mins for their premier league testing! "Amy, I loved that" said the coach and the others then echoed this. I relax. "Amy, I don't know any other psych that can do what you do. You are using mindfulness and making the language appropriate for the lads, they have more focus and awareness because of the way you are phrasing it. Great work". Wow! How on top of the world do I feel right now? What better praise can I get from the S&C coach. I'm putting football language into this and the buy in has been so much greater, actually I do know what I am doing. Who knew?!

6.9 The Use of Language: Academic Voice

Both extracts above allude to the impact that experiential learning can have; as Hasses (2021) notes, mindfulness is best understood through direct experience. However, the personal voice also highlights the impact that language can have on an experience. Hasses (2021) explains that regardless of our background, or philosophical approach, mindfulness is universal; "...it is often being discovered, forgotten, and rediscovered again"(Hasses, 2021, p. 81). What mindfulness has allowed me to do as an application is show that it can be used and utilised in all environments. Mindfulness is not 'one size fits all' in terms of the language (*imagine that we are the wind crashing against a mountain*), but what it demonstrates is that mindfulness can be context specific to aid access and usability (Fuller, 2018).

The first narrative highlights my novice approach to introducing mindfulness into the football setting. I followed the 'process' that I had read about in books, taking note from recordings that have been used again and again, but this got 'thrown back in my face'. I was fortunate to have an established and positive relationship with the players as this could have easily gone extremely badly. If it was not for me being embedded as a full-time practitioner and ended with me losing these players as clients. The literature often references practitioners who 'parachute in' and highlights the potential negative impact that this can have on delivery (Kaufman et al., 2018). The

psychological and physiological aspects in football are equally important, therefore having mindfulness embedded in the culture highlights its value just like the importance placed on physical and tactical training (Vealey, 2007). Within this particular example (U16 session), the experience the players had could have been a great way to notice where the mind had wandered to and therefore a good exercise to be able to bring the mind back. Conversely, with psychology in football still viewed with scepticism (e.g., Larsen & Engell, 2013; Zillmer & Gigli, 2007), this language could have lost the players completely meaning that trying to gain buy in and future adherence to mindfulness would have been extremely difficult.

Mindfulness is generally described as purposeful non-judgemental attention to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Research explains that in order to achieve this, mindfulness skills rely on the experience of the practitioner which is developed through time and effort (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Therefore, adherence to daily practice is key in building a skilled mindful mind for anyone learning mindfulness (Grossman, 2011). Long term, these skills can promote psychological well-being which leads to higher levels of resilience (Keune & Fortintos, 2010; Oken et al., 2015), which improves managing physical and emotional problems (Bowen et al. 2010; Segal et al. 2010). There are vast amounts of research regarding mindfulness adherence (e.g., Perret., 2014; Salmon et al., 2009; Scott-Hamilton & Schutte, 2016), and the extracts above highlight that the use of contextual language in this environment has a major impact on this.

The literature suggests that psychology as a general discipline “frequently suffers with conceptual confusions and misunderstandings driven by our unintentionally misguided use of language” (Lindsay et al., 2014, p. 42). Lindsay et al., (2010) state that psychology as a discipline, use metaphors that create generalisations. It is perhaps craved by the discipline to ensure that the scientific rigor is kept yet still obtaining the simplistic generalisations, which potentially causes confusion that leads to the “attempt of using empirical methods to verify the abstracted claims of mentalism” (Lindsay et al., 2014, p.46). In supporting the importance of contextual language, Brown,

and colleagues (2005) developed a framework addressing contextual intelligence which reinforces the importance of language and the success of interventions. In the second extract, it was highlighted by the S&C coach how important the use of football terminology was and the impact this had on the boys focus as well as their adherence. The research suggests that practitioners who have prior experience within a culture and subsequent fluency in the culture's language has a distinctive advantage over others (Brown et al., 2005). Having worked as an applied practitioner for 10 years at the club, I had understood the culture, had built relationships, and learnt the language, which I feel has been the key to success since it ensured that I had developed sufficient contextual intelligence and cultural proficiency to work effectively in this elite environment. Knowing the players' values and attitudes enabled me to present mindfulness in a way that was positively received. Similar to the opinion of Hasses (2021) regarding mindfulness being universal, Hayes and Brown (2004) agree the principles of performance are universal across performance domains. Some may argue that there is no need to spend time gathering specific contextual information considering the principles are universal, however, from my experience and as the literature highlights (e.g., Brown et al., 2005), it is important to treat each situation as unique, regardless of the universal or generalisable principles. It is important that the information you deliver is specific to that individual or team, allowing them to feel fully appreciated and considered.

6.10 'Eureka Moments': Personal Voice

Despite the challenges that I have experienced, there have been 'eureka' moments and these have been really powerful for me. There have been the moments whereby I have truly appreciated my role as a practitioner and the impact that mindfulness has had on the players, staff, and the environment. This next set of narratives highlights those turning point moments throughout the research. These have made everything worthwhile and are the reason I will continue to embed mindfulness into this culture.

6.10.1 Joy

A player that I have struggled to gain a relationship with has been injured for six months. He is the utmost professional. He will join in with my sessions, say the right things but will always hold me at arm's length. Within a group psychology session, the squad asked for a body scan. This alone was something I was proud of. However, in addition this particular player joined in. He arrived late due to his rehab session, but afterwards turned to me and said "Amy for those 10 minutes that I joined in, it is the first time in six months that I haven't thought about my pain. Thank you". I was overjoyed, and so happy with this one comment. To have this particular player comment, was the biggest piece of praise that I could have asked for. It's moments like this that make me appreciate what I am doing and the impact that I have had as a practitioner. It has taken me around six years to build a relationship with this particular player and as trivial as that comment may have been to him, for me it was the biggest source of praise I could have received.

I have been working with a player for a good month on anchoring his attention to the breath. This particular player has struggled to get in the squad and is therefore questioning himself when he gets to training, recognising that he struggles to think clearly due to his mind being full of 'stuff'. Through practising anchoring, he can anchor his attention back to the present rather than being distracted by all the unnecessary thoughts surrounding pressure. This player came on as a substitute at 80mins when we were 3-2 down. We were awarded a penalty, and he stood up to take it. The last penalty he had taken had missed. After that miss he'd said "Amy, as soon as I picked that ball up to take the penalty, I didn't want it. It's the first time that I haven't wanted to take a penalty, I knew that I was going to miss! I never feel like that!". We are back in the present moment, and I was watching him with anticipation as he picked up the ball to take the penalty. 'Take a breath, focus your attention' I was saying to myself from the stand. He took the penalty, scored and we drew the game 3-3, gaining a point in the league. After the game, I walked over onto the pitch to be with the squad, and he broke away from the group to come and see me. All of a sudden, I am engulfed in a hug, and he said "Amy, I did what you said and what we have practised. I took a breath and focused on that. Thankyou".

Again, it is in these moments that I truly appreciate the impact that I have had as a practitioner. I can get so caught up in what needs to be better, how to I improve, what will make more of an impact, that I do forget to take a moment and appreciate the impact that I have had on some of these players. Mindfulness has allowed me to take a step back, appreciate these moments without judgement and show and experience self-compassion.

I would like to think I have a good relationship with all staff within the club, but in particular the medical team. The head physiotherapist approached me with a movement specialist and said “Amy, we need your expertise. I want to include mindfulness into my sessions, in the treatment room and out on the pitch. I would like this player to work on his breath control and know that using the breath as an anchor would work really nicely and compliment what I am doing. Can we work together on this? You’re the expert”. I have the type of relationship with this physio whereby we respect each other’s disciplines and skill sets but he will also tell me that what I do is too ‘fluffy!’. It’s that type of love-hate relationship. We can get on like a house on fire, but we can also clash... Therefore, for him to ask me to include mindfulness and anchoring into his sessions, in front of a movement specialist, was a big tick for me, a little break through and sense check that actually I do know what I am doing.

A couple of hours later I wanted the physio to join in the session. We combined his Thai Chi movements with the breath control and focus, with the sole purpose of bringing his attention to his breath instead of his injury. Although I was confident in my ability, and knew how to frame the session, I also had butterflies as I wanted to show to the head physio the positive impact that this can have on players and show why it should be incorporated into all sessions. We started and he joined in., I also did the Thai Chi with the player. The three of us were out on the pitch on yoga mats, in our kit with shoes off, basking in the morning sunshine. The scene had been set, now over to me I thought. “Focus on the breath, notice where you are breathing, notice whether you have changed the breath. If the mind gets distracted, notice this, and bring it back to your breath”. As I talked, I

could see both the physio and player breathing deeply. We finished the hour session and the physio turned round to me and said “that was excellent, I didn’t realise how bad I was breathing, I loved that. My focus drifted and I could bring it back, that has set me up for the day”. I was elated. It not only had an impact for the player but for this particular physio to have an experiential learning experience; I’m happy! This is what it about, allowing people to gain greater awareness of themselves. Success!

6.11 ‘Eureka moments’: Academic Voice

“The metaphor of the eureka moment helps illustrate the instrumental role that information and more specifically the contexts of our engagements with information play in research, innovation, and other markers of our creativity” (Anderson, 2011, p. 2). You often hear people say that they have had a eureka moment, and from a practitioner, seeing the ‘light bulb’ turn on is a wonderful moment; a moment where players or staff gain that experiential experience where they understand the impact that this understanding can have on them. Eureka moments are those that are discovered unexpectedly, either personally or when you assist others to experience that moment. Knoblich and Oellinger (2006) refer to these moments as ‘sudden smart insights’ (para. 1). The personal extracts explore these moments that are experienced by others but in order for these individuals to experience these, there was work put in behind the scenes in order for such a moment or discovery to occur (Anderson, 2011). Research suggests that these eureka moments do not just come from nowhere, background work has to contribute to such a moment.

In his book *The Self-Aware Universe*, Amit Goswami (1993) claimed, “*If we concentrate on the content of the thought, we lose sight of its direction*” (cited in Miller, 1993, para. 5). This phrase shows how we can focus too much on thoughts, which cause us to overthink. Mindfulness is a tool to help quieten the mind, allowing us to be in the present moment, and what the personal extracts show is that the players and staff that allowed themselves to quieten the mind, had that eureka moment where they recognised the value of mindfulness and the impact this can have on them. The

key to mindfulness is not to try and force thoughts coming into your head, allow them to come and go, which has similarities to the eureka literature; the key is not to try too hard to have a eureka moment, the mind will allow it to happen (Evans, 2011).

The injured player had been striving to not think about his injury, he had become hypersensitive to every movement and his mind was constantly being pulled back to his injury. Taking part in the body scan, paying attention to the sound of my voice and the instructions, allowed his mind to drift to his injury but then being able to bring his attention back to his breath was a eureka moment for him. Being aware that he could choose where he places his mind, he could choose to place his attention elsewhere was a turning point moment. Although a difficult skill, the true joy and feeling of elation that he expressed during the reflection was a eureka moment for him. Again, as the literature has highlighted, this didn't just happen, there has been a lot of background work that got him to that point, but now he has the ability to pull his attention away from his injury and understanding the true power of anchoring attention.

The reason I chose to use the word 'Eureka' is because I believe it was the best way to describe the experiences that are shown within the personal extract; they are sudden moments of understanding. People refer to moments 'when something clicks', yet this experiential moment has been around for more than 2000 years as an interjection to celebrate discoveries (Losche, 2018). There are numerous definitions of such moments, but one that I feel is relevant comes from Smith and colleagues "the moment that everything makes sense, and a cohesive approach is made clear" (Smith et al., 2013, p. 186). It is clear from the personal extracts that the players and staff member show an emotion of joy after their eureka moment and according to the literature after these experiences occur, they are accompanied by positive affective (Laukkonen et al., 2020).

6.12 General Discussion

This study explored the integration of mindfulness into an elite professional football club through an autoethnographic approach. Although previous research has explored the potential for

ethnographic approaches within sport psychology (e.g., Krane & Baird, 2005; Smith & McGannon, 2018; Champ et al., 2019), there has been a lack of published practitioner-research ethnographies conducted in sport, especially within professional football. There is limited, if not no research to date published regarding the integration of mindfulness in professional football, let alone an ethnographic account.

This study gives insight into a professional football environment and the realities faced when trying to embed mindfulness into the culture. It highlights the challenges faced by the practitioner-researcher (e.g., emotional impact, irrational thoughts, questioning authenticity) and looks to provide awareness for other practitioners prior entering this environment. It is important to provide evidence of the 'realities' that practitioners face when entering the football environment, or even to practitioners looking to include mindfulness into their practices within an elite environment, as we need to help diminish the gap between academic research and applied practice (Lillis, 2008).

Integration of mindfulness has been a challenge as staff have 'come and gone' from the club meaning that education is firstly required, alongside 'buy' in from staff, which means there is a constant cycle of this introduction process. Conflict between those who like the concept of mindfulness to those who do not (and that debate occurring on the same teams), therefore managing time and application has its challenges. This highlighted to me the importance of relationships and the impact this can have on delivery (e.g., Arnold & Sarkar, 2014; Beaumont, Maynard, & Butt, 2015; Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014; Collins et al., 2013; Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2015; Tod et al., 2011), but also, athletes' well-being (Bloom et al., 2013; Lidor & Blumenstein, 2011). This study has overall allowed for dedicated reflection time to assess my skill sets as an applied practitioner, my delivery, but also allowed me to create space to step back and appreciate the role I have within football and the difficulty this environment presents. I am always told that to have spent 10 years in football as a psychologist is a massive achievement. I often forget this. I can get so caught up in the 'football bubble' but by extending the literature with my version of events,

this only makes the literature richer with knowledge for new practitioners entering this field, experienced practitioners entering this field, or even insight to delivering mindfulness in football or sport as a general.

6.13 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research only considers my perspective. Other people within the psychology department may view things differently and they may have a different story to tell from being part-time compared to my full-time role (Van Maanen, 2011). To date, only a very small number of practitioner-researcher ethnographies (e.g., Devaney et al., 2018., Champ et al., 2019) have been conducted in elite sport, and none addressing embedding mindfulness into football. Further studies from practitioner-researchers within elite sport (Champ et al., 2019) would better aid our understanding of the elite environment as well help us understand whether the narratives within this study are generalisable or need to be seen in isolation.

6.14 Conclusion

The present study sought to reflect on the experiences of a practitioner embedding mindfulness into a professional football environment, specifically focusing on both the highs and lows, the big wins, and challenges. With the aim to show and demonstrate the experiences in a raw, emotive, and personal way through unique narratives. The analytical work identified three key themes: the struggles of application, the use of language, and eureka moments. Based on a six-year ethnography, I hope the narratives demonstrate the unique challenges, the demands, and emotional journey that can occur when working in professional football. In turn, it is hoped that the reader is able to connect with the written stories in an accessible and personal manner, whilst providing an appropriate level of support and guidance to assist their own personal journeys.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter of this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of the findings from all studies that have been presented in the above chapters. Further to this, the implications of the thesis are discussed in relation to applied sport psychology practice. Finally, limitations of the research are identified, and potential avenues for potential research highlighted.

7.1 Aims of the Thesis

1. To gain a greater understanding of whether mindfulness can be fully embedded within an elite football culture.
2. To document the design, implementation, delivery, and evaluation of an established mindfulness program and how it can be made bespoke for the elite football culture within a team setting.
3. To train a physiotherapist to deliver mindfulness through their rehabilitation programme, whilst also exploring the perceptions of this delivery through the lens of the injured player and the physiotherapist.
4. To explore the experiences and attitudes of performance staff (e.g., academy staff and coaches) on their understanding and the integration of mindfulness within the football club.
5. To explore the practitioner's journey of embedding mindfulness into a football academy culture over a longitudinal period.

Chapter 1 – This chapter reviewed the existing literature and exposes gaps in knowledge that could be explored. This therefore allowed this programme of research to demonstrate the relevance and originality of this project.

Chapter 2 – This chapter aimed to address aims one and two. Can an established framework be modified to suit a specific culture and its demands, highlighting the importance of language and integration from staff. Semi-structured interviews gained a greater insight to the effectiveness of the established yet bespoke mindfulness programme.

Chapter 3 aimed to address aims one and three. It highlighted the impact language has on the environment. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to capture the perceptions of the case study which provided insight into a long-term rehabilitation programme and the impact of integration amongst practitioners of different disciplines.

Chapter 4 aimed to address aim one and four. It illustrated the impact mindfulness has had over several disciplines and support staff as well as impacting the way that their discipline is then delivered. Using creative non-fiction used a story to capture the effectiveness of embedding mindfulness over a six-year process in professional football.

Chapter 5 aimed to address aims one and five. It documented the lived experience of the researcher/practitioner of embedding, mindfulness into the football culture.

Chapter 6 provided an overall discussion of studies.

Chapter 7 gives a reflective account of personal and professional development as a researcher and practitioner.

7.2 General Discussion

This thesis provides insight into the delivery of mindfulness within an elite football academy setting. The studies highlight the multiple contexts that mindfulness can be effectively delivered within ranging from players programmes, in the classroom and on the pitch, in rehabilitation settings, and across a multidimensional staffing team who developed the use of mindfulness in their practice. Conducting this research also allowed for personal and professional development as a researcher and a practitioner which is shown in a reflective piece subsequent to this discussion section.

The following section presents a number of key findings that emerged from the thesis. These are discussed with relation to mindfulness being embedded into an academy football culture and gaining an understanding of the most effective ways to do this impactfully and effectively. It is hoped

that these findings will make a novel and original contribution to the literature and our current understanding of mindfulness delivery within sporting cultures, more specifically professional football.

7.2.1 Chapter Two: Mindful sport performance enhancement in action: a case study with an elite football academy

This study was the first glimpse of introducing mindfulness into the academy system with the players. These findings shown in chapter two created valuable insight into the development of the PhD thesis and the studies, as it allowed for the scene to be set and created a baseline for mindfulness and its understanding, the use of language and the 'buy in' needed to start the embedding process.

The findings of this study showed that there was a link between practising focusing on the breath in a formal situation such as a classroom to then being able to utilise this skill in situ, such as out on the pitch. MSPE has emerged as a leading mindfulness-based mental training programme for athletes and coaches (Kauman et al., 2018). Despite being deep-rooted within the traditions of Kabat-Zinn's (1990) MBSR and Segal et al., (2013) MBCT work, the programme can be adapted to be unique and bespoke for different athletic populations (Pineau et al., 2019). This flexible approach was able to provide a smooth transition from formal meditative practice in the classroom, to then the gym, and then out on to the pitch. However, although players reported the use of the breath in the recovery sessions, when in the gym they did not notice the use of mindfulness. Whereas they saw greater transferability and use when out on the pitch, especially in terms of the ability to focus.

MSPE is designed for sessions to progress from sedentary practice to mindfulness in motion, allowing for sport specific (in this case football) exercises that allows for the practice of being mindful when engaging in the specific skills of football. To support this specific mindfulness-based programme, empirical evidence has been conducted over the decade (De Petrillo et al., 2009; Glass et al., 2019; Kaufman et al., 2009; Spencer et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2011).

Players mentioned within the findings that they found personal benefit; however, these impacted them in different ways. For example, some preferred the formal classroom based meditative sessions, where others wanted it more on pitch and individualised, yet all stated that they would benefit from more sessions with the researcher as the deliverer. This supports Peter Haberl's (personal communication, August 18, 2015) work where he highlighted that mindfulness cannot be mastered straight away, it requires patience, discipline, and practice. This also links to the findings of Erickson et al., (1993) that learning skills take time and personal investment is required. Further evidence has suggested that mindfulness is a skill that is learnt through practice, which interns is associated with positive outcomes to sport performance (Buhlmayer et al., 2017; Noetel et al., 2019). This supports other findings that the players found personal benefit from practising mindfulness, such as help with GCSE's exam preparation and pressure. The evidence supports this by stating that mindfulness practice has been shown to relate to well-being in athlete populations (Foster & Chow, 2020; Kaufman et al., 2009).

This particular study highlighted five major themes: experiences, breathing, emotional management, understanding and future recommendations. These themes piqued interest from the club, and this was a beneficial step in taking the research further as shown in the following studies. Several sub-themes were formed from these major themes, where each have shaped the how mindfulness is viewed and delivered within the academy football environment. The experience from these academy players gave insight into managing pressure, their relationships within the team, greater awareness of themselves and their body, and also the struggles of practising mindfulness. This was a real insight as this allowed for greater understanding of what the players experiences were of mindfulness. This is also supported through the literature and the importance of knowing the athletes that the programme is being delivered to, as certain aspects within their environment can be emphasised (Goodman & Kashdan, 2015; Kaufman et al., 2018). As a practitioner-researcher, this allowed to be a smooth transition of culture understanding what may have enabled the players to gain the experiences that they had during this programme. Although at the start of the MSPE

programme, there were players who were unsure and sceptical about mindfulness, these individuals also found benefit from practising. It is therefore noted that it does seem worthwhile encouraging players to keep an open mind and try mindfulness as recognising their experience may not be what was expected will also allow them to reap benefits that they did not anticipate (Mistretta et al., 2017).

Mindfulness awareness can be cultivated through both formal and informal mindfulness practices. Within the data of this study, both forms of practices are discussed by the players where there was a varied view on both forms. There are no definite definitions within the literature of formal and informal practice, however formal practices are considered to be a time set aside for a set period to practice and engage in meditative practices such as the body scan, sitting meditation, and mindful movement (Birtwell et al., 2019). Informal practice includes embedding mindful awareness into everyday tasks or skills within football that will allow for players to engage in mindful moments.

There is growing literature around the benefits of both formal and informal mindfulness practices, and it shows that more research is needed within this area to show true impacts of both. Research has provided benefits for formal meditative practices, and this is recommended within mindfulness-based programmes (such as MBSR; Kabat-Zinn 2004., MSPE; Kaufman et al., 2018; MBCT; Segal et al., 2013). Some studies have reported significant associations between the amount of formal practice and symptom reduction or other outcomes (Crane et al., 2014; Hawley et al., 2014). Whereas informal mindful practice research also provides benefits. Hindman et al., (2015) reported greater mindfulness and self-compassion in participants when practising informal mindfulness practices, and Sharpiro et al., (2003) reported participants who practised informal mindfulness felt more rested and benefited their sleep. Yet, other studies fail to show the relationship between informal mindfulness practices and outcomes (Crane et al., 2014; Hawley et al., 2014).

The data within this study highlights the benefits of learning both forms of practice; formal and informal. Players found that the formal meditative practices helped them concentrate and focused as it guided them to bring their attention back rather than allowing their mind to wander. They did however find it easier to practice at home as there were far less distractions. The challenge would then to be able to formally practice within a big group to show how they have trained their attention, when the mind wanders due to internal or external distractions, how effective are they at bringing their attention back to the present moment.

What was also promising from the data provided is that players found the benefit of using mindfulness informally to aid their attention and focus when out on the pitch. They were able to notice emotions rise, or unhelpful thoughts and became mindfully aware to bring their attention back to the task at hand. Kabat-Zinn (1990) has often stated that informal practice has been learnt through the form of formal practice, highlighting that there is a need for both in order to be effective.

Within football, mainly thanks to the EPPP, psychology has become more prevalent and required within football academies. Players are taught psychological strategies to better cope with the demands required of them, from competition, to being judged (Birrer et al., 2012; Champ et al., 2018). Even if players are achieving and are considered elite 'A grade players' who are considered psychologically healthy, they may still experience a wide range of internal processes such as competitive anxiety, negative emotions or thinking, fear of failure that may negatively disrupt performance (Birrer et al., 2012; Josefsson et al., 2017). Gardner and Moore (2004) introduced a mindfulness and acceptance programme as an alternative to PST as they believed that the empirical support for regular PST in relation to athletic performance is limited (Moore, 2009). Mindfulness has been shown within the literature that the meditative practices can aid and enhance our ability to understand one's emotions (Charoensukmongkol, 2014). Meditative practices teach individuals to

closely observe one's emotions and feelings moment-to-moment without judgement, which develops a heightened awareness of the emotional state (e.g., Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Players highlighted within this study that their awareness of emotions, thoughts and feelings became greater which enabled them to recognise and detach themselves to ensure that they stayed focused on the task at hand. Roemer and colleagues (2015) support the players comments by stating that emotion regulation and mindfulness strongly emphasise the acceptance of emotions. In addition, numerous studies have supported the idea that mindfulness-based interventions are related to an improved ability to regulate negative emotions (Frewen et al., 2008; Roemer et al 2015). Having the ability to recognise the internal struggles that the players were facing and bring their attention back to the present was a massive achievement for them. This also supports the research benefits of practising mindfulness.

Finally, the last two themes of this study explained the players understanding of mindfulness and the next practical steps within football. Players recognised that mindfulness is about having a greater awareness of themselves and recognising that they have the power and control to bring their attention back to the present moment when they choose to. Learning more about themselves and managing the internal noise within their system was a key learning outcome that the players discussed and highlighted. The biggest recommendation that they spoke about was having more sessions out on the pitch, really 'tapping into' the formal meditative practices where they could practice and see performance changes. In addition, having more regular sessions where they could practise with the researcher out on pitch side was needed. For the first introduction of mindfulness to players, the U16 MSPE programme was a huge success within the club. Therefore, enhanced performer understanding, further education and practical application of mindfulness are the key lessons from this study that shape the thesis.

7.2.2 Chapter Three: Incorporating mindfulness into injury rehabilitation: player and physiotherapist case-study

An injury within football small or large can have 'knock on' effects to both a player and the team. From a team perspective, a coach ideally likes to have maximum number of players on a pitch for training to ensure that their sessions are realistic, competitive, and full of developmental learning. From a player's perspective, they want to be 'out on the grass'. No player wants to be injured whether that is for a short spell or unfortunately is a long-term injury. Heaney (2006) and Reese and colleagues (2021) reported that injuries can affect an athlete's mental health by triggering depression, anxiety, decrease self-esteem, loss of identity, fear of re-injury, anger, isolation, and tension. It is important to note that injuries can have both a physiological and psychological impact on an athlete (Ruddock-Hudson et al., 2014).

With the current study in mind, research (Arvinen-Barrow & Walker, 2013) has shown that mindfulness can be an effective tool to achieve a relaxed state of body and mind. It can enable athletes to gain a greater awareness of themselves and acceptance of their situation as an injured athletes (Arvinen-Barrow & Walker, 2013). Venkatesh and colleagues (1997) also report that practising meditation in the long term will aid greater awareness of self. This stands in parallel with the findings displayed from this study. Both the player and the physiotherapist both reported greater awareness of themselves. They both stated that they had greater awareness of stress levels and could manage better their emotional state. In addition, the physiotherapist reported that whilst he gained a greater self-awareness that aided his practitioner skills, he also gained greater understanding of the players emotions and the impact that these could have on the rehabilitation. To support this, Stahl and Goldstein (2010) emphasised that being in the present moment, is enhanced by paying attention to and being conscious of physical sensations. Mindfulness has been reported to aid suffering of those injured athletes that are in pain (Mohammed et al., 2018), and additionally, Ivarsson (2015) reported that footballers who took on psychological interventions specifically towards attention, were able to minimise sports injuries. He recommends daily mindfulness practices to lessen the risk of injury.

In addition to greater self-awareness for both the player and the physiotherapist, they reported a greater element of trust between themselves and the researcher. Research has demonstrated (Bone & Fry, 2006; Carsen et al., 2004) that engagement in mindfulness programmes show significant improvements in day-to-day relationship happiness, relationship stress, stress coping efficacy and overall stress. Individuals also gain an increase in compassion, showing greater empathy for others (Shapiro et al., 1998). This was reported from both the player and the physiotherapist that relationships between them improved. They also felt supported from the researcher and research has shown (Bone & Fry, 2006) that if a high level of support is perceived, this could maximise the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process. Crossman (1997) reported that social support can have a positive impact on an athlete's return to sport. Rees and colleagues (2010) emphasised that receiving support from a number of different people, such as physiotherapist, psychologist, family friends can aid an athlete's ability to cope with the psychological distress that they may be facing or experiencing. This then allows for players to potentially achieve a shorter timeframe of their rehabilitation programme if they continue to socially connect with others, maintain focus on their goals and fitness levels.

One of the main learning points taken from this study is for more education needed for physiotherapists to comfortably deliver mindfulness within their rehabilitation sessions. Although this finding in this study is bespoke to mindfulness, other research has highlighted this finding, meaning that physiotherapists would like more knowledge, understanding and upskilling on psychological skills in order to enhance their rehabilitation programmes (Brewer et al., 1991; Ford & Gordon, 1993; Ford & Gordon, 1998; Gordon et al., 1991; Hemmings & Povey, 2002; Lamba & Crossman, 1997; Larson et al., 1996; Weise & Weiss, 1987; Weise et al., 1991).

An additional finding within this study highlighted that greater focus and concentration was achieved from both the player and the physiotherapist. This is also supported by Pappous et al., (2020) who found that physiotherapists that embarked on an MBSR programme had an increase in

their attention and concentration. It was also reported that the participants who used meditative practices helped them cope better with the particular challenges and demands of their work, which was also highlighted from the results in the current study within chapter three.

As well as the development of relationships between each other and the whole multi-disciplinary team. Mindfulness is argued within the literature to aid social interaction; allowing for open, receptive awareness to one's own internal experiences promoting a secure sense of self (Heppner et al., 2008). Research (Brown et al., 2007) has also stated that those who practice mindfulness are deemed to be more empathetic and are receptive and attentive to others' thoughts, emotions, and welfare, which are key qualities of a 'good' physiotherapist (Klenier et al., 2021). The physiotherapist spoke about the importance of the support network that he has around him and the player when in a rehabilitation programme. Durocher and colleagues (2016) found that when faced with real constraints of practice, effective collaborations aid delivery.

Finally, a point that has been highlighted across the whole thesis is the need for more education and upskilling in delivering mindfulness. More applied examples bespoke to disciplines was recommended for staff to feel comfortable in delivering such a skill. They see the importance of mindfulness and therefore movement needs to be generated with this interest to allow staff to feel comfortable in delivering and applying mindfulness into their context.

7.2.3 Chapter Four: The Power of Being Present: a creative non-fiction representation of embedding mindfulness into elite football

Findings from this study in chapter four showed the importance of a whole club approach towards embedding mindfulness. Despite the depth mindfulness research showing promise for its application, it is still considered within its infancy, especially regarding culture (Mindfulness in Schools, 2016). Within the domain of sport, mindfulness as a concept and intervention is becoming more increasingly popular, where several mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) have featured within the realms of sport. However, there is sparse literature showing the "cultural transitions of

ideas, practices, and philosophies, especially in the sport and exercise psychology domain” (Roychowdhury et al., 2021, p.5).

With regards to the findings in this study, it could be argued that embedding mindfulness within this football culture has been a success. Roychowdhury and colleagues (2021) highlight that it is tempting to conclude that mindfulness has undergone a successful transition within sport. They concluded that “(Point A) mindfulness has been transformed into a highly popular and successful concept in sport and exercise psychology discourses (social repositioning), (Point B) its practices have been secularised to fit the sport psychology professional practice (negotiation of cultural practices), and (Point C) it has been appropriated as a technique to be used for enhancement of performance and well-being (meaning reconstruction)” (pg. 5).

Within the findings of this current study, they address these three areas. Point A: the vignettes highlight the impact and social interaction from the MDT staff of their applications of mindfulness. They see the benefit of mindfulness within the social context of football and the impact this can have on staff and players well-being. Mindfulness in Schools. (2016) highlighted that a number of randomised controlled trials of workplace mindfulness-based training courses have found positive effects on burnout, wellbeing, and stress (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Manotas et al., 2014; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2007). Studies have also shown that those that practise mindfulness report lower levels of stress whilst multi-tasking at work and can concentrate for longer without their attention being diverted (Jha et al., 2010; Zeidan et al., 2010; Mrazek et al., 2013).

Other research has also suggested that senior staff or leadership teams that practice mindfulness have employees who are less emotionally exhausted, have a better work-life balance and show better job performance ratings (Reb et al., 2013; Reb et al., 2015). The current study describes how people have to invest in the process to ‘reap the rewards’, such as less stress, better well-being, and ultimately greater performance outcomes. When talking about social conformity, the findings highlight the key stakeholders to target; if you get them on board, then others will

follow; they are the decision makers. This point endorses Reb et al., (2013, 2015) findings, it even showed in the vignettes how the senior members round the fire pit radiated authority without potentially realising the influence that they themselves and their actions have on others.

The findings from this study highlights that the social repositioning of mindfulness from start to now has changed and this is evident in the story that the data is telling. Highlighting that staff had a limited understanding of mindfulness, yet their view of the value it can have to not only their own well-being, but performance outcome is evident. Having a diverse form of staff that feel that the club should invest more in this concept is promising as well as highlighting that all staff from management to player facing are talking about mindfulness.

Point B is also examined and highlighted within chapter 4, showcasing the use of team and individual sessions to make the programme bespoke for both players and staff. The findings draw attention to the impact and use of informal and formal mindfulness practice, showing the benefits of both within the environment. This highlights the adaptability and flexibility of mindfulness and its use within the current football culture. The ability to allow mindfulness to 'fit' into the football culture, and still show its impact was discussed in the vignettes. However, this could cause mindfulness to become less successful as it could lose "its spiritual, ethical, and philosophical foundations" (Roychowdhury et al., 2021, p. 5). Researchers have suggested that if mindfulness is detached from its original roots and present it as a secular 'do it yourself' concept, mindfulness may turn into another self-help tool that will not provide the benefit it is shown and evidenced for (Hyland, 2017; Roychowdhury, 2021).

Roychowdhury and colleagues (2021) have recommended that researchers and practitioners explore reflexive practices and develop novel MBI's that would enhance mindful awareness of individuals strengths and areas for development which will aid both athletic and personal success. The aim is to integrate mindful attention into the players and staff's conscious life, to assist growth with a refined awareness and deeper appreciation of their journey and development as a

player/staff member and person. This would ultimately help keep the spiritual, ethical, and philosophical foundations of mindfulness. The findings of the study suggest that novel MBIs were used through the various staff as well as staff gaining greater awareness and appreciation for their own well-being and impact within the club culture; Annie alluded to this nicely *“taking in my surroundings, like listening to the birds and I have time to think about what I’m doing where I’m going, what’s going on and just kind of just think about me.”* Although more bespoke and novel programmes were suggested and could be introduced, the findings suggest that this club and the culture are making progress in delivering what has been asked by staff and suggested within the literature. There is still a long way to go, however, future applied practices and suggestions will be explored later on in the discussion under ‘Future Practical Applications’.

Finally, point C, although briefly discussed above, was not necessarily a key finding from this study. The data presented in this study explored more how staff understand, use, and see benefit of embedding mindfulness rather than touching implicitly on performance; focus can be seen more on the staff well-being. Despite this being said, the other studies within this thesis, do highlight and explore the benefits of mindfulness and the impact it has on performance and well-being for players.

An interesting point to highlight from this study which can link to the point above is staff’s perceptions of what others think when practising this technique. The perception of mindfulness is positive, yet when practising mindfulness is still questioned. It is seen as ‘weird’ and this perception from others is an area that still needs to be addressed for the social repositioning still needs to be addressed. Time and resource could be a factor that could impact and change this perception from staff, and this was mentioned within the findings of study, having more time and access to mindfulness.

The strongest finding that came through from the story was the whole MDT support and the openness and willingness for a variety of staff to try, practise and apply mindfulness into their daily lives but also their application. Having the openness from management to utilise this technique was

also an area that highlighted progression this club has made at trying to embed this technique into the club's philosophy. More can still be done, staff still need more upskilling and understanding of the application, its uses and benefits, yet the club has come far in utilising this skill whilst still trying to encapsulate the spiritual, ethical, and philosophical foundations of mindfulness.

7.2.4 Chapter Five: An autoethnography exploring the lived experiences of a psychology practitioner embedding mindfulness into an already established culture: Mindfulness in Professional Football

My journey as a researcher/practitioner has been emotional, challenging, exciting, daunting, rewarding all at the same time; a 'rollercoaster' of emotional experiences from start to finish. The findings and experiences told within this study would not have provided the depth it has if the use of questionnaires or semi-structured interviews were conducted (Krane & Baird, 2005). This autoethnographic research explored how such a technique as mindfulness could be embedded and used vastly across a culture within an elite setting; this method used allowed for clear and raw data to be shared.

Prior to the piece of research, only a handful of studies have addressed the experience of a female sport psychologist within football (Champ, 2018), yet none have addressed embedding a technique such as mindfulness into a sport culture, let alone an elite football culture. As a result of this study, there is now an understanding and insight of how practitioners can start to embed and use mindfulness effectively within different sporting cultures and in particular, football. These findings can provide key insights of lessons learnt along the way, and what might constitute as effective mindfulness application. Furthermore, it places specific events, encounters, challenges, and highs, as well as greater understanding into the context within the objectives of this thesis (Tedlock, 2000).

Despite the aim of this study providing greater insight into the application of mindfulness within football, this type of method has allowed myself as a practitioner to gain greater self-

awareness, and as a researcher to think more critically (Knowles et al., 2021). For example, highlighting the amount I have had to 'stretch myself' out of my own comfort zone as both a practitioner and a researcher, to then be able to recognise and practise the ability to bring my attention back to the present. Creating notes and capturing own observations and reflections has helped me make sense of the data as well as appreciate the difficulties faced (Loughran, 2002). Dearnley (2005) has suggested that this form of methodology is not only influential for developing the individual that is conducting the research, but also poses benefits for others to enhance their knowledge within the field.

When trying to chapter my personal experiences of this process the biggest challenge was the ethical dilemma of 'how much is too much', when exposing vulnerability. This study was emotionally difficult and to capture the raw data in a powerful and meaningful way was at times uncomfortable. Ellis (1999) explored the sensitivity of the data shared within this form of methodology and the perception readers may have on the researcher and their experiences. However, despite this vulnerability that was felt, after deep reflection and support from supervisors and the club, it was felt that it was important to share lived experiences for others to learn from.

There were several learning outcomes that emerged from this data which was collected over the six-year period. The following subsections will explore such findings in relation the struggles of application, the use of language, and those Eureka moments.

7.2.4.1 Imposter Syndrome

Firstly, Serra de Queiroz and colleagues (2016) explain how applied sport psychologists aspire to work in professional football yet trying to impact individual players is difficult unless addressing the organisational culture as well (Champ, 2018). Gaining and developing relationships with key stakeholders has been key, and this has been formed through time and integration as a practitioner into the club, understanding the club's core beliefs and values as an organisation, and embedding self into the football context. This has taken time and has been a slow journey, yet this

has then allowed for relationships to be built as well as credibility as a practitioner to start to introduce new concepts into the club. Although this is the case, imposter syndrome is still at the forefront of my mind when working in this sporting sector.

“Most women in the cultural sector suffer from ‘imposter syndrome’ and half confidence issues. We all react and cope with this in different ways – by over-compensating and ‘fronting it out’ or by not taking opportunities because we feel we are not ready for them” (Participant quoted in Pedler & Aspinwall, 2010, p.7).

Imposter syndrome describes the condition where individuals find it difficult and hard to believe that they deserve any credit for what they have achieved and are convinced that they are some forms of fraud. Although the above quote is about women in general, and the data is based on my female perspective, Clance and Imes (1978) also state that this condition is often found in men as well (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2016; Woolston, 2016). Imposter syndrome is common in high performers across a range of careers; and often involves persistent thoughts of intellectual phoniness (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2016).

It is often talked about in football academies how players need to be the “24-hour professional”, how players are constantly watched and judged on standards, behaviours, attitudes, and actions both on and off the pitch; where performance is measured against ridiculously high standards (Robertson, 2017). Although this is asked for with players, as staff members, they are also judged. Imposter syndrome is associated with highly demanding professional environments and careers that demand (Chrousos & Mentis, 2020; Dickerson, 2019; Mullangi & Jagsi, 2019; Want & Kleitman, 2006). With this in mind, humans are social animals who have evolved to live and work in groups and the very nature of imposter syndrome is to be compared to those around you within those social groups. Perhaps feeling like an imposter is to prove to those within the social group that you belong and have value and therefore should be kept within the tribe (Fieldman, 2021). This is supported by Crawford

et al., (2016) who suggest that those with imposter syndrome are aggressively trying to pursue achievement.

When addressing the data, upon reflection, although this discussion has shown the disadvantages of having imposter syndrome the data has shown that I have been successful in trying to embed mindfulness into this elite environment. Therefore, having and feeling like an imposter has kept me 'sharp' as a practitioner, alert to the environment and encourages me to prepare meticulously to ensure that mindfulness is delivered in the most appropriate and effective manner. What the research fails to highlight is how everyone can experience imposter syndrome. A lot of research has been conducted within academia, displaying that a lot of academics will forgo their career due to the anxiety and stress that they feel due to not being good enough (Woolston, 2016). Hings et al., (2020) discuss the importance of building the gap between education-training-practice to minimise the number of sport psychology practitioners experiencing imposter syndrome. Yet the emphasis on this research did focus on new neophyte practitioners; the literature is still limited on experienced applied practitioners and their experience of being an imposter.

Within applied practice or research, the questions should address whether imposter syndrome helpful or unhelpful. Upon reflection, speaking to colleagues within the sport psychology arena, practitioners have felt like an imposter at some point within their career and sometimes still do. These practitioners have been in the line of work for decades and still have that sense of being a fraud. Yet, having this sense of imposter syndrome may have been one of the driving forces behind their success and those positive behaviour characteristics that enable them to be a good and effective practitioner. When referring to the data, experiencing imposter syndrome, although uncomfortable and unsettling at the time, allowed me to become successful in embedding mindfulness into the football culture. It ensured that I accounted for the relevance to the culture, it was user friendly, could be understood and

applied by all. Therefore, I will try and embrace the imposter syndrome to help me become and maintain being a good practitioner and drive me forwards each day to pursue success.

7.2.4.2 Use of language

The first vignette within this section highlights the impact that language can have on mindfulness 'buy in', and this can translate to psychology 'buy in'. Evidence has shown that coaches and athletes recognise the benefits of sport psychology, yet the understanding and application of evidence-based sport psychology is limited (Pope et al., 2015). Chai (2003) highlighted the importance of language in creating and understanding the meaning and suggested that a clear focus should be placed on observing and listening to the individuals, understands their meaning and intentions before we interpret. Wittgenstein (1953) supported this and suggested that we as practitioners cannot learn a language or understand their terminology until we experience their world and the language they use. Therefore, by spending a prolonged amount of time within an organisation and experiencing their culture, the researcher becomes "saturated with first-hand knowledge of the setting" (Morrill & Fine, 1997, p.435). This supports the data within this section of the study as the use of language to gain 'buy in' was crucial and this only happened due to the embedding of the research-practitioner; this is an important point where practitioner 'parachuting in' may fail to see value in the importance or recognise (Parker, 1995).

In order to embed mindfulness into the football culture, it was key that relationships were built between different staff members and an understanding of their disciplines to ensure that the specific language they used was relevant and context specific (Champ, 2018; DeMarco et al., 1996). This collection of perspectives and experience facilitated the development of a holistic understanding, supported by Denzin (1989) stating that gaining perspectives from other stakeholders allows for broader, richer, and 'thickened' data to be collected. Therefore, with the above in mind, I was immersed in the environment as a practitioner-researcher, which allowed me to collect observations, field notes, and conversations to supplement my own reflections.

In keeping with the staff and players perspective on mindfulness, it was key to ensure that the sessions were implemented in a place where players felt comfortable. The two vignettes demonstrate the importance of language used to create the engagement required on a similar level to the physical and technical elements; meaning that the language and terms used are coherent with what is used from both players and staff within the environment (Mellalieu, 2017). The second vignette shows the strength and importance of contextual intelligence and with this in mind, the data collected for this particular scenario was conducted outside, on pitch, with multiple disciplines of staff, after a training session, with an idea of the context and frame of the week. This therefore highlighted the strength of a practitioner-researcher being embedded into the culture rather than 'parachuting in' as the integration between the mindfulness application with the technical, tactical, and physical elements was invaluable. This also creates the safe and secure environment for the players to explore mindfulness.

The biggest outcome to be shared from these two examples, is the impact that language and terminology can have on the acceptance of a technique such as mindfulness. Showing that the language is non-threatening/non-stigmatic (Mellalieu, 2017) without the psychological connotations is key for acceptance and buy-in; showing to players and staff that you understand their world and context. What exists, particularly in male professional team sport environments, is often the traditional, closed culture that is resistant to change or new concepts (Eubank et al., 2014). Therefore, creating those relationships and reassuring players and staff that you understand the cultural context is key as well as trust and credibility (Ravizza, 1988).

The ability to understand the language used within this context is by gaining a greater understanding of the knowledge and ability to apply concepts to an individual in which they operate where the language makes sense to them (Brown et al., 2005; Mellalieu, 2017). Champ et al., (2021) believe that gaining a greater understanding of the cultural proficiency and contextual intelligence is essential for a sport psychologist to be successful when working in professional sport (Mellalieu,

2017). These can be developed in a number of ways 1. Acknowledging the importance of culture, 2. Learning the culture, 3. Understanding all aspects of the culture, 4. Immersing oneself within the culture, 5. Examining one's own cultural background, and 6. Working in the culture (Brown, et al., 2005; McDougall et al., 2019; Mellalieu, 2017). It is believed that the lessons learnt for mindfulness to be successful within football, as explored within the second vignette, was successful partly due to acknowledging and being able to address the above six points.

7.2.4.3 Eureka moments

This particular section highlighted the key learning experiences that I felt as a practitioner and as a researcher. Linking into the imposter syndrome and not feeling that I have the right credibility to deliver mindfulness within the football environment, these experiences allowed myself to be able to take that step back and appreciate the learning that had occurred from the practices that I had delivered. Mindfulness is all about paying attention to the present moment without judgement, and during these Eureka moments, this was the most powerful form of non-judgment awareness; "one's ability to accept a present-moment experience without evaluating it (e.g., accept reality as it is) (Baas et al., 2020, p.620).

7.3 Practical Implications

There are several practical implications that have emerged from the data collected across the six-year programme of research. The following section will explore such implications with relation to 'buy in' and the use of language.

7.3.1 Buy in and language

Facilitating 'buy in' has been one of the hardest aspects of this research. People's understanding, perceptions and application of mindfulness has been varied and therefore adapting discussions and how to introduce the concept of mindfulness has had to be carefully thought out for the relevant intended target audience. On reflection, there have been some key learning points that

have facilitated the transition of mindfulness into the football culture. Firstly, to encourage players to engage in mindfulness has come from the involvement of staff and their engagement. Although all staff have had different views of mindfulness and its use and function, all academy staff have participated in sessions and have engaged in the process. For example, staff joining in on the MSPE programme, or the delivery of mindfulness within an injury session, which ultimately facilitated commitment from the players (Pineau et al., 2019). This also allowed for everyone (players and staff) to speak the same language as the mindfulness started to become integrated into sessions.

Developing and having relationships amongst players and staff is a key factor to take into consideration when this research was conducted. Understanding the club culture and having those relationships first may have contributed to the success of embedding mindfulness into the club culture (Pineau et al., 2019). Developing familiarity with the athletes and the staff by attending training sessions, team meetings, tours and competitions only helped strengthen the relationships amongst the club and the participants within these studies which helped enhance the engagement in mindfulness. Although they have had psychology sessions as part of their academy programme, mindfulness was a new concept for all, and therefore having that connection was integral to their willingness to take part, engage and be open-minded (Pineau et al., 2019). Having been around the environment for 10 years, this allowed for key phrases, and highly relatable and meaningful examples to be used to help capture their attention and want to practise mindfulness further.

7.3.2 Time

Within the football environment, time is precious. The ability to be flexible is key. Scheduling time with players on an individual basis or as a team can be challenging, due to the demands of the environment and other performance support departments (e.g., coaching, analysis, medical) also demanding time with players to help facilitate performance. Therefore, on reflection, one potential reason for the success of embedding of mindfulness was due to the ability of the practitioner-researcher being flexible in their approach. For example, varying the length of time for mindfulness

sessions, the place in where they are conducted, changing the focus on sessions based on the 'message of the week' (i.e., heavy loading week means more of a reflective bodily awareness scan for recovery purposes).

Finally, like the saying goes 'practice what you preach' (Pack et al., 2014), this is also vitally important when delivering mindfulness. Pineau and colleagues (2019) state "to implement this training most effectively, one needs both a conceptual and an experiential knowledge of mindfulness, meaning having a personal mindfulness practice" (p. 252). Other mindfulness experts have also expressed the same view (e.g., Segal et al., 2013). Having personal experience of mindfulness can inform the time required to practise, how mindfulness is delivered, understand the language and context in which mindfulness is delivered, and provide modelling of an open, warm, and curious attitude towards practising mindfulness (Pineau et al., 2019).

Delivering mindfulness or any other psychological intervention requires thoughtful and intentional flexibility especially within an elite professional sport such as football (Goodman & Kashdan, 2015; Wolanin & Gross, 2016). When conducting this research, a holistic and integrative approach was considered. Therefore, as the thesis has presented, mindfulness application can be highly adaptable that can flex with the needs of the player or environment presented, as long as the grounded approach is not lost or forgotten.

7.4 Limitations

Despite all category one football clubs having access to sport psychology services, there frequency of delivery can still be sparse as most aim to cover the whole academy programme rather than focusing on one age group. Within football clubs, the majority of teams have one or two coaches per squad, one S&C practitioner, one physiotherapist, one analyst; at times an age group can have two within each discipline. Psychology practitioners however are still sparse and seem to be covering three squads or more each, therefore service delivery or bespoke service can be limited. This is made clear on the staffing psychology structure within the EPPP and PL guidelines. With this

in mind, can football teams still achieve the same effectiveness as this study has shown from practitioners 'parachuting in'?

Although mindfulness can be incorporated into sessions, research throughout this thesis has shown that mindfulness should be practised daily, if possible, to allow for beneficial change to occur. Vealey (2007) also supports this by stating that any mental training needs to be integrated into an overall programme to show its true benefits. If a programme cannot be fully embedded into a culture or a training programme, practitioners, staff, and athletes need to appreciate the implications this may have on the desired outcome. To embark on a mindfulness integration does require an understanding of the beliefs and significant commitment (Kaufman et al., 2018).

7.5 Future research

The findings from this research provide several avenues to be addressed to further the understanding of embedding mindfulness into a highly demanding elite sporting culture. Firstly, it is suggested that more longitudinal practitioner-researcher ethnographies would be beneficial to further understand how practitioners have kept the historic concept of mindfulness whilst adapting it to fit the cultural environment they are working within.

Secondly, more research into different sports contexts will enable practitioners and researchers to compare and contrast findings. More specifically, it may address the lived experiences of practitioners utilising and embedding mindfulness in other sporting cultures, looking across sport and cultural comparisons. Research of this kind may be beneficial for sport psychology students, graduates, or even experienced practitioners to gain greater insight into the embeddedness of mindfulness. For example, it may increase their awareness of what they may face when operating in different sport settings.

Thirdly, more evidence to enhance the current literature needs to address the use of mindfulness over a longitudinal period within other sporting contexts. More specifically, comparing

and contrasting findings to provide insight into how practitioners have adapted their delivery and shown the benefits of mindfulness as well as reflecting on their experiences. This is the first piece of research to address this and therefore more needs to be done and conducted to show the value of being embedded as a practitioner and the effectiveness mindfulness can have on performance.

In addition, the result of more ethnographies within this area may provide greater understanding of the benefits mindfulness can have for elite athletes, highlighting the importance of training attention to the wider support performance staff, (i.e., physiotherapist, coach, strength and conditioner, key stakeholders). Furthermore, the clear transparency of this research would be beneficial for applied practitioners and academics in advancing knowledge within the mindfulness area.

Fourthly, more research exploring the perceptions and reflections of staff and players regarding the impact of mindfulness and its effectiveness to aid optimal performance outcomes would be beneficial. This would allow for practitioners and researchers to gain a greater insight into how mindfulness can be embedded further in order to aid performance success. Research addressing staff's perceptions will also explore what aspects of mindfulness is truly embedded within a culture or sport.

Research understanding a psychology teams' approach to mindfulness and the approach taken to gain 'traction' and 'buy-in' would be a vital exploration for practitioners and teams looking to utilise mindfulness. All teams are bespoke, different and have own philosophical viewpoints, therefore gaining a greater understanding of how one concept can be applied, would be a fantastic additional source to the current literature.

Ultimately, this programme of research has addressed various approaches to embedding mindfulness into football, however, common threads have arisen, one being a barrier of perception and understanding of mindfulness. More research is required to address why barriers of mindfulness is such a challenge, focusing on the impact that this can have on the functionality of a working IDT.

To be effective as an IDT authentic collaboration and communication is key (Karol, 2014). However, for this to occur, it would be interesting to discover whether modelling vulnerability in an MDT has an impact on 1. Communication and togetherness, 2. Perceptions of introducing mindfulness or other psychological constructs, 3. Staff's buy-in to mindfulness and its training.

Language has been another key theme across this programme of study and therefore gaining greater insight into context specific language is an area within the literature that needs further development and consideration. Would elite professional sports have the same impact if generic mindfulness language was used or more context specific language and would this change the type of training and delivery services that are currently available within the literature.

Finally, mentioned throughout was the desire for an individualised approach and bespoke programmes of mindfulness to aid further development. However, although this is in an ideal world, how much of this is practical and feasible. Although, the findings throughout suggest that an individualised approach would be better, would the same results be achieved regarding the feeling and sense of enhanced communication and togetherness. Therefore, further research is needed to address this matter. With regards to individualised approaches, this may have a 'knock-on' effect to staff. With this in mind, more research is needed on practitioners' self-care and the impact mindfulness can have on this. This would further the literature and support the findings of Quarlitiroli et al., (2021).

All of the above suggestions for future research will ultimately extend the current mindfulness findings and explore how to further enhance performance. This future research will allow for greater awareness of the impact mindfulness can have on performance as well as creating real-life experiences and understanding for practitioners and academics to learn from, which ultimately aids the delivery of mindfulness within sporting contexts.

7.6 Applied Implications

7.6.1 Future practical applications for practitioners

Throughout this programme of study, mindfulness has been described and referred to as highly important for performance and well-being. Mindfulness can improve focus, concentration and allows individuals to detach themselves from negative thoughts and emotions that can negatively impact performance (Kaufman et al., 2018). Yet there are some key findings taken from this body of research that need consideration. Firstly, there has been enormous interest of the importance of making mindfulness bespoke and individualised. However, practically this means that more psychologists are needed for this to happen and upskill the MDT staff to ensure that the correct and appropriate techniques and skills are delivered. Yet this has a huge impact financially to clubs and organisations. The Premier League provide financial support for those academies that gain Category 1 status, however the current requirement to achieve this is to have one full-time psychologist or multiple sport psychologists which equate to full-time hours. With the EPPP providing these guidelines in order to achieve this status, why would clubs want to invest in multiple psychologists when one is enough to achieve the highest status. This would need addressing, as this could be a big, applied implication for clubs to bring mindfulness effectively into their organisation. Therefore, influencing the requirements of the EPPP system to adequately provide service delivery within football is required.

Secondly, initial perception and 'buy-in' is an important applied implication that needs further considering. There needs to be a coordinated IDT approach to ensure that mindfulness is effectively used and embedded into the football programme and culture. Therefore, the reinforcement of appropriate and contextual language needs consideration. For this to occur, understanding the MDTs barriers to the use of mindfulness is important. Interestingly, although MDT's work to achieve an outcome, these outcomes are specific to that particular discipline to enhance the players performance. Potentially, one reason why so many sporting organisations and football clubs still work in an MDT manner is due to practitioners potentially seeking recognition for their contribution in making that player better, showcasing their part in the process for the athlete's success. This can cause a barrier to full integration of mindfulness but also effective working as an

IDT which has been suggested to be more effective than working in an MDT (Körner, 2010; Richardson et al., 2014; Sinclair et al., 2009).

Finally, within the findings of this whole programme of study, gaining greater self-awareness has been consistently highlighted as a factor from practicing mindfulness. Gaining greater self-awareness encourages an inquisitive mind. Therefore, when staff are inquisitive and curious about learning more about themselves, this can aid staff development and their deliver of skills, ultimately leading to greater productivity. However, financial investment and time to practice mindfulness is requires for this to be achieved. If this applied implication of financial investment and practice time could be taken into consideration, staff may be able to perform better under pressure as well as have a greater sense of health and well-being, meaning retention of staff may be likely to increase.

6.6.2 Future practical applications within the organisation

From a practical standpoint, the next step to be explored within this area is full integration into the first team environment. Currently there is some provision for mindfulness application within the club however to gain full integration such as the academy, more investment and understanding is needed for both the staff and players within the first team. The first team environment is a highly emotional one due to the stress of the day to day running, the match pressure of achieving results and being under the spotlight 24/7. There is a lot of 'noise' that can disrupt the system for any human being yet when a professional athlete under these circumstances, this 'noise' can impact decision making, awareness, focus, as well as physical symptoms such as increased hormones that evoke stress. Champion et al., (2018) found an 11% increase in mental resilience (Lazar et al., 2005), ability to manage stress and an increase in satisfaction with life. This therefore demonstrates the impact that mindfulness can have on performance. Mindfulness meditation has been scientifically proven (Lazar et al., 2005; Holzel) to help alleviate stress, be more open and less reactive after regular practice. Mindfulness 'softens' the way that we as individuals perceive stress and relate it in

a more accepting way, which ultimately may aid all players and especially 1st team players within a highly stressful and demanding environment.

The next step for organisations is to allow and provide daily mindfulness practice both players and staff. The benefit for daily mindfulness is essential as this provides greater benefits when we repeat the practise frequently and consistently (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Finding time to practise mindfulness, even for a short period of time, is more beneficial than not practicing. Within a football environment the schedules are hectic and can change on a day-to-day basis, hour to hour, however what is always included is the strength and conditioning sessions both in the gym, and out on pitch, and pre-activation to warm-up the body ready for the session ahead. However, mindfulness is not deemed as a necessity currently for this to happen every day. Within the current organisational setup, more recently mindfulness sessions have been occurring four times a week in the morning for particular age groups. What would be ideal is to see daily sessions run as a squad, on pitch, before pre-activation or with pre-activation to firstly, show the importance of it, secondly, continuous practice to show development, and thirdly, demonstrate full integration as a multi-disciplinary team. This would support the findings and the current literature that daily practice is required to see the benefits of mindfulness.

To enhance this further within organisations, the environment and setup of where mindfulness/psychology is situated within clubs could be addressed. Psychology is often an 'add on' for clubs, and this has been made clear through the EPPP with the requirement for only one full time practitioner, however if psychology was in the centre of academies, this would represent the equal importance of psychology and mindfulness as it can impact all aspects of football. Having psychology based within the centre, would allow for a mindfulness and yoga studio to be present which would allow for morning meditative practices. This would allow for a closer link between medical for activation exercises within a yoga studio and S&C for fundamental movement. From the findings found from this programme of research, more staff are wanting to integrate mindfulness more

within their practices, yet it can still often be overlooked. Therefore, if there was a physical building that everyone needs to walk past allows for this to then be in the forefront of their mind, which would bring mindfulness more to their conscious and hopefully create even greater collaboration and integration of mindfulness.

7.7 Conclusion

This thesis explored the integration and delivery of mindfulness within one professional football club over a six-year duration. This research was the first of its kind to be conducted working in a professional sport over a longitudinal period. The various methodological approaches allowed for greater insight to be gained into understanding how mindfulness can be embedded into different areas and contexts within the football club, ranging from group delivery to physiotherapy integration on a one-to-one basis.

A key finding from this autoethnography was the enhanced self-awareness gained as a practitioner working within the professional environment. This reflective journey provided a detailed insight of the lived experience of a practitioner, showcasing the fundamental need for others to embark on reflective practice. This process contributed to the development of further self-awareness which ultimately enhanced practice. This reflective account is spoken about during training but often an oversight when in the applied world due to time constraints and the fast nature of elite sport. It is suggested that future research would benefit from more ethnographic research to provide detailed accounts of the application, benefits, and challenges of embedding mindfulness, which would illuminate complex and little studied topics (Krane & Baird, 2005). However, this is not without its personal, ethical, and moral challenges for the researcher (Lofland & Lofland, 1984), therefore appropriate levels of support and supervision are required (Champ, 2018).

It is hoped that the research and findings provided help deepen our understanding of mindfulness within a specific culture and the in particular the delivery and application within a professional football context. Providing insight into the challenges, struggles and successes that have

occurred, highlighting the true realities of the football culture and perception of mindfulness. This one reason why this thesis is novel in its approach. The range of methods and diverse studies shows the journey I have been on as a researcher and as a practitioner, which I hope will only help, aid and guide others who are motivated to used mindfulness in this manner. It is hoped that the thesis provides insight that the integration of mindfulness was not smooth or linear, portraying challenges faced along the way as well as insecurities of the researcher. This demonstrates that is beneficial for all, not just players performance outcomes.

Finally, the data presented in each of the chapters provides examples of various cultural aspects within football and how mindfulness could be used and show its benefits. The integration is complex and challenging, yet the values and opinions of mindfulness was shown through the different perceptions of players and staff regarding the efficacy of mindfulness delivered within the football club.

This whole thesis is novel, unique and innovative in its approach, making this an original contribution to the current knowledge regarding applied sports psychology practice. The findings discussed above provide opportunities for other sport psychology practitioners and performance staff to utilise and practice mindfulness effectively within professional football environments. Finally, this may start the journey of de-stigmatising the use of mindfulness within professional football, especially amongst those who rarely or do not practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

A Critical, Self-Reflective Analysis Detailing My Personal and Professional Development during this PhD Journey

8.1 Introduction

This reflective piece will draw on the various experiences I have had during my studies as well as explore my personal learning and development that is integral to the process of completing a PhD as well as developing my skills as an applied practitioner. This reflective piece will draw upon relevant literature and various personal experiences over the course of these six years as well as showing the contribution it has had towards my professional career.

8.2 Why a PhD?

When I initially registered for the PhD, I was perhaps more complacent than I might have been when in my full-time role as a practitioner or even going through my accreditation to become a practitioner. I assumed that completing the PhD was the next step in my development, the step that was the norm and was logically the next step for me and my career. I had looked at PhD's before and none sparked my interest. I knew it had to be applied or I would quit before I even started. I had seen that Winchester was open to new PhD research proposals and an area that had recently sparked my interest at work was mindfulness and its application in sport. Forward on six years, the proposal was accepted, I was enrolled as a PhD student at Winchester and now at the final stages of completion.

I was unsure of what to expect from a PhD. I had heard that it was tough but worth it, yet I was unprepared for how different it was compared to my undergraduate or my masters. There were no defined 'steppingstones' for me to follow, which is what I had experienced in my academic journey to date. This was a new experience for me.

I have learnt over the course of these six years a lot about myself as an individual, a practitioner and ultimately a researcher. When I finished uni, and completed my accreditation to be a sports psychologist, despite some hesitation in my applied skills, I was confident and knew that I would grow into my role as a practitioner. Starting the PhD was a new challenge for me and what I felt was the next step for my development. It was also a chance for me personally to show myself and others that I was able and capable of completing something which is deemed as a huge achievement. Although I felt that this may not be a reason to complete a PhD; to prove to others; research states that this is one of the main reasons that individuals seek to do a PhD, “to prove themselves in the eyes of significant others” (Brailsford, 2010, p.24). What undertaking a PhD has shown me is that my knowledge area is small part of what is out there in both the academic and practitioner world. The PhD experience has really opened my eyes to the breadth of knowledge and experience that is available around the world and that we can only scratch the surface. I will always remember my supervisors telling me that I won't be able to include everything and that when I submit a piece of work, the following day, new research may be made available. What I can take comfort in, despite really struggling with this, is that I am the expert in my particular research area; I am the expert in mindfulness in premier league academy football. Having been seen as an expert in this area is also one reason why I initially wanted to do the PhD, to become recognised as an expert in a particular area, and fundamentally aid my career path as an applied practitioner.

8.3 Significant Moments

One of the most poignant moments that stand out for me during this journey is my understanding of my ontological view as a researcher. This was a massive stumbling block for myself and on reflection, probably my supervisors. Through my three years of undergraduate studies and the year of my masters, I had no module or mention of a researchers ontological and epistemological viewpoint. This obviously came as a surprise to my supervisors but was one of the biggest academic hurdles I had to overcome; I couldn't pronounce the words let alone understand

what they meant. This was probably one of my biggest academic barriers that I had to overcome but what turned out to be one of the most significant development and learning outcomes from this academic journey.

When presented with the definition of ontology, this is what I had to try and compute and understand “The SAGE Online Dictionary of Social Research Methods (2006) defines ontology as ‘a concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures... Ontological issues are concerned with questions pertaining to the kinds of things that exist within society’” (no page). To me this didn’t make any sense until I sat down with my supervisors to try and unpick the definition and the meaning to me. My understanding and interpretation on the research that I have conducted to date has gone by the understanding that ontology is about my beliefs and my view of reality and the social world that exists (Ormston et al, 2014). Where epistemology is more about the assumptions I make about the kind or nature of knowledge that is presented (Richards, 2003) and how to find out more about the world (Snape & Spencer, 2000); how can information be acquired and communicated to others (Manion & Morrison (2007). Bryman (2008) defines epistemology as “an issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (p.13).

With the two definitions highlighted above, not understanding either, I felt completely out of my depth and thinking ‘why am I doing a PhD’. As soon as I got past the language used, I started to understand how I started to view and see the world through a researcher’s lens.

I soon realised that I didn’t sit on the Positivism epistemological position. Focusing solely on objectivity and evidence in searching for truth I found extremely difficult to compute and put into perspective within the psychology applied discipline. Despite seeing value in ‘hard data’, understanding the facts and values behind something, not knowing ‘why’ that data was saying something was what I found really intriguing and interesting. I battled with this concept that this

wasn't going to be my ontological perspective as working in an environment where everything is data driven and metricised, I felt that my research would have no credibility if I didn't take this viewpoint. However, it didn't sit comfortably with me that "Positivist knowledge, according to Wellington (2000) deemed to be objective, value-free, generalizable, and replicable. This is why positivism is often being perceived as a synonymous of 'scientific method'" (Al-Saadi, 2014, p.3). I was looking at this epistemological viewpoint and realised that this approach does not consider that each footballer is individual, they have their own story to tell and are all different and unique in their own right.

When comparing the extreme opposing ends of the continuum for epistemological positioning of interpretivism, this sat a lot more comfortably with how I viewed the world and the way that I approach any of my applied work. Ormston and colleagues (2014) explain that interpretivism is when people use their perceptions to interpret the world around them through their senses, such as their knowledge if formed from their 'understanding ' of events based on reflection and not just lived experiences. I like the fact that "knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding (not discovering) the social world of the people being studied, focusing on their meaning and interpretations, i.e., meanings are social constructed by the social actors in a particular context" (Al-Saadi, 2014, p.4).

Within this journey of conducting the PhD, my epistemological and ontological assumptions also went on a journey. As each study evolved, I moved further along the continuum towards interpretivism, and this was reflected in the methodological approach that was taken. As previously mentioned, each player and staff member that I worked with have their own story to tell, an individual view and perspective and this was explored in more detail as the studies materialised. According to Cohen and colleagues (2007), "the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated" (p.19). in contrary to the view of positivism, this means that there are no shared realities, all individuals create

their own meanings from the knowledge gained; “all meanings are a product of time and place...the researcher cannot capture the social world of another or give an authoritative account of their findings because here are no fixed meanings to be captured” (Ormston et al, 2014, pp.15-16). With all individuals having their own perspectives, there are different ways to capture and interpret individuals’ realities (Wellington, 2000); such as thematic analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, creative non-fiction, and ethnographies to name a few.

Being embedded within the research and the culture of the club, when fully understanding these two words, ontology, and epistemology, it made more sense as to why I would take more of an interpretivist approach. Meaning that my epistemological stand looked more at the nature of knowledge and how it was acquired meaning that I had a close relationship to the club and the world I was in as a researcher and as a practitioner. In other words, I found it hard to distance myself from the research process. From this, my knowledge that was gain was based on reflections and interpretations of events, rather than objective data. When embedding mindfulness into the football environment, it made sense to me to explore more about the participants’ perceptions and beliefs of mindfulness, which embraces the qualities and essence of qualitative research (Al-Saadi, 2014).

8.4 The Dual Role; Researcher and Applied Practitioner

Embarking on a PhD part-time whilst having a full-time practitioner role within elite sport was the biggest challenge I found during this whole process. I am someone who takes commitment very seriously. I have always worked hard. Barriers and challenges have been thrown my way and I have always felt that I will face them head on. However, I had never experienced a challenge such as this. Trying to juggle an intense, highly demanding job which requires full focus and energy as well as wanting to embark on this academic journey for a personal and professional development was maybe a step too far.

Practitioner-research is defined as a research method carried out by applied practitioners with an aim to further the development and understanding of the social world in which research is

conducted (McLeod, 1999). Practitioner-research is one of the most appropriate methods for reducing the gap of knowledge and understanding between research and practice in sports psychology, as this encourages practitioners to maintain their links with academia and allows for the publication of models of best practice (Champ et al., 2019). However, there is currently a significant distance between the research that is being disseminated in sport psychology academically and applied practice (Devaney et al. 2018; Lillis 2008). Therefore, conducting this research allowed me to enhance the research between academia and applied sport but also allowed for personal growth, awareness, and development. The following section alludes to the PhD itself and the challenges I faced but also explore the role that I had within the football environment; a practitioner-researcher.

With regards to the PhD, on reflection, I wonder whether the challenges I have faced would have been less daunting if I was a full-time student. Yet in reality, I know that if it came to the choice of doing a PhD or staying within the applied sport realm, applied sport would win every time. Time was the biggest factor that I felt that I faced. Having the time to read academic literature, upskill myself in mindfulness and still carry out my day-to-day job role was a struggle. Although there is recommended literature on effective time management (Muirhead & Blum, 2006), life and work seemed to get in the way of this plan. For the first two years, I felt like I wasn't doing anything productive and that I hadn't even thought about collecting data or even really knowing how the PhD was going to pan out. I definitely felt isolated within this period (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Lovitts, 2008; Paliktzoglou & Suhonen, 2010). It was a struggle; I didn't feel supported and thought that this is the first time that I will quit and fail badly at something. This went completely against my values of putting in 100% energy and commitment. Albion (2005) explores the support given to part-time PhD students and supports my experience, the limited physical interaction with other PhD colleagues or academics.

My motivation and self-monitoring of my work was a struggle throughout the whole process (Bozarth et al., 2004; Dafoulas, 2006). I found that my day job as a practitioner would over-power

the fact that I was also on a research journey. This coupled with the feeling and sense of isolation wasn't helped with being situated off site and having limited social interactions with peers (Paliktzoglou & Suhonen, 2010).

As previously mentioned in the significant moments section, taking a more interpretivist approach meant that it was difficult to wear the dual role of researcher and practitioner; both having value within this research for being combined. Much of this research has been about the participants view of mindfulness within a football setting and therefore such a process is informed by the context in which individuals live in and at the same time influences their perceptions of learning and the way that they would learn. It is important to recognise that in order to get a true and honest representation of mindfulness in this environment, each participant has their own interpretations of the research that I conducted. This I felt required exploring while still understanding that their varied viewpoints yield to different types of understandings and how they view the world and in particular, how they view mindfulness within football. these ontological and epistemological positions are of particular relevance to the PhD work I conducted as this allowed me to explore the impact of mindfulness and their experiences through the eyes of the participants, which I'm not sure would have been as effective if I wasn't embedded as a practitioner within the environment.

Although this section of my reflective piece is about the dual role, I wanted to commit myself to explore (not discover) part of the participants reality of mindfulness through their experiences and perceptions. This was to one aid and explore the PhD subject area, yet two to aid my personal development and application as a practitioner. Despite having to know more about my ontological and epistemological stand for research purposes, this has allowed be to gain better and deeper reflection as an applied practitioner. Consequently, through this process, more application of mindfulness has been applied within the club context due to greater understanding of how others view and perceive mindfulness, through their experiences and through detailed observation and

reflection. There are a growing number of mindfulness sport programmes that could have been used within this study of research as an intervention, however, this would not have created the same impact that this thesis describes throughout. This programme of research is novel and unique due to the embedding of mindfulness over a longitudinal period, making this revolutionary.

8.5 Transferable Skills

As part of my job role, I have been nominated to lead up the club's innovation and research group which involves keeping on track of all projects that are occurring internally within the performance sector of the club, ranging from psychology, to medical, to analysis, to coaching etc. The PhD has allowed me to gain more confidence and provided me with more opportunity to explore various research skills to address these projects and investigate, evaluate, and guide others to think of the best approach to answering a question; through finding the most relevant data, form of practical analysis, understand and utilise the relevant findings.

With reference to the innovation and research group above, being able to project manage to some degree and sticking to a time scale has dramatically improved whilst trying to juggle other aspects of both the job and life commitments. Throughout the PhD I have had to design four studies (with help from supervisors), set timelines and deadlines, overcome setbacks, and manage club stakeholders. This has been a challenge but one where I know that I am now able and capable of managing long-term projects as well as short term goals which require organizational skills, motivation, and perseverance.

One area that I feel has drastically improved and I have developed over this journey is my ability to critically think. Within the PhD, I have had approach problems systematically, see the links and connections between ideas, research, and data, evaluate arguments, and analyse information and data to find the conclusion. Within my applied practitioner role, this has provided me with more confidence and conviction to speak up and voice my ideas and opinions which are based on experience and facts. Others within my applied role have notice my ability to finely critic ideas and

exercises to ensure that the most accurate conclusion is achieved. On top of this, being asked to mentor a few colleagues, has demonstrated my ability to critically stand back and evaluate the data and information in front to then analyse and decide on the next appropriate steps to take. Although the two examples may seem on paper miles apart and show no relevance, I don't believe that my skills sets and where I am today would be the same without the journey of the PhD but also my personal journey and development as an applied practitioner.

Finally, I believe that my ability to work with people and build relationships has been an area that I am constantly reflecting on. It wasn't until writing this reflective piece that I realised that the PhD has contributed to this development. Although the PhD can be isolating and is an individual project, a lot of the work is about collaboration. I have to ensure I have effective relationships with my participants for them to be willing to part-take, having integration within departments to build a mindful culture is all based on relationship and working effectively together. Finally, disseminating results and findings, is all about effective communication, ensuring that the information comes across in a common language for all to understand. If I didn't have the relationships with the participants I do have, then the ability to disseminate these findings in a user-friendly way I believe would look a lot different.

All of the above has been helped in addition to the PhD by the completion of an internal (Optimise – development of self and as a leader) and external course (SEPAR – to achieve HCPC accreditation). Although both are very different, they both highlight and reflect on personal development and growth, being able to critically analyse and evaluate information. SEPAR enabled me to show and acquire the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to gain full accreditation and chartership as a *Practitioner Psychologist*. Similarly, to the PhD, I had to demonstrate that I was able to work autonomously in the applied sport industry with a view to facilitate optimal involvement, performance, and enjoyment in athletes. The Optimise programme allowed for enhanced self-awareness, collaboration with others, effective communication, and dissemination of information.

This also correlates with the above skills that I have taken from the PhD journey, highlighting that in fact I have developed both professionally and personally.

8.6 Future Aspirations

There is still limited research regarding the application of mindfulness within professional sports. This PhD has made me realise that I would like to be seen as an expert in this field, being able to bring a skill to a group of high performing athletes as well as a high performing environment and make the skill applicable for all to use. I would like to continue to develop as a researcher within the applied realm of sport as there is still limited resource made readily available highlighting the challenges that practitioner-researchers may face when working and operating in an elite sporting environment (Nesti & Sully, 2014). Champ and colleagues (2019) have highlighted that a clearer understanding is required for the challenges that practitioner-researchers face when working in high-performance cultures, as this may help inform the development of support methods and education.

REFERENCES

- Acosta, R. V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2004). Women in intercollegiate sport. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal*, 13(1), 62.
- Ahern, K. J. (1999). Ten tips for reflexive bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9, 407- 411.
- Aherne, C., Moran, A. P., & Lonsdale, C. (2011). The Effect of Mindfulness Training on Athletes' Flow: An Initial Investigation. *The Sport Psychologist*, 25, 177-189.
- Akelaitis, A. V., & Malinauskas, R. K. (2018). The expression of emotional skills among individual and team sports male athletes. *Medical-biological problems of physical training and sports*, 62-67.
- Albion P. Designing for an online doctoral studies community using an open-source platform. In C. Crawford et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2005* (pp. 2138-2143). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.,2005.
- Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., and Schweizer, S. (2010). Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: a meta-analytic review. *Clin. Psychol. Rev.* 30, 217–237.
- Allen-Collinson, J. (2012). Autoethnography: situating personal sporting narratives in socio-cultural contexts. In *Qualitative research on sport and physical culture*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Al-Saadi, H. (2014). Demystifying Ontology and Epistemology in research methods. *Research gate*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Anderson, T. D. (2011). Beyond Eureka Moments: Supporting the Invisible Work of Creativity and Innovation. *Information Research: An international electronic journal*, 16(1), n1.
- Anderson, L. V. (2016). *Feeling like an imposter is not a syndrome* [online]. Retrieved October 21, 2021,

from http://www.slate.com/articles/business/the_ladder/2016/04/is_impostor_syndrome_real_and_does_it_affect_women_more_than_men.html?via=gdpr-consent [Google Scholar]

Anonymous, N., M. S. Ronkainen, N. J. Tod, and M. A. Littlewood. 2018. "An Exploration of the Experiences of Elite Youth Footballers: The Impact of Organisational Culture." *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. .

Arch, J. J., & Craske, M. G. (2010). Laboratory stressors in clinically anxious and non-anxious individuals: The moderating role of mindfulness. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48, 495–505.

Arden, C. L., Taylor, N. F., Feller, J. A., & Webster, K. E. (2012). Return-to-sport outcomes at 2 to 7 years after anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction surgery. *The American journal of sports medicine*, 40(1), 41-48.

Arden, C. L., Glasgow, P., Schneiders, A., Witvrouw, E., Clarsen, B., Cools, A., ... & Bizzini, M. (2016). 2016 Consensus statement on return to sport from the First World Congress in Sports Physical Therapy, Bern. *British journal of sports medicine*, 50(14), 853-864.

Arnold, R., & Sarkar, M. (2014). Preparing athletes and teams for the Olympic Games: Experiences and lessons learned from the world's best sport psychologists. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 13, 4–20.

Arvinen-Barrow, M., & Clement, D. (2015). A preliminary investigation into athletic trainers' views and experiences of a multidisciplinary team approach to sports injury rehabilitation. *Athletic Training & Sports Health Care*, 7(3), 97-107.

Arvinen-Barrow, M., & Clement, D. (2017). Preliminary investigation into sport and exercise psychology consultants' views and experiences of an interprofessional care team approach to sport injury rehabilitation. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 31(1), 66-74.

- Arvinen-Barrow, M., Hemmings, B., Weigand, D. A., Becker, C. A. & Boothe, L. (2007). Views of chartered physiotherapists on the psychological content of their practice: a national follow-up survey in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation, 16*. 111-121.
- Arvinen-Barrow, M., Massey, W. V., and HeMBSRings, B. (2014). Role of sport medicine professionals in addressing psychosocial aspects of sport-injury rehabilitation: professional athletes' views. *J. Athl. Train. 49*, 764–772.
- Arvinen-Barrow, M., and Walker, N. (2013). *The Psychology of Sport Injury and Rehabilitation*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Aschbacher, K., O'Donovan, A., Wolkowitz, O. M., Dhabhar, F. S., Su, Y., & Epel, E. (2013). Good stress, bad stress and oxidative stress: insights from anticipatory cortisol reactivity. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 38*(9), 1698-1708.
- Atkinson, R. (2007). The life story interview as a bridge in narrative inquiry. *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*, 224-245.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. Thousand Oaks: Sage*, 248-261.
- Averill, J. R., Chon, K. K., & Hahn, D. W. (2001). Emotions and creativity, east and west. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 4*(3), 165-183.
- Baas, M., Nevicka, B., & Ten Velden, F. (2020). When paying attention pays off: the mindfulness skill act with awareness promotes creative idea generation in groups, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 29*, 619-632,
- Baer, R. (2003). Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 10*, 125-143.

- Bagheri, E., & Dana, A. (2021). The effect of mindfulness protocol on anxiety, self-efficacy and performance of athletes. *Sport Psychology Studies (ie, mutaleat ravanshenasi varzeshi)*, 10(36), 23-44.
- Bai, S., & Repetti, R. L. (2015). Short-term resilience processes in the family. *Family Relations*, 64(1), 108-119.
- Balasubramaniam, M., Telles, S., & Doraiswamy, P. M. (2013). Yoga on our minds: a systematic review of yoga for neuropsychiatric disorders. *Frontiers in PSYCHIATRY*, 3, 117.
- Baltzell, A., & Akhtar, V. L. (2014). Mindfulness meditation training for sport (MMTS) intervention: Impact of MMTS with division I female athletes. *The Journal of Happiness & Well-Being*, 2(2), 160-173.
- Baltzell, A., Caraballo, N., Chipman, K., & Hayden, L. (2014). A qualitative study of the mindfulness meditation training for sport: Division I female soccer players' experience. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 8(3), 221-244.
- Baltzell, A. L., Chipman, K., Hayden, L., & Bowman, C. (2015). Qualitative study of MMTS: Coaches' experience. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(3), 5-20.
- Baltzell, A. (2016). *Self-Compassion, Distress Tolerance, and Mindfulness in Performance*, 53- 77. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press
- Baltzell, A., & Summers, J. (2016). *The Future of Mindfulness and Performance across Disciplines*. P. 515-541. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press
- Baltzell A., Summers J. (2017) *Introducing Mindful Meditation Training for Sport (MMTS) 2.0*. In: *The Power of Mindfulness*. Springer, Cham.
- Baltzell, A., & Summers, J. (2018). *The power of mindfulness: Mindfulness meditation training in sport (MMTS)*. Springer.

- Bartlett, C. (2015) An autoethnographic study into mindfulness meditation and the impact on psychotherapy training. Other thesis, Middlesex University / Metanoia Institute. [Thesis]
- Beaumont, C., Maynard, I., & Butt, J. (2015). Effective ways to develop and maintain robust sport confidence: Strategies advocated by sport psychology consultants. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27, 301–318.
- Behan, D. (2019). Demoralization during medical illness: a case of common factors treatment. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 47(3), 266-275.
- Behar, R. (1997). *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*. Boston, Beacon
- Beneka A, Malliou P, Bebetos E, Gioftsidou A, Pafis G, Godolias G., (2007) Appropriate counselling techniques for specific components of the rehabilitation plan: a review of the literature. *Phys Train*.
- Bengtsson, H., Ekstrand, J., Walden, M., & Hagglund, M. (2018). Muscle injury rate in professional football is higher in matches played within 5 days since the previous match: a 14-year prospective study with more than 130 000 match observations. *Br J Sports Med* 2018; 1116–1122.
- Bergland, C. (2017). How do neuroplasticity and neurogenesis rewire your brain? *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201702/how-do-neuroplasticity-and-neurogenesis-rewire-your-brain>
- Berke DS, Zeichner A. (2016). Man's heaviest burden: A review of contemporary paradigms and new directions for preventing men's masculine aggression. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*. 10, 83–91.
- Bernier, M., Thienot, E., Codron, R., & Fournier, J. (2009). Mindfulness and acceptance approaches in sport performance. *Journal of Clinical Sports Psychology*, 4, 320-333.

- Bevan, N., Drummond, C., Abery, L., Elliott, S., Pennesi, J. L., Prichard, I., ... & Drummond, M. (2021). More opportunities, same challenges: adolescent girls in sports that are traditionally constructed as masculine. *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(6), 592-605.
- Biddle, S.J.H., Hanrahan, S.J. and Sellars, C.N. (2001). Attributions: Past, present, and future. In *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (edited by R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas and C.M. Janelle), 2nd ed., pp. 444-471. New York: Wiley
- Birrer D, & Röthlin P. (2017). Riding the third wave: CBT and mindfulness-based interventions in sport psychology. In: Zizzi SJ, Andersen MB, editors. *Being mindful in sport and exercise psychology*. Morgantown: FiT; p. 101–22.
- Bianco T. Sport injury and the need for coach support. In D. Pargman (Ed.), *Psychological bases of sport injuries* Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology, 2007, 237-266. 5.
- Birrer, D., Röthlin, P., Morgan, G. (2012). Mindfulness to Enhance Athletic Performance: Theoretical Considerations and Possible Impact Mechanisms. *Springer Science + Business Media*.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26, 1802–1811.
- Birtwell, K., Williams, K., Van Marwijk, H., Armitage, C., Sheffield, D. (2019). An Exploration of Formal and Informal Mindfulness Practice and Associations with Well-being. *Mindfulness*, 10, 89-99.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M. Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson. N. D., Carmondy, J., & Devins, G (2004). Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11 (3), 230-241
- Blodgett, A. T., Schinke, R. J., Smith, B., Peltier, D., & Pheasant, C. (2011). In indigenous words: Exploring vignettes as a narrative strategy for presenting the research voices of Aboriginal community members. *Qualitative inquiry*, 17(6), 522-533.

- Blom, L., Visek, A., & Harris, B. (2013). Triangulation in youth sport: Healthy partnerships among parents, coaches, and practitioners. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 4, 86–96.
- Blythe, W. (2006). *To hate like this is to be happy forever: A thoroughly obsessive, intermittently uplifting, and occasionally unbiased account of the Duke-North Carolina basketball rivalry*. New York, NY: HarperCollins
- Bochner, A. P. (2000). Criteria against ourselves. *Qualitative inquiry*, 6(2), 266-272.
- Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2016). *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories*. Routledge.
- Bodhi, B. (2000). *The connected discourses of the Buddha*. Wisdom Publications
- Bodhi, B. (2000). *A comprehensive manual of Adhidhamma*. Seattle: BPS Pariyatti
- Bondár, R. Z., Bertollo, M., di Fronso, S., & Robazza, C. (2021). Mindfulness to performance enhancement: a systematic review of neural correlates. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1-29.
- Bone, J. B., & Fry, M. D. (2006). The influence of injured athletes' perceptions of social support from ATCs on their beliefs about rehabilitation. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*, 15(2), 156-167.
- Bowen S, Chawla N, & Marlatt GA (2010). *Mindfulness-based relapse prevention for substance use disorders: a clinician's guide*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Bowles, P. (2014). *Capitalism*. Routledge.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. sage.
- Bozarth, J., Chapman, D.D., LaMonica, L.: Preparing for distance learning: Designing an online student orientation course. *Educational Technology & Society*, 7 (1), 87-106, (2004).

- Bradbury-Jones, C., Taylor, J., & Herber, O. (2014). How theory is used and articulated in qualitative research: Development of a new typology. *Social Science & Medicine*, 120, 135-141.
- Brady, A. & Maynard, I. (2010). At an elite level the role of a sports psychologist is entirely about performance enhancement: A debate article. *International review of sports and exercise psychology*, 6, 59-66
- Brailsford, I. (2010). Motives and Aspirations for Doctoral Study: Career, Personal, and Inter-personal Factors in the Decision to Embark on a History PhD. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 5, 15-27
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2013. *Successful qualitative research: a practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage.
- Brems, C., Baldwin, M. R., Davis, L., Namyniuk, L. (1994). The imposter syndrome as related to teaching evaluations and advising relationships of university faculty members. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 65(2), 183
- Brewer, B. W., & Redmond, C. (2016). *Psychology of sport injury*. Human Kinetics.
- Brewer B, Van Raalte J, Linder D. Role of the sports psychologist in treating injured athletes: a survey of sports medicine providers. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 1991;3:183–90.
- Brinkborg, H., Mehanek, J., Hesser, H., & Berglund, G. (2011). Acceptance and commitment therapy for the treatment of stress among social workers: A randomised control trial. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 49, 389-38.
- Brocki, J.M., & Wearden, A.J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, 21(1): 87-108
- Brown, C. H., D. Gould, and S. Foster. (2005). "A Framework for Developing Contextual Intelligence (CI)." *The Sport Psychologist* 19 (1): pp.51–62.

- Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R.M. (2003). The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and its Role in Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (4), 822-848
- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R.M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18 (4), 211-237
- Bryant, F., & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savouring: a new model of positive experience. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.*
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
- Buckley, J., & Cameron, L. D. (2011). Automatic Judgements of exerciser self-efficacy and exercise disengagement in adults experienced and inexperienced in exercise self-regulation. *Psychology of sport and Exercise*, 12, 324-332.
- Bühlmayer, L., Birrer, D., Röthlin, P., Faude, O., & Donath, L. (2017). Effects of mindfulness practice on performance-relevant parameters and performance outcomes in sports: A meta-analytical review. *Sports medicine*, 47(11), 2309-2321.
- Bulğay, C., Tingaz, E. O., Bayraktar, I., & Çetin, E. (2020). Athletic performance and mindfulness in track and field athletes. *Current Psychology*, 1-8.
- Bumbuc, S. (2016). About Subjectivity in Qualitative Data Interpretation. *International conference Knowledge-Based Organisation*, 22, 419-424
- Burke, S. (2016). Rethinking 'validity' and 'trustworthiness' in qualitative inquiry: How might we judge the quality of qualitative research in sport and exercise sciences? In B. Smith & A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 330–339). London: Routledge.
- Cahn, B. R., & Polich, J. (2006). Meditation states and traits: EEG, ERP, and neuroimaging studies. *Psychological bulletin*, 132(2), 180.

- Calvert, T. (2015). "Psychology in injury prevention and rehabilitation," in *Sports Injury 438 Prevention and Rehabilitation*, eds D. Joyce and D. Lewindon (Abingdon: Routledge), 22–30.
- Calvin, M. (2018). *State of play: under the skin of the modern game*. Random House.
- Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. (2013). Coding in-depth semi structured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 42, 294–320.
- Cardaciotto, L. (2005). Assessing Mindfulness: The Development of a Bi-Dimensional Measure of Awareness and Acceptance, *Ph.D. thesis, Drexel University*.
- Carpenter, D. R. (2007). Phenomenology as method. In H. J. Streubert & D. R. Carpenter (Eds.), *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (pp. 75- 99). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- Carson, S.H., & Langer, E. (2006). Mindfulness and self-acceptance. *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 24 (1), 29-43.
- Cathcart, S., McGregor, M., & Groundwater, E. (2014). Mindfulness and flow in elite athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 8(2), 119-141.
- CeCaro, M., Rotar, K., Kendra, M., & Beilock, S. (2010). Diagnosing and alleviating the impact of performance pressure on mathematical problem solving. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 63, 1619-1630.
- Champ, F. (2018). Psychological Development in Professional Youth Football: An Ethnography of Sports Psychology Practice, *Thesis, Liverpool John Moore*.
- Champ, F., Nesti, M., Ronkainen, N., & Todd, D. (2018). An exploration of the experiences of elite youth footballers: The impact of organizational culture. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 32, 146-167.

- Champ, F., Ronkainen, N., Nesti, M., Tod, D., & Littlewood, M. (2020). 'Through the lens of ethnography': Perceptions, challenges, and experiences of an early career practitioner-researcher in professional football, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 12, 513-529.
- Charoensukmongkol, P. (2014). Benefits of mindfulness meditation on emotional intelligence, general self-efficacy, and perceived stress: Evidence from Thailand. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 16(3), 171-192.
- Chatham-Carpenter, A. (2010). 'Do Thyself No Harm': Protecting Ourselves as Autoethnographers. *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(1), M1-M1.
- Chavez, E. (2008). Flow in sport: A study of college athletes. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 28, 69-91.
- Chen M., & Meggs, J. (2021). The effects of Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE) training on mindfulness, and flow in national competitive swimmers. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 16, 517-527.
- Chenail, R.C., 2010. Getting specific about qualitative research generalizability. *Journal of ethnographic & qualitative research*, 5, 1–11.
- Chia, R., 2003. Organisation theory as a postmodern science. In: *The Oxford handbook of organisation theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 113-142.
- Chiesa, A., Calati, R., & Serretti, A. (2011). Does mindfulness training improve cognitive abilities? A systematic review of neuropsychological findings. *Clinical psychology review*, 31(3), 449-464.
- Chiesa, A., & Malinowski, P. (2011). Mindfulness-Based Approaches: Are they all the same? *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 67, 404-424

- Chiesa A, Serretti A. (2009). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for stress management in healthy people: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Alternative Complementary Medicine*, 15:593–600.
- Christensen, D., & Aoyagi, M. (2014). Lessons learned consulting at Olympic trials: Swimming through growing pains. *The Sport Psychologist*, 28, 281–289.
- Clance, P. & Imes, S. (1978). The impostor phenomenon among high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy Theory, Research and Practice*, 15(3): 241–7.
- Clayton, B., & Humberstone, B. (2006). Men's talk: A (pro) feminist analysis of male university football players' discourse. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 41(3-4), 295-316.
- Clement, D., & Arvinen-Barrow, M. (2013). Sport medicine team influences in psychological rehabilitation—A multidisciplinary approach. In M. Arvinen-Barrow & N. Walker (Eds.), *The psychology of sport injury and rehabilitation* (pp. 156–170). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Coe, R. J. (2012). Conducting your research. *Research methods and methodologies in education*, 41-52.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Collins, R., Evans-Jones, K., & O'Connor, H. (2013). Reflections on three neophyte sport and exercise psychologists developing philosophies for practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 27, 399–409.
- Collins, K., & Nicolson, P. (2002). The meaning of “satisfaction” for people with dermatological problems: Reassessing approaches to qualitative health psychology research. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 7, 615-629.
- Compton, W. & Hoffman, E. (2013). *Positive psychology, the science of happiness and flourishing* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Converse, A. K., Ahlers, E. O., Travers, B. G., & Davidson, R. J. (2014). Tai chi training reduces self-report of inattention in healthy young adults. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 8, 13.
- Cooper, B.T., 2017. The Mindfulness Meditation Training for Sport and Injury Rehabilitation with High School Athletes: A Pilot Study (Doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University).
- Corlett, J. (1996). Sophistry, Socrates and sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 84- 94.
- Corbally, L., Wilkinson, M., & Fothergill, M. A. (2020). Effects of mindfulness practice on performance and factors related to performance in long-distance running: A systematic review. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 14(4), 376-398.
- Cote, T. A. (2019). *Catalyst for courage: College athletes' experience participating in a mindfulness and self-compassion intervention* (Order No. 13899634). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I. (2305531018).
- Cotterill, S. (2015). Preparing for performance: strategies adopted across performance domains. *The Sport Psychologist*, 29(2), 158-170.
- Cottrell, S. (2019). *The study skills handbook*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Cowman, S. E., Ferrari, J. R. (2002). "Am I for real?" Predicting imposter tendencies from self-handicapping and affective components. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 30(2), 119-126.
- Craddock, S., Birnbaum, M., Rodriguez, K. L., Cobb, C., & Zeeh, S. (2011). Doctoral students and the imposter phenomenon: Am I smart enough to be here? *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48(4), 429-442.
- Crane, C., Crane, R. S., Eames, C., Fennell, M. V., Silverton, S., Williams, J. G., & Barnhofer, T. (2014). The effects of amount of home meditation practice in mindfulness based cognitive therapy on hazard of relapse to depression in the Staying Well after Depression Trial. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 6317-6324.
- Crane, C., & Williams, J. M. G. (2010). Factors associated with attrition from mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in patients with a history of suicidal depression. *Mindfulness*, 1(1), 10-20

- Crane, R. S., & Kuyken, W. (2019). The Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC): Reflections on implementation and development. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 28*, 6–10.
- Crawford, J. (2021) Imposter Syndrome for Women in Male Dominated Careers, *Hastings Women's L.J.* 26
- Creswell, J., & Miller, D. (2000). *Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. Theory into Practice, 39*, 124–130
- Cropley, B., Hanton, S., Miles, A., & Niven, A. (2010). Exploring the relationship between effective and reflective practice in applied sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist, 24*(4), 521-541.
- Crossman, J. (1997). Psychological rehabilitation from sports injuries. *Sports Med. 23*, 333–339
- Cruickshank, A., Collins, D., & Minten, S. (2013). Culture change in a professional sports team: Shaping environmental contexts and regulating power. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 8*, 271–290.
- Crust, L. (2007). Mental toughness in sport: A review. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 5*, 270-290.
- Crust, L., Nesti, M., & Littlewood, M. (2010). A cross sectional analysis of mental toughness in a professional football academy. *Athletic Insight Journal, 2*.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond Boredom and anxiety*. Washington, DC: Jossey-Bass.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). If we are so rich, why aren't we happy? *American Psychologist, 54*, 821-827.

- Culver, D., Gilbert, W., & Sparkes, A. C. (2012). Qualitative research in sport psychology journals: The next decade 2000-2009 and beyond. *The Sport Psychologist*, 26, 261–281.
- Cushion, C., & Jones, R. L. (2006). Power, discourse, and symbolic violence in professional youth soccer: The case of Albion Football Club. *Sociology of sport journal*, 23(2), 142-161.
- Dafoulas, G.A.: Emerging trends in web-based learning: The use of e-portfolio. Proceedings of the 12th NETTIES (Networking Entities) International Conference. Timisoara, Romania: Editura Orizonturi Universitare, pp. 118-123, (2006).
- Dale, L. M., Fabrizio, A. J., Adhlakha, P., Mahon, M. K., McGraw, E. E., Neyenhaus, R. D., . . . Zaber, J. M. (2002). *Occupational therapists working in hand therapy: The practice of holism in a cost containment environment*. *Work* (Reading, Mass.), 19, 35–45.
- Daley, C., Ong, C. W., & McGregor, P. (2020). Applied psychology in academy soccer settings: A systems-led approach. In *The psychology of soccer* (pp. 172-188). Routledge.
- Davidson, R. (2002). Toward a biology of positive affect and compassion. In R.J. Davidson and A. Harrington. (Eds.), *Visions of compassion: Western scientists and Tibetan Buddhists examine human nature* (p. 107-130). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, R., Kabat-Zinn, J., Schumacher, J., Rosenkranz, M., Muller, D., Santorelli, S., Urbanowski, F., Harrington, A., Bonus, K., & Sheridan, J. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine* 65 564–570.
- Davis, M. C., & Zautra, A. J. (2013). An online mindfulness intervention targeting socioemotional regulation in fibromyalgia: results of a randomized controlled trial. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 46(3), 273-284.
- DeCaro, M. S., Rotar, K. E., Kendra, M. S., & Beilock, S. L. (2010). Diagnosing and alleviating the impact of performance pressure on mathematical problem solving. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 63(8), 1619-1630.

- Denzin, N. K. (1994). The art and politics of interpretation.
- Denzin, N. K., 1989. *Interpretive Interactionism*. Newbury Park, California: Sage
- DeMarco, G., Mancini, V. & Wuest, D., 1996. Reflections on change: A qualitative and quantitative analysis of a baseball coach's behaviour. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 20(2), pp. 135-163.
- Depraz, N., Varela, F., & Vermersch, P. (2000). The gesture of awareness: An account of its structural dynamics. In M. Velmans (Ed.), *Investigating Phenomenal Consciousness* (pp. 121-136). Amsterdam: Benjamin.
- De Petrillo, L., Kaufman, K., Glass, C., & Arnkoff, D. (2009). Mindfulness for long-distance runners: An open trial using mindful sport performance enhancement (MSPE). *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 4, 357-376.
- Devaney, D. J., Nesti, M. S., Ronkainen, N. J., Littlewood, M., & Richardson, D. (2018). Athlete Lifestyle Support of Elite Youth Cricketers: An Ethnography of Player Concerns Within a National Talent Development Program. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 1-21.
- Dhillon, H., Dhillon, S., & Dhillon, M. S. (2017). Current concepts in sports injury rehabilitation. *Indian journal of orthopaedics*, 51(5), 529-536.
- Dhiman, S. (2012). Mindfulness and the art of living creatively: Cultivating a creative life by minding our mind. *Journal of Social Change*, 4 (1), 24-33.
- Djikic, M. (2014). Art of mindfulness: Integrating Eastern and Western approaches. In A. Ie, C. Ngnoumen, & E. J. Langer (Eds.), *The Wiley–Blackwell handbook of mindfulness* (pp. 139–148). Oxford, England: Wiley.
- DiBernardo, R. (2018). *Implementation and impact of the Mindfulness Meditation Training for Sport (MMTS) 2.0 protocol with a division III women's college basketball team and coaching staff* (Doctoral dissertation).

- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Doing sensitive research: What challenges do qualitative researchers face? *Qualitative Research*, 7, 327–353.
- Drew, M. K., Raysmith, B. P., & Charlton, P. C. (2017). Injuries impair the chance of successful performance by sportspeople: a systematic review. *British journal of sports medicine*, 51(16), 1209-1214.
- Driediger, M., Hall, C., & Callow, N. (2006). Imagery use by injured athletes: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of sports sciences*, 24(3), 261-272.
- Durocher E, Kinsella EA, McCorquodale L, Phelan S 2016 Ethical tensions related to systemic constraints: Occupational alienation in occupational therapy practice. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health* 36: 216–226
- Eames, P. G. (1989). Head injury rehabilitation: Towards a “model” service. In R. L. I. Wood & P. G. Eames (Eds.), *Models of brain injury rehabilitation*. London: Croom Helm.
- Edvardsson, A., Ivarsson, A., & Johnson, U. (2012). Is a cognitive-behavioural biofeedback 621 intervention useful to reduce injury risk in junior football players? *Journal of Sports Science* 622 and *Medicine*, 11, 331.
- Eist, Harold I. MD, DLFAPA, FRCP(C) DBT Skills Training Manual, 2nd Ed. Marsha M. Linehan (2015) New York, The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease: November 2015 - Volume 203 - Issue 11 - p 887.
- Eklund, R. & Cresswell, S. (2007). Athlete burnout. In G. Tenenbaum & R. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (3rd edn., pp.621-641. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Ekstrand, J. (2013). Keeping your top players on the pitch: The key to football medicine at a professional level. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 47, 723-724.
- Ekstrand J, Hägglund M, Waldén M. (2011). *Injury incidence and injury patterns in professional football: the UEFA injury study*. *Br J Sports Med*;45:553–8

- Elliott, R., Fischer, C.T., & Rennie, D.L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for the publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 215-229.
- Ellis, C. (1991). Sociological introspection and emotional experience. *Symbolic Interaction*, 14, 23–50.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Vol. 13). Rowman Altamira.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical social research/Historische sozialforschung*, 273-290.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A.P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A.P. (2003), "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject", in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousands Oaks, CA, pp. 199-258.
- Epstein, R. M. (1999). Mindful practice. *Jama*, 282(9), 833-839.
- Ericsson, K. A., Krampe, R. T., & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological review*, 100(3), 363.
- Erisman, S. M., & Roemer, L. (2010). A preliminary Investigation of the effects of experimentally induced mindfulness on emotion responding to film clips. *Emotion*, 10, 72– 82
- Erol A, & Karpyak VM. (2015). Sex and gender-related differences in alcohol use and its consequences: contemporary knowledge and future research considerations. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 156, 1–13

- Eubank, M., M. Nesti, and A. Cruickshank. 2014. "Understanding High Performance Sport Environments: Impact for the Professional Training and Supervision of Sport Psychologists." *Sport Exer Psychol Rev* 10: pp.30–7.
- Evans, T. (2011). *The art and science of light bulb moments*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Feldman, G., Greeson, J., & Senville, J. (2010). Differential effects of mindful breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and loving-kindness meditation on decentering and negative reactions to repetitive thoughts. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48, 1002–1011.
- Flaxman, P., & Bond, F. (2010). A randomised worksite comparison of acceptance commitment therapy and stress inoculation training. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48, 816-820.
- Fletcher, D., Hanton, S., Mellalieu, S. D., & Neil, R. (2012). A conceptual framework of organizational stressors in sport performers. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, 22(4), 545-557.
- Fletcher, D., & Wagstaff, C. R. D. (2009). Organizational psychology in elite sport: Its emergence, application and future. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10(4), 427–434.
- Flint FA. (1998). Specialized psychological interventions. In: Flint FA, ed. *Psychology of Sport Injury*. Leeds, UK: Human Kinetics; 29– 50.
- Fieldman, H. (2021). Imposter Syndrome—Good, Bad or Ugly?
- Foley, D. (2002). Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 15(4), 469-490.
- Ford, I. W., Eklund, R. C., and Gordon, S. (2000). An examination of psychosocial variables moderating the relationship between life stress and injury time-loss among athletes of a high standard. *J. Sports Sci.* 18, 301–312
- Ford I, Gordon S. Social support and athletic injury: The perspective of sport physiotherapists. *Australian J Sci Med Sport* 1993;7:17–25.

- Ford, I. W., & Gordon, S. (1998). Perspectives of sport trainers and athletic therapists on the psychological content of their practice and training. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation, 7*, 79-94.
- Foster, B. J., & Chow, G. M. (2020). The effects of psychological skills and mindfulness on well-being of student-athletes: A path analysis. *Performance Enhancement & Health, 8*(2-3), 100180.
- Fox KC, Nijeboer S, Dixon ML, Floman JL, Ellamil M, Rumak SP, Sedlmeier P, Christoff K. (2014). Is meditation associated with altered brain structure? A systematic review and meta-analysis of morphometric neuroimaging in meditation practitioners. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev.* 2014 Jun;43:48-73.
- Frank, A. W. (2000). The standpoint of storyteller. *Qualitative health research, 10*(3), 354-365.
- Fredrickson, B. L., Boulton, A. J., Firestine, A. M., Van Cappellen, P., Algoe, S. B., Brantley, M. M., ... & Salzberg, S. (2017). Positive emotion correlates of meditation practice: A comparison of mindfulness meditation and loving-kindness meditation. *Mindfulness, 8*(6), 1623-1633.
- Fredrickson, B., & Levenson, R. W. (1998). Positive emotions speed recovery from the cardiovascular sequelae of negative emotions. *Cognition & emotion, 12*(2), 191-220.
- Frewen, P. A., Evans, E. M., Maraj, N., Dozois, D. J., & Partridge, K. (2008). Letting go: Mindfulness and negative automatic thinking. *Cognitive therapy and research, 32*(6), 758-774.
- Fried-Buchalter, S. (1997). Fear of success, fear of failure, and the imposter phenomenon among male and female marketing managers. *Sex Roles, 37*(11/12), 847-859.
- Fuller, K. (2018). Mindfulness: Just another health crazed fad? *Psychology Today*. Retrieved January 22, 2020,
- Gard, G., & Lundvik Gyllensten, A., (2000) The Importance of Emotions in Physiotherapeutic Practice, *Physical Therapy Reviews, 5*, 155-160,
- Gard T., Noggle J., Park C., Vago D. R., Wilson A. (2014a). Potential self-regulatory mechanisms of yoga for psychological health. *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* 8:770

- Gardner, F.L. (2001). Principles and practices of acceptance-based sport psychology. Grand rounds lecture presented at the Department of Psychiatry Grand Rounds at North Shore University Medical Center and Health System, Manhasset, NY.
- Gardner, F. (2016). Scientific Advancement of mindfulness-and-Acceptance-Based Models in Sport Psychology: A Decade in Time, a Seismic Shift in Philosophy and Practice. In A. Baltzell (Ed.), *Mindfulness and Performance (Current Perspective in Social and Behavioural Sciences)*, pp. 127-152
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). A mindfulness-acceptance-commitment-based approach to athletic performance enhancement: Theoretical considerations. *Behavior therapy*, 35(4), 707-723.
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2007). *The Psychology of Enhancing Human Performance: The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2020). Mindfulness in sport contexts. *Handbook of Sport Psychology*, 738-750.
- Garland, E. L., Geschwind, N., Peeters, F., & Wichers, M. (2015). Mindfulness training promotes upward spirals of positive affect and cognition: multilevel and autoregressive latent trajectory modeling analyses. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 15.
- Gearing, R. E. (2004). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 1429-1452.
- Germer, C. K. (2005). Mindfulness: What is it? What does it matter? In C. K. Germer, R. D. Siegel, & P. R. Fulton (Eds.), *Mindfulness and psychotherapy* (pp. 3–27). New York: Guilford Press.
- Germer, C., Siegel, R., & Fulton, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Mindfulness and psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press

- Gervis, M., Pickford, H., Hau, T., & Fruth, M. (2019). A review of the psychological support mechanisms available for the long-term injured footballers in the UK throughout their rehabilitation. *Science and Medicine in Football, 4*, 22-29.
- Geschwind, N., Peeters, F., Drukker, M., van Os, J., & Wichers, M. (2011). Mindfulness training increases momentary positive emotions and reward experience in adults vulnerable to depression: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology, 79*(5), 618.
- Giges, B. & Reid, G. (2016). *Awareness, Self-Awareness, and Mindfulness: The Application of Theory to Practice. P. 488-512*. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbourne, D., & Richardson, D. (2005). A practitioner-focused approach to the provision of psychological support in soccer: Adopting action research themes and processes. *Journal of sports sciences, 23*(6), 651-658.
- Gill, M. J. (2014). The possibilities of phenomenology for organizational research. *Organizational research methods, 17*(2), 118-137.
- Glass, C. R., Spears, C. A., Perskaudas, R., & Kaufman, K. A. (2019). Mindful sport performance enhancement: Randomized controlled trial of a mental training program with collegiate athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 1*–34.
- Giorgi, A. (2011). IPA and science: A response to Jonathan Smith. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 42*, 195-216.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Goldin, P., & Gross, J. (2010). Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on emotional regulation in social anxiety disorder. *Emotion, 10*, 83-91.

- Goleman, D. (2003). *Destructive emotions. How can we overcome them? A scientific dialogue with the Dalai Lama*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Golsworthy, R., & Coyle, A. (2001). Practitioners' accounts of religious and spiritual dimensions in bereavement therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 14, 183-202.
- Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., ... Lazar, S. W. (2016). Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Management*, 42, 114– 142
- Goodger, K., Gorely, T., Lavalley, D., & Harwood, C. (2007). Burnout in sport: A systematic review. *Sport Psychologist*, 21(2), 127-151.
- Gordhamer, S (2014, March 31). Mindfulness: The Seattle Seahawks' sport psychologist shares why it matters. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mindfulness-the-seattle-s_b_4815477
- Gordon S, Milios D, Grove J. Psychological aspects of the recovery process from sport injury: the perspective of sports physiotherapists. *Aust J Sci Med Sport* 1991;23:53–60.
- Gordon, S., Potter., & Ford. I.W. (1998). Toward a psychoeducational curriculum for training sport-injury rehabilitation personnel. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 10, 140-156.
- Gordon S, Potter M, Hamer P. (2001) The role of the physiotherapist and sport therapist. In: Crossman J, ed. *Coping With Sport Injuries: Psychological Strategies for Rehabilitation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 62–82.
- Gould, D., Dieffenbach, K., & Moffett, A. (2002). Psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions. *Journal of applied sport psychology*, 14(3), 172-204.
- Gratton, C. & Jones, I. (2004). *Research methods for sport studies*. London: Routledge.

- Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioural Assessment*, 26, 41–54
- Grbich, C. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Green, B., Lin, M., McClelland, J. A., Semciw, A. I., Schache, A. G., Rotstein, A. H., ... & Pizzari, T. (2020). Return to play and recurrence after calf muscle strain injuries in elite Australian football players. *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, 48(13), 3306-3315.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. (2001). *Under the medical gaze: Facts and fictions of chronic pain*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Grossman P (2011). Defining mindfulness by how poorly I think I pay attention during everyday awareness and other intractable problems for psychology's (re)invention of mindfulness: comment on Brown et al. (2011). *Psychological Assessment*, 23(4), 1034–1040.
- Gucciardi, D., & Dimmock, J. (2008). Choking under pressure in sensorimotor skills: Conscious processing or depleted attentional resources? *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9, 45-59.
- Gunaratana, H. (2002). *Mindfulness in plain English*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Haberl, P., (2015). Personal communication, August 18. Cited in Henriksen, K., Hansen, J., & Larsen, C. H. (2019). *Mindfulness and acceptance in sport: How to help athletes perform and thrive under pressure*. Routledge.
- Hafenbrack, A. C. (2017). Mindfulness meditation as an on-the-spot workplace intervention. *Journal of Business Research*, 75, 118–129
- Hagger, M., Chatzisarantis, N., Griffin, M., & Thatcher, J., (2005). Injury representations, coping, emotions, and functional outcomes in athletes with sports-related injuries: A test of self-regulation theory. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35, 2345-2374.

- Hägglund, M. (2007). *Epidemiology and prevention of football injuries* (Doctoral dissertation, Institutionen för hälsa och samhälle).
- Halliwell, E. (2010). *Mindfulness Report* Mental Health Foundation available at http://www.livingmindfully.co.uk/downloads/Mindfulness_Report.pdf
- Hamson-Utley JJ, Martin S, Walters J. (2008). Athletic trainers' and physical therapists' perceptions of the effectiveness of psychological skills within sport injury rehabilitation programs. *J Athl Train.* 43: 258–264.
- Haney, T. (2015). The imposter syndrome: Unlocking the fear of being successful and serving as a leader. *NONPF 41st annual meeting conference proceedings*. Retrieved October 21, 2021 from <https://nonpf.confex.com/nonpf/2015md/webprogram/Paper8087.html> [Google Scholar]
- Hanh, T. (1976). *The miracle of mindfulness: A manual for meditation*. Boston, MA: Beacon
- Hardison, M. E., & Roll, S. C. (2016). Mindfulness interventions in physical rehabilitation: A scoping review. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 70(3), 7003290030p1-7003290030p9.
- Hardy, L. J., Jones, G., & Gould, D. (1996). *Understanding psychological preparation for sport: Theory and practice of elite performers*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons
- Harris, L. (2005). Perceptions and attitudes of athletic training students towards a course addressing psychological issues in rehabilitation. *Journal of Allied Health* 34 (2), 101-109.
- Harris, L. L., Demb, A., & Pastore, D. L. (2005). Perceptions and attitudes of athletic training students toward a course addressing psychological issues in rehabilitation. *Journal of Allied Health*, 34, 101-109.
- Harvey, J., and Katz, C. (1985). *If I'm so successful, why do I feel like a fake? The imposter phenomenon*. New York, NY: St. Martin's.

- Hasker, S. M. (2010). *Evaluation of the mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) approach for enhancing athletic performance*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Hasse, L., Kentta, G., Hickman, S., Baltzell, A., & Paulus, M. (2016). Mindfulness Training in Elite Athletes: MPEAK with BMX Cyclists. In A. Baltzell (Ed.), *Mindfulness and Performance* (Current Perspectives in Social and Behavioral Sciences, pp. 186-208). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hassed, C. (2021). Mindfulness: Is it Buddhist or Universal? *American Psychological Association, 49*, 72-88
- Hassed, C. (2013). Mind-body therapies: Use in chronic pain management. *Australian Family Physician, 42*, 112-117.
- Hawley, L. L., Schwartz, D., Bieling, P. J., Irving, J., Corcoran, K., Farb, N. S., et al. (2014). Mindfulness practice, rumination, and clinical outcome in mindfulness-based treatment. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 38*(1), 1–9.
- Hawkins, R. D., Hulse, M. A., Wilkinson, C., Hodson, A., & Gibson, M. (2001). The association football medical research programme: an audit of injuries in professional football. *British journal of sports medicine, 35*(1), 43-47.
- Hayes, S. (2004). Acceptance and commitment therapy, relational frame theory, and the third wave of behavioural and cognitive therapies. *Behaviour Therapy, 35*, 639–65.
- Hayes, S. & Kirk, S. (2004). *A Practical Guide to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Springer
- Hays, K., & Brown, C. (2004). *You're on! Consulting for peak performance*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Hayes, S. C., Luoma, J. B., Bond, F. W., Masuda, A., & Lillis, J. (2006). Acceptance and commitment therapy: Model, processes and outcomes. *Behaviour research and therapy, 44*(1), 1-25.

- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Acceptance and commitment therapy*. New York: Guilford.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K., Wilson, K. G., Bissett, R. T., Pistorello, J., Toarmino, D., ... & McCurry, S. M. (2004). Measuring experiential avoidance: A preliminary test of a working model. *The psychological record*, 54(4), 553-578.
- Heaney, C. (2005). Physiotherapists' perceptions of sport psychology intervention in professional soccer. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4, 67-80.
- Heaney, C. (2006). Physiotherapists' perceptions of sport psychology intervention in professional soccer. *Int. J. Sport Exerc. Psychol.* 4, 73–86.
- Heckman, C. (2018). The effect of mindfulness and meditation in sports performance.
- Heijne, A., Axelsson, K., Werner, S., & Biguet, G. (2008). Rehabilitation and recovery after anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction: patients' experiences. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, 18, 325-335.
- Hemmings, B. & Povey, L. (2002). Views of chartered physiotherapists on the psychological content of their practice: a preliminary study in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 36, 61-64
- Heppner, W. L., Kernis, M. H., Lakey, C. E., Campbell, W. K., Goldman, B. M., Davis, P. J., & Cascio, E. V. (2008). Mindfulness as a means of reducing aggressive behaviour: Dispositional and situational evidence. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 34(5), 486–496.
- Hernandez-Reif, M., Field, T., Krasnegor, J., & Theakston, H. (2001). Lower back pain is reduced and range of motion increased after massage therapy. *International journal of neuroscience*, 106(3-4), 131-145.

- Hess, C., Gnacinski, S., Meyer, B. (2019). A Review of the Sport-Injury and Rehabilitation Literature: From Abstraction to Application. *The Sport Psychologist*, 33, 232-243.
- Heun R., & Pringle A. (2018). Football does not improve mental health: A systematic review on football and mental health disorders. *Glob. Psychiatry*. 25–38.
- Hill, C., & Updegraff, J. (2012). Mindfulness and Its Relationship to Emotional Regulation. *Emotion*, 12, 81-90.
- Hilliard, R. C., Blom, L., Hankemeier, D., & Bolin, J. (2017). Exploring the relationship between athletic identity and beliefs about rehabilitation over adherence in college athletes. *Journal of sport rehabilitation*, 26(3), 208-220.
- Hindman, R. K., Glass, C. R., Arnkoff, D. B., & Maron, D. D. (2015). A comparison of formal and informal mindfulness programs for stress reduction in university students. *Mindfulness*, 6(4), 873–884.
- Hings, R. F., Wagstaff, C. R., Anderson, V., Gilmore, S., & Thelwell, R. C. (2020). Better preparing sports psychologists for the demands of applied practice: The emotional labour training gap. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 32(4), 335-356.
- Hoffman. B. M., Papas. R. K., Chatkoff. D. K., & Kerns, R. D. (2007). Meta-analysis of psychological interventions for chronic low back pain. *Health Psychol*, 26, 1–9
- Holguín-Ramírez, J., Ramos-Jiménez, A., Quezada-Chacón, J. T., Cervantes-Borunda, M. S., & Hernández-Torres, R. P. (2020). Effect of Mindfulness on the Stress–Recovery Balance in Professional Soccer Players during the Competitive Season. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 7091.
- Holzel, B., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramesetti, S., Gard, T. & Lazar, S. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Res* . 191, 36-43.

- Holzel, B., Lazar, S., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D., & Ott, U. (2011). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspect. Psychol. Sci.* 6, 537-599.
- Hopper, D. (2017). Practical Applications of Mindfulness Techniques in Sport. Bachelor's Thesis Degree. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science
- Hughes L., & Leavey G. (2012) Setting the bar: Athletes and vulnerability to mental illness. *Br. J. Psychiatry.* 95–96.
- Hülshager, U. R., Walkowiak, A., & Thommes, M. S. (2018). How can mindfulness be promoted? Workload and recovery experiences as antecedents of daily fluctuations in mindfulness. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, 91(2), 261-284.
- Hussey, J., Weinberg, R., & Assar, A. (2020). Mindfulness in sport: An intervention for a choking-susceptible athlete. *Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4(1), 1-10.
- Hut, M., Glass, C. R., Degnan, K. A., & Minkler, T. O. (2021). The effects of mindfulness training on mindfulness, anxiety, emotion dysregulation, and performance satisfaction among female student-athletes: The moderating role of age. *Asian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1(2), 75-82.
- Hutchins, H. M. (2015). Outing the imposter: A study exploring imposter phenomenon among higher education faculty. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, 27(2), 3- 12.
- Hutchins, H. M., & Rainbolt, H. (2017). What triggers imposter phenomenon among academic faculty? A critical incident study exploring antecedents, coping, and development opportunities. *Human Resource Development International*, 20(3), 194–214.

- Hyland, P. K., Lee, R. A., & Mills, M. J. (2015). Mindfulness at work: A new approach to improving individual and organizational performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 8, 576–602.
- la Cour, P., & Petersen, M. (2015). Effects of mindfulness meditation on chronic pain: a randomized controlled trial. *Pain Medicine*, 16, 641-652.
- le, A., Ngnoumen, C., & Langer, E. (2014). Part 1: Origins and Theory. *The Wiley Handbook of Mindfulness*. Jon Wiley & Sons.
- levleva L, Orlick T. (1991). Mental links to enhanced healing: an exploratory study. *Sport Psychol.* 5:25–40.
- Ivarsson, A. (2015). Psychology of Sport Injury: Prediction, Prevention and Rehabilitation in Swedish Team Sport Athletes. Doctoral thesis, Linnaeus University Press, Växjö.
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., Andersen, M., & Fallby, J. (2015). It pays to pay attention: A mindfulness-based program for injury prevention with soccer players. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27, 1-27.
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., Anderson, M., Tranaeus, U., Stenling, A., & Lindwall, M. (2015)., *Psychological factors impact on the risk of sport injuries: A meta-analysis*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., & Edvardsson, A. (2015). Psychologically based programs for injury prevention in football: a meta-analysis. Paper presented at the 8th World Congress on Science and Football, Copenhagen, Denmark, 20-23 May, 2015.
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., and Podlog, L. (2013). Psychological predictors of injury occurrence: a prospective investigation of professional Swedish soccer players. *J. Sport Rehabil.* 22, 19–26.

- Ivarsson A, Tranaeus U, Johnson U, Stenling A. (2017). Negative psychological responses of injury and rehabilitation adherence effects on return to play in competitive athletes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Open Access J Sports Med.* 8:27-32
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., Karlsson, J., Börjesson, M., Hägglund, M., Andersen, M., & Waldén, M. (2019) Elite female footballers' stories of sociocultural factors, emotions, and behaviours prior to anterior cruciate ligament injury, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17:6, 630-646
- Ivtzan, I., & Hart, R. (2016). *Mindfulness Scholarship and Interventions: A Review*. P. 3-28. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press
- Jackson, P. (1995). *Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior*. New York: Hyperion.
- Jackson, S. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). *Flow in Sports*. Human Kinetics.
- Jackson, S., & Roberts, G. (1992). Positive performance state of athletes: Towards a conceptual understanding of peak performance. *Sport Psychologist*, 6, 156-171.
- Jackson, S. (2016). *Flow and Mindfulness in Performance*. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press
- Jain S, Shapiro SL, Swanick S, Roesch SC, Mills PJ, Bell I, Schwartz GE. A randomized controlled trial of mindfulness meditation versus relaxation training: Effects on distress, positive states of mind, rumination, and distraction. *Annals of Behavioural Medicine*. 2007;33:11–21.
- Jekauc, D., Kittler, C., & Schlagheck, M. (2016). Effectiveness of a mindfulness-based intervention for athletes. *Psychology*, 8(1), 1-13.
- Jamieson, S. D., & Tuckey, M. R. (2016). Mindfulness interventions in the workplace: A critique of the current state of the literature. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 225, 180–193.
- Jevon, S. M., & Johnston, L. H., (2003). The perceived knowledge and attitudes of governing body-chartered physiotherapists towards psychological aspects of rehabilitation. *Physical Therapy in Sport*, 4, 74-81.

- Jha, A., Krompinger, J., & Baime, M. (2007). Mindfulness training modifies subsystems of attention. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioural Neuroscience, 7*, 109-119.
- Jha AP, Stanley EA, Kiyonaga A, Wong L, Gelfand L. Examining the protective effects of mindfulness training on working memory and affective experience. *Emotion. 2010;10(1):54–64.*
- Johnston, L. H., & Carroll, D. (1998). The context of emotional responses to athletic injury: a qualitative analysis. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation, 7(3)*, 206-220.
- Johnson, U., Ekengren, J., & Andersen, M. B. (2005). Injury prevention in Sweden: Helping soccer players at risk. *Journal of sport and exercise psychology, 27(1)*, 32-38.
- Johnson, U., Ivarsson, A., Karlsson, J., Hagglund, M., Walden, M., & Borjesson, M. (2016). Rehabilitation after first-time anterior cruciate ligament injury and reconstruction in female football players: a study of resilience factors. *BMC Sports Sci Med Rehabil 8*, 20
- Johnson, C., & Parry, D. (2015a). Contextualizing qualitative research for social justice. In C. Johnson & D. Parry (Eds.), *Fostering social justice through qualitative inquiry: A methodological guide (pp. 11–22)*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Jones, M. V. (2003). Controlling emotions in sport. *The sport psychologist, 17(4)*, 471-486.
- Josefsson, T., Ivarsson, A., Gustafsson, H., Stenling, A., Lindwall, M., Tornberg, R., & Böröy, J. (2019). Effects of mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) on sport-specific dispositional mindfulness, emotion regulation, and self-rated athletic performance in a multiple-sport population: an RCT study. *Mindfulness, 10(8)*, 1518-1529.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An outpatient program in behavioural medicine for chronic patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: Theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General Hospital Psychiatry, 4 (1)*, 33-47

- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, NY: Delta.
- Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2013). *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1996). Mindfulness meditation: What it is, what it isn't, and its role in health care and medicine. In Y. Haruki, Y. Ishii, and M. Suzuki (Eds.), *Comparative and psychological study on meditation* (pp. 161-170). Delft, Netherlands: Eburon.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: science and Practice*, 10 (2), 144-156.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2004). *Full catastrophe living* ((15th anniversary ed.). London: Piatkus Books Ltd.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. London, UK: Piatkus.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2005). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. 15th Anniversary Edn New York, NY: Delta Trade Paperback/Bantam Dell.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living, revised edition: how to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation*. Hachette UK.
- Kageyama, N. (2014). Practicing self-compassion: performance psychologist Noa Kageyama offers a counterintuitive strategy for becoming more motivated and resilient in the practice room-- and less anxious under pressure. *Flutist Quarterly*, 40(1), 28-32.

- Kamphoff, C. S., Thomaes, J., & Hamson-Utley, J. J. (2013). Integrating the psychological and physiological aspects of sport injury rehabilitation: rehabilitation profiling and phases of rehabilitation. In *The psychology of sport injury and rehabilitation* (pp. 152-173). Routledge.
- Karol, R.L. (2014). Team models in neurorehabilitation: Structure, function, and culture change. *NeuroRehabilitation*, 34, 655–669. PubMed
- Kaufman, K., Glass, C., & Arnkoff, D. (2009). Evaluation of Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE): A New Approach to Promote Flow in Athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 3, 334-356.
- Kaufman, K., Glass, C., & Pineau, T. (2016). *Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MPSE)*. In Amy. L. Baltzell. (2016). *Mindfulness and Performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., & Pineau, T. R. (2018). *Mindful sport performance enhancement: Mental training for athletes and coaches*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kee, Y., & Wang, C. (2008). Relationships between mindfulness, flow dispositions and mental skills adoption: A cluster analytic approach. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9(4), 393–411
- Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 15(2), 257-272.
- Kelly, S., & Waddington, I. (2006). Abuse, intimidation and violence as aspects of managerial control in professional soccer in Britain and Ireland. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 41(2), 147-164.
- Kelly, A., Wilson, M. R., Jackson, D. T., Goldman, D. E., Turnnidge, J., Côté, J., & Williams, C. A. (2020). A multidisciplinary investigation into “playing-up” in academy football according to age phase. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 1-11.
- Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical psychology review*, 31(6), 1041-1056.

- Kerr, C. E., Sacchet, M. D, Lazar, S. W., Moore, C.I., & Jones, S. R. (2013). Mindfulness starts with the body: Somatosensory attention and top-down modulation of cortical alpha rhythms in mindfulness meditation. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 7 (12), 1-15
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2005). The dangers of feeling like a fake. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(9), 108-116.
- Keune PM, & Forintos DP (2010). Mindfulness meditation: a preliminary study on meditation practice during everyday life activities and its association with well-being. *Psychological Topics*, 19(2), 373–386
- Koch, T. (1995). Interpretive approaches in nursing research: The influence of Husserl and Heidegger. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 21, 827-836.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1844) *The Concept of Anxiety*, Trans. R. Thomte, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1980). *The Concept of Anxiety*. (R. Thomte & A. Anderson, Eds. & Trans.). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1844
- Kleiner, M., Kinsella, E., Miciak, M., Teachman, G., McCabe, E., & Walton, D. (2021). An integrative review of the qualities of a ‘good’ physiotherapist. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*, Ahead-of-print, 1-27.
- Knoblich, G. & Oellinger, M. (2006). *The Eureka Moment*. Scientific American Mind.
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-eureka-moment/>
- Koch, T. (1995). Interpretive approaches in nursing research: The influence of Husserl and Heidegger. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 21(5), 827-836.
- Kolt, G. S., & Anderson, M. B. (Eds.). (2004). *Psychology in the physical and manual therapies*. Philadelphia: Churchill Livingstone Inc.
- Konter, E., Beckmann, J., & Mallett, C. J. (2019). Psychological skills for football players. In *Football Psychology* (pp. 179-197). Routledge.

- Konter, E. (2012). Leadership power perceptions of soccer coaches and soccer players according to their education. *Journal of Human Kinetics, 34*, 139.
- Körner, M. (2010). Interprofessional teamwork in medical rehabilitation: A comparison of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team approach. *Clinical Rehabilitation, 24*, 745–755.
- Korobeynikov, G., Korobeinikova, L., & Shatskih, V. (2013). Age, Psycho-Emotional States and Stress Resistance in Elite Wrestlers. *International Journal of Wrestling Science, 3*, 58-69
- Koutures CG, & Gregory AJ, (2010) Injuries in youth soccer. American Academy of Paediatrics. Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness. *Paediatrics 125.*, 410–14.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Touchstone.
- Kumar, S., & Cavallaro, L. (2018). Researcher self-care in emotionally demanding research: A proposed conceptual framework. *Qualitative health research, 28*(4), 648-658.
- Kumar, S., & Jagacinski, C. M. (2006). Imposters have goals too: The imposter phenomenon and its relationship to achievement goal theory. *Personality and Individual Differences, 40*(1), 147-157.
- Kuyken, W., Watkins, E., Holden, E., White, E., Taylor, R., Byford, S., . . . Dalgleish, T. (2010). How does mindfulness-based cognitive therapy works? *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 48*, 1105–1112
- Laborde, S., Dosseville, F., & Allen, M. S. (2015). Emotional Intelligence in Sport and Exercise; A Systematic Review. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 26*, 862-874
- Lafferty, M. E., Kenyon, R., & Wright, C. J. (2008). Club-based and non-club-based physiotherapists' views on the psychological content of their practice when treating sports injuries. *Research in Sports Medicine, 16*, 295-306.

- Lamba, H. & Crossman J. (1997). The knowledge of attitude toward and use of psychological strategies by physiotherapists in injury rehabilitation. *Physiotherapy in Sport* 20:14–17.
- Landhäußer, A., & Keller, J. (2012). Flow and its affective, cognitive, and performance related consequences. In S. Engeser (ed.), *Advances in flow research* (pp. 65-86). New York: Springer.
- Langer, E. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- Langer, E. (1994). Mindfulness and work. In C. Whitmyer (Ed.), *Mindfulness and meaningful work: Explorations in right livelihood* (p. 223-230). Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Langer, E. (2006). *On becoming an artist: Reinventing yourself through mindful creativity*. New York, NY: Ballantine.
- Langer, E., & Moldoveanu, M. (2000). The construct of mindfulness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (1), 1-9.
- Larsen, C., H., & Engell, C. (2013). The Art of Goal Setting: A Tale of Doing Sport Psychology in Professional Football. *Sport Science Review*, 1-2, 49-76
- Larson GA, Starkey C, Zaichkowsky LD. (1996). Psychological aspects of athletic injuries as perceived by athletic trainers. *Sport Psychol.* 10:37–47.
- Laslett, B. (1999). Personal narratives as sociology.
- Laukkonen, R., Schooler, J., & Tangen, J. (2020). Eureka Heuristic: How feelings of insight signal the quality of a new idea.
- Laurie, J., & Blandford, A. (2016). Making time for mindfulness. *International journal of medical informatics*, 96, 38-50.
- Lazar, S., Kerr, C., Wasserman, R., Gray, J., Greve, D., Treadway, M., McGarvey, M., Quinn, B., Dusek, J., Benson, H., Rauch, S., Moore, C., & Fischl, B. (2005). Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. *Neuroreport*, 16, 1893-1897.

- le, A., Ngnoumen, C. T., & Langer, E. J. (Eds.). (2014). *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of mindfulness*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lee, A., Harvey, W., Price, L., Morgan, L., Morgan, N., & Wang, C. (2017). Mindfulness is associated with psychological health and moderates pain in knee osteoarthritis. *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage*, 25(6), 824-831.
- Lentz, T. A., Zeppieri Jr, G., George, S. Z., Tillman, S. M., Moser, M. W., Farmer, K. W., & Chmielewski, T. L. (2015). Comparison of physical impairment, functional, and psychosocial measures based on fear of reinjury/lack of confidence and return-to-sport status after ACL reconstruction. *The American journal of sports medicine*, 43(2), 345-353.
- LeVasseur, J. J. (2003). The problem of bracketing in phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13, 408-420.
- Levin, M. E., Hildebrandt, M. J., Lillis, J., & Hayes, S. C. (2012). The impact of treatment components suggested by the psychological flexibility model: A meta-analysis of laboratory-based component studies. *Behavior therapy*, 43(4), 741-756.
- Levy, B., & Langer, E. (1999). Aging. In M. A. Runco & S. R. Pritzker (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Creativity* (Vol. 1, pp. 45-52). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Levy, D. M., Wobbrock, J. O., Kaszniak, A. W., & Ostergren, M. (2012). The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation Training on Multitasking in a High-Stress Information Environment, *Proceeding of Graphics Interface (GI '12)*. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Information Processing Society, 45-52
- Lewis, J., et al., 2014. Generalizing from qualitative research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls, and R. Ormston, eds., *Qualitative research practice*, 2nd ed. London: Sage, 347–366.

- Librowicz, S. (2017). *Achtsamkeit in der psychosozialen Versorgung. Eine empirische Studie bei MitarbeiterInnen Psychosozialer Beratungsstellen in der Steiermark*. Unpublished dissertation, Universidad Central de Nicaragua.
- Lidor, R., & Blumenstein, B. (2011). Working with adolescent soccer and basketball players from conflicting cultures - A three-dimensional consultation approach. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35, 229–245.
- Lillis, T. (2008). Ethnography as method, methodology, and “Deep Theorizing” closing the gap between text and context in academic writing research. *Written communication*, 25(3), 353-388.
- Linehan, M. M., Bohus, M., & Lynch, T. (2007). Dialectical behavior therapy for pervasive emotion dysregulation. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp. 581– 605). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Little, G. C. D. (2015). *Client-practitioner relationships in sport injury rehabilitation* (Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University).
- Littlewood, M. (2005). *The impact of foreign player acquisition on the development and progression of young players in elite level English professional football*. Liverpool John Moores University (United Kingdom).
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.
- Lindsay, E. K., Chin, B., Greco, C. M., Young, S., Brown, K. W., Wright, A. G., ... & Creswell, J. D. (2018). How mindfulness training promotes positive emotions: Dismantling acceptance skills training in two randomized controlled trials. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 115(6), 944.

- Lindsay, P., Pitt, T., & Thomas, O. (2014). Bewitched by our words: Wittgenstein, language-games, and the pictures that hold sport psychology captive. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review*, Vol. 10, 41-54
- Losche, F (2018). *Investigating the moment when solutions emerge in problem solving*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Plymouth. PEARL. <http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/12838>
- Lu, F. J., & Hsu, Y. (2013). Injured athletes' rehabilitation beliefs and subjective well-being: The contribution of hope and social support. *Journal of athletic training*, 48, 92-98.
- Lutz, A., Brefczynski-Lewis, J., Johnstone, T., & Davidson, R. J. (2008). Regulation of the neural circuitry of emotion by compassion meditation: effects of meditative expertise. *PLoS One*, 3 (3), 1-10
- Lutz, J., Mattout, J., Pagnoni, G. (2019). The epistemic and pragmatic value of non-action: a predictive coding perspective on meditation. *Current Opinion in Psychology*,
- MacKay D. G. (1982). The problems of flexibility, fluency and speed-accuracy trade-off in skilled behavior. *Psychol. Rev.* 89, 483–506. 1
- Mackenzie, C., Poulin, P., & Seidman-Carlson, R. (2006). A brief mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention for nurses and nurse aides. *Applied Nursing Research*, 19, 105-109
- Madigan, D. J., Gustafsson, H., Smith, A., Raedeke, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). The BASES expert statement on burnout in sport. *The sport and exercise scientist*, 61, 6-7.
- Mahoney, J., & Hanrahan, S. J. (2011). A brief educational intervention using acceptance and commitment therapy: Four injured athletes' experiences. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 5(3), 252-273.

- Maitland, A. (2012). *Organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships: An ethnographic study of an elite rowing club* (Doctoral dissertation, Brunel University School of Sport and Education PhD Theses).
- Malterud, K. (2001). Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *The lancet*, 358(9280), 483-488.
- Mani, M., Kavanagh, D. J., Hides, L., & Stoyanov, S. R. (2015). Review and evaluation of mindfulness-based iPhone apps. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth*, 3, e82.
- Manotas M, Segura C, Eraso M, Oggins J, McGovern K. Association of brief mindfulness training with reductions in perceived stress and distress in Colombian health care professionals. *International Journal of Stress Management*. 2014;21:207–225.
- Manuel, J. C., Shilt, J. S., Curl, W. W., Smith, J. A., Durant, R. H., Lester, L., & Sinal, S. H. (2002). *Coping with sports injuries: An examination of the adolescent athlete*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31, 391-393.
- Marlett, G. & Kristeller, J. (2008). Mindfulness and medicine. In W. R. Miller (Ed.), *Integrating spirituality in treatment* (p. 67-84). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books.
- Martikainen P, Bartley M, Lahelma E. (2002). Psychosocial determinants of health in social epidemiology. *International Journal of Epidemiology*; 31:1091-3.
- Martindale, R. J. J., & Mortimer, P. (2011). Talent Development Environments - Key Considerations 16 LARSEN, ALFERMANN, HENRIKSEN, AND CHRISTENSEN²⁷³ for Effective Practice. In D. Collins, H. Richards, & A. Button (Eds.), *Performance psychology* (pp. 61–77). Kidlington: Elsevier
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

- May, R. (1983). *The Discovery of Being*. New York: Norton
- McCarthy, J., & Hayden, L. (2016). Utilizing Mindfulness Strategies in Mentoring and Coaching Socially Vulnerable Youth. In A. L. Baltzell (Eds.), *Mindfulness and Performance* (p. 464 – 487), Cambridge University Press
- McDougall, M, Nesti, MS and Richardson, DJ (2015) The Challenges of Sport Psychology Delivery in Elite and Professional Sport: Reflections from Experienced Sport Psychologists. *SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST*, 29 (3). pp. 265- 277.
- McDougall, M., N. Ronkainen, D. Richardson, M. Littlewood, and M. Nesti. 2019. “Three Team and Organisational Culture Myths and Their Consequences for Sport Psychology Research and Practice.” *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 13: 1–16.
- McIlveen, P. (2008). Auto ethnography as a method for reflexive research and practice invocational psychology. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 17(2), 13.
- McMahon, J. (2016). Creative analytical practices. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 324-337). Routledge.
- Meadows, L., & Williams, J. (2009). An understanding of functional movement as a basis for clinical reasoning. *Bobath Concept*, 23.
- Mellalieu, S. D. 2017. “Sport Psychology Consulting in Professional Rugby Union in the United Kingdom.” *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* 8 (2): 109–120.
- Melvin, J. L. (1980). Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary activities and the ACRM. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 61(8), 379–380.
- Michalak, J., Crane, C., Germer, C. K., Gold, E., Heidenreich, T., Mander, J., ... & Segal, Z. V. (2019). Principles for a responsible integration of mindfulness in individual therapy. *Mindfulness*, 10(5), 799-811.

- Miller, I. (1993). *The Self-Aware Universe – A Synopsis of Amit Goswami’s Theory of Physics and Psychic Phenomena*. The Synergetic Qabala Website.
https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/ciencia_psicho08.htm
- Miller, J. (1993). The Unveiling of Traumatic Memories and Emotions Through Mindfulness and Concentration Meditation: Clinical Implications and Three Case Reports. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 25*, 169-180
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Mindfulness in Schools. (2016, March 20). Mindfulness research.
https://mindfulnessinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/MI_Building-the-Case_v1.1_Oct16-1.pdf
- Minkler T., Glass, C., & Hut, M. (2021). Mindfulness training for a college team: Feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness from within an athletic department. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 33*, 606-626
- Mistretta, E., Glass, C., Spears, C., Perskaudas, R., Kaufman, K., Hoyer, D. (2017). Collegiate Athletes’ Expectations and Experiences with Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 11*, 201-221.
- Mitchell, T. O., Nesti, M., Richardson, D., Midgley, A. W., Eubank, M., & Littlewood, M. (2014). Exploring athletic identity in elite-level English youth football: A cross-sectional approach. *Journal of sports sciences, 32*(13), 1294-1299.
- Mohammed, W. A., Pappous, A., & Sharma, D. (2018). Effect of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in increasing pain tolerance and improving the mental health of injured athletes. *Frontiers in psychology, 9*, 722.

- Moore, Z.E. (2003). Toward the development of an evidence-based practice of sport psychology: A structured qualitative study of performance enhancement interventions (Doctoral Dissertation, La Salle University, 2003). Dissertation Abstracts International-B, 64 (10), 5227.
- Moore, Z.E., & Gardner, F.L. (2001, October). Taking applied sport psychology from research to practice: Integrating empirically supported interventions into a self-regulatory model of athletic performance. Workshop presented at the meeting of the Annual Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology, Orlando, FL.
- Moore, Z.E., & Gardner, F.L. (2002, August). Psychological skills training for athletic performance enhancement: An evidence-based approach. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- Moore, Z.E., & Gardner, F.L. (2003, August). A protocol for Mindfulness-Acceptance Commitment (MAC) approach to athletic performance enhancement. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.
- Morrell, K., Loan-Clarke, J. & Wilkinson, A., 2004. Organisational change and employee turnover. *Personnel Review*, 33(2), pp. 161-173.
- Mostofsky, S. H., & Simmonds, D. J. (2008). Response inhibition and response selection: two sides of the same coin. *Journal of cognitive neuroscience*, 20(5), 751-761.
- Moynihan, J., Chapman, B., Klorman, R., Krasner, M., Duberstein, P., Brown, K., & Talbot N. (2013). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Older Adults: Effects of Executive Function, Frontal Alpha Asymmetry, and Immune Function. *Neuropsychobiology*, 68.
- Mrazek MD, Franklin MS, Phillips DT, Baird B, Schoole JW. Mindfulness training improves working memory capacity and GRE performance while reducing mind wandering. *Psychological Science*. 2013;24(5):776-781
- Mumford, G. (2015). *The Mindful Athlete: Secrets to pure performance*. USA. Parallax Press

- Muirhead, B, Blum, K.D.: Advising online dissertation students. *Educational Technology & Society*, 9(1), 1-8, 2006.
- Naderi, A., Shaabani, F., Zandi, H. G., Calmeiro, L., & Brewer, B. W. (2020). The effects of a mindfulness-based program on the incidence of injuries in young male soccer players. *Journal of sport and exercise psychology*, 42(2), 161-171.
- Nakamura, J. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). *The construction of meaning through vital engagement*. In Flourishing, eds. C. Keyes and J. Haidt, 83-104. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books.
- Nakamura, J. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder and S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (p. 89-105), Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Nehra, D. K., Nehra, S., & Dogra, R. (2012). Positive psychological functioning with mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) program. *Biopsychosocial Issues in Positive Health*. Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House,
- Nesti, M. (2004). *Existential psychology and sport: Theory and application*. London: Routledge.
- Nesti, M. (2010). *Psychology in Football: Working with Elite and Professional Players*. London: Routledge.
- Nesti, M., Littlewood, M., O'Halloran, L., Eubank, M., & Richardson, D. (2012). Critical moments in elite premiership football: Who do you think you are? *Physical Culture and Sport*, 56, 23.
- Nesti, M., & C. Sulley. 2014. *Youth Development in Football: Lessons from the World's Best Academies*. London: Routledge. [Crossref](#).
- Nicholls, A. R., Polman, R. C., & Holt, N. L. (2005). The effects of an individualized imagery interventions on flow states and golf performance. *Athletic insight*, 7(1).
- Nideffer, R. (2002). *Getting into the Optimal Performance State*. PhD.

- Nielsen, L., & Kaszniak, A. (2006). Awareness of subtle emotional feelings: A comparison of long-term meditators and nonmeditators. *Emotion, 6*, 392–405.
- Nien, J. T., Wu, C. H., Yang, K. T., Cho, Y. M., Chu, C. H., Chang, Y. K., & Zhou, C. (2020). Mindfulness training enhances endurance performance and executive functions in athletes: An event-related potential study. *Neural plasticity, 2020*.
- Niven, A. (2007). Rehabilitation adherence in sport injury: Sport physiotherapist' perceptions. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation, 16*, 93-110.
- Noetel, M., Ciarrochi, J., Van Zanden, B., & Lonsdale, C. (2019). Mindfulness and acceptance approaches to sporting performance enhancement: A systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 12*(1), 139-175.
- Oguntuase, S. B., & Sun, Y. (2022). Effects of mindfulness training on resilience, self-confidence and emotion regulation of elite football players: The mediating role of locus of control. *Asian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.
- Oken BS, Chamine I, & Wakeland W (2015). A systems approach to stress, stressors and resilience in humans. *Behavioural Brain Research, 282*, 144–154.
- Ong, A. D., Bergeman, C. S., Bisconti, T. L., & Wallace, K. A. (2006). Psychological resilience, positive emotions, and successful adaptation to stress in later life. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 91*(4), 730.
- Orlick, T. (1990). *In pursuit of excellence*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Ormston, R., Spencer, L., Barnard, M., & Snape, D. (2014). The foundations of qualitative research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. Nicholls & R. Ormston (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (pp. 1-25). Los Angeles: Sage.

- Pack, S., Hemmings, B., & Arvinen-Barrow, M., (2014). The Self-Practice of Sport Psychologists: Do They Practice What They Preach. *Sport Psychologist, 28*, 189-210.
- Pfirmsmann, D., Herbst, M., Ingelfinger, P., Simon, P., & Tug, S. (2016). Analysis of injury incidences in male professional adult and elite youth soccer players: a systematic review. *Journal of athletic training, 51*(5), 410-424.
- Pain, M. A., & Harwood, C. G. (2004). Knowledge and perceptions of sport psychology within English soccer. *Journal of sports sciences, 22*(9), 813-826.
- Pain, M. A., & Harwood, C. G. (2008). The performance environment of the England youth soccer teams: A quantitative investigation. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 26*(11), 1157-1169.
- Paliktzoglou, V., & Suhonen, J. (2011). Part-time online PhD reflection: Train of thoughts. *Procedia Computer Science, 3*, 149-154.
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pappous, A., Mohammed, W. A., & Sharma, D. (2021). Physiotherapists' experiences with a four-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *European Journal of Physiotherapy, 23*, 305-310.
- Parker, A., (1995). Great Expectations: Grimness or Glamour? The Football Apprentice in the 1990s. *The Sport Historian*, pp. 107-126.
- Parkman, A. (2016). The imposter phenomenon in higher education: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 16*(1), 51-60.
- Pearson, L., & Jones, G. (1992). Emotional effects of sports injuries: implications for physiotherapists. *Physiotherapy, 78*, 762-770.

- Pecen, E., Collins, D., & MacNamara, Á. (2016). Music of the night: Performance practitioner considerations for enhancement work in music. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology, 5*(4), 377.
- Pedler, M., and K. Aspinwall. 2009. CLP leadership facilitation skills programme 2008/2009. First Evaluation Report to Action Learning Associates
- Pen, Lorette J. and Craig A. Fisher. (1994). Athletes and Pain Tolerance. *Sports Medicine* 18, 496 no. 5 319-329. 497.
- Perna, F. M., Antoni, M. H., Baum, A., Gordon, P., & Schneiderman, N. (2003). Cognitive behavioral stress management effects on injury and illness among competitive athletes: a randomized clinical trial. *Annals of behavioral medicine, 25*(1), 66-73.
- Perrent, K. (2014). Can acceptance and commitment therapy increase rehabilitation adherence for the treatment of sport injury? (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3636935)
- Petitpas A, Danish SJ. Caring for injured athletes. In: Murphy S, ed. *Sport Psychology Interventions*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics; 1995:255–281. 26.
- Pickert, K. (2014). The mindful revolution. *TIME magazine, 3*(2014), 2163560-1.
- Pidgeon AM, Ford L, Klaassen F. Evaluating the effectiveness of enhancing resilience in human service professionals using a retreat-based mindfulness with Metta Training Program: A randomised control trial. *Psychology, Health, and Medicine. 2014;19:355–64.*
- Pineau, T., Glass, C. & Kaufman, K. (2009). *Mindfulness in Sport Performance*. Cited in A. Ie, C. Ngnoumen, & E. Langer (Eds.), *Handbook of Mindfulness*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell
- Pineau, T. R., Glass, C. R., Kaufman, K. A., & Bernal, D. R. (2014). Self-and team-efficacy beliefs of rowers and their relation to mindfulness and flow. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 8*(2), 142-158.

- Pineau, T., Glass, C., Kaufman, K., Minkler, T. (2019). From losing record to championship season: a case study of mindful sport performance enhancement. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 10, 244-254.
- Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism* (Vol. 2). Sage.
- Podlog, L., & Eklund, R. C. (2007). The psychosocial aspects of a return to sport following serious injury: A review of the literature from a self-determination perspective. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 8, 535-566.
- Podlog, L., Dimmock, J., & Miller, J. (2010). A review of return to sport concerns following injury rehabilitation strategies for enhancing recovery outcomes. *Physical Therapy in Sport*, 12, 36-42.
- Podlog, L., Heil, J., & Schulte, S. (2014). Psychosocial factors in sports injury rehabilitation and return to play. *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America*, 25, 915-930.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Pope JP, Stewart NW, Law B, et al. (2015). Knowledge translation of sport psychology to coaches: coaches' use of online resources. *Int J Sports Sci Coach*, 10: 1055–1070.
- Powietrzynska, M., Tobin, K., & Alexakos, K. (2015). Facing the grand challenges through heuristics and mindfulness. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 10(1), 65-81.
- Prentice, W. E., & Arnhem, D. (2011). *Principles of athletic training: A competency-based approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Privette, G. (1981). Dynamics of peak performance. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 21(1), 57-67.
- Putukian, M. (2016). The psychological response to injury in student athletes: a narrative review with a focus on mental health. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 50(3), 145-148.

- Quartiroli, A., Wagstaff, C., Thelwell, R. (2021). The what and the how of selfcare for sport psychology practitioners: A delphi study. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, Ahead of Print, 1-20.
- Rae, K., & Orchard, J. (2007). The orchard sports injury classification system (OSICS) version 10. *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine*, 17(3), 201-204.
- Randall, W. L., & Phoenix, C. (2009). The problem with truth in qualitative interviews: reflections from a narrative perspective. *Qualitative research in sport and exercise*, 1(2), 125-140.
- Ravizza, K. (1977). Peak experiences in sport. *Journal of Humanistic psychology*.
- Ravizza, K. (1988). Gaining entry with athletic personnel for season long consulting. *The Sport 20 Psychologist*, 2, 243-242.
- Ray, R., Terrell, T., & Hough, D. (1999). The role of the sports medicine professional in counselling athletes. In R. Ray., & D. M. Weise-Bjornstal (Eds.). *Counselling in sports medicine*. Champaign, IL; Human Kinetics.
- Raya-Castellano, E. P., & Uriondo, L. F. (2015). A review of the multidisciplinary approach to develop elite players at professional football academies: Applying science to a professional context. *International Journal of Performance Analysis in Sport*, 15(1), 1-19.
- Reb J, Narayanan J, Ho ZW. Mindfulness at work: Antecedents and consequences of employee awareness and absentmindedness. *Mindfulness*. 2013;6(1):111-122.
- Reb J, Narayanan J, Chaturvedi S. Leading mindfully: two studies on the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee wellbeing and performance. *Mindfulness*. 2012;5(1):36-45.
- Reed-Danahay, D. E. (1997). Bridges to Humanity: Narratives on Anthropology and Friendship. *American Ethnologist*, 24(1), 220-220.

- Rees T, Mitchell I, Evans L, Hardy L. (2010) Stressors, social support, and psychological responses to sport injury in high- and low-performance standard participants. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11:505-512.
- Reese, L. M. S., Pittsinger, R., and Yang, J. (2012). Effectiveness of psychological intervention following sport injury. *J. Sport Health Sci.* 1, 71–79.
- Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: An overview and methodological review. *The Psychologist*, 18, 20-23.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative inquiry*, 6(2), 253-255.
- Richardson, D., Littlewood, M., & Gilbourne, D. (2005). Homegrown or Home Nationals? Some Considerations on the Local Training Debate. Insight Live
https://ice.thefa.com/ice/livelink.exe/fetch/2000/10647/466509/477135/477257/Homegrown_or_Home_Nationals._The_Case_for_the_Local_Training_Debate.?nodeid=675785&vernum=
- Richardson, L.P., Ludman, E., McCauley, E., Lindenbaum, J., Larison, C., Zhou, C., . . .Katon, W. (2014). Collaborative care for adolescents with depression in primary care. *JAMA*, 312(8), 809–816.
- Robertson, J. (2018). Dealing with imposter syndrome. In *EqualBITE* (pp. 146-151). Brill.
- Roderick, M. (2006). *The work of professional football*. Taylor & Francis.
- Rogers, T. J., & Landers, D. M. (2005). Mediating effects of peripheral vision in the life event stress/athletic injury relationship. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 27, 271-288.
- Rooks, J. D., Morrison, A. B., Goolsarran, M., Rogers, S. L., & Jha, A. P. (2017). “We are talking about practice”: The influence of mindfulness vs. relaxation training on athletes’ attention and well-being over high-demand intervals. *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement*, 1(2), 141–153.

- Roemer, L., & Orsillo, S. M. (2002). Expanding our conceptualization of and treatment for generalized anxiety disorder: Integrating mindfulness/acceptance-based approaches with existing cognitive-behavioural models. *Clinical Psychology-Science and Practice*, 9, 54-68.
- Ronkainen, Noora J.; Nesti, Mark S. (2015). An existential approach to sport psychology: Theory and applied practice. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, (), 1–13.
- Roper, E. A. (2008). Women's career experiences in applied sport psychology. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 20(4), 408-424.
- Roper, E. A., Fisher, L. A., & Wrisberg, C. A. (2005). Professional women's career experiences in sport psychology: A feminist standpoint approach. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19(1), 32-50.
- Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51, 432-451.
- Rotella, B. & Cullen, B. (2004). *The golfer's mind: Play to play great*. New York: Free Press.
- Röthlin, P., Birrer, D., & Horvath, S. (2016). Psychological skills training and a mindfulness-based intervention to enhance functional athletic performance: design of a randomized controlled trial using ambulatory assessment. *BMC psychology*, 4(1), 1-11.
- Röthlin, P., Horvath, S., Trösch, S. *et al.* (2020). Differential and shared effects of psychological skills training and mindfulness training on performance-relevant psychological factors in sport: a randomized controlled trial. *BMC Psychol* 8, 80.
- Roulston, K. (2001). Data analysis and 'theorizing as ideology'. *Qualitative research*, 1(3), 279-302.
- Roychowdhury, D., Ronkainen, N., & Guinto, M. L. (2021). The transnational migration of mindfulness: A call for reflective pause in sport and exercise psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 56, 101958.

- Ruddock-Hudson, M., O'Halloran, P., & Murphy, G. (2012). *Exploring psychological reactions to injury in the Australian Football League (AFL)*. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 24, 375-390.
- Ruddock-Hudson, M., O'Halloran, P., and Murphy, G. (2014). The psychological impact of long-term injury on Australian football league players. *J. Appl. Sport Psychol.* 26, 377–394.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salmon, P. (2003). How do we recognise good research? *The Psychologist*, 16, 24-27.
- Salmon, P., Santorelli, S., Sephton, S., & Kabat-Zinn, J (2009). Intervention elements promoting adherence to mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs in clinical behavioural medicine setting. In S. A. Schumaker, J. K. Ockene, & K. A. Riekert (Eds.), *The handbook of health behaviour change* (3rd ed., pp.271-286). New York, NY: Springer
- Sakulku, J. & Alexander, J. (2011). The imposter phenomenon. *International Journal of Behavioural Science*, 6(1), 73-92.
- Sappington, R., & Longshore, K. (2015). Systematically reviewing the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions for enhanced athletic performance. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 9(3), 232–262.
- Sauers, E. L., Dykstra, D. L., Bay, R. C., Bliven, K. H., & Snyder, A. R. (2011). Upper extremity injury history, current pain rating, and health-related quality of life in female softball pitchers. *Journal of sport rehabilitation*, 20(1), 100-114.
- Schaffran, P., Altfeld, S., & Kellmann, M. (2016). Burnout in sport coaches: A review of correlates, measurement and intervention. *Deutsche zeitschrift für sportmedizin*, 67(5), 121-126.
- Schinke, R. J., Blodgett, A. T., McGannon, K. R., & Ge, Y. (2016). Finding one's footing on foreign soil: A composite vignette of elite athlete acculturation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 25, 36-43.

- Schwanhausser, L. (2009). Application of the mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) protocol with an adolescent springboard diver. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 3*(4), 377-395.
- Scott-Hamilton, J., & Schutte, N. (2016). The role of adherence in the effects of a mindfulness intervention for competitive athletes: changes in mindfulness, flow, pessimism, and anxiety. *Journal of clinical sport psychology, 10*, 99-117
- Scott-Hoy, K. (2002). What kind of mother...? An ethnographic short story. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(3), 273-279.
- Segal, S. J. (Ed.). (2014). *Imagery: Current cognitive approaches*. Academic Press.
- Segal ZV, Bieling P, Young T, MacQueen G, Cooke R, Martin L, & Levitan RD (2010). Antidepressant monotherapy vs. sequential pharmacotherapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, or placebo, for relapse prophylaxis in recurrent depression. *Archives in General Psychiatry, 67*(12), 1256– 1264
- Segal, Z. V., Teasdale, J. D., Williams, J. M., & Gemar, M. C. (2002). The mindfulness-based cognitive therapy adherence scale: Inter-rater reliability, adherence to protocol and treatment distinctiveness. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, 9*(2), 131-138.
- Seminowicz, D. A. Davis K. D. (2007). A re-examination of pain–cognition interactions: implications for neuroimaging. *Pain 130*, 8–13.
- Shannon, S., Hanna, D., Haughey, T., Leavey, G., McGeown, C., & Breslin, G. (2019). Effects of a mental health intervention in athletes: Applying self-determination theory. *Frontiers in psychology, 10*, 1875.
- Shapiro, S. L., Bootzin, R. R., Figueredo, A. J., Lopez, A. M., & Schwartz, G. E. (2003). The efficacy of mindfulness-based stress reduction in the treatment of sleep disturbance in women with breast cancer: an exploratory study. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 54*, 85–91.

Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Astin, J., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 62*, 373-386.

Sharp, L. A., Hodge, K., & Danish, S. (2015). Ultimately it comes down to the relationship: Experienced consultants' views of effective sport psychology consulting. *The Sport Psychologist, 29*, 358-370.

Sheldon, K. M., Prentice, M., & Halusic, M. (2015). The experiential incompatibility of mindfulness and flow absorption. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 6*(3), 276-283

Sherman, R. (2013) Imposter Syndrome: When You Feel Like You're Faking It, 8 AM. *NURSE TODAY* 57, 57-58

Shinebourne, P. (2011). The Theoretical Underpinnings of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). *Existential Analysis: Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis, 22*(1).

Shortway, K., Wolanin, A., Block-Lerner, J., Marks, D. (2018). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for injured athletes: Development and preliminary feasibility of the return to ACTION protocol. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 12*, 1-23.

Shumaker SA, Brownell A. Toward a theory of social support: Closing conceptual gaps. *Journal of Social. 1984; 40:11-36.*

Sheldon, K.M., Prentice, M., & Halusic, M. (2015). The Experiential Incompatibility of Mindfulness and Flow Absorption. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 6* (3), 276-283

Sibinga, E., Perry-Parrish, C., Chung, S., Johnson, A., Smith, M., & Ellen, J. (2013). School-based mindfulness instruction for urban male youth: A small randomised controlled trial. *Preventative Medicine, 57*, 799-801.

Siegel, Daniel J. (2007). *The mindful brain: reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being.* New York: W.W. Norton.

- Siegel, Ronald D. (2010). *The mindfulness solution: everyday practices for everyday problems*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Sinclair, L.B., Longard, L.A., & Mohabeer, R.N. (2009). What's so great about rehabilitation teams? An ethnographic study of interprofessional collaboration in a rehabilitation unit. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 90, 1196–1201.
- Smith, D. (2013). *Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks
- Smith, J. A. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology". *Psychology and Health*, 11, 261-271.
- Smith, J.A. (1999). Towards a relational self: Social engagement during pregnancy and psychological preparation for motherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 409-426.
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 1(1), 39-54.
- Smith, B (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences, *Qualitative Research In Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10, 137-149.
- Smith, B., & McGannon, K. (2017): Developing rigor in qualitative research: problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology, *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10, 1317357
- Smith, A. M., & Milliner, E. K. (1994). Injured athletes and the risk of suicide. *Journal of athletic training*, 29(4), 337.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003) Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. London: Sage.

- Smith, K. S., Smith, A. C., & Stanford, J. (2013, March). Sparking the imagination - exploring the eureka moment. *International Journal of Architectural Research*, 7
- Snape, D., & Spencer, L. (2003). The foundations of qualitative research In J. Richie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 1-23). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Spalding, N. J., & Phillips, T. (2007). Exploring the use of vignettes: From validity to trustworthiness. *Qualitative health research*, 17(7), 954-962.
- Sparkes, A. C. (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: Reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of sport journal*, 17(1), 21-43.
- Sparkes, A.C. & Smith, B., 2014. *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and health: from process to product*. London: Routledge.
- Spencer, A. L., Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., & Pineau, T. R. (2019). Mindful sport performance enhancement in action: A case study with an elite football academy. In K. JOURNAL OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION 253 Henriksen, C. Larsen, & J. Hanson (Eds.), *Mindfulness and Acceptance Approaches in Elite Sport: A Practical Guide to Performing and Thriving Under Pressure*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Spielberger, C. D., & Hackfort, D. (1989). *Anxiety in sports: An international perspective*.
- Stahl, B., and Goldstein, E. (2010). *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Case study: Composition and performance. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 31-44.
- Stambulova, N., Stephan, Y., & Jarphag, U. (2007). Athletic retirement: A cross-national comparison of elite French Swedish athletes. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 8 101-118.
- Stiller-Ostrowski JL, Hamson-Utley JJ. (2010) Athletic trainers' educational satisfaction and technique use within the psychosocial intervention and referral content area. *Athl Train Educ J*. 5:4–11.

- Stubbe, J. H., van Beijsterveldt, A. M. M., van der Knaap, S., Stege, J., Verhagen, E. A., Van Mechelen, W., & Backx, F. J. (2015). Injuries in professional male soccer players in the Netherlands: a prospective cohort study. *Journal of athletic training, 50*(2), 211-216.
- Su, N., Si, G., & Zhang, C.-Q. (2019). Mindfulness and acceptance-based training for Chinese athletes: The mindfulness-acceptance-insight-commitment (MAIC) program. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 10*(4), 255–263
- Sullivan, M. J., Thorn, B., Haythornthwaite, J. A., Keefe, F., Martin, M., Bradley, L. A., & Lefebvre, J. C. (2001). Theoretical perspectives on the relation between catastrophizing and pain. *Clin J Pain, 17*, 52–64.
- Sundgot-Borgen, J. (1994). Risk and trigger factors for the development of eating disorders in female elite athletes. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.*
- Swann, C., Keegan, R., Piggott, D., & Crust, L. (2012). A systematic review of the experience, occurrence, and controllability of flow in elite sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*(6), 807-819.
- Swann, C., Crust, L., Keegan, R., Piggott, D. & Hemmings, B. (2015). An inductive exploration into the experience of flow in European Tour golfers. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 7*, 210-234.
- Tamminen, K. A., & Bennett, E. V. (2017). No emotion is an island: An overview of theoretical perspectives and narrative research on emotions in sport and physical activity. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 9*(2), 183-199.
- Tang, Y. Y., Hölzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I. (2015). The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 16*(4), 213-225.
- Tang, Y. Y., & Posner, M. I. (2013). Special issue on mindfulness neuroscience. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 8*(1), 1-3.

- Tatsumi, T., and Takenouchi, T. (2014). Causal relationships between the psychological acceptance process of athletic injury and athletic rehabilitation behaviour. *J. Phys. Ther. Sci.* 26, 1247–1257.
- Taylor, J., & Taylor, S. (1997). *Psychological approaches to sports injury rehabilitation*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.
- Taylor, M., Hageman, J., Brown, M. (2016). A Mindfulness Intervention for Residents: Relevance for Paediatricians. *Paediatric Annals*, e373-e376.
- Teasdale, J., Seagal, Z., & Williams J. (1995). How does cognitive therapy prevent depressive relapse and why should attentional control (mindfulness) training help? *Behavioural Research and Therapy*, 33, 25-39.
- Teasdale, J. Segal, Z., Williams, J., Ridgeway, V., Soulsby, J., & Lau, M. (2000). Prevention of relapse/recurrence in major depression by mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. *J. consult. Clin. Psychol*, 68, 615-623.
- Thanissaro Bhikkhu (2007). Strength training for the mind. *Access to Insight*. Retrieved from <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/strengthtraining.html>
- The Premier League. (2020) Premier League Handbook 21/22. Retrieved 16th May 2022, from <https://resources.premierleague.com/premierleague/document/2020/09/23/9af878e5-d485-4683-87d9-4e4c3834d3bf/PL-2020-21-YD-Rules.pdf>
- Thienot, E., Jackson, B., Dimmock, J., Grove, J. R., Bernier, M., & Fournier, J. F. (2014). Development and preliminary validation of the mindfulness inventory for sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(1), 72-80.
- Thomson, D., Gowing, F., English, M., & Hassenkamp, A. (2017). Exploring the Role of Mindfulness as a Potential Self-Management Strategy for Physiotherapy Students when on Clinical

- Placement. *International Journal of Practice-based Learning in Health and Social Care*, 5, 19-37.
- Tingaz, E. O., Kizar, O., Bulğay, C., & Çetin, E. (2021). Mindfulness in male soccer players: A cross-sectional study. *IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*, (15), 388-399.
- Tjong, V. K., Murnaghan, M. L., Nyhof-Young, J. M., & Ogilvie-Harris, D. J. (2014). A qualitative investigation of the decision to return to sport after anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction to play or not to play. *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, 42, 336-342
- Tod, D., Andersen, M., & Marchant, D. (2011). Six years up: Applied sport psychologists surviving (and thriving) after graduation. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23, 93–109.
- Touroni, E., & Coyle, A. (2000). What does it mean to be a donor offspring? The identity experiences of adults conceived by donor insemination and the implications for counselling and therapy. *Human Reproductions*, 15, 2041-2051.
- Tracey, J. (2003). The emotional response to the injury and rehabilitation process. *J. Appl. Sport Psychol.* 15, 279–293.
- Tranaeus, U., Johnson, U., Engström, B., Skillgate, E., & Werner, S. (2015). A psychological injury prevention group intervention in Swedish floorball. *Knee Surgery, Sports Traumatology, Arthroscopy*, 23, 3414-3420.
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British journal of management*, 14(3), 207-222.
- Tripp, D. A., Stanish, W., Ebel-Lam, A., Brewer, B. W., & Birchard, J. (2007). Fear of reinjury, negative affect, and catastrophizing predicting return to sport in recreational athletes with anterior cruciate ligament injuries at 1 year postsurgery. *Rehabilitation psychology*, 52(1), 74.

- Tsebe, K. B., & Van Niekerk, R. L. (2021). Effect of a 7-week Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment intervention programme on mental toughness: An experimental study of male league softball players. *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences (AJPHEs)*, 27(2), 192-201.
- Tuffour, I. (2017). *A Critical Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Contemporary Qualitative Research Approach*. *J Health Commun.* 2:52.
- Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 86(2), 320.
- Twizell, O., & Hanley, T. (2021). Counselling, psychotherapy and training the football elite. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(4), 855-858.
- Udry, E., Gould, D., Bridges, D., & Tuffey, S. (1997). People helping people? Examining the social ties of athletes coping with burnout and injury stress. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19(4), 368-395.
- Vago, D. R. (2014). Mapping modalities of self-awareness in mindfulness practice: a potential mechanism for clarifying habits of mind. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1307(1), 28-42.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. University of Chicago Press.
- Van Vliet, K. J., Foskett, A. J., Williams, J. L., Singhal, A., Dolcos, F., & Vohra, S. (2017). Impact of a mindfulness-based stress reduction program from the perspective of adolescents with serious mental health concerns. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 22(1), 16-22.
- Vago, D. R., & Silbersweig, D. A. (2012). Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): a framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 6, 296.

- Varsson, A. (2015). *Psychology of Sport Injury: Prediction, Prevention and Rehabilitation in Swedish Team Sport Athletes*. Doctoral thesis, Linnaeus University Press, Växjö.
- Vaughan, J., Mallett, C., Potrac, P., Lopez-Felip, M., & Davids, K. (2021). Football, Culture, Skill Development and sport Coaching: Extending Ecological Approaches in Athlete Development Using the Skilled Intentionality Framework. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 27-59
- Vealey SR. Mental skills training in sport. In: Tenenbaum G, Eklund RC, editors. *Handbook of sport psychology*. Hoboken: Wiley; 2007. p. 287–309.
- Veehof, M. M., Oskam, M. J., Schreurs, K. M., & Bohlmeijer, E. T. (2011). Acceptance-based interventions for the treatment of chronic pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Pain®*, *152*(3), 533-542.
- Venkatesh, S., Raju, T., Shivani, Y., Tompkins, G., and Meti, B. (1997). A study of structure of phenomenology of consciousness in meditative and non-meditative states. *Ind. J. Physiol. Pharmacol.* *41*, 149–153.
- Villemure. C, & Bushnell. M, C. (2002). Cognitive modulation of pain: how do attention and emotion influence pain processing? *Pain, 95*, 195–9.
- Vlaeyen. J. W., Linton, S. J. (2000). Fear avoidance and its consequences in musculoskeletal pain: a state of the art. *Pain, 85*, 317–32.
- Wagstaff, C. R. D. (2017a). Organizational psychology in sport: An introduction. In Wagstaff, C. R. D. (Ed.), *The organizational psychology of sport: Key issues and practical applications* (pp. 1–7). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Wagstaff, C. R. D. (Ed.). (2017b). *The organizational psychology of sport: Key issues and practical applications*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Wagstaff, C. R. D. (2019). Taking Stock of Organizational Psychology in Sport, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 31*:1, 1-6.

- Wagstaff, C. R. D., Fletcher, D., & Hanton, S. (2012b). Positive organizational psychology in sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 5(2), 87–103.
- Wagstaff, C. R. D., & Lerner, R. J. (2015). Organisational psychology in sport: Recent developments and a research agenda. In S. D. Mellalieu & S. Hanton (Eds.), *Contemporary advances in sport psychology: A review* (pp. 91–119). London: Routledge.
- Walker, M., & Unterhalter, E. (2004). Knowledge, narrative and national reconciliation: Storied reflections on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 25(2), 279-297.
- Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(2), 146-160.
- Wall, C., Glenn, S., Mitchinson, S., & Poole, H. (2004). Using a reflective diary to develop bracketing skills during a phenomenological investigation. *Nurse Researcher*, 11, 22- 29.
- Wallace, B. A. (2001). Intersubjectivity in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8, 209 –230
- Wallace, B. A. (2005). *Balancing the mind*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion
- Walsh, R. (2011). Lifestyle and mental health. *American Psychologist*, 66(7), 579.
- Walsh, R., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). The meeting of meditative disciplines and western psychology: A mutually enriching dialogue. *American Psychologist*, 61, 227–239.
- Wayne P. M., Walsh J. N., Taylor-Piliae R. E., Wells R. E., Papp K. V., Donovan N. J., et al.. (2014). Effect of Tai Chi on cognitive performance in older adults: systematic review and meta-analysis. *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.* 62, 25–39.
- Wellington, J. (2000). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. London: Continuum.

- Wesch, N., Hall, C., Prapavessis, H., Maddison, R., Bassett, S., Foley, L., ... & Forwell, L. (2012). Self-efficacy, imagery use, and adherence during injury rehabilitation. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 22(5), 695-703.
- Wiese DM, Weiss MR. (1987) Psychological rehabilitation and physical injury: implications for the sports medicine team. *Sport Psychol.* 1(4):318–330.
- Wiese, D. M., Weiss, M. R., & Yukelson, D. P. (1991). Counselling strategies for enhanced recovery of injured athletes within team approach. In D. Pargman (Ed.), *Psychological bases of sport injuries* (2nd ed.) (pp. 125-155) Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Wiese DM, Weiss MR, Yukelson DP. (1991). Sport psychology in the training room: a survey of athletic trainers. *Sport Psychol.*, 5, 15–21
- Wiese-Bjornstal DM, Smith AM. Counselling strategies for enhanced recovery of injured athletes within a team approach. In: Pargman D, ed. *Psychological Bases of Sport Injuries*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology; 1993:149–182.
- Wilding, A (2021). Experiences of female sport psychologists working in elite English soccer. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19,
- Williams, J. M., & Andersen, M. B. (1998). Psychosocial antecedents of sport injury: Review and critique of the stress and injury model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 10, 5–25
- Williams, J. M., & Scherzer, C. B., 2010. Injury Risk Rehabilitation: Psychological Considerations. i J. M. Williams (Red.), *Applied Sports Psychology*, s. 512-541. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations* (G.E.M. Anscombe, Trans.). New York: Macmillan.

- Wolever, R. Q., Bobinet, K. J., McCabe, K., Mackenzie, E. R., Fekete, E., Kusnick, C. A., & Baime, M. (2012). Effective and viable mind-body stress reduction in the workplace: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 17*(2), 246.
- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. G. (2020). Consultant characteristics in sport psychology service provision: A critical review and future research directions. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 18*(1), 46-63.
- Worsfold, K. E. (2013). Embodied reflection in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 41*, 54-69.
- Yambor, J., & Connelly, D. (1991). Issues confronting female sport psychology consultants working with male student-athletes. *The Sport Psychologist, 5*(4), 304-312.
- Yeung A., Chan, J., Cheung, Zou, L. (2018). Qigong and Tai-Chi for Mood Regulation. *Focus 2018; 16:40–47*
- Young, S. (1997). *The science of enlightenment*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True
- Zadeh, M.M., Ajilchi, B., Salman, Z. and Kisely, S., 2019. Effect of a mindfulness programme training to prevent the sport injury and improve the performance of semiprofessional soccer players. *Australasian Psychiatry, 27*(6), pp.589-595
- Zeidan F, Johnson SK, Diamond BJ, David Z, Goolkasian P. Mindfulness meditation improves cognition: evidence of brief mental training. *Consciousness and Cognition. 2010; 19*(2):597-605.
- Zhang, C. Q., & Su, N. (2020). Mindfulness training. In *The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (pp. 429-439). Routledge.
- Zillmer, E. A., & Gigli, R. W. (2007). Clinical sport psychology in intercollegiate athletics. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 1*(3), 210-222.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Study 1 Ethics



Ms. Amy Spencer

Department of Sport, Exercise and Health
Faculty of Business, Law and Sport
University of Winchester

31 January 2019

Dear Amy,

**RE.: Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement in Action: An Applied Case Study.
(RKEEC18072_Spencer)**

Thank you for returning your updated ethics application form to me and the additional documents. Your tabulated response addresses the feedback, indicating the changes you have made. I have now reviewed these and I am pleased to confirm that your project has received a favourable opinion from the Committee. A record of your documents will be uploaded to the Committee SharePoint site.

There are several very small details that you need to address in your documentation:

- The Data Protection Officer is Joseph Dilger
- Updated Uni logos needed for the parent letter and PIS
- Wording in the PIS (section "what will I do with the information") needs checking

I and the Committee wish you well in taking your project forward.

Best wishes,

Samantha Scallan
Chair, RKE Ethics Committee

CC

Frances Hutt; ethics1; PGRadmin; Stewart Cotterill; Tim Holder



Chancellor: Alan Titchmarsh MBE VMH DL
Vice-Chancellor: Professor Joy Carter BSc PhD CGeol FGS

University of Winchester, a private charitable company limited by guarantee in England and Wales number 268292 Registered Office: Sparkford Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 4NR

Preliminary questions:

1. Age?
2. Gender?
3. Number of years with the Southampton FC Academy?
4. Number of years playing football

Specific study questions

Lab

1. Thinking back to those 10 sessions on mindfulness, what can you remember the most? Why? **Chilli/Chocolate/breathing/body scan**
2. What was your biggest lesson learnt from the sessions? Positive or negative
3. What do you feel might have been the reason to include mindfulness into our psychology sessions? **Focus/relax/flow**
4. How did you find doing the formal homework practices?
5. Did the sessions change anything about how you approach football, education, or life? Why? – this could be either positive or negative
6. What was your initial reactions to the sessions and the content? **Weird/enjoyable/unsure**

Gym

7. How did or would you include mindfulness into your gym sessions? **Lifting weights/focus/breathing**
8. How, if at all, did Natt Depledge incorporate mindfulness into his gym sessions? **Lifting weights/focus/breathing**
9. Were there any differences you noticed in gym sessions with regards to attitude, focus, and concentration?
10. Was it easier to do gym stuff with myself and Depledge there being a reminder or could you do it on your own?
11. Do you think you achieve your best performance in gym, if yes how? **Lifting more/better movement**
12. What makes you perform at your best in gym? What is your Mind-set? **Focus/concentration**

Pitch

13. Did you notice how mindfulness was incorporated into training? **Warm-ups/coaching drills/language used**
14. Did coaches say anything to keep you in the moment? If so what? **Feel the grass**
15. How do you experience flow? Being in the zone? **What does it feel like**
16. How do you stay calm and composed when under pressure? What coping strategies do you use? **Breathing/anchors**
17. During this 10 week period, did you notice anything different about staff or players in terms of language/behaviour/delivery? **Type of language used**

18. Have you learnt anything to take to your/into your performance on the pitch? During the game? Preparation? Reflection? Etc.

Other

19. How do you feel after doing the sessions? **Calm/relaxed/frustrated**

20. We spoke a lot about anchors, did you have any and what were they? Do you still use them?
The breath/heartbeat

21. What would you change? **Sessions/recordings/location/group/individual**

22. What would you recommend for other people to try?

23. How can we make it more applicable to football?

Thank you for your time, and agreeing to take part in this interview.

Appendix 2. Parents Information Sheet



Dear Parent

My name is Amy Spencer and I have been at Southampton Football Club for 7 seasons. I gained my undergraduate degree at Chichester University and my masters at Bangor University in Applied Sport Psychology, additionally, I am accredited as a BASES a sports scientist. For my PhD I am investigating the use of mindfulness in an elite football environment and for my first piece of research, I am looking to integrate an academically research mindfulness programme; Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement. I am looking to embed this programme into the U16s, to examine whether this optimises performance and additionally well-being.

The players will engage in a 10-week programme that will look at embedding mindfulness into the classroom, gym and pitch-side. In addition, interviews will be conducted that will be split into three key sections, ultimately reflecting on their experiences and understanding/perception of mindfulness and its application within the Southampton environment.

All information will be kept anonymous and confidential and it will be destroyed on completion of the study. If you would like a copy of the results or wish to withdraw your response at any time then please let me know. I am running a workshop for parents to see what the intervention will cover and how the results will be used. This is a place for you to ask any questions.

Finally, if you require any further information about the study then, again please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks in advance for your assistance with this research.
Sincerely,

Amy Spencer
Professional Lead Sport Psychologist
Southampton FC

M: +44 (0) 7856 323916

E: aspencer@saintsfc.co.uk

Appendix 4. Participants information sheet



Participant Information Form

You are kindly invited to participate in my research project looking at applying a mindfulness-based programme into your rehabilitation schedule. Before the interview research begins, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken, and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions about the study.

Who am I?

My name is Amy Spencer and I am a full time employee of Southampton Football Club within the Psychology department and a PhD student at Winchester University.

My supervisors are two Academic Lecturers at Winchester University and the club has approved the research.

Why am I doing this research?

Mindfulness has grown within all domains not just sport, yet little research has shown the benefits mindfulness can have on optimal performance within an elite setting. Research has been shown in the sporting context that Flow and Optimal performance is highly correlated within the domain of sport and this has been done within collegiate athletes. However, no research to date has been conducted within an elite environment.

Therefore, this research is looking to incorporate mindfulness into your training schedules from the psychology lab, to the gym and then out onto the pitch. It will show how mindfulness can be used in all environments and help aid performance outcome.

Who can take part?

The research is open to the U16 age group

What would be involved?

I would like you to take part in the 10 mindfulness sessions and an interview that is split into 3 key sections which will take approximately 1 hour. In addition, you will be asked to complete a battery of questionnaires; The Flow Anxiety Mindfulness Emotion (FAME): Flow State Scale – Dispositional Flow Scale-2; Anxiety – Sport Anxiety Scale-2; Mindfulness In Sport; Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; PHL (Philadelphia) Mindfulness Scale; Emotional Regulation – Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale.

What will I do with the information?

In order for me to gain the PhD degree, the data the data will be combined with information from other will be coded and analysed by myself and all players' identities will be kept confidential. The information collected will not have any direct impact on the players' contract decision. Additionally the data may be used to write and publish articles in academic/industry journals. You will be welcome to see an abstract of the study and any articles once they are available online, you will have chance to withdraw up until the paper is written (date will be provided in written form). The final data will be used to create a programme that can be used throughout the club.

Will the information from the questionnaire be kept private?

The information will be stored in locked rooms/computers with password protection, and will only be used by myself. No names or individual data will be used within the final thesis, publications.

What if you change your mind about taking part?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and if at any point you wish to withdraw from the study, you may do so with no explanation required. If you wish to make any comments or complaints about the

study, or my performance, please contact Dr Stewart Cotterill (supervisor), Dr Samantha Scallan (Chair of Ethics at Winchester), and Joseph Dilger (University Data Protection Officer):

Amy Spencer: aspencer@saintsfc.co.uk

Dr Stewart Cotterill: SCotterill@aecc.ac.uk

Samantha Scallan: Samantha.Scallan@winchester.ac.uk +44 (0)7787 297400

Joseph Dilger: Joseph.Dilger@winchester.ac.uk +44 (0)1962 841515

Appendix 5. Informed Consent



Informed Consent Form

Mindfulness Sport Performance Enhancement in Action: An Applied Case Study

Please initial if you agree:

Researcher: Amy Spencer

The purpose of this study has been clearly explained to me and any risks involved in my participation have been made explicitly clear. All my questions about it have been satisfactorily answered. In addition, I agree that:

- A. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information form. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- B. I give permission for this interview to be recorded on audio phone.
- C. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study, without providing an explanation. I will have chance to withdraw up until the paper is written (date will be provided in written form)
- D. I agree to take part in the study.
- E. Information I give will only be used for completion of an MPhil/PhD project in the Department of Sport Sciences, University of Winchester and publications resulting from the project.
- F. My identity in this study will remain anonymous.
- G. I am aware that this data collected will help design programmes on mindfulness in the future for the club
- H. My data will be stored securely. Only the researcher and PhD supervisors will have access to the data, which will be stored on the university OneDrive under password protection
- I. Data shall be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed.

.....
Name of participant

.....
Date

.....
Name of guardian

.....
Signature

SESSION ONE

PRESENT MOMENT ANCHORS

**Mind-Body
Connections**

**Present Moment
Anchors**

**Noticing
Sensations**



Stop

Take a few breaths

Observe what's happening

Proceed

We are strengthening the ability to just observe, to be present with and aware of what is occurring, without getting lost in reactions and judgements that so often detract from experience and performance.

You can help your mind to settle by **investigating** and **exploring** physical sensations with real **curiosity**

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' sensation. What we're doing is **noticing whatever is there**, be comfortable or uncomfortable, familiar or 'weird'

SESSION ONE

HOME PRACTICE

Please record your daily mindfulness practice in the log below. Feel free to note anything that you observe during your practice so we can discuss it during the next session.

| DATE | MINUTES | WHAT I PRACTICED | OBSERVATIONS |
|------|---------|------------------|--------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Your home practice will include changing of the breath (belly and chest breathing) and sitting exercise. Please try and do this at least three times.



Appendix 7. Study 2 Ethics



Monday 29th April 2019

Amy Spencer

Faculty of Business, Law and Sport

University of Winchester

Hants, SO22 4NR

Dear Amy Spencer,

Re: Faculty of Business, Law and Sport RKE Ethics Application [BLS/19/13]

Title: *Mindfulness Approaches to Injury Rehabilitation Part Two: A Case Study of a Physio within Elite Football*

Thank you for your submission to the University of Winchester, Faculty of Business Law and Sport (BLS) ethics panel.

On behalf of the Faculty of BLS RKE Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that you have received a favourable opinion for the ethical content of your application. Ethical approval is for five years and is only for the documentation submitted for review on 29/04/19. If the project has not been completed within five years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Head of the Faculty BLS ethics committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Faulkner'.

Dr James Faulkner

Head of Ethics in Faculty BLS

University of Winchester

Dr James Faulkner, Head of Ethics in the Faculty of BLS
Email: James.Faulkner@winchester.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0)1962 624932

Appendix 8. Study 2 Player Questions

Injury History

1. Can you explain what injury you had?
2. How did you get injured?
3. How long was the injury and what was your reaction to your rehab plan?
4. What was the hardest part of the rehab?

Sport psychology help – level of openness (receptivity)

5. What was your initial reaction in working with me throughout the rehab process?

Mindfulness and the protocol

6. Had you heard of mindfulness before this?
7. Tell me about your first reaction to the mindfulness sessions I introduced you to?
8. What was your overall experience of the mindfulness protocol that you followed?
9. What was your experience learning and practicing the mindfulness meditation?
 - a. Was it helpful or not helpful? Why?
10. Did this help you through the injury process? In what way?

Lessons learnt

11. What did you take out from our time working together throughout the injury?
12. Are there any key elements you remember from our sessions?
13. Was there anything enjoyable about the sessions? If so what?
14. Do you think it helped or not helped? Why?
15. What is the biggest lesson you have learnt from practicing mindfulness?

Appendix 9. Study 2 Physiotherapist Questions

Preliminary questions:

5. Age?
6. Gender?
7. Number of years with the Southampton FC
8. Number of years as a physio

Physio History

16. Why physio?
17. Can you explain your journey and experience in football?
18. What is the hardest part of the rehab process from your point of view?
19. What is the most enjoyable part of the rehab process from your point of view?

Mindfulness and the protocol

20. What is your understanding of mindfulness?
21. What was your initial reaction of mindfulness and its application?
22. Do you feel that learning about mindfulness has had any impact – positive or negative on your practice?
23. What other forms of psychological skills do you use in your practice? How do they differ from mindfulness?
24. What was your initial reaction in working with me throughout the rehab process?
25. What has been your experience of working with psychology beyond the rehab?
26. Can you elude to the pros and cons of psychology in rehab?
27. Any key moments that stay with you from a learning point of view and application?
28. Do you think it was beneficial for the player to have psychology present?

Future recommendations

29. How would you adapt mindfulness to better fit your programme and style?
30. What was your overall experience of mindfulness and psychology in the process?
31. What could psychology do more of to help your practice and the department?
32. Would you like more educational content and if so what?
33. If a programme of mindfulness was adapted for physios to use in rehab, do you think it would be beneficial and if so why?
34. What's been your biggest lesson with 1. Having psych support and 2. The mindfulness?
35. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 10: One Minute Meditation Script

1. Make yourself comfy, either sat or lying down, taking the strain off your injury. Feel like you are in control of your body, that you are supporting yourself and nothing else is. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable to do so or just lower your gaze.
2. Focus your attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body. Feel the different sensations of each breath, in and out. There is no need to alter your breathing, just observe the breath. What is happening to your chest, your lungs, is the breath cold or warm?
3. After a while your mind may wander. When this does happen, gently bring your attention back to your breath, without giving yourself a hard time for allowing your mind to wander. By acknowledging that your mind has wandered and bringing the mind straight back to the breath is overall skill of mindfulness.
4. You might feel calm, sleepy, tired or even frustrated, angry or in pain. Notice how these emotions can come and go, they arrive and then just fly away. Whatever you are feeling, just allow it to be as it is and then bring that mind back to the breath.
5. Slowly open your eyes.

How did you find that? All you are allowing yourself to do is focusing your attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body. By focusing on the breath, it allows you to observe your thoughts as they pop into your mind, realizing that they are just thoughts and that they come and go. You can watch them appear, and watch them disappear like soap bubble being created and then bursting. You have the choice whether to act upon the thoughts and feeling that you are experiencing or not.

Appendix 11. Study 3 Ethics



Tel: 01962 841515
Fax: 01962 842280
www.winchester.ac.uk

Winchester
Hampshire
SO22 4NR

Amy Spencer
Sport, Exercise & Health
Faculty of Health & Wellbeing
University of Winchester

04/02/2020

Dear Amy,

Re: Multidisciplinary Perspectives of Embedding Mindfulness techniques into a Premier League Football Academy (HWB_REC_19/08_Spencer)

Thank you for returning your updated ethics application to me and rebuttal responses to the reviewer questions. Your answers comprehensively address the queries posed and clearly highlight the changes made to the documentation. I have now reviewed these and I am pleased to confirm that your project has received a favourable opinion.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please contact me directly.

I wish you well in taking your project forward.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Faulkner'.

Dr James Faulkner
Faculty Head of Research & Knowledge Exchange
University of Winchester
Email: James.Faulkner@winchester.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0)1962 624932



Chancellor: Alan Titchmarsh MBE VMH DL
Vice-Chancellor: Professor Joy Carter BSc PhD CGeol FGS

University of Winchester, a private charitable company limited by guarantee in England and Wales number 5269291 Registered Office: Sparkford Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 4NR

Appendix 12. Study 3 Questions

1. Age?
2. Gender?
3. Time at club?
4. Role at club?
5. Number of years with exposure to mindfulness?

6. What is your understanding of mindfulness?
7. Why do you think there is a sudden interest in mindfulness in sport and globally?
8. What do you feel the purpose of mindfulness is?
9. Any limitations to practicing mindfulness? What don't you like about mindfulness?

10. How has mindfulness influenced you as a person?
11. How has mindfulness influenced your practice?
12. How have you used mindfulness in your practice?
13. Do you think we should have mindfulness training for all practitioners? Please give reason for your answer
14. How can we gain more integration/what would make it better?
15. How do you think mindfulness should be applied to the culture of football?
16. What more would you like to see from psychology from a mindfulness perspective?
17. What messages are you now giving players based on your understanding of mindfulness? Have these changed from previous?
18. How do you measure the impact of mindfulness and its desired outcome?
19. Why is mindfulness useful to this club and the culture of football?

Appendix 13. Study 4 Ethics



Tel: 01962 841515
Fax: 01962 842280
www.winchester.ac.uk

Winchester
Hampshire
SO22 4NR

Faculty of Health & Wellbeing

University of Winchester

02/05/2022

Dear Amy Spencer and Dr Tim Holder

Re: HWB_REC_220328_Spencer-Holder

Thank you for returning your updated ethics application to me and rebuttal responses to the reviewer questions. Your answers comprehensively address the queries posed and clearly highlight the changes made to the documentation. I have now reviewed these and I am pleased to confirm that your project has been approved.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please contact me directly.

I wish you well in taking your project forward.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background, appearing to read 'K Cook'.

Dr Katherine Cook

Ethics Lead, Health and Wellbeing

University of Winchester

Email: HWB_Ethics@winchester.ac.uk